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Dear Parents and Students,

Our great big world gives us a glimpse of the power and majesty of our God. The skies are big, but God is bigger. The mountains are high, but God's goodness is higher. The oceans are great, but God's love is greater.

I have been blessed to communicate with many people around the world who have shared with me about their lives so that I could share their lives with you through the pages of this book. I have spent years compiling the stories, folktales, and the songs in this curriculum. I pray that it is a blessing to you.

As you open these pages, keep opening your heart to the God who created this great big world, Who loves you and has a beautiful plan for your part in it.

Mary Evelyn Notgrass McCurdy
Cookeville, Tennessee
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Author's Thanks

I could not have written this alone! I appreciate my husband, Nate, for heartily supporting my efforts and for creating the maps that are part of this curriculum.

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And, most importantly, I appreciate our Father in heaven for creating this great big world for us to explore. To You belong all the glory and praise.

How to Use Our Great Big World

Our Great Big World is a one-year world geography course designed for students in grades one through four. The curriculum has 30 units with three lessons each. I recommend completing one unit per week.

The lessons are grouped by continent, plus a few additional regions. The curriculum begins by exploring the North Pole and the South Pole. Lessons then explore the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia and Oceania, North America, Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

Our Great Big World is much more than geography. As you go through the curriculum, your students will also be learning history, literature, music, and art. You can simplify your school year by making *Our Great Big World* the centerpiece of your children's learning this year.

How Does This Curriculum Work?

This book provides all of the instructions for what to do each day, so you don't need a separate Teacher's Guide. Parents can read the lessons aloud or students can read the lessons alone. I encourage you to enjoy looking closely at the pictures and talking about them.

Each lesson in this curriculum stands alone. When you begin studying a new continent or region, you will read one lesson about the whole region first, including three special foods from that part of the world. After that, each lesson will focus on one particular person, place, or subject within that region.

Each unit has three lessons. At the end of each lesson is an Activities Ideas box. Don't think of these as a checklist that you must complete. Look at these as ideas to enhance your study. Let your student's grade, age, abilities, needs, and interests be your guide as you select activities. The activities should challenge your student, but he or she should also feel competent and successful.

In the Activity Ideas box you will find instructions for:

- Finding a particular place on a globe.
- *Our Great Big World Atlas Workbook*
- *Our Great Big World Lesson Review*
- *Our Great Big World Coloring Book*
- *Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World*
- Creative Writing
- Family Activities
- Literature

Map and Globe

A map of the continents is on the inside of the back cover of this book. In the first lesson about each continent or major region, your student will see the continent or region name in **bold red type**. Your student should find that continent or region on the map of the continents.

Since understanding our three-dimensional planet on a two-dimensional map is difficult for young children, I highly recommend that you purchase a globe that shows all the countries of the world. In lessons about specific countries, your student will see the name of the country in **red**. In the Activity Ideas box at the end of those lessons, I suggest finding the specific countries on a globe. Finding locations on the map at the end of the book *and* on a globe will help your child gain a better grasp of where things are in our great big world.



Atlas Workbook

After you have enjoyed a lesson, your child will be ready to complete the corresponding page in the *Atlas Workbook*. This resource is optional, but if your child is ready for it, I strongly encourage you to use it. Your student will learn a great deal about our great big world through these activities.

Each student should have his or her own personal *Atlas Workbook*. I recommend using pencils and high-quality colored pencils—and always having a sharpener handy!

Lesson Review

The *Lesson Review* has five questions about each lesson. This book is designed primarily for older students studying this course. You can have your child answer these on his own by writing directly in the book, you can read the questions aloud and have him answer orally, or you can skip them all together. It is completely up to you. You know the best way for your child to retain and enjoy the material.



Coloring Book

After you have enjoyed a lesson, your child will be ready to complete the corresponding page in the *Coloring Book*. We designed each page to review something from the lesson. Coloring is a great way to reinforce concepts visually. It requires children to focus on details and think about the subject they are coloring.



In developing these books, I had younger students in mind for the *Coloring Book* and older students in mind for the *Atlas Workbook*. However, many children will benefit from doing both! You know how to make the best choices for your children.

The *Coloring Book* is a great way to occupy children while they listen to you read the literature aloud. If you have a child who is not yet in first grade, you can purchase a *Coloring Book* to include her in your family's study and keep her little hands busy, too!

Folktales and Songs of Our Great Big World



This book is an exciting collection of folktales and songs from around the world. One folktale and one song correspond with each unit. Some of the folktales are taken directly from old folktale collections that are in the public domain. Others I retold based on traditional tales. You may like to read the folktales aloud to your child, but you will also find recordings of all the folktales at notgrass.com/FSOGBW. If you listen to the recordings, your child can read along in the book and look at the illustrations. Be sure to read the introduction to each selection in the book before you listen to the recording.

I am excited for you to hear the songs in this collection. People in several countries around the world recorded songs specifically for this project. Two even composed original songs. The audio quality on a few of the tracks is not professional, but the authenticity definitely makes up for it. When you come to a song, visit notgrass.com/FSOGBW (or scan this QR code and save the link on your phone).



Creative Writing Notebook

If you plan on your child completing the creative writing ideas, I suggest you give your child a notebook specifically for that purpose. Each unit contains one creative writing idea. If your child is not ready for creative writing, you can simply discuss the ideas presented in the prompts. You could also have your child draw a picture that illustrates his or her thoughts. Another idea is for your child to dictate his or her thoughts while you write them down in the notebook.

If you would like to incorporate handwriting practice, you could have your students write the names of the featured countries in a notebook. Students of any age would benefit from copying the Bible verse at the end of each lesson.

Family Activities

Each unit includes one Family Activity that is connected with one of the lessons in that unit. These activities include crafts, recipes, games, and other special projects. The instructions are on the last page of each unit. I recommend that you read the instructions and gather the supplies ahead of time. You can find a list of all the supplies you will need to complete these activities at notgrass.com/OGBWlinks. You can complete the activity on the day it is assigned or on another day that is convenient. I encourage you to let these be fun activities for your whole family.

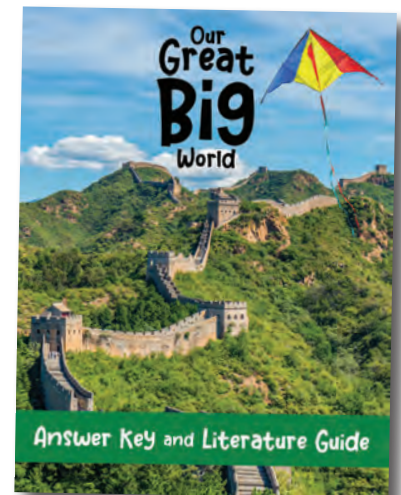
Like all components of *Our Great Big World*, the Family Activities are optional. We offer them as extra learning experiences, but do not feel obligated to do them if they do not suit your family's needs or schedule.

Parental Supervision

Please review the Family Activities and discuss with your child what he or she may do alone and what activities need your supervision. The activities include the use of scissors, knives, the oven, the microwave, and the stovetop. Some children may be allergic to recipe ingredients or craft supplies. Notgrass History cannot accept responsibility for the safety of your child in completing these activities. Thank you for being a conscientious parent who takes responsibility for your child's safety.

Answer Key and Literature Guide

This booklet for parents contains answers for the review questions in the *Lesson Review* and for the few activities in the *Atlas Workbook* that need an answer key. It also includes a guide for the literature titles. This guide lets you know about topics and words you might want to be aware of before you hand the books to your child to read. If you read the books aloud, you can always skip over the handful of words or phrases that you might not want them to hear.



Literature

Seven suggested literature titles complement the lessons in *Our Great Big World*. Each book corresponds to one of the regions in the curriculum. All of the titles are in print and available from Notgrass History.

You can read these titles aloud with your student, which is a fun and memorable way to spend time together. Or you can have your child read the books independently. You might decide to do a combination, depending on your family's schedule.

Each chapter in each literature title is assigned in the Activity Ideas box at the end of the lessons. These assignments are merely a suggested guide to help you finish the book while you are studying the corresponding region. You might prefer to read that region's book over a single weekend or on a road trip, but we do recommend you read it while you are studying the corresponding region. Some lessons do not have literature assignments when a region has more lessons than there are chapters in the corresponding book.

Each book offers an enjoyable way to learn more about a region, but if reading the literature adds too much pressure to your homeschool schedule, feel free to skip some or all of them.

The books give children a feel for life around the world during modern times or at least fairly recent history. *The Muddleheaded Wombat* is not about real life, but it is a timeless tale of talking animals that is popular with children in Australia.

- *The Turtle of Oman* by Naomi Shihab Nye
- *Akimbo of Africa* by Alexander McCall Smith
- *A Bear Called Paddington* by Michael Bond
- *Race for the Record* by Dave and Neta Jackson
- *The Muddleheaded Wombat* by Ruth Park
- *Owls in the Family* by Farley Mowat
- *Juana and Lucas* by Juana Medina

How Much Time Will Each Lesson Take?

You can read each lesson aloud in about 15 minutes. Answering the questions in the *Lesson Review* will only take a few minutes. The time it takes for a student to complete the *Atlas Workbook* will vary depending on the activity for that day and on each particular child. Many of the activities will take less than 10 minutes, while others will take a bit longer.

Reading the literature will add some time, as will the creative writing and the *Coloring Book*, if you choose to include those in your study. If you do all of the suggested activities, you should plan on an hour to an hour and a half per lesson on average (not including the Family Activities, which will require additional time). You might like to read one lesson each day for three days and complete other suggested activities on other days in your school week.

What Supplies Will My Student Need?

Students will need a pencil and colored pencils. You will need a smartphone, tablet, or computer to listen to the audio recordings of the folktales and songs. Most Family Activities require additional supplies. Remember you can access a complete supply list at notgrass.com/OGBWlinks. The individual Family Activity instruction pages at the end of the units also list supplies needed.

How Many Activities Should My Student Complete?

You know best what your student is capable of accomplishing. Some students will benefit most from completing all of the activity ideas. Others will do better completing only some of them. The variety of activities make it easy for your student to have a positive, rich, and engaging learning experience. Do not feel pressure to complete every assignment! We like to offer a variety of learning activities to meet the needs of a wide range of ages and learning styles.

Helping Struggling Students

For students who struggle with reading or writing, feel free to make adjustments to help them be successful and not become frustrated. You or an older sibling can read the lessons and literature aloud while your student reads along and looks at the rich illustrations. Struggling students might also benefit from reading aloud to you. They can orally complete creative writing activities and review questions.

Using Our Great Big World with Multiple Ages

Our Great Big World is especially designed for first through fourth graders, but other ages can certainly benefit. Younger siblings can listen in on the lessons and literature, look at the pictures, and take part in the Family Activities. If you have a student who has already completed fourth grade, but you want to keep all your children learning together, you might consider giving your older student some additional assignments. They could copy the Bible verses at the end of the lessons, write book reports about the literature titles, research and write reports about some of the places or topics presented in the lessons, make models of some of the featured structures, create travel commercials, or complete other creative activities. You can assign each child different activities, depending on his or her age, interests, and skill level.

Optional Supplemental Resources

This curriculum contains plenty of information for a rich learning experience. You do not need to supplement with anything extra. However, if you are looking for recommended videos, virtual field trips, and interactive websites, check out the suggested links available for each lesson at Homeschool History. Visit notgrass.com/OGBWlinks or scan the QR code.



Respect for All

We at Notgrass History make every effort to write about all people in an honoring and respectful way. We realize that people have different views and preferences when it comes to describing particular groups. We believe that God has created all people in His own image and that they all have equal value in His sight. We have prayerfully sought to use words that honor and respect everyone.

Encouragement for the Journey

Remember that God designed your family and the daily responsibilities you carry. A homeschooling mother who has one child can complete more activities than a homeschooling mother who has seven children and an elderly grandparent living in her home. God will use the efforts of both of these mothers. God does not expect you to do more than you can do. Be kind to yourself. He knows exactly what you and your children need this year. We encourage you to pray about how your family can make the most of *Our Great Big World*. Let it be a tool to help you have a wonderful learning experience with your children.

Remember that out of all the parents in the world to whom God could have given your children, He chose you. He is the one who put your family together. He knows what He is doing. Trust in His choice. God created you. He created your children. Relax and remember that this is the day that the Lord has made. Rejoice and be glad in it!

We at Notgrass History are here to help you. If you have questions or simply need some encouragement, send us an email (help@notgrass.com), call us at 1-800-211-8793, or send a text to 833-236-9631. Thank you for homeschooling your children.