

## **Our Philosophy of Literature: How and why has TCA chosen the literature read by students?**

The philosophy guiding the study of literature at The Classical Academy centers on a love of letters and the pursuit of truth. Without this focus, such a study devolves into a fruitless meandering through popular works and fails in both the pursuit of an enduring love and appreciation for literature and the pursuit of objective truth. A central presupposition behind this study is the belief that the author's intent, the social/historical context, the text itself, and the reaction of readers throughout the ages all contribute to meaning. It is by focusing on these things, and not by employing modern criticism that often muddle meaning instead of revealing it, that truth is found. As may be surmised from the name of our school, The Classical Academy employs an intentional bias toward older texts, preferring those that have stood the test of time and have proven to be of enduring value. These works stem primarily from the Western Civilization tradition, paying particular focus to the works of considerable length and scope as found in epic poetry and novels, but without ignoring the important shorter prose pieces and poetry.

Great literature opens many doors, but three of the most important are the acquisition of empathy, the practice of discernment, and the development of morals. Psychologists and career counsellors have written that empathy is the most important skill a person will ever need to succeed. Empathy is what motivates us to be kind, and it can be developed through reading and identifying with characters, particularly characters who struggle. Literature also allows readers to see that characters' choices have consequences, and students can discuss and experience the results of poor choices in a safe environment, exploring "unsafe" ideas in a "safe place." Finally, good literature also exposes students to the ideas of moral absolutes, helping students recognize relativism, and enabling them to construct a defense of their beliefs.