

Biblical Worldview Scope for *Making Connections in Literature* (4th Ed.)

This document is our answer to the question “What must a student understand and value in order to comprehend eighth-grade literature from a biblical worldview?” What follows is a list of the themes that we believe are essential for eighth-grade students to understand and internalize. We anticipate that early in the course students will be required to recall and explain these themes. However, as these themes recur, require students to evaluate ideas within these themes, formulate a Christian understanding of them, and apply what they have learned about these themes to real-life situations. We hope to achieve high levels of internalization whenever students are required to apply their learning.

Maturity: How do I become who I should be?

Creation: The Bible is concerned not only with what a person does but also with who he is. This truth is why the Bible emphasizes the heart (a word the Bible uses to refer to the entire inner person). The goal is to become the kind of person who, when facing a situation of pressure, does right almost without thinking. He has been so transformed on the inside that doing right has become second nature to him. This state requires the grace and working of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16–25), as well as an understanding of God’s Word (Ps. 119:1–16).

Fall: Students have likely been affected by our culture’s emphasis on authenticity. In our culture, this trait often refers to simply being one’s self rather than seeking to be formed into who one ought to be. Students should be able to explain that simply being one’s self is equivalent to simply being a sinner.

Legalism is a fallen alternative to the cult of authenticity. Students should be able to explain that mere external obedience to rules (even God’s rules) without inner transformation falls short of God’s purpose of redemption. Students should evaluate characters and literature selections as to whether they reflect the biblical emphasis on developing virtue or, instead, the cults of authenticity or legalism.

Redemption: Students should be able to internalize the importance of character formation and to personally identify with examples of growth in the selections they read. They should be able to explain how they will seek to develop godly character in their own lives.

Examples of Implementation:

The David and Goliath narrative (1 Sam. 17:1–58) allows students to identify how a young person can be more mature than his elders if his character and motivations have been shaped by truth about God.

“The Story-Teller” prompts students to evaluate the selection’s moral tone, as well as characters representing both the authenticity cult and legalism.

“The Great Rat Hunt” encourages students to reflect on their own personal experiences in light of Scripture and the lessons for growth in maturity that they contain.

Wisdom: What is the best course of action?

Creation: “Wisdom is . . . the posture of fearing the Lord, as well as the skill of living in God’s created but fallen world in a way that yields justice, peace, and flourishing.”¹ Students should be able to explain that wisdom is the skill of knowing the right thing to do or say in the varied situations of life—and of knowing how to do or say it well. Students should be able to explain how a person becomes wise. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of

¹ Jonathan Leeman, *How the Nations Rage: Rethinking Faith and Politics in a Divided Age* (Nashville: Nelson, 2018), 84.

wisdom” (Prov. 9:10), but the children of this world are sometimes wiser in their generation than the children of light (Luke 16:8). Students can learn wisdom from selections written by unbelievers, but they need to understand that they must filter what they learn through the corrective lenses of Scripture.

Fall: The fool is the opposite of the wise man. A fool is a person who fails to succeed because he does not conform his life to the way God made the world to work. Students should evaluate the actions of characters and distinguish wisdom from foolishness. They should be able to identify why a certain course of action was foolish and identify a wiser choice. They should be able to distinguish between actions that bring temporary success with those that bring lasting success (as defined by Scripture). Students should also be able to evaluate whether a selection exhibits wisdom or folly overall. Is the selection teaching wisdom, or is it training undiscerning readers to become foolish?

Redemption: Studying the selections in this book will help students grow in wisdom as they are trained to read literature in light of Scripture and truth about God and His world revealed in creation. Students should also be able to articulate the wisdom they have gained and describe how they can apply it to their lives. They should internalize the importance of fearing God and should value learning from wise parents and teachers.

Examples of Implementation:

“The Wise Old Woman” reinforces showing respect for the wisdom of older, wiser people while opposing the counsel of foolish rulers.

The excerpts from Amal Unbound help students learn to self-assess in light of Scripture in order to correct character flaws and develop prudence, the ability to make the best choices in hard situations.

The excerpt from The Lost Princess provides an opportunity for students to evaluate the foolish protagonist and learn from her growth in wisdom.

Generosity: What does it mean to be generous?

Creation: To be generous is to give more of something desirable, such as kindness or financial help, than what is expected. This virtue is rooted in the character of God, who has lavished us with goodness beyond what we could expect or deserve through His creation of the world and redemption of believers. In these literature selections, students should be able to identify characters who go above and beyond in showing kindness or providing for the needs of others.

Fall: Miserliness is the inverse of generosity. This trait is a manifestation of the Fall in that it places love of self over love of others. Students should evaluate characters who fail to be generous and should be able to explain why their actions fall short of biblical expectations.

Redemption: Students should be able to formulate alternative courses of action for characters who fail to show generosity. They should apply the concept of generosity to their own lives, showing the ability to internalize this virtue.

Examples of Implementation:

A Christmas Carol: Scrooge and Marley allows students to analyze how the extension of grace leads to the transformation of Scrooge’s character. They will also evaluate how this plot secularizes the Christian storyline of Creation, Fall, Redemption.

Selections from the book of Proverbs demonstrate that a generous person honors God by showing love to the poor. Students relate this understanding to an excerpt from Little Women.

Freedom: What does it mean to be free?

Creation: People often think of liberty as the ability to do whatever they desire, but students should be able to explain that, in a biblical worldview, freedom operates within God-ordained constraints. Students should be able to explain that biblical freedom is “a power to do what we ought.”² Therefore, true freedom empowers people to love and obey God, to

² Thomas Manton, “Sermon Upon Luke 19:14,” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 18 (London: Nisbet, 1874), 110.

love others and do good to them (Matt. 22:39), and to live according to what is true (John 8:32; Rom. 6–8; Gal. 3–5). Students should identify literature selections in which this understanding of freedom is at work for the author and the characters.

Fall: Students should be able to identify instances when people or characters have been wrongly deprived of freedom, tyrannized, or oppressed. They should be able to explain why enslaving someone, committing violence based on race or political viewpoint, or establishing a totalitarian form of government is wrong.

As noted above, Christians believe that true freedom exists when it has the goal of glorifying God and showing love to others. Students should identify instances when authors or their characters have replaced that goal with another, such as achieving economic equality for all citizens or promoting the supremacy of a national or ethnic heritage. Any other ultimate goal is idolatrous, and students should evaluate the negative effects of such views.

In light of the biblical view of freedom outlined above, students should also critique the common tendency to view freedom as the absence of all constraints.

Redemption: Students should be able to articulate a biblical view of freedom in their own words, in addition to formulating biblical alternatives to selections that have an unbiblical view of freedom. They should also be able to create their own written responses that exhibit a biblical view of freedom.

Examples of Implementation:

The excerpts from *Red Scarf Girl* demonstrate that revolutions to free people from oppression often result in greater oppression. Students reflect on how they would respond if tyranny became a reality in their lives.

The *Through My Eyes* excerpts illustrate how relying on God enables a person to avoid bitterness when facing oppression. Students consider how *Ruby Bridges* provides an example for addressing racial injustice.

Verses from Galatians 5 help students to develop a biblical perspective of freedom.

Nature: How do I take time to reflect on the world God made?

Creation: God created a world that is beautiful as well as functional. A great deal of the glory of God is displayed in the varied beauties of the world God made. Students should be able to explain how good literature, especially poetry, helps people see and appreciate all God’s creation (cf. Gen. 2:23; Ps. 104). Students should also recognize that God has commissioned humans with a stewardship over creation.

Fall: Students should evaluate fallen ways of thinking about nature. These include the idea that spending time in nature is sufficient to make us better people (as if humans’ deepest problems were not in their hearts). They also include the naturalistic view of the world, which excludes a place for God in understanding and appreciating the creation. Students should also identify the effects of the Fall on creation.

Redemption: Through the study of the selections in this unit, students should grow in their appreciation for God’s creation and should be able to explain how this appreciation will affect their everyday worship of God. This attitude should lead students to consider how Christians can wisely steward what God has entrusted to their care. Students should also formulate how Christians can value and benefit from technology while not placing their faith in it.

Examples of Implementation:

Poetry such as Psalm 104, “A Hillside Thaw,” and “Simile: Willow and Ginkgo” evokes appreciation for God’s creation.

Excerpts from *Out of the Dust* provide an example of how human mismanagement of creation can have disastrous results.

The story “Hallucination” allows students to evaluate the author’s worldview. Students learn that this worldview places faith in technology rather than in God.