

The Canon of Great Books

ACCS Scholars Panel



Devin O'Donnell, Moderator
ACCS

Christopher Schlect, Ph.D.
New Saint Andrews College

Grant Horner, Ph.D.
The Master's University

David Diener, Ph.D.
Hillsdale College

What Educational Work do Books Perform?



Christopher Schlect, Ph.D.
New Saint Andrews College

Three Ways of Handling Books

mode of instruction	flourished when?	how wisdom transfers from book to reader	the role of texts
Charismatic	c. 950-1100	mimesis and enculturation	texts supply a teacher with material to embody
Scholastic	c. 1100-1450	dialectic analysis	texts contain timeless, universal ideas
Humanities	c. 1400-1500	mimesis and enculturation	texts carry the living voices of their authors, and the living memories of great examples

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Cultural Selection



Grant Horner, Ph.D.
The Master's University

THE
DEFENCE OF
Poetrie.

By Sir Phillip Sidney,
Knight.



LONDON

Printed for William Pinfenby.

1595.



Mr William Shakespe
COMEDIES
HISTORIES
AND
TRAGEDIES.

Printed according to the true Original Copies.

Unto which is added, SEVEN

PLAYS,

Never before Printed in Folio:

VIZ.

Amleth Prince of Tyre.

The London Prodigal.

The History of Thomas Lord

Cromwel.

Sir John Oldcastle Lord Cobham
The Puritan Widow.
A Yorkshire Tragedy.
The Tragedy of Locrine.

The Fourth Edition.

To the Reader:
It thou here seest put,
Shall appear cut;
and a strife
the Life.
Wit

The Practical and Particular Nature of the “Canon” Question



David Diener, Ph.D.
Hillsdale College

The Practical and Particular Nature of the “Canon” Question

Dr. David Diener

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3. Consider the demographics of your student body.
4. Don't discount the value of unique teacher preferences and qualifications.
5. Be aware of the unique parameters set by your scope and sequence.

“When evening has come, I return to my house and go into my study. At the door I take off my clothes of the day, covered with mud and mire, and I put on my regal and courtly garments; and decently reclothed, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received by them lovingly, I feed on the food that alone is mine and that I was born for. There I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for their actions; and they in their humanity reply to me. And for the space of four hours I feel no boredom, I forget every pain, I do not fear poverty, death does not frighten me. I deliver myself entirely to them.”

(Machiavelli, 1513 letter to Francesco Vettori.)

“I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension.”

(Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 84.)

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