

# Why Does Liberty Have Great Books Reading Lists?

Dr. Maureen Schaffer, parent and founder

*I* don't care what my child eats, just so long as he's eating!" How many times have we

heard this familiar statement uttered by a parent? Probably never. But change *eat* to *read*, and perhaps you've considered the thought yourself.

So why does Liberty require students to select books from approved Great Books lists for required "outside" reading?

First, consider that required outside reading is actually homework. And just as math homework problems are assigned for practicing particular concepts, outside reading is assigned for a specific purpose: guiding Liberty students to *mature literacy*.

According to Liberty's charter, "*Mature literacy develops as students become acquainted with a broad and rich body of knowledge and become familiar with many well-written, diverse and meaningful works of literature.*" To support this goal, grade-level Great Books reading lists have been developed by our faculty and Academic Advisory Committee and approved by the Board.

The books on these lists were selected with consideration to exposing children to literature they might not otherwise encounter. The books are intended to nudge students toward higher levels, not just in matters of syntax and vocabulary, but also in sophistication of plot, character development, conflict and resolution, and the sustained reading of lengthy works rather than simply excerpts.

Of course, students can and should read additional books of their own choosing over and above the required reading homework. Parents are encouraged to steer their children toward selections which support the school's mission. For more information on Liberty's approach to literacy, see Policy **7.13 Reading and Literacy** and Policy **7.14 Literature Acquisition**.