

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING APPLIED TO MASONIC EDUCATION

by

R.W. Bro. G.J. Patterson

G.L. Canada in Ont.

(The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the Author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Victoria Lodge of Education and Research.)

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Masons are urged to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge. This statement really places the responsibility on the newly initiated brother to become a learner, a student of Masonry. All brethren therefore, should help the new member to become a learner and assist him in his researches.

The word education is derived from "e ducto" to lead out. Can we think of Masonic Education as the leading out from the darkness of ignorance into the light of Truth? This does not in any way suggest coercion which results in little learning. Lecturing to a passive audience or to a resistant audience will have little success.

Those interested in Masonic Education should therefore know something of the laws of learning.

1. There must be motivation. Interest must be awakened in the student. This is not difficult as most candidates are curious. This is the stage when a challenge ought to be made.
2. There must be a problem; e.g. How is it done? Why is it done at this time and in this place? What is the significance of the symbol?
3. There must be participation or student activity. Students learn by doing. Research is followed by the selection and organization of facts. This in turn will be followed by certain judgments, conclusions and, finally, by communication or reporting.
4. There should be reinforcement of the knowledge or skills by repetition. This would apply particularly to the ritual or to the floor work.
5. There should be planning. Organization and timing are important. Fatigue will result in little or incomplete learning. Comparatively few faces at one time can be learned well.

The subject matter for study will include History, Symbolism and Literature. Literature may be considered as the writing about Masonry or the ritual itself. The ritual contains many beautiful similes, metaphors and allegories which are worthy of careful study.

Resource material would include the Book of Constitution, the History of Grand Lodge, the Manual, Grand Lodge Proceedings, Fraternal Correspondence, the V.O.T.S.L and the Masonic Library.

In the light of the above let us consider Symbolism as a subject for study. Usually Masons are interested in symbolism. Symbols are meant to conceal as well as to reveal. It should be understood that symbols may be interpreted in different ways according to the individuals ability to think abstractly and to

use his imagination.

It should be noted, also, that there are said to be five different levels of thought; viz. word, concept, comprehension, interpretation and critical thinking. Brethren should be encouraged to think on the higher levels of the thought processes.

"Every character, mark or figure has a moral tendency and serves to inculcate the practice of virtue." Many characters and symbols are explained in the ritual but many are not.

Why not interest a young Mason by challenging him to discover the meaning, or to give his own interpretation of a symbol, and then tell the brethren in the Lodge what he has discovered?

He must organize his material, use his imagination and communicate his conclusions to others. This involves most of the principles of learning which were enumerated above.

The following is a list of unexplained characters, figures and emblems that may stimulate a Mason's interest and research, if he is assigned to the task::

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| Sprig of Acacia | first regular step | dove |
| Tassels | 15" - 12" - 9" | cornucopia |
| ashlar | Theorem of Pythagoras | trowel |
| cable | tassels on apron | Ecclesiastes 12 |
| blindfold | ribbon apron | morning star |
| slipper | flap on apron | to a young Mason or to a Junior Officer. |

He reports at the next regular meeting, taking 3 or 4 minutes only. This has been done. It works successfully.

Two Examples

Sprig of Acacia --3rd degree - to mark the spot - a guide post - for remembrance - legend of Isis and Osiris -(Manual p. 137-8) - immortality - Masonic funeral service - evergreen in memory - symbolic of immortality.

Four tassels - pendent to the four corners of the L. - in reality hanging from the ceiling - covering is a celestial canopy, even the heavens - therefore they are heavenly characteristics - must reach up to acquire - not easily attained -struggle strengthens character - cannot attain perfection but a "man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a Heaven for?"

Finally brethren, remember; Motivation, Problem, Research, Reinforcement, Organization, Recapitulation, Participation, Communication.