



# Core Virtues: Traditional Implementation

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*A Brief Introduction*



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# *Core Virtues*<sup>®</sup>

Building character one story at a time

## **Introduction**

This resource provides the original framework of the Core Virtues program, a practical, non-sectarian approach to character education for kindergarten through sixth grade. The program's objective is to ignite the imagination of the young, inspiring them to do and be their best. It is a catalyst for academic success, encouraging the habits of the heart and mind that are necessary for quality scholarship. This is accomplished through the reading of quality children's literature to help children fall in love with the Good. In other words, the goal is to build character one story at a time—a principle that guided the traditional implementation and continues in the program today.



a time.

## Mission Statement

The original mission statement articulated the program's foundational vision as follows:

Our mission is to advance virtue-based character education for elementary school children and to marshal the resources of literature and history on behalf of that endeavor. Drawing on the American Founders' insight that knowledge and virtue are essential to a properly functioning republic, the Core Virtues program seeks to promote the intellectual, moral, and civic virtues with:

- An exemplary K-6 character-education curriculum, which is literature-based, historically informed, and easily implemented.
- A website that supports the *Core Virtues* approach by showcasing key works of literature and new resources.
- Posters that provide visual support for classroom efforts.
- A network of communication and support among schools and educators using the literature-based *Core Virtues* approach.

## Virtue of the Month/Three-Year Virtue Cycle

To unify schools around a single goal, the *Core Virtues* program highlighted a “Virtue of the Month.” These virtues, whether intellectual, moral, or civic, were chosen because they are common ground and broadly embraced. By focusing on one virtue (or set of virtues) per month across all grade levels (K-6), it was hoped that the language would permeate all areas of the school, becoming a common conversation wherever students found themselves.

The *Core Virtues* program employed a three-year cycle of virtues, highlighting a different virtue (or trait derived from a virtue) each month of the school year (September through June). During the academic year, students focused on 10 virtues, tied in part to the rhythm and seasons of the traditional 180-day school year. The virtue cycle alternated over a three-year period to embrace the broad range of traits that undergird human flourishing. See the chart below for the three-year cycle:

Month	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
September	Respect & Responsibility	Respect & Responsibility	Respect & Responsibility
October	Diligence	Self-Control & Patience	Perseverance
November	Gratitude	Wonder (Awe)	Stewardship
December	Generosity & Hospitality	Charity	Service
January	Courage	Courage	Courage
February	Honesty & Justice	Love of Country	Loyalty
March	Compassion	Faithfulness	Mercy
April	Forgiveness	Graciousness & Courtesy	Gentleness & Humility
May	Hope & Joy	Imagination	Wonder (at the unknown)
June	Heroism & Humor	Lives to Learn From	Wisdom & Wit

The following three pages include charts of the yearly breakdown of definitions for the given virtues for each month:

Year 1			
Month	Kindergarten	Grades 1 & 2	Grades 3-6
September – Respect & Responsibility	Respect is treating others politely and kindly.	Respect is treating others with high regard regardless of their race, their place, or the color of their faces.	Respect is treating others with high regard.
October – Diligence	Diligence is working your very hardest and staying with it.	Diligence is steady, earnest, and energetic effort.	Diligence is doggedly doing your best.
November – Gratitude	Gratitude is thankfulness for the gift of life and the gifts in life.		
December – Generosity & Hospitality	Generosity is giving without thinking of getting.		Generosity is giving with an open hand and an open heart.
January – Courage	Courage is doing what is right in the face of fear. OR Courage is moving beyond fear. OR Courage is finding the strength to venture and persevere.		
February – Honesty & Justice	Honesty is truthfulness: loving the truth, telling the truth, and living truthfully in word and deed. OR Justice is giving the other his or her due. OR Justice is making space for the rights and needs of others.		
March – Compassion	Compassion is feeling what others are feeling and trying to help with their troubles.		Compassion is feeling the pain of others and acting to end their distress.
April – Forgiveness	Forgiveness is having enough heart to let go of hurt.	Forgiveness is finding it in your heart to pardon or excuse.	Forgiveness is freeing yourself from anger and the other from guilt.
May – Hope & Joy	Hope is finding the light in the darkness and trusting the right endings.		
June – Heroism	Heroism is taking noble action for a good cause.		

Year 2			
Month	Kindergarten	Grades 1 & 2	Grades 3-6
September – Respect & Responsibility	Responsibility is doing your part for the groups that make us whole.		
October – Self-Control & Self-Discipline	Self-Control is stopping to think about my actions before I enact them. OR Self-Discipline is applying ourselves to our tasks. OR Self-Discipline is giving the best of ourselves and saying “no” to our weaknesses”		
November – Wonder (Awe)	Wonder is to stop and say, “Wow!”	Wonder is to delight in beauty and mystery. OR Wonder is the first step on the path to knowledge.	Wonder is to marvel at mystery; to stand in awe before the unexplained.
December – Charity	Charity is caring and working to be kind. OR Charity is giving of heart and soul and mind.	Charity is Love. OR Charity is selfless giving to those in need.	Charity is the root and mother of all the virtues.
January – Courage	Courage is doing what is right in the face of fear. OR Courage is moving beyond fear. OR Courage is finding the strength to venture and persevere.		
February – Love of Country	Love of Country means being devoted to our nation—loving its ideals, honoring its heroes, respecting its past, and working hard for a just and noble future.		
March – Faithfulness	Faithfulness is standing by those we love, those we serve, and what we believe.		
April – Graciousness & Courtesy	Graciousness is acting kindly, courteously, and making another feel special.		
May – Joy	Joy is the fullness of spirit that blooms from the loving heart.		
June – Lives to Learn From	Learn from those who act well, think well, forge new paths, and seek a better world.		

Year 3			
Month	Kindergarten	Grades 1 & 2	Grades 3-6
September – Respect & Responsibility	Respect is treating others politely and kindly.	Respect is treating others with high regard regardless of their race, their place, or the color of their faces.	Respect is treating others with high regard.
	Responsibility is doing your part for the groups that make us whole.		
October – Perseverance	Perseverance is sticking to it, even when you'd rather give up.	Perseverance is persisting.	Perseverance is pushing on despite difficulty and hardship.
November – Stewardship	Stewardship is caring well for the gifts given us – our life, our world, our talents, and those entrusted to our care.		
December – Service	Service is helping others with a cheerful heart.		
January – Courage	Courage is doing what is right in the face of fear. OR Courage is moving beyond fear. OR Courage is finding the strength to venture and persevere.		
February – Loyalty	Loyalty is being faithful and true to our duties, relations, and ideals.		
March – Mercy	Mercy is showing kindness to those who have not been kind to us.		Mercy is showing compassion to the enemy, the wrongdoer, or those over whom one has power.
April – Gentleness & Humility	Humility is knowing that I am definitely not perfect.		Humility is avoiding the temptation to exaggerate our own abilities and underestimate those of others.
	Gentleness is treating others with kind words and mild manner		
May – Wonder (of the unknown)	Wonder is to stop and say, "Wow!"	Wonder is to delight in beauty and mystery. OR Wonder is the first step on the path to knowledge.	Wonder is to marvel at mystery; to stand in awe before the unexplained.
June – Wisdom & Integrity	Wisdom is knowledge of the things that matter. Integrity is living life faithful to good principles and high ideals.		

## Stories and Beautiful Imagery

The Core Virtues program is built on the belief that stories inspire children’s natural desire to aspire to greatness, a dream that plays out in the theaters of their imaginations. Grand narratives draw them forward, encouraging them to fall in love with either good or evil. William Kilpatrick, professor and author of *Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right from Wrong*, and an inspiration behind the Core Virtues program, pointed out that a child facing cancer or illness or any great test of self may find inspiration and strength for the journey by reading and re-reading the “Twelve Labors of Hercules.” In like manner, one who thrills to “Horatius at the Bridge” or the Story of Ruby Bridges is quicker to model civic courage and, in the latter case, forgiveness as well. The program’s foundational conviction—one that remains central to its mission—is that the job of parents and educators is to ensure that the dramas in their children’s and students’ imaginations are quality scripts, stories that inspire them to fall in love with virtue, with moral excellence.

The traditional implementation also held that beauty would grace a sound moral environment. The beautiful is not always moral, but the moral is always beautiful; therefore, books were chosen based on the beauty of their illustrations and thus their ability to lift the spirit through what the eyes beheld. Through personal, pointed, and pleasing literary examples and illustrations, the program aimed to put before children the drama of virtue: strong (or weak) men and women who confront difficulty, temptation, danger, or vice, and triumph—perhaps at great personal cost. These superhero dramas are necessary for the moral imagination. They provide children, teachers, and schools with a framework for behavior and a rich, shared language of moral excellence.





## **The Morning Gathering – The Basic Structure of the Daily Program**

The Morning Gathering was considered the heart of the Core Virtues program’s traditional implementation. If literature was the tool, the Morning Gathering was the vehicle. As a morning ritual, the Morning Gathering began the day (at least three times per week) in a consistent, encouraging, and inspiring way.

In fifteen to thirty minutes, the Morning Gathering set a clear focus through a good story centered on the virtue of the month. Teachers began each month by introducing the new virtue. They asked students what they knew about that virtue and invited students to share ideas. After the discussion, the teacher read the story and then asked, “Now what do you think we mean by \_\_\_\_\_ (virtue)?” By using examples from the story, the teacher led a more specific conversation about the virtue. Finally, the teacher posted the definition for all to see and reflect upon it for the month (for more details about posters, see “3-Year Cycle of Posters” on page 31). The definitions, as seen in the above tables, provided summary reflections in age-appropriate words.

In subsequent Morning Gathering sessions, rather than analyzing the virtue of the month, the teachers and students simply engaged in great stories about the virtues. The stories did the work of presenting the virtue attractively, without the need for lectures; the teacher was there to read the stories in an entertaining and compelling way and to guide the students through their observations and thoughts. The purpose of the Morning Gathering was never to sermonize on the “moral of the story,” because for a child, nothing ruins a good story quite like a grown-up who feels compelled to spell out “the moral.” A good story does its own work and moves its audience for all the right reasons; therefore, the guidance to teachers was to guide, clarify, enjoy the students’ reflections, share personal reflections, make logical connections to content in the rest of the academic curriculum, and be unabashedly positive about the virtues studied.

Overall, the Morning Gathering offered students the opportunity to see the beauty and value of each virtue through the power of stories. It was designed to be a simple (i.e., no training required) and inspiring way for schools, teachers, and parents to cultivate moral formation in the young—a principle that remains at the core of effective character education.



## Connection to Core Knowledge Sequence

Core Virtues was developed independently by historian and former school leader, Dr. Mary Beth Klee. Originally, it was designed to complement and to be used in conjunction with the Core Knowledge Sequence, a content-rich academic curriculum developed by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and the Core Knowledge Foundation. E.D. Hirsch coined the phrase “cultural literacy,” which was the aim of his Core Knowledge sequence and foundation. Through the study of the content-based curriculum, students would build broad, shared knowledge and become culturally literate in their Western and American traditions, allowing them to better read, write, communicate, and participate as informed citizens—goals that remain central to quality education.

The following pages include charts listing, grade by grade, the stories, speeches, poetry, historical themes, works of art, and musical pieces specified in the 2010 Core Knowledge Sequence. After each entry, an abbreviation indicates the strand of the sequence in which the item appears: LA (Language Arts), WC (World Civilization), AC (American Civilization), S (Science), FA (Fine Arts), and M (Music).

In the traditional implementation, teachers and parents were encouraged to connect to the body of work within Core Knowledge and make curricular connections where they logically fit within the flow of conversation about the monthly virtues during the Morning Gathering and beyond. By integrating rich content, students would have a more well-rounded education, leading to greater opportunities for flourishing.

	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade
September	<p><b>Respect:</b>            “Cinderella.” (LA)            “The Ugly Duckling.” (LA)  <b>Responsibility:</b>            The Brothers Grimm, <i>Snow White</i>. (LA)            A.A. Milne, <i>Winnie the Pooh</i>. (LA)            Aesop’s “Lion and the Mouse.” (LA)            Mary Cassatt. (FA)</p>	<p><b>Respect:</b>            Gelett Burgess. “The Goops.” (LA)            Lois Lenski. “Sing a Song of People.” (LA)            Continent Review (WC)  <b>Faithfulness &amp; Responsibility:</b>            “Puss in Boots.” (LA)            A.A. Milne, “House at Pooh Corner.” (LA)            “The Boy Who Cried Wolf.” (LA)</p>	<p><b>Respect:</b>            Emily Dickinson. “Bee! I’m Expecting You.” (LA)            Aileen Fisher. “Caterpillar.” (LA)            Christina Rossetti. “Hurt No Living Thing.” (LA)            Carl Sandburg. “Buffalo Dusk.” (LA)            “Auld Lang Syne.” (M)  <b>Friendship:</b>            E.B. White. <i>Charlotte’s Web</i>. (LA)</p>
October	<p><b>Diligence, Self-Control, Perseverance:</b>            “Early to bed, early to rise.” (LA)            Aesop’s “Tortoise and the Hare.” (LA)            “The Little Red Hen.” (LA)            “The Three Little Pigs.” (LA)            Casey Jones. (LA)            Margery Williams. <i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i>. (LA)            King Midas and the Golden Touch. (LA)            George Washington Carver. (S)            Wilbur and Orville Wright. (S)</p>	<p><b>Diligence:</b>            ”The Boy at the Dike.” (LA)            “The Maid and the Milk Pail.” (LA)            Age of Exploration. Columbus. (WC)            Ben Franklin. (AC)</p>	<p><b>Diligence:</b>            “Labors of Hercules.” (LA)            “The Trojan Horse.” (LA)            Sequoyah and the Cherokee Alphabet. (AC)            Paul Bunyan. (LA)            Johnny Appleseed. (LA)            Pecos Bill. (LA)            The Discus Thrower. (FA)            John Henry (LA, AC, M)            Sweet Betsy from Pike. (M)</p>

	<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Grade</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Grade</b>
November	<p><b>Gratitude, Wonder, Appreciation:</b> Introduction to Continents (WC) The Pilgrims and the First Thanksgiving. (AC) Jane Goodall. (S)</p>	<p><b>Gratitude, Wonder, Stewardship:</b> “I Know All the Sounds Animals Make.” (LA) The wonder of exploring a new world. (WC) Pilgrims, Mayflower. First Thanksgiving. (AC) Benjamin Franklin, His great intellectual curiosity. (AC) Thomas Edison. Inventiveness. (S)</p>	<p><b>Gratitude, Wonder, Stewardship:</b> Harry Behn. “Discovery.” (LA) Federico Garcia Lorca. “Seashell.” (LA) Rachel Field. “Something Told the Wild Geese.” (LA) Christina Rossetti. “Who Has Seen the Wind?” (LA) Robert Louis Stevenson. “Windy Nights.” (LA) James Barrie. <i>Peter Pan</i>. (LA) Pajaro Cu. (LA) Pandora’s Box. (LA) Aristotle. (WC) Hokusai. “The Great Wave at Kanagawa Nami-Ura.” (FA) Van Gogh. “The Starry Night.” (FA) Thomas Cole. “The Oxbow.” (FA)</p>
December	<p><b>Generosity:</b> “The Legend of Jumping Mouse.” (LA)</p>	<p><b>Generosity, Service, Charity, &amp; Holidays:</b> Christmas Story (WC) Hanukkah story (WC)</p>	<p><b>Generosity, Service, Charity, &amp; Holidays:</b> Dickens. <i>A Christmas Carol</i>. (LA) Brothers Grimm. “The Fisherman and his Wife.” (LA) “The Gift of Athena.” (LA) Clement Moore. “The Night Before Christmas.” (LA)</p>

	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade
January	<p><b>Courage:</b>  “Momotaro: Peach Boy.” (LA)  “Little Red Riding Hood.” (LA)  Aesop’s “The Dog and His Shadow.” (LA)  ”Chicken Little.” (LA)</p>	<p><b>Courage-Physical &amp; Moral:</b>  “Hansel and Gretel.” (LA)  “Issun-boshi.” (LA)  “Jack and the Beanstalk.” (LA)  Pocahontas Saves John Smith. (AC)  Paul Revere. (AC)  Deborah Sampson. (AC)  Daniel Boone and the Wilderness Road. (AC)  Lewis and Clark. (AC)  Sacajawea. (AC)</p>	<p><b>Courage:</b>  James Madison. (AC)  Dolly Madison. (AC)  Francis Scott Key. (AC)  The Erie Canal.(AC)  Pioneers heading west. (AC)  Harriet Tubman. (AC)  Abraham Lincoln. (AC)  Martin Luther King.(AC)</p>
February	<p><b>Helping Your Country (Justice, Honesty, Love of Country, Loyalty):</b>  U.S. as a democracy.  The people rule.  We’re all in this together. (AC)  Biographies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abe Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt. (AC)  This Land is Your Land. (M)  American Flag (AC)  Johnny Appleseed. (LA)  Winslow Homer. (FA)  George Washington Carver (S)</p>	<p><b>Honesty:</b>  “The Pied Piper of Hamelin.” (LA)  Carlo Collodi, <i>Pinocchio</i>. (LA)  Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i>. (LA)  “The Boy Who Cried Wolf.” (LA)  <b>Love of Country:</b>  Rule by the people. (AC)  American Revolution. (AC)  Thomas Jefferson. (AC)  Martin Luther King. (AC)  Washington. Nancy Turner Byrd (LA)  ”Yankee Doodle” (M)</p>	<p><b>Honesty, Justice; Love of Country; Loyalty:</b>  All men created equal. “We the People.” (AC)  Abraham Lincoln.  ”Emancipation Proclamation.” (AC)  Immigration unit. (AC)  Rights and responsibilities of citizens. (AC)  Susan B. Anthony. (AC)  Eleanor Roosevelt. (AC)  Martin Luther King. (AC)  Cesar Chavez. (AC)  Aaron Copland. “Fanfare for the Common Man.” (M)  “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.” (M)  America. (M)  “This Land is Your Land.” (M)  <b>Faithfulness to Country:</b>  Crete and King Minos. (WC)  Theseus and the Minotaur. (LA/WC)  Athenian democracy.  Pericles. (WC)  Chagall. “I and the Village.” (FA)</p>

	<b>Kindergarten</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Grade</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Grade</b>
March	<b>Compassion, Faithfulness, Mercy:</b> “The Legend of Jumping Mouse.” (LA)	<b>Patience:</b> “It Could Always be Worse.” (LA) “The Goose and the Golden Eggs”. (LA) <b>Compassion:</b> Medio Pollito. (LA) Aesop’s, “The Dog in the Manger.” “Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughter.” (LA) Code of Hammurabi. (WC) The Good Samaritan. (WC)	<b>Humility:</b> “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” (LA) “Inktomi Lost His Eyes.” (LA) “Dionysus.” (LA) “Arachne the Weaver.” (LA) ”Daedalus and Icarus” (LA) <b>Mercy:</b> “Beauty and the Beast.” (LA) Buddha. (WC) Asoka. (WC) Florence Nightingale. (S)
April			<b>Hope:</b> “We shall Overcome.” (M) “Swing Low Sweet Chariot.” (M) ”Follow the Drinking Gourd.” (M)
May			<b>Wisdom: Knowledge of the Things that Matter:</b> “The Blind Men and the Elephant.” (LA) “The Gift of Athena.” (LA) “Daedalus and Icarus.” (LA) ”Oedipus and the Sphinx.” (LA) Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. (WC) Rodin. “The Thinker.” (FA) “Tis A Gift to be Simple.” (M)
June		<b>Lives to Learn From:</b> Rachel Carson. (S) Louis Pasteur (S) Edward Jenner (S)	<b>Lives to Learn From:</b> Alexander the Great. (WC) Robert Fulton (AC) Clara Barton. (AC) Jackie Robinson. (AC) Eleanor Roosevelt. (AC) Jacob Riis. (AC)

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
September	<p><b>Responsibility:</b> Aeneas and Anchises. (WC)</p>	<p><b>Respect, Responsibility, Friendship:</b> Elma Stuckey. "Humanity." (LA) <i>Robin Hood.</i> (LA) Codes of chivalry. (WC)</p>	<p><b>Respect &amp; Responsibility:</b> Louisa May Alcott. <i>Little Women.</i> (LA)</p>	<p><b>Human Dignity &amp; Solidarity:</b> Langston Hughes. "Mother to Son." (LA) Maya Angelou. "Woman Work." (LA) <i>A Tale of Two Cities.</i> (LA) Charles Dickens. (WC)</p>
October	<p><b>Diligence:</b> Jean Millet. "The Gleaners." (FA) Vermeer. "Milkmaid." (FA) "Aeneas Forsakes Dido." (WC)</p>	<p><b>Diligence, Perseverance, Self-Discipline:</b> Daniel Defoe. <i>Robinson Crusoe.</i> (LA) Jonathan Swift. <i>Gulliver's Travels.</i> (LA) Robert Louis Stevenson. <i>Treasure Island.</i> (LA) Demi. <i>The Magic Brocade.</i> (LA)</p>	<p><b>Diligence:</b> Arthur Conan Doyle. <i>Sherlock Holmes.</i> (LA) Prince Henry the Navigator (WC) Leonardo Da Vinci (WC) Gutenberg (WC) Galileo (WC) Peter the Great (WC) Daniel Boone (AC) Building of Erie Canal (AC)</p>	<p><b>Temperance &amp; Diligence:</b> Rudyard Kipling. "If." (LA) "Apollo and Daphne." (LA) Jean Millet. "The Gleaners." (FA)</p>

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
November	<p><b>Gratitude, Appreciation, Wonder:</b>  Nancy Byrd Turner. <i>First Thanksgiving of All.</i> (LA)  Sergeant Joyce Kilmer. "Trees." (LA)  "The Hunting of the Great Bear." (LA)  Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. "Song of Hiawatha." (LA)  John Muir. (S)  "The Peaceable Kingdom." (VA)  Debussy. "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun." (M)  Dvorak. "New World Symphony." (M)  Aaron Copland. "Simple Gifts." (M)  Gustav Holst. "The Planets." (M)</p>	<p><b>Gratitude, Wonder, Appreciation:</b>  Edna St. Vincent Millay. "Afternoon on a Hill." (LA)  Christina Rosetti. "Clouds." (LA)  "Tongue Cut Sparrow." (LA)  Johann Strauss, Jr. "Blue Danube." (M)</p>	<p><b>Gratitude, Wonder, Appreciation:</b>  Emily Dickinson. "A Bird Came Down the Walk." (LA)  Walt Whitman. "I Hear America Singing." (LA)  Alfred Lord Tennyson. "The Eagle." (LA)  Ralph Waldo Emerson. "The Snowstorm." (LA)  Shakespeare. <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream.</i> (LA)  Mark Twain. <i>Tom Sawyer</i> (LA)  Thomas Cole. "The Oxbow." (FA)  Albert Bierstadt "Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak." (FA)  Ferde Grofe. <i>Grand Canyon Suite.</i> (M)</p>	<p><b>Gratitude &amp; Wonder:</b>  George Gordon Byron. "Apostrophe to the Ocean." (LA)  William Wordsworth. "The Daffodils." (LA)  Robert Frost. "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening." (LA)  Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. "A Psalm of Life." (LA)  Caspar David Friedrich. "The Wanderer." "The Chalk Cliffs of Rugen." (FA)  Monet. "Impression Sunrise." "Bridge Over a Pool of Water Lilies." (FA)  Vivaldi. <i>Four Seasons.</i> (M)  Debussy. "Claire de Lune." (M)</p>

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
December	<b>Charity:</b> The Little Match Girl. Hans Christian Anderson (LA)		<b>Beauty &amp; Goodness:</b> Michelangelo. Madonnas and David. (WC and FA) Raphael. Madonnas. (WC and FA) Boticelli. Birth of Venus. (FA) Da Vinci. Mona Lisa. Last Supper. (WC and FA) Donatello. St. George. (FA) Kamakura. Buddha. (FA) Renaissance madrigals. (M)	<b>Moving Beyond Self:</b> Paul Laurence Dunbar. "Sympathy." (LA) "Narcissus and Echo." (LA) "Orpheus and Eurydice." (LA) "Pygmalion and Galatea." (LA)

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
January	<p><b>Courage:</b>  “Jason and the Golden Fleece.” (LA)  ”Perseus and Medusa.” (LA)  “Horatius at the Bridge.” (LA)  Caesar Crossing the Rubicon. (WC)  “William Tell.” (LA)  “Valhalla.” (LA)  Eric the Red.  Leif the Lucky.  Early American Explorers: de Leon, de Soto, Coronado, Cartier, Champlain, Henry Hudson. (AC)  Pocahontas. (AC)  Rossini.  “William Tell Overture.” (M)  Wagner. “Ride of the Valkyries.” (M)</p>	<p><b>Courage:</b>  Patrick Henry.  “Give me Liberty or Give me death.” (LA)  Ralph Waldo Emerson. Concord Hymn. (LA)  Maya Angelou.  “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me.” (LA)  Nathan Hale. (AC)  Molly Pitcher. (AC)  Thomas Jefferson,  John Adams,  George Washington. (AC)  <i>St. George and the Dragon.</i> (LA)  Joan of Arc. (WC)</p>	<p><b>Courage &amp; Resolution:</b>  Julia Ward Howe.  “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” (LA)  Frederick Douglass.  <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.</i> (LA)  Martin Luther. (WC)  Queen Elizabeth I. (WC)  Lewis and Clark. (AC)  Jedidiah Smith. (AC)  Pioneer experiences on Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. (AC)  The Alamo. (AC)</p>	<p><b>Courage/Fortitude:</b>  Homer. <i>The Iliad</i> and <i>the Odyssey.</i> (LA)  William Shakespeare.  <i>Julius Caesar.</i> (LA)  Plato. “Trial of Socrates.” (WC)  Jacques Louis David. “Death of Socrates.” (FA)  Virgil. <i>Aeneid.</i> (WC)  Alexander the Great. (WC)  South American Liberators: Hidalgo, Bolivar, San Martin, O’Higgins, Marti. (WC)</p>

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
February	<p><b>Honesty &amp; Justice, Civic Responsibility, Love of Country:</b>  Cincinnatus. (WC)  Samuel Francis Smith. "My Country 'Tis of Thee." (LA)  Starving Times in Virginia. Massachusetts. (AC)  Mayflower.  Pilgrims. (AC)  Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. (AC)  William Penn. (AC)</p>	<p><b>Honesty &amp; Justice, Loyalty, Love of Country:</b>  Sundiata Keita. (WC)  Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Paul Revere's Ride. (LA)  James Madison. (AC)  Benjamin Banneker. (AC)  Benedict Arnold. (AC)  Thomas Jefferson. (AC)  <b>Democratic Principles:</b>  Sojourner Truth. "Ain't I a Woman?" (LA)  Frederick Douglass. (AC)  William Lloyd Garrison. (AC)  Elizabeth Cady Stanton. (AC)  Charles Drew. (S)</p>	<p><b>Love of Country, Civil Liberty &amp; Civil Disobedience:</b>  Walt Whitman.  "O Captain! My Captain!" (LA)  Langston Hughes. "I, Too, Sing America." (LA)  Abraham Lincoln. "The Gettysburg Address." (LA)  Glorious Revolution. (WC)  English Bill of Rights. (WC)  Thoreau. "Civil Disobedience." (AC)  John Brown.  Harper's Ferry. (AC)  Lincoln Douglas Debates. (AC)  Harriet Beecher Stowe. <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>. (AC)  Abraham Lincoln. "The Emancipation Proclamation." (AC)  Sitting Bull. (AC)</p>	<p><b>Justice:</b>  Judaism.  Concepts of law and justice. 10 Commandments. (WC)  Greek polis and patriotism. (WC)  Greeks on who is the good citizen? (WC)  Trial of Socrates. (WC)  French Revolution.  Liberte, egalite, fraternite. (WC)  Samuel Gompers. (AC)  Labor conditions at turn of century. (AC)  Ida B. Wells. (AC)  Booker T. Washington. (AC)  Theodore Roosevelt. (AC)  Susan B. Anthony. (AC)  Eugene V. Debs. (AC)  Delacroix.  "Liberty Leading the People." (FA)</p>

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
March	<p><b>Compassion &amp; Mercy:</b>            “Androcles and the Lion.” (LA)</p>	<p><b>Compassion, Faithfulness, Mercy:</b>            Dorothea Dix. (AC)            “Auld Lang Syne.” (M)  <i>King Arthur &amp; the Knights of the Round Table.</i> (LA)</p>	<p><b>Compassion &amp; Magnanimity:</b>            Bartolome de las Casas. (WC)            Buddhism. Four Noble Truths.            Eightfold Noble Paths. (WC)</p>	<p><b>Compassion &amp; Forbearance:</b>            Christianity: Two Great Commandments. (WC)            Christianity: Sermon on Mount. (WC)            Jane Addams. Hull House. (AC)            Jacob Riis. “How the Other Half Lives.” (AC)</p>
April	<p><b>Graciousness, Forgiveness, Gentleness, Humility:</b>            Society of Friends:            “Quakers” (AC)            Edward Hicks, “The Peaceable Kingdom” (FA)            Claude DeBussy, “Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun.” (M)            “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands.” (M)</p>		<p><b>Humility:</b>            Ernest Lawrence Thayer. “Casey at the Bat.” (LA)</p>	<p><b>Seeking Knowledge:</b>            Emily Dickinson. “There is No Frigate Like a Book.” (LA)            Aristotle. (WC)            Isaac Newton and Laws of Nature. (WC &amp; S)            Descartes. Cogito ergo sum. (WC)            Charles Darwin. (S)            Marie Curie. (S)            Albert Einstein. (S)</p>

	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
May	<p><b>Hope, Joy, Wonder:</b>  <i>The People Who Could Fly.</i> (LA)  <i>Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp.</i> (LA)            Lewis Carroll.  <i>Alice in Wonderland.</i> (LA)            Alexander Graham Bell. (S)            Copernicus. (S)            John Winthrop.  <i>City on a Hill.</i> (AC)            Rimsky Korsakov.            “Scheherazade.” (M)            Beethoven. “Ode to Joy.” (M)            Pieter Bruegel.            “Peasant Wedding.” (FA)</p>	<p><b>Hope &amp; Wonder:</b>            Langston Hughes.            “Dreams.” (LA)            Eleanor Porter.  <i>Pollyanna.</i> (LA)</p>	<p><b>Hope &amp; Understanding:</b>            Frances Hodgson Burnett. <i>The Secret Garden.</i> (LA)            Music of Scott Joplin, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, George Gershwin (M)  <b>Honor &amp; Integrity:</b>            Miguel Cervantes.  <i>Don Quixote.</i> (LA)</p>	<p><b>Hope:</b>            James Weldon Johnson. “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” (LA)            Handel. “Water Music.” (M)</p>
June	<p><b>Heroism:</b>            “Three Words of Wisdom.” (LA)</p>	<p><b>Lives to Learn From, Wisdom:</b>            Horace Mann. (AC)            Amelia Bloomer. (AC)            Margaret Fuller. (AC)            Elizabeth Blackwell. (S)</p>		

*Core Knowledge* also recommended that students learn cultural phrases and sayings. The following chart is a list of those that are applicable within the traditional *Core Virtues* framework:

Phrases & Sayings			
	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade
September	<b>Respect:</b> “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”	<b>Respect, Faithfulness &amp; Responsibility:</b> “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” “The more the merrier.” “Never leave till tomorrow what you can do today.”	<b>Respect, Friendship:</b> “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” “Two heads are better than one.”
October	<b>Diligence, Self-Control, Perseverance:</b> “The early bird catches the worm.” “Practice makes perfect.” “Where there’s a will there’s a way.” “Look before you leap.” “Better safe than sorry.”	<b>Diligence:</b> “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” “Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” “The early bird gets the worm.”	<b>Diligence:</b> “Where there’s a will there’s a way.” “Back to the drawing board.” “Easier said than done.”
November		<b>Gratitude, Wonder, Stewardship:</b> “A wolf in sheep’s clothing.” “Sour grapes.”	
January			<b>Courage:</b> “Cold feet.”
March			<b>Humility:</b> “Pride goes before the fall.” “Back to the drawing board.” “Practice what you preach.”

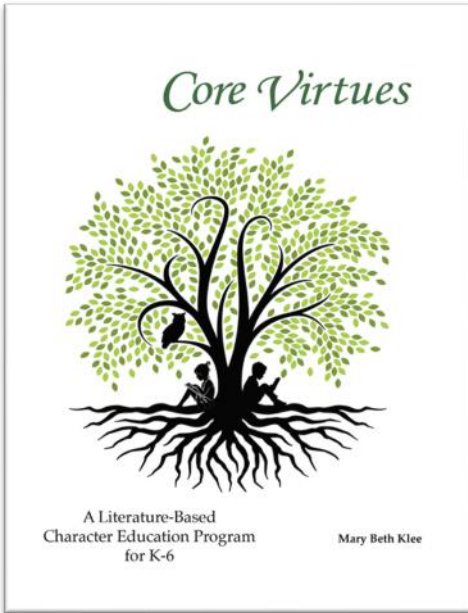
Phrases & Sayings			
	Kindergarten	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade
April			<b>Hope:</b> “Don’t cry over spilled milk.” “Get up on the wrong side of the bed.” “Turn over a new leaf.” “Keep your fingers crossed.”

Phrases & Sayings				
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
September		<b>Respect, Responsibility, Friendship:</b> “Beauty is only skin-deep.” “Through thick and thin.”		<b>Human Dignity &amp; Solidarity:</b> “All for one and one for all.” “A friend in need is a friend indeed.”
October		<b>Diligence, Perseverance, Self-Discipline:</b> “Haste makes waste.”	<b>Diligence:</b> “Well begun is half done.” “Eureka!” “Read between the lines.”	<b>Temperance &amp; Diligence:</b> “Rome wasn’t built in a day,” “Little strokes fell great oaks.” “A stitch in time saves nine.”
November				<b>Gratitude &amp; Wonder:</b> “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth.”
March				<b>Compassion &amp; Forbearance:</b> “Time heals all wounds.”
April	<b>Graciousness, Forgiveness, Gentleness, Humility:</b> “Let bygones be bygones.”	<b>Understanding &amp; Forgiveness:</b> “Bury the hatchet.” “Live and let live.”		<b>Seeking Knowledge:</b> “Eat crow.” “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you.”

Phrases & Sayings				
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade
May		<b>Wonder &amp; Hope:</b> “Half a loaf is better than none.” “Laugh and the word laughs with you.”	<b>Hope &amp; Understanding:</b> “Every cloud has a silver lining.” “Count your blessings.”	<b>Hope:</b> “Make hay while the sun shines.” “It’s never over till it’s over.” “Hitch your wagon to a star.”
June		<b>Lives to Learn From, Wisdom:</b> “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.” “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” “Make hay while the sun shines.” “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”		

## Other Notable Features

### *Resource Book*



To provide an overview of the program’s philosophical and historical underpinnings, details on how to implement the program, and an extensive resource guide (bibliography) to quality children’s literature organized by virtue, Dr. Mary Beth Klee published a resource book. It is a great resource on the program’s foundations and its traditional implementation. The book can be ordered from IngramSpark, a print-on-demand publisher at the following link or using the QR Code:

[Purchase a Copy of the Core Virtues Book](#)



### [Core Book Lists for Monthly and Yearly Cycles of Virtues](#)

*Core Virtues* provided ample stories to illustrate the monthly virtues for students (many of which continue on the updated website!). To support schools that were just beginning *Core Virtues*, a “fallback” list of books was provided to narrow the search to a few good options for each year.

### *Monthly Heroes or “Lives to Learn From”*

Each month, a new “hero or heroine” was featured that correlated to the virtue of the month. These people were men and women from whom we could learn, as they tirelessly pursued excellence in their own lives and helped improve the lives of others. Books about the hero or heroine were recommended to provide further opportunities to inspire virtues in children. Although no longer tied to a specific monthly virtue, highlighting “lives of virtues” and books about or associated with them remains an important component of the updated program—and many of the heroes from the former site and biographies live on at the new site!

### *Holidays*

To further enliven the morning gathering and bring deeper rhythms of the year into kids’ hearts, books related to yearly national holidays, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and MLK Jr. Day, were recommended. While the new website does not explicitly tie books to national holidays, many of the books from this section that relate to the updated virtue framework and the lives of virtue highlighted remain.

### *Schools of Faith and Saint of the Month*

Historically, virtue-based character education is rooted in the ancient Greek philosophical tradition, and although the *Core Virtues* program was and remains non-sectarian, there is much wisdom and virtue found in religion. To provide further guidance in literature, the traditional program included stories that supported faith-based schools, including providing a “Saint of the Month” for Catholic schools. The updated program especially focuses on the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and stories associated with them.

### *Poetry*

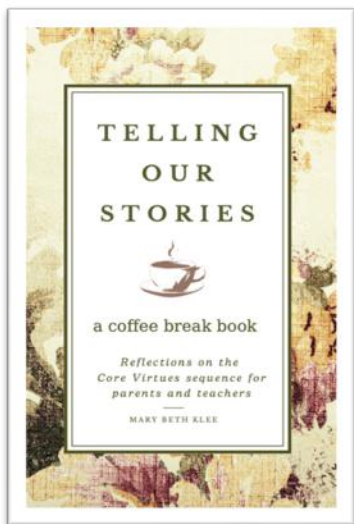
Classic poems that celebrated the monthly virtues were an important part of Core Virtues and remain so within the updated framework. “You will never be alone with a poet in your pocket,” John Adams told his son John Quincy as the young man set off to Russia in 1781. If the pedagogical practice of the period was any measure, fourteen-year-old John Quincy probably had far more poems in his head than in his pocket—poetry memorization was

central to a child’s education, and for good reason. Poems committed to memory become a kind of “larder”, as literary critic Brad Leithauser puts it, “laid up against the hungers of an extended period of solitude.” They can inspire and sustain us in moments of darkness or isolation. They train the ear to the quality language, cadence, and rhythm that, in Shelley’s words, “lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world.” They are a source of wonder. The classic poems featured in the traditional and the new iteration of *Core Virtues* carry on this long and fruitful tradition—and when children learn them by heart, so will they.

### [Chapter Books](#), [Anthologies](#), & [Parent Teacher Bibliography](#)

In the spirit of providing as many resources as possible, the old website offered virtue-filled chapter books and anthologies, as well as books for parents and teachers wanting to learn more about character education. Core Virtues has always been and will remain a treasure trove of great books for moral formation! By clicking the hyperlinks, the Excel sheets for each list of titles can be downloaded.

### *“Telling Our Stories” Blog & Book*



The traditional Core Virtues program included a blog called “Telling Our Stories” that brought the monthly virtues to life beyond the classroom. Each post highlighted the chosen virtue of the month, connecting it to current events, real-life examples, or further literary explorations that demonstrated the virtue in action. By bridging timeless principles with contemporary moments, the blog helped educators and parents see how these virtues continue to shape human experience and inform our responses to the world around us. The enduring value of these reflections was recognized in 2024 when

the blog posts were compiled into a coffee table book, preserving these stories and insights for continued inspiration and reflection.

Telling Our Stories can be ordered from IngramSpark, a print-on-demand publisher, at the following link or using the QR Code:

[Purchase a Copy of the Telling Our Stories Book](#)



### 3-Year Cycle of Posters

The traditional Core Virtues program included a 3-year cycle of monthly posters, each featuring a virtue, a simple definition, and an illustration. Posters could be purchased as 11x17-inch prints. While the posters are no longer available for sale, you may [download a PDF file of all posters](#) and have them printed at your convenience.



## Conclusion

The Core Virtues program can still be implemented using this traditional framework, and the foundational principles outlined in this resource remain as vital as ever. However, we invite educators and parents to explore the enhanced program now available through Hillsdale College at [www.corevirtues.hillsdale.edu](http://www.corevirtues.hillsdale.edu). The updated framework organizes virtues around the cardinal virtues, connected secondary virtues, and the three theological virtues. This structure offers greater flexibility in instructing the young, allowing educators to move beyond a fixed yearly or monthly schedule. Instead, the program can be used either to connect organically with content, life skills, and virtues currently being taught in the classroom, or to address specific situations where students would benefit from cultivating their moral imaginations through story. Whether using the traditional implementation or the new framework, the mission remains the same: to build character one story at a time and to inspire children to fall in love with virtue through the power of great literature.