

Comparing Charlotte Mason curricula

	Simply Charlotte Mason	A Delectable Education	Ambleside Online	The Alveary, from CMI
What is it?	Free curriculum guide, bookstore, blog; forums	Podcasts and guidelines/ suggestions; does not call itself a curriculum per se	A very detailed curriculum; there are forums and such available through other websites	A new curriculum from the Charlotte Mason Institute; still seems to be in “beta testing” stages; a rich support system is planned
What they say about themselves	“Our curriculum is designed to help you homeschool the Charlotte Mason way with confidence and freedom! Your whole family is combined together for as many subjects as possible as you enjoy a wonderful mix of modern and classic books.”	[I couldn't find one good quote for this]	“AO's detailed schedules, time-tested methods, and extensive teacher resources allow parents to focus effectively on the unique needs of each child.”	“A curriculum for 21 st century North American students”; “We wanted to create a modern, organic program that is based on primary resources, heavily integrates teacher training, helps teachers and parents who are still working out ideas implement Mason’s methods with fidelity, and embraces the idea that what we study should reflect our own time and place. We also wanted it to focus on the time and place in which we live and to be connected to the best thoughts of some of the leading voices of our day that resonate with Mason’s principles and methods.”
Cost? (ie do they charge you	SCM makes and sells some	One can pay for consultations to get	“There is no fee to use the curriculum	Yearly Family membership fee of

<p>anything; all require obtaining books)</p>	<p>materials but one can use their curriculum without purchasing from them; they also have a planner which will help you schedule readings and work</p>	<p>personalized suggestions (\$30/hr); the women involved also sell other resources such as their schedule cards through their websites</p>	<p>or website.” AO resists any outside advertising and sales.</p>	<p>\$499/yr (??)</p>
<p>How much work is done for you (the parent)?</p>	<p>SCM offers a planner which will help you divide up books into daily lessons yourself or you can purchase guides which will do so (\$\$). It does have a module-like tool online to help you select all the subjects you need and booklists that one can see without purchasing.</p>	<p>ADE will provide you with personalized book suggestions (\$\$). But really this is more of a philosophy or approach, not specific materials laid out for you.</p>	<p>“Without the understanding of Charlotte Mason's vision, even a curriculum like AmblesideOnline won't give your children a CM education. It will just be another booklist, a collection of texts and subjects to mark off a checklist. We designed this curriculum so that, instead of spending your time trying to figure out the best CM-quality living books to use, your children can jump into their schooling right away and you will be freed from the burden of trying to create your own CM curriculum, so you can spend your time familiarizing yourself with Charlotte's Mason's vision for raising broad-minded, thinking children who are as concerned about</p>	<p>Everything seems to be laid out for one, including telling you when to do exams; “The first topic covered is scheduling. We adhered strictly to Mason’s daily time limits for morning lessons, but we also provided documents that will help your family find a healthy rhythm. For those who like to make their own schedules, we provided guidelines on how many times per week and for how many minutes each subject should be scheduled. Then we thought through it for you to come up with a sample of what your schedule might look like in each form.”</p>

			<p>their duty to others, as they are their own rights. <i>No booklist can do that alone</i>--it takes an understanding of all the other components of Charlotte Mason's method. For that, we strongly urge you to read her books”</p> <p>...</p> <p>“You'll need to add in your own math curriculum and a foreign language program.” Also a phonics program for pre-readers</p>	
<p>Is it flexible?</p>	<p>After saying their book suggestions are just that-- suggestions: “We are happy to share what books we and our children have enjoyed . . .But you know your children much better than we do . . . “</p>	<p>Because there are not as many specifics on the website, yes, it is flexible. Consultations will give “personalized” suggestions.</p>	<p>“Decide how you'll divide the workload over the term or year (use or adapt the 36-week schedule if it helps) and plan a schedule, remembering to schedule short lessons of 10-20 minutes for younger children, 25-30 minutes for older children. You don't need to do every subject every day. You can do math Mon/Wed/Fri, geography Tue/Thur, US history Mon/Tues/Wed and world history Thu/Fri. You can break up the week</p>	<p>“The programs tell you which pages to read during the term. They also give suggestions for “Extra Helpings,” if your child has already read a book, if a book is just not resonating with the child, or if the student is showing keen interest in a subject and is hungry for more.”</p>

			in any way that suits you. Some break up the traditional subjects over four days and reserve Fridays for art or music. There is no one right way. Be prepared to make changes as you see what works.”	
Is it inherently Christian? How is Bible included?	History and Bible are integrated: “We believe it's important for students to understand how the Bible fits into world history – that the events recorded in the Bible actually happened and in an historical setting.”	While the people behind ADE clearly value the Bible (see quote below), because it is not a curriculum per se, one could use their resources without Christian content (I believe). “The Bible is the most authoritative and ancient of all books and Mason considered its lessons to be the supreme lesson, leading most directly to knowledge of God. This podcast explores why she was of this opinion, why we must not neglect its lessons . . .”	In answer to can a non-Christian use this curriculum: “Yes, although some of our books and resources are distinctly Christian and you may prefer to make substitutions to fit your family's needs.” AO includes a Bible reading plan for years 1-7 but it is not integrated into the rest of the curriculum in the way SCM is.	Bible readings are definitely a part of the curriculum. They don't seem to be integrated with history but Bible is also used for recitation.
What subjects are done together as a family?	“Your whole family is combined together for as many subjects as possible.” Math, science (not incl nature study), and language arts (not	Children are combined for much work. Re history: “this enables a family (or entire school) to study the same time period at the same	“We've tried to make it easier for families by combining certain subjects: Bible study, Nature Study and observation,	History is done together. “move at your own pace subjects” are math, reading, foreign language and grammar.

	<p>incl literature, Shakespeare, etc) are the only subjects not combined.</p>	<p>time.”</p>	<p>Picture Study (art appreciation), Composer Study (classical music appreciation), Folk Songs and Hymns. . . Then, each student will have their own history, literature, poetry, geography, and science schedule of books.” “Many combine history/literature readings so they can read aloud to all the students at the same time. Their children do math and language arts at their own appropriate levels.” They also give a chart of how certain years (1 and 6; 2 and 7, etc) line up.</p>	
<p>History: Are different streams done simultaneously? Where does one begin?</p>	<p>“Start with any history time period you want to. Once you’ve read all the way through Modern Times, you can start over and repeat the studies, using the older grade level book lists as your students grow.” ... “So as we study ancient civilizations, we put the main emphasis on Bible history and bring world history in</p>	<p>Study begins with what is closest to us – American history for those in the US. Ultimately three streams of history are studied at once – US, British/Europe (beg in gr 4), and Ancient (beg in gr 5). ADE seems to be the only one to use multiple streams simultaneously.</p>	<p>“Charlotte Mason taught the history of her own country alongside world history, doing both side by side chronologically. It hasn't been practical for AmblesideOnline to duplicate that totally because Charlotte Mason's country (England) had a long, rich history, unlike the US, whose history is only known only vaguely before the 1400's. Rather,</p>	<p>Begins with American history with tales studied in grade 1; 4th grade adds British history and 5th adds an ancient history stream so ultimately 3 streams are being studied at once</p>

alongside. That's why we take three years to go through Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, and Ancient Rome."

what AmblesideOnline has offered is closer to a history of western civilization, with an emphasis on America's roots in Western/British history. Every class in Charlotte Mason's schools followed the same period of history, covering that historical era for each level, every term. This is a mammoth task that the organizers of this curriculum were not prepared to undertake with each new term - it simply isn't practical for the advisory to schedule books for each historical period for every level. Therefore, an equally satisfactory method was developed whereby each AmblesideOnline student will study history in a chronological sequenceAmblesideOnline schedules two rotations of history in a child's 12-year school career, starting with the early middle ages (year one) and

			progressing chronologically until year 6. At this point Greek and Roman history are introduced”	
When do we begin Shakespeare and Plutarch?	Shakespeare recommendations begin with grade 2. I can't find info on Plutarch.	Plutarch begins in 5 th grade and Shakespeare in grade 4.	“Shakespeare and Plutarch's Lives (biographies of Greeks and Romans) are also done together, but students don't need to begin those until fourth grade, or whenever they begin Year 4. Younger children do simplified versions of Shakespeare stories.”	Plutarch from form 2a (5 th grade?) on; Shakespeare begins in form 2 (3 rd or 4 th grade?)
Math	Recommends curricula such as Right Start and MUS; Sells a guide to teaching living math to be used with your curriculum	Prefers living math; recommends SCM's guide to living math; provides principles for choosing a curriculum incl: concrete (manipulatives) to abstract, building understanding, not busywork, allows narration, incl story/word problems and mental math, self-paced, enough practice	Math not included	Uses Right Start or Ray's Arithmetic
Early education, or when to begin	SCM offers a pre-K and K curriculum guide but encourages parents to focus on “developing good habits, getting	Begins w first grade; in 1 st grade history is studied through “tales”	AO does not recommend starting before age 6 and says some children may not be ready even then. Year 1 begins the	Form I is designed for age 6 though it may be used for “mature 5 year olds.”; Grade one studies tales for history

	<p>acquainted with nature, exploring with the five senses, growing in their spiritual lives, and playing outdoors” before age 6.</p>		<p>history rotation but “focusing on people rather than events” They do have a “Year 0 (K)” curriculum but say: “Year 0 is not a formal Ambleside year, but refers to all the years before formal academics begin in Year 1 (typically on or after age 6). During these early years, we focus on helping the child discover his own world through his own explorations, with lots of outdoor time and real tasks around the house. We might introduce gentle academics through play, such as playing with objects (to introduce math concepts) or playing with letters (to introduce beginning reading).”</p>	
Exams/testing	<p>Final exams “should be a natural part of learning that reveals to both the teacher and student alike what ideas have become part of the child's life . . .” One or two open-ended questions from each book read</p>	<p>Exams are one week per term (3 terms per year); they are to show the student what they have learned and to help the teacher see if the materials worked; they do not evaluate the student; form 1 does them orally</p>	<p>“Exams are optional - nobody at this website will be checking or grading your exams, but some list members have attempted doing CM-style exams as a way to gauge their child's progress.” AO does provide exam</p>	<p>Exams are sent out and due dates are given; these are used to evaluate the curriculum and are optional</p>

	with no review beforehand.	by form 3 all exams should be written; they are open ended questions	questions by year if you choose to use them.	
Language arts	Spelling is done in context, through copywork and dictation, not spelling lists. Dictation begins in grade 4; handwriting is taught through copywork; offers <i>Spelling Wisdom</i> books for copywork and dictation passages (\$); composition is taught through narration; written narration begins around age 10; offers <i>Using Language Well</i> series (\$) to teach composition and grammar; Grammar begins around age 10	Handwriting/writing begins with copywork taken from the child's school books; copywork continues through high school and becomes the commonplace book; dictation and grammar begin in 4 th grade; narration prepares for composition; grammar delayed till around age 10; you don't need a grammar curriculum per se; no true composition till they have something to write about beg in 7 th grade	“[AO]'s language arts consists of reading instruction, transcription (copywork), narration, dictation and grammar. Creative writing consists of physically forming the letters, composing thoughts and, finally, transferring those thoughts to paper. . . In grammar there's only a small body of knowledge to learn--it doesn't need to take years and years to learn it, and it doesn't need to start in first grade.”	Penmanship, then copywork, then dictation; narration of course; “composition” in the form of brief stories related to reading is begun by form 2; grammar with <i>Simply Grammar</i> (or another of your choice) begins in form 2 and moves on to <i>Analytical Grammar</i> in form 3; copywork/dictation passages seem to be taken from poems and Shakespeare etc that they are using
High school science	Apologia; also recommends using living books as a supplement	Associated with Sabbath Mood Homeschool which has a living science curriculum which extends through high school. Booklists are free online. Lesson guides are available to buy.	“Apologia Science texts are used in Years 7-12”; rumor has it they may be revising their high school book suggestions	Unknown; not sure if high school curriculum is even out yet
Geography	Combined with history and bible, uses maps and living books;	Living books and maps; physical geography for elementary age	“Other than <i>Holling C Holling</i> (<i>Seabird, Paddle to the Sea</i>) and travel	Seems to be living books and mapmaking; some geography at least

	Available to buy: the <i>Visits to...</i> study guide series	should be “by the way” – learned by being out in nature as well as through living books (from Sabbath Mood Homeschool)	books, AmblesideOnline has no systematic geography study.”	seems to be combined with history
Art and Music	Gives lists of artists, composers etc and recommends studying 3 of each per year; includes some modern artists (with care taken to make sure they are “family appropriate”); sells picture study portfolios	I believe ADE integrates composers and artists with the time period being studied; SCM's picture study portfolio's are authored by ADE's Emily Kiser	Done as a family; AO provides artists and composers for each term; these are not tied in to history. “The schedule of artists and composers is on the website and is offered as a suggestion. Members may choose to focus on different artists or composers for any given term.”	Includes some moderns at least – such as patriotic American songs.
Foreign Language	A modern/spoken language from early years and Latin from 4 th grade on; only gives recommendations, does not provide curriculum	Recommends first modern language from grade 1; Latin from grade 5 and a 2 nd modern language beg in grade 7; gives recommendations in approach but no specific curricula; lauds learning of French but allows for other languages	“Charlotte Mason advocated learning French first, and then adding other languages later, including Latin (at about age 10 or 12). Families may certainly make a different choice of which language - but the goals are the same: to be able to express ideas in another language, to communicate to others, to be able to 'think' in another language, and to be able to read literature - and narrate from it - in another language.”	Seems to begin French or Spanish from the beginning and to add Latin in form 2A (5 th grade?). “Extra support is given for hard to teach subjects such as world languages”

<p>Books: old or new? Availability?</p>	<p>“While we appreciate the value of many older books . . . we agree with [CM] that many newer books may be living . . .so our book suggestions may differ from those Charlotte used 100 years ago.”</p>		<p>Emphasizes books available as ebooks or free online; many older books</p>	<p>Emphasizes books in print and readily available; billed as a “modern” CM curriculum that includes many newer books</p>
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