

## CHOOSING YOUR HISTORY CURRICULUM

For homeschool moms and other teachers who are able to choose their own history curriculum, selecting the book(s) that will keep you energized all year long is a crucial decision. Whether you call them spines, source books, core books, or textbooks, you can't ignore the importance of having one all-encompassing history guide to keep you grounded and make sure you leave no obvious gaps. This book will reinforce the flow of events, even if your extended reading is chronologically a little before or behind it in time sequence.

Knowing how important this book really is, which text do you choose? You can browse through a broad list at [www.abookintime.com/sourcebooks](http://www.abookintime.com/sourcebooks), and the following suggestions may help you make your final decisions.

### The Younger Child

For the early grades, standard curriculums just take far too long to tell the story. Your child shouldn't have to wait up to 4 years before s/he's heard the bulk of American history. S/he is capable of learning much more than that, and time is precious! Try other **American history** books, such as McGraw-Hill's The Complete Book of US History or the more advanced Dorling Kindersley's Children's Encyclopedia of American History. If you need 2 years to get through the book you choose, you will still have plenty of time to spend on world history.

My personal favorites for early elementary **world history** are published by Usborne books. Their simplest version is called First Encyclopedia of History. They also offer the all-encompassing Book of World History, or its revised (not necessarily better, just different) edition, Encyclopedia of World History. These books can easily be divided into a 2-year program if you feel you need more time.

### Upper Elementary & Junior High

I still tend to avoid traditional textbooks for the middle grades simply because of other available options with a lot more appeal. If we're talking favorites, my **American history** choice is a no-brainer! I have loved Joy Hakim's series The Story of US since I first opened the cover. These books are thorough AND engaging, and kids really do like to read them. Since it is so thorough, you may want to spread this series out over 2 years. Of course, there are several other good American history options, including the Dorling Kindersley book mentioned above.

Again, for **world history**, Usborne Publishing is at the top of my list, with the Kingfisher History Encyclopedia following close behind. All of these books are concise, yet complete, and the color illustrations that pack each page keep the reader's attention. If you are combining age groups, the illustrations are especially useful when trying to include younger children. Susan Wise Bauer's Story of the World series is another good world history option for this age group with its storytelling style, although it offers few illustrations. You would need to allow 4 years to complete her entire series.

### High School

Since high school needs to prepare a student for the structure of college academics, textbooks become a much more viable option. With a solid background in history from the earlier grades, a student is less likely to zone out with all the detail, instead absorbing and understanding new concepts. Extracurricular reading becomes even more important at this age to keep interest level high.

### Wrapping It Up

This is by no means an extensive list, but a good place to start as you explore the options that would work best for you. Keep your long-range plan in focus when you shop around, choosing a book for this year with next year's selection in mind. And always plan to reinforce your learning with lots of extracurricular books and activities. Your child(ren) should come away from each history year with a better understanding of the world around them and the important people and events that came before them.

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#### *About the Author:*

*Carol Henderson is the author of history booklist [www.aBookInTime.com](http://www.aBookInTime.com). She loves history, loves to teach, and has been homeschooling for 15 years in the Charlottesville, Virginia, area. She currently teaches history at a large homeschooling co-op.*