

# Introduction

## How to Use this Book

*All Through the Ages* is a glorified list of books, commonly available from public libraries and homeschool catalogs, which are useful for learning history using literature—real books—rather than textbooks. The heart of *All Through the Ages* is the compilation of suggested books from the following sources. The original source is indicated after each book entry by a letter. The sources and letters are:

Answers in Genesis	AG
Beautiful Feet Books	BF
Best Historical Novels and Tales	BH
Bethlehem Books	BB
Bluestocking Press	BP
Books Children Love	B
Conservative Book Club	CB
Dover Publications	D
History of Nations	HN
Honey for a Child's Heart	H
Elijah Company	E
Great Books of the Christian Tradition	C
Great Books of Western Civilization	W
Greenleaf Press	G
Lamplighter Publishing	LL
Landmark Books	L
Let the Authors Speak	A
Newbery Books	N
Newbery Honor Books	NH
Nobel Prize in Literature	NP
Pulitzer Prize Winner	P
Robinson Curriculum	R
Sonlight Curriculum	S
Story of Mankind	SM
Veritas Press	VP
Vision Forum	VF

Entries that do not have a letter are books that I have discovered myself, or that others have recommended to me. Obviously, some books will be on more than one list. I have generally credited the first list I found them on. Each section (historical era or geographical region) is subdivided by reading level: 1-3 for beginning or easy readers, corresponding to 1st through 3rd grades; 4-6 for fluent readers, corresponding to 4th through 6th grades; 7-9 for maturing readers, corresponding to 7th through 9th grades; and 10-12 for college-bound readers, corresponding to 10th through 12th grades.

The reading levels are meant to indicate independent reading ability only. Kindergartners through high schoolers may enjoy listening to *Little House on the Prairie* read outloud, and junior highers and high schoolers may enjoy reading it, although it is listed at a 4-6 reading level. That is because it is at the fluent reading stage that most children can read and understand it for themselves for the first time. Reading levels are subjective. One child may be in 3rd grade, but reading at a 6th grade level, while another child in 3rd grade may be reading at a 1st grade level. The reading levels are guidelines only, and not necessarily meant as rigid divisions.

Maturing readers (7-9) generally mean more advanced vocabulary and/or complex situations than elementary readers are usually comfortable with. College-bound readers (10-12) generally mean more advanced vocabulary, or technical or detailed writing, or complex or challenging life situations, or more

disturbing or challenging themes. Usually just a more mature understanding of universal themes is required to make the book worth reading. By no means do all of the 10-12 books have disturbing themes! Most of them don't. In the few that do, it may mean some violence, or it may mean some depiction of the human condition in its fallen state. I have deliberately put all of the Great Books of Western Civilization in the 10-12 group, even though some are suitable for younger children, because the Great Books usually deal with questions such as forms of government, family life, good vs. evil, the purpose or origin of man, the existence of God, or other themes that we may not want our younger children wrestling with. Others of us may want our older children exposed to the literature that has shaped our civilization, even if it raises questions about some things we take for granted.

The *All Through the Ages* book lists are arranged into two main sections. The book lists in the first section are arranged by chronology, and they are subdivided by time periods of history, such as ***Ancient Egypt*** or ***The Middle Ages***. Within each time period, the books are further subdivided by the four reading levels. The books in each reading level are then arranged under these headings: ***Overview of the era***, ***Specific events***, ***Biographies***, ***Historical fiction***, ***Literature***, and ***Culture***. Those books that provide an overview of the whole era under question are listed under ***Overview of the era***. Those books dealing with specific events or themes of that era are listed under ***Specific events***. Those books that are biographies of important persons to that era are listed under ***Biographies***. Those books that are considered historical fiction—even if that historical fiction contains real historical events and real historical persons—are listed under ***Historical fiction***. Those books that either retell the literature of the people (as mythology does with ancient civilizations) or are the literature produced by the writers living during that era, are listed under ***Literature***. Those books that speak to a certain aspect of the culture of an era—its food, dress, art, or other cultural aspects—are listed under ***Culture***. If one of these subheadings is missing from a reading level, it means that I was not able to find any books dealing with that particular theme.

The Chronological section follows the rise of Western Civilization. In the later centuries, it follows the rise of the American nation, beginning with ***New World Colonization***. Included at the end of each era from ***New World Colonization*** to the Modern Era is a section on World Events, also subdivided by reading level. World Events lists books having to do with major events that took place in the greater world at the same time period as that era of American History. Therefore world history from the 17th century does not have to be abandoned.

Not all the books listed for each era are necessary for an accurate or complete picture of the period. But I have included as many really good books that I could find, because you never know what will fire a child's imagination, or where they will become fascinated with something that they really want to pursue in depth.

The second major section of *All Through the Ages* is the Geographical section. The book lists in this section are divided by geographical regions, cultures, or countries, like ***Africa*** or ***Polynesia***. As in the Chronological section, each region is subdivided by reading levels, and each reading level is subheaded with ***Overview of the region***, ***Specific events***, ***Biography***, ***Historical fiction***, ***Literature***, and ***Culture***; only this time the history under question is the history of that region, from ancient times to modern, rather than the history of an era. Books listed in the Chronological section are usually listed in the Geographical section also. In addition, books that do not have to do with the rise of Western Civilization, but that do have to do with the history or culture of a particular place may be listed only in the Geographical section.

I have also included, in the Chronological section, especially concerning ancient history, essays regarding different aspects of that era's history. These essays contain information and ideas which we have come to understand through studying the whole scope of Western and Biblical history over the course of the past decade; but which, because of their nature, are difficult to find articulated in any one book on the subject. Examples include the rise of paganism from Nimrod's Babylonia or the difficulties of pinning down an exact chronology for Ancient Egypt. I have included this information because most of us homeschool moms have received a secular, public school education ourselves, deficient in history, if my experience is any measure. We are starting with our own children behind the starting line, and must

overcome the deficiencies of our own educations in order to give something better to our children. The information in these essays is designed to help us get to the starting line.

Besides the Chronological and Geographical sections, there are three other shorter sections of book lists. The first is the History of Science and Mathematics, also subdivided by reading levels. The second is the History of the Arts, also subdivided by reading levels. The third is the lists of Great Books of Western Civilization and the Christian Tradition. These are divided into the History of the Great Discussion, the History of Literature, the History of Poetry, and the History of Drama. The Great Books are also included in the main Chronological and Geographical lists, but they are relisted here for those that want a list of just the Great Books. The Great Books are listed in order by chronological era, and are not subdivided by reading level, as these books are mostly for college-bound and adult readers. However, many of them are timeless and ageless. Each parent should use his judgment as to how and when to incorporate any of these in the curriculum. In our family, the children listen to or read the Bible, the greatest of great books, from babyhood, and then they generally begin the other Great Books in junior and senior high.

Lastly is the index. Every book found in *All Through the Ages* is listed in the index alphabetically by title and author, along with the section and reading level where the book can be found.

I have really tried to include what Charlotte Mason would call “living books,” and have tried to avoid “twaddle” wherever possible. Included is a wide variety of reading material: historical fiction, biographies, legends, journals, essays, letters, treatises, speeches, works of philosophy or retellings of history. There are also fascinating children’s non-fiction books where appropriate. I haven’t read every book listed, although I have looked at an awful lot of them. *All Through the Ages* is mainly a compilation of lists from other sources, and I have not edited the lists from those sources for content.

Because of this, I am sure that someone somewhere will disagree with my inclusion of some book or books on the list. With over 5600 books included in *All Through the Ages*, that disagreement would be impossible to avoid. Not even I agree with every book listed (especially some of the more modern “great books” of Western Civilization). What I try to do when presented with a list like this, is to look at all the books recommended myself, and choose the ones that agree with the message I want my children to receive from their reading, then ignore the rest. I would NEVER just assume that I agree with everything, and then give my child a carte blanche stack of books. I encourage everyone using this list to do the same.

On the question of how to find some of these books, the ones from a homeschool supply company, such as Greenleaf Press or Sonlight Curriculum, can be ordered from that company. Many are additionally available from publishing companies, such as Applewood Books or Preston Speed Publishers, and they can also be ordered from that company. There is a bibliography in the back of the book listing the books and catalogs used as a resource in compiling *All Through the Ages*, along with their addresses, phone numbers, and Internet addresses. Regarding the other books, many can be found at your local library. However, it is increasingly becoming a sad fact of life that many libraries are dumping the older books in favor of revisionist history or PC dead white male bashing. University libraries usually carry the great books, and I have never been unsuccessful in acquiring a copy of a book not found in my local library through interlibrary loan. Moreover, the text of many, many older classics can be found over the Internet. Begin searching with the Online Books Page at [onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/](http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/), Project Gutenberg at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org), or search for a book title in quotes using Google at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). Then, there’s always used book stores and out of print book searches, public school book depositories, and my favorite, summer yard sales and flea markets.

## **On pre-History, Creation, and Evolution**

A cursory glance through the various timelines of the ancient civilizations shows that I have chosen to use biblical chronology and the historical records of the ancient world, rather than, as most modern history references do, dates harmonized with current evolutionary theory. There are several reasons for this.

First of all, evolutionary theory is a modern theory which has been imposed upon the historical records of the ancient world, and where they disagree, the historical records are assumed to be false or exag-

gerated or tampered with. This distrust of the historical record in favor of a theory which comes millennia after those records were written is unique among standard analysis of historical texts, and therefore its trustworthiness should be taken with a grain of salt.

Second, evolutionary theory is constantly changing because as a scientific theory, it has problems. The more research that has gone into the theory, the more its inherent flaws and inconsistencies have come to light, rather than the other way around. This is exactly what happens to every false story, as any judge will tell you who has ever seen the story of a witness go through cross-examination. Examination either highlights errors or affirms truth. The truth of evolutionary theory has been far from affirmed, and with every passing year, the mountain of inconsistencies it must climb to be proven true grows ever greater. Under these circumstances, to teach it as an absolute certainty would be folly.

Third, historical references which include timelines based on evolutionary theory are legion. Any public library will have these resources available. Fourth, and perhaps most important to me, is that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. In many places in the Bible, we are told that God cannot lie, but that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Now if it is true that the Bible is the Word of the God who cannot lie, then why did He tell us a lie concerning the origin of the world and all the creatures that inhabit it? I do not believe He did lie to us. Jesus taught from Genesis as if it were authoritative, as did the Gospel writers and Paul. Nevertheless, for many years I believed as I had been taught, that the earth was billions of years old and the Genesis account, well, I never tried to harmonize the obvious inconsistencies. I just accepted both as true. But one day I was reading in Romans, and verse 5:12 stood out to me:

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--.”

I realized that if death entered the world *because of* Adam’s sin, and Paul was teaching that this was the reason for Jesus Christ coming in the flesh and dying for our sins, then the fossil record could not have been laid down *prior to* Adam’s sin. Because whatever else fossils are, they are all dead, that is undisputed. I realized that I couldn’t continue to believe that Genesis was false and Romans was true; I either had to believe that Genesis was true and Romans was true, or I had to believe that Genesis was false and Romans was false. I chose the former.

I have since discovered that I am not alone, and that many highly qualified scientists share my belief that the earth is in fact created by God according to the history outlined in Genesis, and that fossils, dinosaurs, and star-light can all be explained with the physical laws of the universe and the historical account of Genesis in harmony. Books that help with this can be found from Answers in Genesis listed in the bibliography. Therefore, the timelines in this book agree with biblical chronology and with the historical records of the ancient world, beginning with the most ancient of them of all, the first eleven chapters of Genesis.

I would like to thank Larry Pierce, editor and translator of James Ussher’s classic survey of world history, *The Annals of the World*, for his invaluable help in making suggestions to improve the accuracy of the ancient history timelines in *All Through the Ages*. All his corrections have been incorporated into this newest printing. Ussher’s *Annals* is a classic of accurate scholarship, which begins with the assumption that the Bible is the only reliable source document of chronological information for the time periods it covers, from Creation. About 25% of the material in *Annals* is from the Bible; Ussher incorporated the history of the ancient and classical world from pagan writers as well. I highly recommend *Annals* to all parents and teachers who want to provide an accurate understanding of ancient history for their students, untarnished by modern evolutionary theory, which has corrupted most modern history books with false assumptions having no basis in the historical record or literature of the ancient world.

## **Teaching History Chronologically**

I am a great advocate of teaching history chronologically. Even before I began homeschooling, it just seemed like common sense to me. I was fortunate in my first year of homeschooling to happen upon Greenleaf Press, who advocate teaching history in this manner. I will not try to reiterate here the benefits of teaching history chronologically when Greenleaf Press has already done such a wonderful job of

explaining it. If you are in doubt as to the value, I refer you to their catalog or their website on the Internet, both of which are listed in the bibliography.

But I will share a few of the advantages I have noticed in my own children from teaching history this way. The first has to do with the continuity and flow of history. When we have begun at the beginning and worked our way from there, the children have had a foundation to build upon. The society and customs and prevalent thought of the period currently under study is linked in their minds to the period previously studied, and those links provide a framework to build new information upon as well as a pathway to progress upon. History, for them, is not only a series of disjointed facts and places and persons to be remembered, but a series of relationships that make sense.

The fact that historical periods are closely linked relationships leads to the second advantage that I have noticed in my children: increased understanding of the hows and whys of historical events. The undercurrent of thought behind the American Revolution becomes clearer because they have already studied the undercurrent of thought behind the society of the Ancient Greeks. The undercurrent of thought behind the American Civil War becomes clearer because they have already studied the undercurrent of thought behind the Roman Empire. They begin to see that there would not have been an Age of Exploration if there hadn't been a Renaissance and a Reformation. The big picture comes within their grasp.

The final advantage I have noticed (and I am sure there are more) is that the children learn that history is truly His Story—the story of the Lord's dealings with mankind, universally and individually. They see a Master Plan as events and epochs unfold before them. They see promises made in the beginning of time brought to fruition, the hand of the Lord guiding His creation. The fear of the Lord impresses them on one hand as they witness His judgment and nations that reap the consequences of their choices, and the lovingkindness of the Lord impresses them on the other hand as they see the Almighty again and again choose to stretch out His hand to accomplish His good purpose. The saturation in His Story frees them from our overbalanced American culture and worldview, to give them eyes that see beyond our borders, beyond our media's presentation of life and the world, beyond their years.

## Using Literature to Teach History

Although there may be excellent textbooks out there for teaching history, I prefer using literature whenever possible. The reasons I prefer literature are first of all, interest: children are more interested and fascinated with what they are learning when learning it out of real, "living" books rather than textbooks. Textbooks by their nature are stripped down to the bare bones facts, devoid of life or color, which, let's face it, are boring, boring, boring.

"Living books", literature, makes historical figures come alive, giving them depth and character and thoughts and feelings and struggles and joys in ways that textbooks cannot possibly do. We see historical figures as real people we can relate to, facing many of the same kinds of life situations we have to face. Literature paints us a picture of a time and place, of customs and society and manners. With literature we get local color and the big picture. All of this translates into greater interest for our children in what they are learning.

Interest is important because it leads to the next advantage of using literature to teach history: retention. Many of us can recall our own history lessons in school and remember struggling over history texts and tests, but what actual facts do we remember from all the hours spent with texts and classroom lectures? I would bet not a high percentage for the time involved. And yet we recall with fondness a treasured book such as *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and ingrained in our memories are tidbits of American history and a mental picture of vast prairies, along with familiarity of a way of life since gone by. While reading *Little House on the Prairie*, we learned naturally and effortlessly with interest and pleasure many of the same facts that we struggled to learn from the texts, and with a much higher percentage of retention of those facts.

A third advantage to using literature to teach history that is often difficult if not impossible for textbooks to emulate, is understanding. An understanding is planted which begins to grow over time of the cause and effect nature of history, how an event can snowball and lead to other events, how choices an individual makes for good or ill can set mankind on a path from which there is no turning back. Litera-

ture by its very nature asks questions of us that keep us reading to find the answers. Very often we ask why someone chose this path or that one, and we strive to understand the choice. We begin to see not only the events themselves, but the why underneath the events.

We begin to see that history is not just a separate subject in its separate compartment, but that history has had an effect on science, and math, and politics, and economics, and geography, and grammar (my children always loved the explanation of the soft c's and g's we have in English; it led to the story of the Norman Invasion of England in 1066, and the gradual picking up of French pronunciations in English.) And we also begin to see that politics and economics and science and math and geography and grammar have had their effect on history as well.

There are many ways to integrate literature in the study of history. Use a book that provides a narrative overview of the history of the era under study as a basis, such as Greenleaf Press' *Famous Men* series, or H. A. Guerber's *Story of* series. This method accommodates itself well to the problem of teaching multiple grades and varying reading abilities. Begin each history class by reading a few pages outloud to all the children of all the grades together. Then after a bit of discussion, let the children settle down to read their own books silently. For example, while studying the French and Indian War, we used *Struggle for a Continent* by Albert Marrin as a narrative basis. Then my upper elementary children read *Kateri Tekakwitha: Mohawk Maid* by Evelyn Brown, and *Roger's Rangers and the French and Indian War* by Bradford Smith, and my junior high child relished *Calico Captive* by Elizabeth George Speare and *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper. When the children finished a book, they did some writing on what they had read, or a project inspired by the book. When that had been completed, they eagerly went on to a new book; all the while the daily outloud readings continued until we finished that era of history.

Literature could be used to supplement a textbook in the same way. Supplement a unit study with literature. Read outloud to your children every night before bed, covering history chronologically over the years. Or just let them read historical fiction and wonderful biographies for fun. There are a myriad number of ways to incorporate great literature into history lessons, only a few of which have been mentioned here. Experiment, discover, and most of all enjoy "living" books and great literature with your children, and watch history come alive!

## Help! I Hate History

Why do we hate history? In my first year of high school, I took the only history course required to graduate—American History. Our teacher, who didn't want to be there any more than most of the kids, read from the textbook for his lectures—in a monotone. It was enough to kill a love of history in even the most passionate. I avoided history like the plague for my remaining school and college years.

I hated history because it was meaningless—so I thought. I had nothing in common with those dead guys from other countries. They were nothing more than a list of names and accomplishments, without faces, without personalities. And who cares who fought who over what five or ten centuries ago?

I hated history because it was boring—so I thought. Dates, places, names; an endless list of facts. It's about as exciting as watching a skeleton on a stand, when you could be watching figure skating or football instead; or better yet, figure skating or playing football yourself.

Now that we are adults out of school, we need to search for the truth about history as openmindedly as we can. We concede that we can let past feelings of aversion color our perceptions of history, blinding us to the truth of the matter. We want to come to the truth of the matter, not colored by what may have been the horrible teachers or horrible textbooks of our own school history classes.

Is history truly meaningless? If all we know about history is a bunch of names and a list of major accomplishments, while that may not be exactly meaningless, it will certainly do little to help break the hold of apathy. It helps if we think of our own time as history in the making. There are significant events going on in the world right now, and people shaping those events. Our times will be history to someone else someday. Can we look back with apathy at the news clips of President Kennedy being struck with bullets; of jubilant people, with tears streaming down their faces, tearing down great chunks of the Ber-

lin Wall, and smashing statues of past tyrants? Or the magazine photos of Princess Diana's car, twisted almost beyond recognition, and the outpouring of love from the world at her funeral? Or the faces of starving children in Somalia, sitting beside their dead families, too far gone to even beg for food? These images wrench emotions from our hearts, and stir our minds to action.

These events, these people, these times are important. Real people, valued by God, with real lives and cherished families were liberated, were ennobled, or suffered, or were killed. It is important for the generation to come to know about these times, to be humanized by these emotions, to learn from these mistakes. To a future generation, the history of our times has meaning. We know that without doubt. Can we believe, therefore, that the history of a preceding time is just as meaningful for us? We just have to find that meaning.

Is history also boring? Names, dates, and places, and nothing more, certainly is. But our own times have as much greater life in them as a figure skater has greater life over a skeleton. Our own times are engaging; while past times seem to be lifeless. And yet the past was someone's present; the past was engaging and full of life and excitement in its time.

The reality, the immediacy, the gut-wrenching images burned in our minds gives meaning and life to our present times. Times past also have their own reality, their own immediacy, and their own gut-wrenching images. The past has its own lessons, pregnant with meaning; and its own adventures, exhilarating in its life-full-ness. Just as we have a few heroes and a multitude of villains, so does the past. Our present heroes and villains live lives full of value or wickedness, of joy, of heartbreak; and past heroes and villains did also. We all, past and present, are human, experiencing life in a way that is common to all: the human condition. We have much to learn from each other, no matter in which century we have lived.

It is very rare to find the reality of history in a history textbook. They are much too limited to even begin to contain its grand scope. History should be about the stories of the day: the people and their lives, the immediacy of their times. Even though in our own education we learned facts about the Civil War again and again, who didn't come away with a much greater sense of reality and the immediacy of the times after watching *Roots*? It told the story behind the facts. History textbooks simply don't have the space for the stories.

But the stories are there. We must read these stories ourselves if we want to replace our apathy for history with tolerance, or even passion. We love stories. It's why people flock to movies year in and year out. And history contains the best stories. One of the most enduring television shows of all time, *Star Trek* and its offshoots, uses plots from history and literature all the time to give life to the future. I believe it's one of the reasons that makes it such a favorite with viewers across the board. It builds upon the great stories of the past.

In order to find the stories, we can look first of all in the literature of the time. The *Iliad* is a great story about the Trojan War, which took place in antiquity. If you think it boring, listen to the plot: a Trojan prince kidnaps the wife of a Greek king because she is the most beautiful woman on earth, and he wants her for his own. The king, of course, is outraged, and vows to get his wife back or die trying. The Greek kings and their armies rally together and lay siege to Troy, where the prince and his captive are holed up. Each side has its illustrious heroes, full of bravery, skill, honor and virtue: Hector for the Trojans, and Achilles for the Greeks. Amid night raids, burning ships, one-to-one combat, insults and glory, the Greeks finally realize that they cannot win Troy by siege, so they devise a devious (or ingenious) plan: to send the Trojans a great gift, dedicated to the gods, and conceal inside it hidden soldiers. After the Trojans accept the seeming defeat of the Greeks and draw the Trojan Horse inside the city, the Greek soldiers steal out at night and open the gates of the city to their comrades without. They sack and burn Troy, and kill the inhabitants. The Trojan prince that started it all gets his, and Helen, of the face that launched a thousand ships, is reunited with her husband. Pretty great story!

If you can't at first handle the language style of the original literature, read a retelling to get the gist of the story. Once you know what's going on, the original becomes quite enjoyable, if you are willing to give it a chance. Poetry is another great place to find the stories of history:

William the First was the first of our kings,  
Not counting Ethelreds, Egberts and things,  
And he had himself crowned and anointed and blest  
In Ten-Sixty-I-Needn't-Tell-You-The-Rest.

But being a Norman, King William the First  
By the Saxons he conquered was hated and cursed,  
And they planned and they plotted far into the night,  
Which William could tell by the candles alight.

Then William decided these rebels to quell  
By ringing the curfew, a sort of a bell,  
And if any Saxon was found out of bed  
After eight o'clock sharp, it was Off With His Head!

From *William I—1066* by Eleanor Farjeon

Many of the most important events or persons in history have been the subjects of poems, and these poems give delightful and fresh insights into the reality of the times.

Histories retold in narratives, in story form, are a wonderful source. My favorite narratives are by H. A. Guerber, who specialized in Western history for children, and Albert Marrin, who specializes in American history as well as in world events such as the Napoleonic Wars or World War II. Authors like them give history back its background, its color, its reality, its immediacy, and its life.

Good historical fiction also tells the stories of history, in the course of weaving a story of its own. Just because the main characters in the story are from, many times, the author's imagination rather than the history books, don't overlook this important resource. The events shaping the character's lives are the events of history, and the authors of historical fiction allow us to see those events through the character's eyes. This is a powerful way to give ourselves the reality of the times.

After having worked so hard overcoming a hatred of history in our own lives, we surely don't want to give our children the same handicap, for handicap it is. We want to use, in the main, literature, poetry, historical narratives and fiction to tell our children the stories of history. Textbooks have a limited place: they serve as good reference for finding out which events happen next, and the people about which we should find the good stories. Once we find the good stories, history time then just becomes story time, the most happily snuggly delightfully looked-forward to time of the day.

Where to find the good stories of history? Once you start reading narratives and literature, they themselves will lead you to more: authors often mention the works that proved invaluable to them, and those books of interest for further reading. After that, it is just a matter of using your library card and building your own home library. *All Through the Ages* was put together to make the task of finding the good stories painless and easy.

## History Scope and Sequence

The following suggested scope and sequence, for first through twelfth grades, can be used in conjunction with *All Through the Ages* to teach history chronologically:

### 1st -6th grades:

- 1: Creation and Early History, Ancient Near East, Ancient Egypt
- 2: Greece and Rome
- 3: Dark and Middle Ages
- 4: Renaissance, Reformation, Exploration, Colonization
- 5: American History through the Victorian Era
- 6: 20th Century American history, 17th-20th century World History

### 7th -12th grades:

- 7: Creation and Early History, Ancient Near East, Ancient Egypt
- 8: Greece and Rome

- 9: Dark and Middle Ages
- 10: Renaissance, Reformation, Exploration, Colonization
- 11: American History through the Victorian Era
- 12: 20th Century American history, 17th-20th century World History

**or 7th -12th grades:**

- 7: Creation, Ancient Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Rome
- 8: Dark and Middle Ages; Renaissance, Reformation, Exploration, Colonization
- 9: American History; 17th-20th century World History
- 10: Creation, Ancient Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Rome
- 11: Dark and Middle Ages; Renaissance, Reformation, Exploration, Colonization
- 12: American History; 17th-20th century World History

Going through history again in the higher grades allows more in-depth treatment of certain pivotal events and persons, and exploration of the social and political issues underlying the events. Another variation on this same theme would be to cover the whole scope of history in the elementary years as outlined above, then once again in junior high school, and again in high school. Different books, however, would be read in junior and senior high: the historical classics in junior high, such as *The History of the Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, *Chronicles [of the Crusades]* by Froissart, or *Autobiography* by Benjamin Franklin. In high school the literary or philosophical classics could be studied: Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. This variation is popular with those that homeschool using classical education, because it takes advantage of the three stages of learning of the trivium.

If you would rather go through the whole pageant of history in twelve years, this alternate plan could be followed:

- 1: Creation and Early History, Ancient Near East, Ancient Egypt
- 2: Ancient Greece
- 3: Ancient Rome
- 4: Dark and Middle Ages
- 5: Renaissance and Reformation
- 6: Exploration and Colonization
- 7: American History: French and Indian Wars in the 1st semester;  
World History: the 18th Century and the Enlightenment in the 2nd semester
- 8: American History: Revolutionary War in the 1st semester;  
American History: Framing the New Government and Civics in the 2nd semester
- 9: American History: Pre-Civil War 1800s and Westward Expansion in the 1st semester;  
World History: the 19th Century and Romanticism in the 2nd semester
- 10: American History: Civil War, Reconstruction, the West, and the Victorian Era
- 11: American History: Pre-WWII 1900s in the 1st semester;  
World History: World Wars I and II in the 2nd semester
- 12: The Modern Era

Another schedule would be to cover American history in 1st through 6th grades and World history in 7th through 12th grades. Although this is my personal least favorite option, *All Through the Ages* can be used to teach history according to that schedule, or according to any of the above plans, or with any other plan that anyone might care to come up with, since every reading level is included for every era represented.

What if you want to teach one history class together to all your children, regardless of grade? Use one of the above plans for your oldest child that you are homeschooling. As your younger children come of school age, they join in the history study wherever you and your oldest child happen to be. Their first year of history might be the Dark and Middle Ages. The elementary age children read out of books geared for their individual reading level, and copy passages and poetry relating to that age of history in writing class, or perhaps write a narration—a retelling—of an important historical event. The older secondary student reads more advanced books and writes a one-page essay on the religious, political,

and/or social forces that brought that event about, or how key persons influenced events, or how the behavior and choices of key persons can be evaluated in light of Scriptural admonition. If the child is high school age, he might write a one-semester research paper on an overarching historical topic for that era, such as an evaluation of the causes of the fall of Rome and how that those causes could be applied to modern American culture; or exploring whether the American Revolution was a legal or illegal conflict under British or natural law; or to what extent the abolitionist movement and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had on precipitating the American Civil War.

In each case, while the era studied is the same for all children of various grade levels, the difficulty of books read independently varies, as well as the difficulty of writing assignments based on the history study. The younger children merely demonstrate that they remember what happened, possibly through narration or through oral or written quizzes; middle school children analyze what happened; while high school children might analyze, compare, evaluate, theorize, or apply the historical event to current events; i.e., the fall of the totalitarian universal government of the Romans led to societal collapse and anarchy. What comparisons can be drawn or lessons can be learned for the 21st century? In this way a common history study can be made interesting and challenging for all children, no matter their grade level.

When the oldest child graduates, the younger children will still have one or more years of history study left. Start over. If the next oldest child entered the history study with the Dark and Middle Ages, and he has two years of school left, begin again with Creation through Ancient Egypt, and Greece and Rome. If this rotating cycle is followed, eventually all children will study all historical eras at the levels that are right for them, no matter where they entered the study when they came of school age.

## On the Use of Real Books in the Elementary Curriculum

The books listed under *Overview of the era*, in every reading level, in most cases, provide a narrative survey of the time period under study. In these narrative surveys, the most important events, persons, and dates of the era are highlighted. The other books listed under *Specific events*, *Biography*, and *Historical fiction* provide more detail on the era's important events and persons.

In the elementary curriculum, knowledge of these important events and persons is what children must learn: what happened, who was involved, where, and when. Traditionally, history textbooks have been used to impart this information, but that information is not only contained in textbooks. It is also contained in the reference books and narrative surveys listed in each era. The parent or teacher can use the timeline of each era included in this book to construct a list of the vital events, dates, and persons their children must learn, and read that information from the books listed in the *Overviews of the era*. Include in your study the reading of additional books from *Specific events*, *Biographies*, *Historical fiction*, *Literature*, and *Culture* to give children a broad picture and familiarity with the life and times of the era under study. Review the important events and persons periodically to ensure each child's mastery of the vital information.

One way that I often tested my children's retention of information was to write each piece of information that I wanted them to remember on an index card; and every day, at the start of our reading, I would simply quiz them on half a dozen or a dozen cards, taking no more than five minutes. If they were able to answer, orally, my questions, those cards went to the back of the stack, and any they had forgotten remained up front for more quizzing on subsequent days until that information was "set" in their minds. This quizzing, or brief daily drill, reviews all information learned throughout the year, so that it remains fresh and becomes truly retained, rather than learned for a test, then forgotten. Another useful activity is occasionally having the children do an oral or written narration about a particular event or person.

Children enjoy tracing, on butcher paper, a map of the area under study, coloring and labeling mountains, rivers, or other physical features, and marking on the map important cities, places, or battles when they are encountered in the narrative survey. Children also enjoy keeping a chronological timeline of the events and persons they are studying, adding important events to their timelines as they learn about them. Both these activities are fun to do, and also help children retain the information they are learning.

Books listed under the Culture section of each era also provide information on artworks or recipes, and many have projects, crafts, or games to play which also give a fuller picture of a different way of life in a different time and place.

Using books from each of the sections listed under each reading level of the era will give children a more complete understanding of the past than if they simply read chapters out of a textbook. It will also serve to keep a child's interest in learning about the past by making that learning as enjoyable as possible, rather than as dreary as possible, as it often is when information is presented in a textbook, sterile way. And yet the objective, of learning a concrete body of historical information, is still accomplished.

## **On the Use of Real Books in the Secondary Curriculum**

Most of the books listed for history study in the junior and senior high levels are “real” books. They are not history textbooks, but real books about history or science or philosophy or economics. Textbooks tell you what the main points of a subject are; in essence, they tell you what to think about that subject. Real books require you to do your own thinking, which is why they provide a superior education. But of course, that is also harder. It is easy to get something tangible out of text books, but how do you get something tangible out of real books?

For example, in the secondary curriculum, we are faced with a list of “great books” to read, like Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *Orations*, Augustine's *Confessions*, or Madison, Hamilton, and Jay's *The Federalist Papers*. They intimidate homeschool parents. But we can read these works successfully with our children in our homeschools. I know because we do it every day, with the greatest great book, the Bible. The Bible is a real book. It is not someone's textbook telling us what to think about spiritual matters and what the main points are. We believe we can read it for ourselves, and our children can read it for themselves, and get something out of it. If we can do that with the greatest great book, we can do it with lesser great books, and even other books that we might use that are helpful, but not “great.” What follows is the plan we use in our homeschool to get the most out of real books in our curriculum.

Junior high children can do the following work with parental help and prompting. It helps for parent and child to write the book notes together, especially in the beginning. High school children can do much of this work on their own, with occasional parental help. Over the course of the six years, children will need less and less help as they get the hang of reading and evaluating real books.

Begin with keeping a notebook, such as a spiral notebook, for each subject under study. Your notes and thoughts and outlines of the real books you read will be recorded in the notebook. Reserve the first page for a list of the books studied for that subject, adding to it as you progress in that study. Make each entry like an entry for a bibliography, and save a space for the date that the book is completed. This first page, in essence, becomes the “table of contents” for your individualized secondary studies in that subject. It will be of great help later when compiling report cards, transcripts, or documentation records for college entrance.

To get the most out of each book, read it through twice. The first time through, read the book quickly, even skimming it. This should take no more than a week for even the thickest book, and many times will only take a few days. If it takes longer than that, you are reading too intently for the first time through. The goal should be just to get the gist of what the author is saying, the big picture. You don't want all the details yet, but just a general idea of where the book is headed—it will help later when the details might otherwise bog you down. During this first initial reading, record the book's table of contents in the notebook, leaving a little space to write in each chapter's main idea later. Be sure to read the author's preface or introduction, if there is one, in this first reading. Good authors don't want to be misunderstood, and many times they will tell you what message they hope to communicate by the book's end. What the author thinks he is saying is of prime importance! Make a note of it in the notebook.

Now the real work of reading begins: reading the book through the second time, this time paying attention to all the details. As you read, you will be making notes on the book, and keeping an outline of the book, chapter by chapter, in the notebook. Begin each chapter's notes on a clean sheet of paper in the notebook (neatness always helps).

Approach each chapter as you did the entire book, giving it an initial reading. If, as you initially read the chapter, something the author says strikes you, make a note of it in the notebook. If he says something you find questionable, or don't understand, make a note of it. If you run across vocabulary that you can't figure out, make a note of it. If he uses a mystifying sentence construction that makes no sense, make a note of it.

When you have finished that chapter's initial reading, go back to your notes. Your goal is to understand the author's message, so it is important to "get" whatever it was that was unclear initially. Look up vocabulary in the dictionary, and write definitions down in the notebook. Re-read the unclear paragraphs and think about them until they begin to make sense. Some convoluted sentence structures may actually have to be diagrammed in order to figure out the meaning. Remember that the main point of the sentence is contained in the subject-verb-object-indirect object, and all the prepositional phrases are window dressing. With older books especially, it may help to actually divide really long sentences into several shorter ones. Do all this work in the notebook. Make a point to record the author's statements that you agree or disagree with. These points of contention and agreement make great starting places for high school papers.

Once you understand that chapter's message, outline the chapter. Look for the main idea of the chapter, and record it. Under the main idea, record the points the author makes to support his main idea, along with any sub-points used to support a point. Once the chapter has been outlined, finish the notes on that chapter with a one-sentence thesis statement for that chapter. Remember during the quick first reading of the book, you recorded the book's table of contents with some space left under each chapter heading? Record the chapter thesis statement there. Now you can go on to the second chapter, and so through the book.

When the entire book has been outlined, carefully go through each chapter thesis statement and try to identify the overarching thesis statement for the entire book. In one or two sentences, state the author's thesis, or premise. In several sentences under that, state the author's main points in coming to that premise. Rewrite the thesis statement and its supporting points as a well-constructed paragraph. Now you have a succinct, very brief synopsis of the book to use for future reference.

Once you know what the author was trying to say, you can determine what you think about his message. It helps to discuss the author's main ideas with someone, or write to someone about the book. Usually it is when discussing and writing about ideas that they begin to crystallize in our own minds. Was the author's message true? Was it partly true and partly erroneous? Why or why not? It is not enough to just agree or disagree with the author based on some vague feeling. Prove that his message is either true or not true. Realize that our ideas about whether his message was true or not may change over time, especially if we are just beginning a study of a subject. We may want to adjust our thinking as we become more learned in the topic. This is perfectly fine.

A real-life example from our own homeschool of chapter notes and chapter thesis statements can be found at our homeschool website, Classical Christian Homeschooling. The Internet address is:

[www.classical-homeschooling.org/curriculum/realbooks.html](http://www.classical-homeschooling.org/curriculum/realbooks.html)

Much of the material from this section is a condensation, along with some of my own practical ideas, of the art of reading described in *How to Read a Book* by Dr. Mortimer Adler. Dr. Adler's book is really essential for homeschoolers using real books in the secondary curriculum. Dr. Adler discusses analytical reading, note-taking, and evaluating the author's message in detail, and also includes chapters on adjusting your reading and evaluating for epic poetry, plays, philosophy, history, etc.—different kinds of real books. I recommend it without reservation.