CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Passages from the Life of a Philosopher

Charles Babbage · *1864 · Babbage's English*

From my earliest years I had a great desire to inquire into the causes of all those little things and events which astonish the childish mind. They brought me up in the Protestant form of the Christian faith. My excellent mother taught me the usual forms of my daily and nightly prayer. Charles Babbage, 1864, PG #57532. For grades 11–12. Chapter I is comic about ancestors; childhood follows. Quote Babbage, not only the jesting headings. The book is long; one map cannot teach it all.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How should a school read Babbage's Passages as he turns from a comic first chapter on ancestors to the childhood itself—a great desire to inquire into the causes of little things, and a mother who taught him his daily and nightly prayer?

"From my earliest years I had a great desire to inquire into the causes of all those little things and events which astonish the childish mind. At a"

Chapter II, Childhood

Chapter I is a comic inquiry into ancestors, with a motto from Salmagundi; quote it as jest if you teach it, but do not take it as the childhood. Chapter II, Childhood, is where he says: from my earliest years I had a great desire to inquire into the causes of all those little things and events which astonish the childish mind. At a later period he commenced the still more important inquiry into those laws of thought, and those aids which assist the human mind in passing from received knowledge to knowledge then unknown. They brought him up in the Protestant form of the Christian faith; his excellent mother taught him the usual forms of his daily and nightly prayer, without bigotry or intolerance. Teach that, for grades 11–12. The 1864 book, Project Gutenberg #57532, is long, and will later come to calculating engines; one map cannot teach it all. Quote Babbage, not only the comic headings.

KEY CHARACTERS

Charles Babbage
Who, from earliest years, desired to inquire into causes, and who writes these passages in 1864

His excellent mother
Who taught him the usual forms of daily and nightly prayer, without bigotry

His father
Named with the mother as having no mixture of bigotry and intolerance

HOW TO BEGIN THESE PASSAGES

> *"From my earliest years I had a great desire to inquire into the causes of all those little things and events which astonish the childish mind. At a"*
> Chapter II

> *"My excellent mother taught me the usual forms of my daily and nightly prayer"*
> Chapter II

Grades 11–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A Desire to Inquire

CHAPTER II, CHILDHOOD

From my earliest years I had a great desire to inquire into the causes of all those little things and events which astonish the childish mind. The philosopher's life begins as a child's questions.

- Keep "little things and events which astonish the childish mind."
- 11–12.
- This is Chapter II, not the comic Chapter I.
- Quote Babbage.

> *"From my earliest years I had a great desire to inquire into the causes of all those little things and events which astonish the childish mind. At a"*
> Chapter II, Childhood

02

From Received Knowledge to the Unknown

CHAPTER II, CHILDHOOD

At a later period he commenced the still more important inquiry into those laws of thought and those aids which assist the human mind in passing from received knowledge to that other knowledge then unknown to our race. The childhood already looks toward a life's work.

- Keep "laws of thought" and "received knowledge."
- 11–12.
- The later engines belong to later chapters.
- Quote this English.

> *"At a later period I commenced the still more important inquiry into those laws of thought and those aids which assist the human mind in passing from received knowledge to that other knowledge then unknown to our race. I"*
> Chapter II, Childhood

03

The Protestant Form of the Faith

CHAPTER II, CHILDHOOD

They brought me up in the Protestant form of the Christian faith. The household's religion is named, plainly.

- Keep "Protestant form of the Christian faith."
- 11–12.
- Do not skip this for the later machines only.
- Quote Babbage.

> *"They brought me up in the Protestant form of the Christian faith. My"*
> Chapter II, Childhood

04

A Mother, and Daily Prayer

CHAPTER II, CHILDHOOD

My excellent mother taught me the usual forms of my daily and nightly prayer; and neither in my father nor my mother was there any mixture of bigotry and intolerance. The first school is a household at prayer.

- Keep "excellent mother," "daily and nightly prayer," and the refusal of bigotry.
- 11–12.
- A particular family, not a later slogan only.
- Quote this English.

> *"My excellent mother taught me the usual forms of my daily and nightly prayer"*
> Chapter II, Childhood

05

The 1864 Passages, after a Comic Chapter I

THE EDITION

Project Gutenberg #57532 is Passages from the Life of a Philosopher, 1864. Chapter I jests about ancestors; Chapter II is childhood. Quote Babbage, not only the jesting headings, and do not quote the later page-number braces as if they were his words. For grades 11–12. The book is long; later chapters come to calculating engines. One map cannot teach it all.

- Name 1864.
- Start with the desire to inquire, and the mother's prayer, not only with the engines.
- Not a later film of a computer.
- A philosopher's passages, in his English.

> *"From my earliest years I had a great desire to inquire into the causes of all those little things and events which astonish the childish mind. At a"*
> Chapter II, Childhood

A child's desire to inquire | Laws of thought, later | A mother's daily prayer | A faith without bigotry | A long book of passages

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. Chapter I is comic about ancestors; the childhood proper is Chapter II: a desire to inquire into the causes of little things that astonish the childish mind.
2. They brought him up in the Protestant form of the Christian faith; his mother taught him daily and nightly prayer, without bigotry.
3. The 1864 book, PG #57532, for grades 11–12, is long. Later chapters come to calculating engines; one map cannot teach it all.
4. Quote Babbage, not only the jesting headings, and not the page-number braces in the file.

Quotations are verbatim from the Babbage's English, Project Gutenberg #57532, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/passages-from-the-life-of-a-philosopher/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.