

OUR LADY OF VICTORY SCHOOL

CATHOLIC HEROES SERIES - GRADES 9-12

LITERATURE LESSON PLANS 2009©

The world that surrounds present-day Catholics is one which evaluates everything according to a universal standard of comfort, pleasure, and personal gratification. If an action, an object, another human being even, gives satisfaction to a person, then he is granted license to judge that action, object, or fellow man, as good. With such subjectivism as their only guiding rule, men, with their wounded natures always tending towards indulgence, cannot help but become soft, indolent and lax, both physically and morally. Catholics, regarded merely as humans alive on this earth, are not aliens to their times. They are immersed in a largely unhealthy, cloying environment, and it is easy for them to fall prey to its influence, catching the common spiritual disease of complacency and of indifference. Catholics as Catholics, however, are summoned to a supernatural—what might well be called a superhuman, a heroic—path. Therefore, they must be taught a cure for the plague afflicting the modern world, so that they may both remedy it in themselves and go forth to channel the medicine of grace.

How then to instruct the Catholic youth so that he or she may pursue the right vocation? All human beings learn best not by abstract admonitions, but rather by the concrete and stirring example of lives beautifully lived for the glory of God. The Catholic Church is a church built upon such lives and, moreover, as St. Justin Martyr declared, a church willing to embrace and incorporate whatever is true and noble—and thus sprung from God—in the thought and art of all men, whether or not they be graced with direct knowledge of its doctrines. Parents and teachers, therefore, have only to turn to the realms of literature and history, as illuminated by Christ, in order to present to their children the vivid stories and characters from which may be drawn guiding principles for their moral development and adult lives as Catholics.

With this in mind, Our Lady of Victory School has now introduced (for the more historically-minded high school student) a literature curriculum which focuses on the grandest figures of Catholic history. These men and women down the ages—from the almost legendary Cid of Spain to the heartbreakingly chivalrous last emperor of Austria—have been inspired to their great deeds solely by their love of God and devotion to the Faith. They knew the cure for the selfishness and self-indulgence that is always the counsel of the three great enemies of the soul: the world, the flesh and the devil. Its name is *charity*: such charity as can inflame the heart and wing the spirit towards heaven; such charity as finds its truest expression in following the example of Christ, sacrificing His life solely for love of every soul upon the earth. Lords and knights and kings all, the figures who are presented to the student in the new Catholic Heroes program saw that the only gift which they could make to repay fittingly the One whose divine self was poured out for their sake was the reciprocal sacrifice of themselves for Him, for His glory, for the establishment of His faith among men, the furtherance of His reign in Christendom. Their vision is so powerful that it comes undimmed to those who read their stories, still capable of healing and transforming souls young and old, the better to prepare them for their present struggle for salvation.

The lessons plans included with the curriculum are intended to provoke thought in the young persons who choose to study the examples of the Catholic heroes in the books in question. Students are encouraged to consider the historical figures and episodes with a mind to applying the principles thus garnered to the challenges of modern living. They have the option, in some cases, of writing further stories about the characters so as to demonstrate thereby their grasp of the virtues and faith necessitated by difficult situations. They are allowed, also, to choose and write about a favorite person or event in the hopes that, by thus achieving a greater intimacy with so inspiring an object of contemplation, their new knowledge may become influential in directing their lives. This is the purpose of education, after all: to introduce children to the truly human, which is, after all, only the truly Catholic and heroic life.

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SUBSTITUTE LITERATURE COURSE
ASSIGNMENTS: - WEEKS 1 – 5

Student's name: _____
Grade Level: 9 10 11 12 (circle one)

EL CID: GOD'S OWN CHAMPION by James Fitzhenry

Weeks 1 – 4: Have the student read the entire book and remind them to take notes of important names, events and dates to aid them when writing their essay.

Week 5 - Essay

Compose an essay on Fitzhenry's El Cid. Options for the essay:

1. In the introduction to the book, Fitzhenry quotes the words of Our Lord to St. Bridget to indicate that the knight is called to the same holiness and heroism that is the vocation of the monk. The epilogue also indicates that Rodrigo Diaz, El Cid, in all likelihood followed his chivalrous calling to sanctity. Write an essay explaining whether or not you think that the Cid is truly a 'saint' or holy man of God. Please support your opinion with plenty of examples from the Cid's life, virtues and actions as presented in the book – or
2. In his epilogue, Fitzhenry writes that "the enemies that the Cid fought are the same that we fight today—the world, the flesh and the devil. The real battle lies in conquering ourselves, and seeking to do God's will in all things, no matter to what vocation we are called." Throughout the book, also, he compares the modern age unfavorably with the medieval period of greater faith and virtue. Explain what virtues particularly characterized the Cid in his own time, and then illustrate how they may be employed nowadays to help persons wage their spiritual war and perhaps remedy the unhealthy spirit of the modern age – or
3. Choose your favorite episode from the book—whether from the Cid's own life or from other historical events recorded in the narrative, e.g., Charles Martel's defense of France or Leonidas' defense of Greece—and write an essay describing its circumstances as well as illustrating what heroism and virtue it required of the men and women involved in it.

This essay is to be no less than 500 words typed (double-spaced) and have a cover page. Carefully proofread your report – points will be taken off for errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as for inadequate content.

[Send **ungraded** essay to school. This will count for half the 1st Quarter test grade.]

Grade _____

Week 5 Time _____

For use by OLVS tutor only:

Week 5

Assignments: _____

Weekly Grade: _____