

How to Use Some Charlotte Mason Methods Without Using the Full-on Charlotte Mason Approach

1. Start with Living Books

Find some good book lists that contain Classics (because they have stood the test of time), historical fiction, biographies, and autobiographies, and older Caldecott and Newbery winners..

This is what living books are according to **Simply Charlotte Mason**:

“Living books are usually written by one person who has a passion for the subject and writes in conversational or narrative style. The books pull you into the subject and involve your emotions, so it’s easy to remember the events and facts. Living books make the subject “come alive.” ”

Some good book lists are found at Read-Aloud Revival, a website for parents who like to read aloud to their children: Honey for a Child’s Heart by Gladys Hunt; Read for the Heart by Sarah Clarkson; Books Children Love by Elizabeth Wilson; and All Through the Ages by Christine Miller. The Sonlight catalog also lists wonderful books as readers and read-alouds that are grouped by grade level and periods of history.

Take your book list with you to the library. Or if you would rather have your own library, you can buy them. If you are studying a certain period in history, find books that have stories that take place during that time. If you are looking for a particular science topic, find a book about it. Or find a book that is told in narrative or story form that explains that topic. There are even living books for math and language. Just keep in mind the definition of living books, and you will find wonderful books that will captivate the interest of your children and yourself.

2. Add some narration.

As you are reading to your children or listening to an audiobook together, have one of them tell back what happened in the last chapter. This is narration, a telling back in one's own words.

I do this in a sneaky way by reading a chapter or two one day. Then the next time we pick up the book to read, I ask one of the children to get us back into the story by reminding us what happened last. This works out very well. The kids usually remember much more than I do. This shows that they were listening. It helps them to remember it even better. And it prepares us for the next part of the story. In the Charlotte Mason method, there are more rules, and you can have older children do written narrations, but I have found my little sneaky method to be natural, easy, and fun for my children.

3. Study Great Artists from the past and their works

There are many resources to help with this.

Erica at <http://Enrichmentstudies.com> has beautiful Fine Art pages with information about the artist and painting and an interesting fact written down below the picture. You can print them out and hang them around your house in a cheap frame or just using washi tape. Easy, right?

She also has resources for Great Composers, Scientists, Inventors, and Poets. If you subscribe to her email list, you get a free collection of Fine Art Pages by a certain artist each month.

Picture Study Portfolios are another great resource. They come with eight pictures by a particular artist on high-quality coated cardstock that is protected from fading (it is suggested to display one picture per week), some words from Charlotte Mason about how to do picture study, a plan for using it, artist biography, recommended reading list, leading thoughts, and more. You can find these at [SimplyCharlotteMason.com](https://simplycharlottesmason.com/store/picture-study-portfolios) at <https://simplycharlottesmason.com/store/picture-study-portfolios>.

There are many books at the library about the Great Artists. Some of my favorites are the ones by Mike Venezia. A wonderful story about a little girl who admired Monet's work so much that she visited his garden is called "Linnea in Monet's Garden". There are many non-fiction books, but there are also fiction books that contain a surprising amount of true information about the selected artist.

4. Study Great Composers

You can use some of the composer resources from <http://Enrichmentstudies.com> at **<http://enrichmentstudies.com/composer-study>**. These are full of biographical information, links to podcasts, the music of the composer, ebooks, audios, movies, and videos.

Gena Mayo has some units put together for studying classical music and composers as well as many other styles of music at **<https://learn.musicinourhomeschool.com>**. This would be an excellent addition to your homeschool.

SQUILT (Super Quiet Listening Time) is another great resource for incorporating Composer Study in your homeschool. There is a cost for these lessons or a membership fee, but you can try some samples and check out the freebies to see if this is something you would like to use regularly.

Classical Kids has some great CD's that tell stories about the composers. You can find these at Christianbook.com The one about Vivaldi is one of my favorites.

Here is a nice composer study resource list from Cindy at **<https://OurJourneyWestward.com/composer/study/resources>**. She has put together titles of books, CD's, and links to webpages that give information about a particular composer.

5. Use the library like crazy!

There are so many Living Books! You just have to search for them as if you're searching for gold. Or jewels. Or whatever means a lot to you. You can find books about **History**, such as historical fiction by an author who is passionate about the subject. Or find well-written biographies or autobiographies.

You can find books about **Science** that cover a topic in an interesting, thorough, stimulating way that encourages further exploration and study. "Archimedes and the Door of Science" by Jeanne Bendick is a good one. You can even find books about scientists that did research and made a breakthrough that affected the world.

You can even find Living Books about **Math**. Some titles are: MathStart Readers by Stuart Murphy, books about Sir Cumference by Cindy Neuschwander, The Grapes of Math by Greg Tang, and Math Curse by Jon Scieszka.

<https://www.livingmath.net/> has a huge list of Living Math resources.

And, of course, you can study literature through Living Books. You should study Classics, because they have stood the test of time.

Have I already said that? Well, I think the Classics need to be remembered and read and discussed in our homes. If the reading seems too difficult, you can try abridged versions or listen to audiobooks.

We can even study Shakespeare in our homes. There are many options for accomplishing this. You can use a book called How to Teach Your Children Shakespeare by Ken Ludwig. Or you can read simple retellings by Charles and Mary Lamb or listen to them on Librivox. You can read Shakespeare plays using The Signet Classics or the Folger Shakespeare Library. Another book for younger children is "Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare for Children" by E. Nesbitt.

6. Nature Study

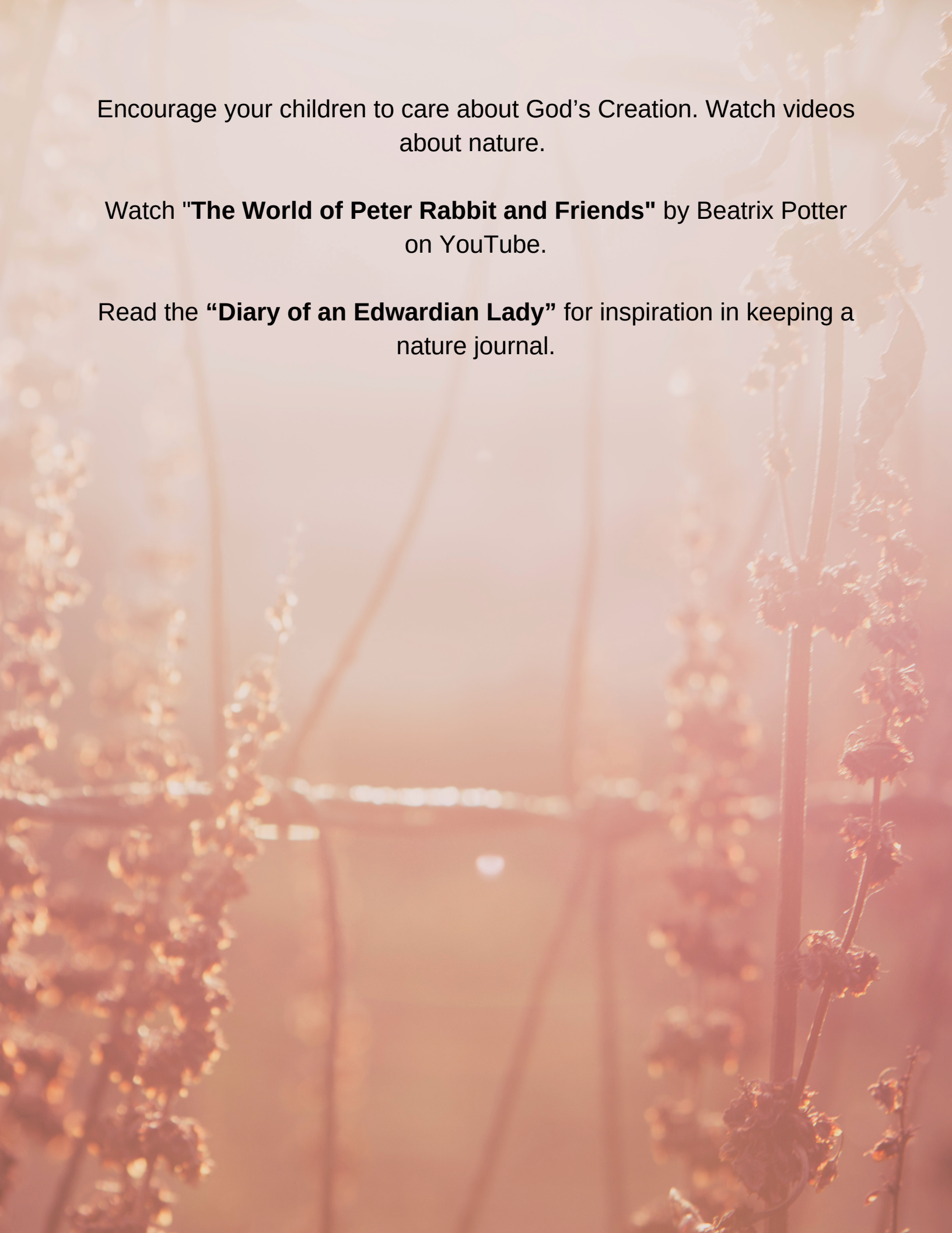
There are many ways to do nature study. It can be as simple as going to the neighborhood park and spotting the wildlife and plant life there. And you can take a nature notebook or sketch pad along and draw some of the things you see. Colored pencils are very easy to transport and easy to draw with. You can take photos of the things you see and then identify and draw them later.

There are several apps you can use to identify nature finds. **Flower Checker**, **Nature Gate**, **PlantSnapp**, and **iNaturalist** are some of them.

You can collect caterpillars and watch them grow and make a chrysalis and become a butterfly. That's pretty easy to do. You just need to obtain a host plant for the caterpillar and a caterpillar or two. Then you observe them every day to see how much they eat and how fast they grow. You make sure they always have plenty of leaves. You watch them make their chrysalis, wait a week or two, and then voila! You have a baby butterfly. I do these with Monarch caterpillars every year, so I always make sure to get fresh milkweed every spring.

There are so many things you can do to study nature. You can:

- Walk in the woods
- Do some Gardening, plant some seeds
- Visit a Garden center
- Go to a farm
- Find a pond to explore
- Go to a river, lake, or ocean
- Go to the zoo
- Go to a museum
- Collect tadpoles and watch them become frogs
- Study birds and bird calls
- Study the stars and planets and other aspects of astronomy
- Get a pet



Encourage your children to care about God's Creation. Watch videos about nature.

Watch "**The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends**" by Beatrix Potter on YouTube.

Read the "**Diary of an Edwardian Lady**" for inspiration in keeping a nature journal.

7. Copywork

Start doing **copywork**. Choose a sentence or paragraph or passage for your child to copy. They can choose their own as they get older. They will learn all of the subskills of language arts through copywork. They will practice reading, spelling, proper punctuation, proper sentence structure, proper writing formats, topic sentences, and indentation. When they're younger they are learning proper letter formation and spacing between words and letters.

They will learn about different writing styles. They will learn about different types of sentences. They will learn from great authors if you have them do copywork from living books that they are reading, or other great pieces of literature or historical documents or scripture. You can have them copy poetry and short verses, too. You should choose some prose style writing for their copywork, too, because that is the kind of writing they will use in their daily lives.

To sum it all up, take these additions and modifications to your curriculum in baby steps. Only add one new thing at a time. You can take them in the order I have listed them. Or you may feel more confident or excited about other areas, so you should start with what you feel would be easiest and best for your family.