

Guide for Parents Using *Exploring World History*

Exploring World History provides material for one entire school year in three subjects: world history, English, and Bible. To complete one credit in world history, one credit in English, and one credit in Bible, the student must read the text in *Exploring World History Part 1* and *Part 2* and complete the weekly and daily assignments as they are given in those volumes.

Students should complete each day's assignments on that day. The student should expect to spend an average of 50 to 60 minutes on each subject each day. The actual time spent on each subject on a given day will vary, but you should allow your student about 2 1/2 to 3 hours per day to complete all three subjects.

We believe that you are in charge of your child's education and that you know best how to use this material to educate your child. We provide you with tools and instructions, but we encourage you to tailor them to fit your child's interests and abilities and your family's situation and philosophy. You might need to experiment with the curriculum for two or three weeks to know how your student can use it most effectively in your situation. Being able to do this is one of the benefits of homeschooling!

Course Descriptions

You can use the following course descriptions as you develop your school records, produce a high school transcript, or report grades.

World History. This course is a survey of world history from Creation to the 21st Century. The course discusses civilizations from around the world. A special emphasis is placed on key events, key ideas, key persons, and everyday life in various time periods of world history. The student reads a significant number of original documents and speeches while studying the narrative of lessons.

English: World Literature and Composition. The student reads classic works of world literature including novels, short stories, devotional literature, plays, theological essays, biographies, memoirs, poetry, and hymns. Emphasis is placed on how the literature reflects the historical settings of the works. The student also has several writing assignments. Most of these are based on historical issues from the various periods of world history. The writing assignments take several forms, including essays, editorials, speeches, and letters. (*Note: You have the option of assigning a 2,000-2,500 word research paper [see page xii in Part 1]. You also have the option of assigning other kinds of projects for each unit as alternatives to writing. You will need to decide how often your student will complete a writing assignment and how often he or she will complete another project.*)

Bible: Issues in World History. This course provides an overview of the Bible and Bible history, including both its message of faith and how it complements our understanding of history. The student reads several complete books of the Bible as well as several of the Psalms and portions of other books. The student also studies such topics as Old Testament history, church history, the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and how to study a New Testament letter. Topical Bible studies bring Biblical teachings to bear on several of the historical issues discussed. (*Note: The Bible study component of this curriculum is concentrated in the first half since that part covers Old Testament and New Testament times, but the second half has a significant amount of Bible study also.*)

Student Review Pack

The *Student Review Pack* has a great deal of material that you might find helpful for increasing your student's understanding of the course and for giving you a way to know and grade your student's grasp of the content. It is an optional supplement that contains the following three components.

The *Student Review* includes review questions on each lesson and on the readings from *In Their Words*; commentary on Bible readings assigned at the end of lessons; and literary analysis of the books assigned in the curriculum. (The Bible commentary and literary analysis are also available on our website through the link given on page 8.)

The *Quiz and Exam Book* has a quiz to be taken at the end of each unit. In addition, after every five units, it has a history exam, an English exam, and a Bible exam. That makes a total of six exams in each subject over the course of the year.

The *Answer Key* contains answers for all of the review questions and for the quizzes and exams.

Suggestions for Grading

To earn credit in world history, English, and Bible, the student is expected to complete the assignments listed on the second page of each unit introduction and all of the assignments listed at the end of each lesson, except for the *Student Review*, which is optional. A weekly assignment checklist is available on our website.

You have several activities that you can include in arriving at a grade for each subject. These activities include: memory work; unit projects (writing assignments and hands-on projects); review questions for each lesson, for the readings in *In Their Words*, and for the literature selections; unit quizzes on history; and exams every five weeks on history, English, and Bible. You can give equal weight to each element, or you might choose to give different weight to each component.

Depending on the chosen topic, you might choose to grade some of the weekly writing assignments as history or Bible assignments instead of as English assignments. You might choose to grade some of the readings in *In Their Words* as Bible assignments when they deal with topics that are related to Bible study. You might also count some of the literature titles as English or Bible work. For instance, you might count *The Art of War* and *Bridge to the Sun* as reading for history. You might count *The Imitation of Christ*, *Here I Stand*, *The Hiding Place*, and *The Abolition of Man* as part of the Bible credit.

Grades are usually assigned on a percentage basis for an individual assignment and as letter grades for a semester on the basis of the cumulative assignment grades. We recommend giving an A if the average weighted grade is 90% or above, giving a B for 80-89%, a C for 70-79%, and a D for 60-69%.

If your child consistently gets grades lower than 60%, you might need to evaluate his readiness to study a course with this level of difficulty. On the other hand, you might need to adjust your expectations. You might consider an additional grading element based on your perception of your child's overall grasp of the material. This is another advantage of homeschooling: you can judge how well your child understands the material and how he or she is growing from the study in ways that are not reflected by test and assignment scores.

We designed this curriculum to cover what we believe a high school student should learn about world history. Helping a student pass the CLEP or AP test was not our primary goal. However, this course provides a good foundation for preparing for those tests, combined with one of the test preparation books that are available.

Teaching Writing

The three most important activities to help students write well are reading good writing, writing as frequently as possible, and having his or her writing critiqued by an experienced writer or teacher.

You can find many aids to help you in teaching writing. The Online Writing Lab from Purdue University is an excellent source that is available on the Internet. We have found *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White to be concise and helpful. This book is available from Notgrass Company and many other sources.

Other resources that have been recommended to us include *The Elegant Essay* by Lesha Myers, *Format Writing* by Frode Jensen, *Writing Skills* by Diana Hanbury King, and *Teaching the Essay* and *Teaching the Research Paper* by Robin Finley. The Institute for Excellence in Writing offers comprehensive instructional courses, and Reconciliation Press offers writing instruction services. These suggestions are offered as resources you can investigate. We do not endorse one program over another.

Grading Writing Assignments

Teaching writing skills can sometimes feel more like an art than a science. We know good writing when we read it, but trying to explain why we like it is like trying to explain why we like a particular flavor of ice cream. Good writing engages the reader and makes him or her want to keep reading. It covers the subject well and uses proper mechanics (spelling, grammar, and punctuation). Good writing informs, inspires, and sometimes challenges the reader. Above all, good writing says something of significance.

Because defining good writing is difficult, giving a grade to a writing assignment can be somewhat subjective. What is the difference, for example, between an A paper and a B paper? One student might write the best that he or she can, and it still might not be as good as what another student writes with less effort. What grade should you assign to that first student's work? In addition, how can the grades you give reflect a student's improvement over the course of a year? After all, we hope that the student will be writing better at the end of the year than at the beginning.

A grade for a writing assignment usually has two elements: one is mechanics, and the other is coverage of the subject matter. Noting errors in spelling and punctuation is relatively easy. Misused words and awkward sentences might be more difficult to detect. The most difficult part of grading is determining whether or not the paper is organized well and covers the topic adequately.

Beginning with the highest possible grade of 100, you might want to take a point off for every misspelled word, punctuation error, or grammatical error. An awkward sentence might count two or three points off. A paragraph that does not flow well or have a clear purpose might cost five to eight points. You can also consider whether the paper is well-expressed but has mechanical errors as opposed to its being poorly expressed but mechanically good. We suggest not giving a grade on the writing assignment until the student submits the final version of the assignment. Use the rough draft as a teaching opportunity. It is fair to have higher expectations later in the course. Also, if a student has numerous mechanical or grammatical errors in a paper, covering the paper with red ink might do more harm than good. Instead, focus on what appear to be the three most serious or common mistakes and don't worry about the rest at that point. When the student has corrected these problems, move on to other problems to correct in later papers.

The website of the College Board, which administers the SAT and CLEP examinations, has an Essay Scoring Guide that its graders use. On their website, you can read this guide and also read sample essays and see why those essays received the scores they did. In addition, the National Assessment of Educational Progress program of the U.S. Department of Education has information available online about its writing assessment.

You will probably find it helpful to have someone outside your family read one or more of your student's essays and give constructive feedback at some point during the school year.

Maps and Timelines

If you want more maps besides those included in the text of *Exploring World History*, consider materials offered by Geography Matters. Our website has links to some free map resources available online. See the website address at the end of this booklet.

Timelines of world history are available from Geography Matters and other publishers. You might consider creating your own timeline in the format that works best for you, such as a chart, successive pages in a book, or a long sheet of paper that you can post on a wall.

Notes About the Literature

We chose literature for the English component of *Exploring World History* that we believe is inspiring and informative and that won't assault your student's faith or sense of decency. We intentionally excluded many books that did not meet our criteria.

Some of the books we included have words or ideas with which you will be uncomfortable, as we are. We want to let you know about these issues in case you want to do some editing before your child reads the books or in case you want to substitute another book. You might want to read a book aloud to your student and skip over inappropriate words. Our family has done this with several books. However you decide to use them, we believe that the overall impact of these books for good outweighs an occasional use of inappropriate words. The editions indicated below are the ones that are available from Notgrass Company.

***The Imitation of Christ* (Dover)**

This book is a good example of devotional literature and has some excellent insights. It reflects Catholic doctrines and practices such as the monastic life (page 13), thinking of saints as special people (page 14), portraying a "religious" person as a monk (pages 15-16), the idea that communion involves a mysterious participation with Christ (several places in Book Four), and the view of the priesthood as a special class in the church (pages 123-124).

***The Hiding Place* (Bantam/Random House)**

The most difficult part of this book is the description of the horrible conditions that Corrie Ten Boom and others endured at the hands of the Germans.

***Bridge to the Sun* (Rock Creek Books)**

Gwen Terasaki married her husband, a Japanese diplomat in the United States, before World War II. They were sent to Japan during the war, even though her husband had strongly opposed the attack on Pearl Harbor. Gwen makes a few references to prayer, but her religious perspective is not strongly articulated in the book.

- Gwen teases her husband Terry by calling him a "silly a—" (page 39).
- She quotes her husband referring to another person's "d— ancestors" in anger (page 58).

- Gwen quotes her grandfather using the curse “God d— it” (page 93).
- She quotes a friend as saying, “Oh, h—” (page 121).
- Gwen quotes a little Japanese boy calling himself a “b—” (page 175).
- She quotes a military officer exclaiming, “I’ll be d—” (page 194).
- Gwen quotes another soldier as saying “God d— it” (page 197).

***Cry, the Beloved Country* (Scribner/Simon & Schuster)**

This novel conveys a story that is harsh and sad in many ways, but it is true to life as it was in South Africa in the late 1940s. The book provides a window on the racial conflict and the trials of modernization that took place there. Life has troubling situations like those described here, although you have to decide if your child is ready to read about them. A murder occurs in the course of the story, but it is not described in graphic detail.

On the positive side, the book contains numerous references to faith in God. Christian people do good in the face of evil. In addition, the end of the story shows how good can come when people work together instead of remaining apart. It is a story of redemption, of bringing good out of something that is bad.

- There are references to and discussion of an immoral lifestyle (pages 53 and 60-61).
- A young girl becomes pregnant out of wedlock. Another character downplays this fact and says, “The real question is whether he will care for them, and lead a decent life” (page 98). Physical intimacy outside of marriage is wrong for both the man and the woman involved.
- A use of “d—” (page 108).
- A use of “bitch” in its proper sense, referring to a female dog (page 110).
- Kumalo wonders how a man can commit murder, and phrases are used to describe how it happens (page 119).
- Kumalo has thoughts about desiring a girl (page 146).
- A use of “h—” (page 172).
- Uses of “d—” and “n—” (page 183).
- A policeman calls another man a “b—” (page 219).
- Reference to the temptation to commit adultery (page 305).

***The Abolition of Man* (HarperCollins)**

Lewis’ point in this book is that truth and virtue exist outside of man’s thinking. The goal of education should be to teach these eternal truths to the next generation.

- You might have to explain castration (page 26).
- Lewis refers to sex a few times (pages 33, 36, 63, and 78) and to contraceptives (pages 54-55).
- Lewis uses “bastard” in its original sense, meaning a child born to an unmarried woman (page 60).

Alternate Literature Selections

If you choose not to use one or more of the books that we suggest for this curriculum, here are some other titles for you to consider:

- Novels by G. A. Henty give good historical information as the backdrop to the stories he tells. Henty wrote dozens of books. Most of them deal with English and European history from medieval to modern times, but he wrote several dealing with ancient history. Be aware that Henty's novels are usually quite violent and contain elements of condescension toward non-English cultures.
- *The Bronze Bow* by Elizabeth George Speare is a Newbery Medal book (1962) set in the time of Christ. It focuses on a young man caught up with Zealots who wanted to defeat the Romans and how the young man is changed by Christ.
- *The Door in the Wall* by Marguerite de Angeli (Newbery Medal, 1950) is set in medieval England and gives good historical background that helps the reader understand life during that period.
- Instead of *Here I Stand*, you might select a biography of Martin Luther for younger readers.
- *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* by Elizabeth Foreman Lewis, the 1933 Newbery Medal winner, reflects life in China in the 1920s amid the political and social chaos that existed there at the time.

We hope that using this curriculum will be a positive experience for you and your student. May God bless and guide you in it. Thank you for choosing *Exploring World History*!

For links to other resources, a unit assignment checklist, and ideas for using this curriculum in a co-op or other group, visit:

notgrass.com/ewlinks