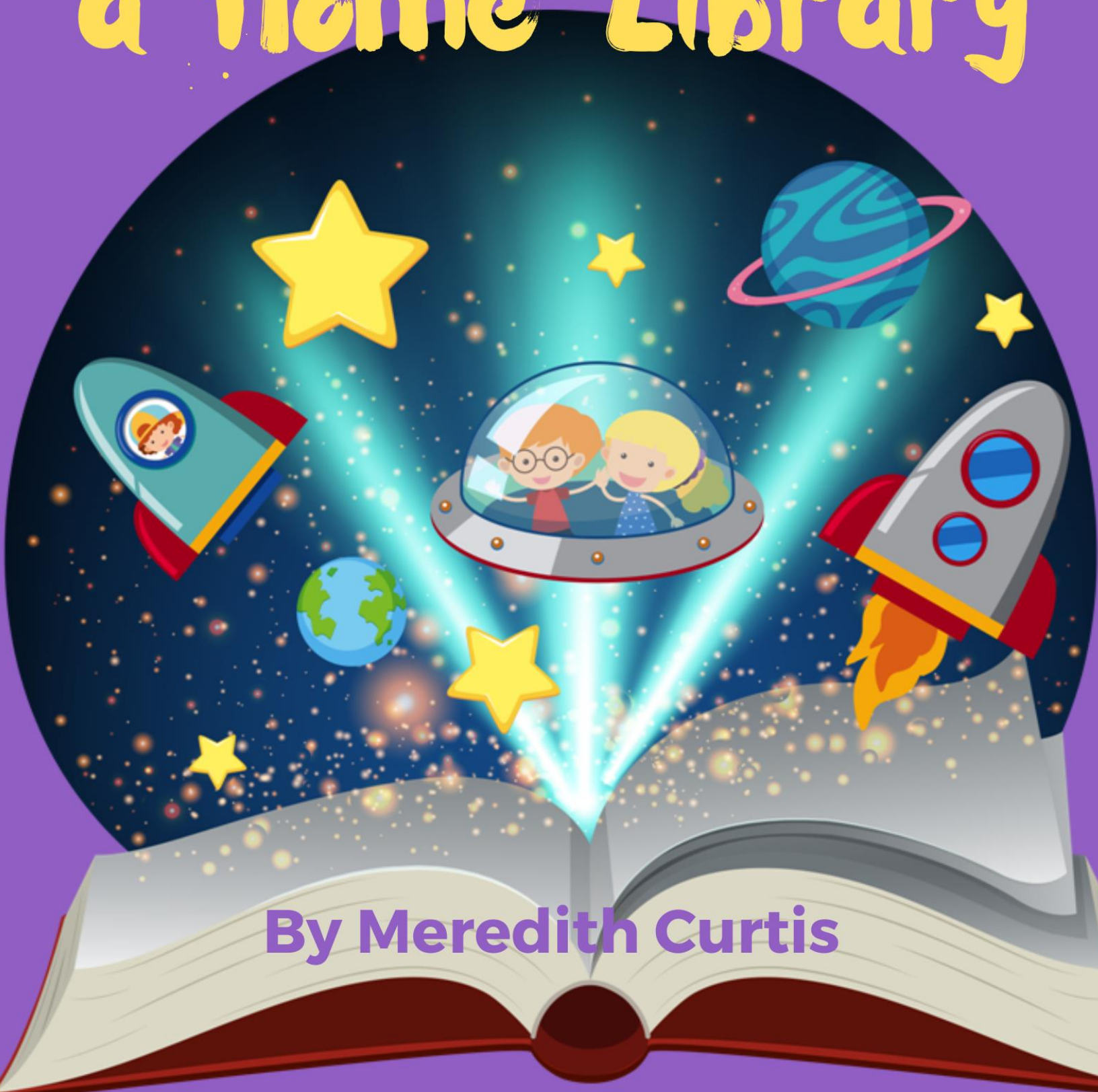


You Can Build a Home Library



By Meredith Curtis

MEREDITH CURTIS

YOU CAN BUILD A HOMESCHOOL LIBRARY

BY MEREDITH CURTIS

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READING LOVELY READING

"And then the bird said, 'Are you my mother?'" I read aloud to my bulging belly.

This was my first pregnancy, and I was determined to do everything the right way. I began reading Scripture aloud during my Quiet Times so that my unborn baby would hear the Word of God. Later while I nursed baby after baby, I continued this practice of reading both the Bible and books aloud to my little ones.

It has been my desire to introduce my children to living books and to instill in them a lifelong love of reading.



Building a Home Library is integral to that goal. Let's begin our adventure with reading.

READING ALOUD, READING ALONE

Reading living books is the key to cultivating a love of reading.

LIVING BOOKS

Living books are books that breathe life, stir up emotions, and make you want to turn the page. Living books can be fiction, non-fiction, poetry, picture books, adventure novels, biographies, testimonies, fairy tales, parables, or nursery rhymes. They are not dry, dusty, or boring.

These precious books are filled with interesting knowledge instead of boring facts. In their pages, we meet real-life people or rounded, rather than flat, story characters. Living books captivate our hearts.

LISTENING TO GOOD BOOKS

Even as adults we need to listen to good writing read aloud. The Bible tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God.

Children love picture books (*Katy No-Pocket, Are You My Mother?*), fairy tales (*Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty*), adventure stories (*SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON, JUNGLE BOOK*), tender stories (*The Little Princess, Hans Brinker & The Silver Skates*), and allegories (*Pilgrim's Progress, Hind's Feet on High Places*). These books can be enjoyed by people of all ages. Little people love to hear chapter books read aloud, using their imaginations to paint pictures of the stories in their minds. Big people are never too old for a well-written, beautifully illustrated picture book.



I read aloud to my children until they are in high school, though in high school it is usually only once a week, except for Bible reading, and we all take turns reading aloud.

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As children hear books and stories that capture their hearts, it whets their appetites for more. Listening also shows your children "how to read" in their minds when they read alone.

When you read aloud to your own children, read expressively, adding sounds and noises when appropriate. Change the volume of your voice as needed to make the story come alive, to add suspense, or enhance the mood.

READING ALOUD

As soon as they learn to sound out words, children should read aloud to mom or dad each day. My little ones would read little "readers" to me every day once they could "read." Fluent reading goes beyond sounding out words to reading fluidly with expression and understanding. The only way to become a strong reader is to read, read, and read some more!

Once my children could read, not only did they read aloud to me, but they would read aloud to their younger siblings as part of their "schoolwork." This cuddle time not only helped them grow in their reading ability, but fostered close relationships that were valuable to them in the years that followed. Several years ago, I walked in the living room to find my oldest daughter reading to one of her younger sisters. (Katie Beth was 25 and Jenny Rose was 19!) On a more recent vacation, we read some of Agatha Christie's short stories aloud with great enjoyment.



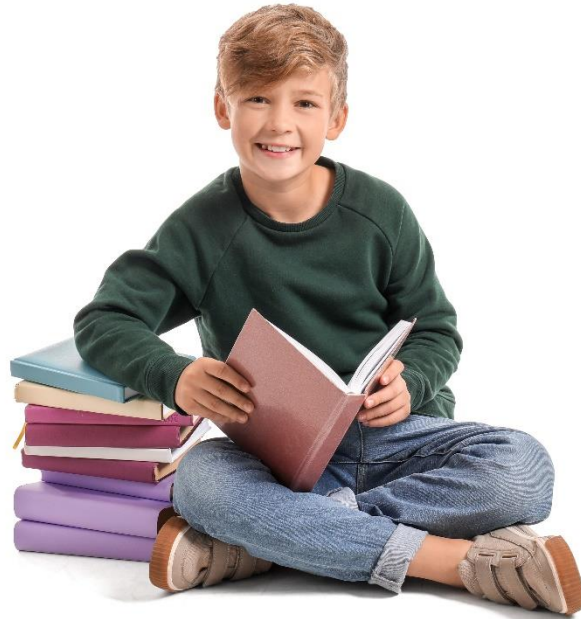
READING ALONE

Reading alone as a daily habit can become an enjoyable hobby. In our home, we set aside time for quiet reading, and everyone reads, even Mom. I had a selfish motive for starting this practice. I never had any time to read myself because I was so busy homeschooling, so I convinced myself that I was "modeling" a love of reading for my kids. Well, really, I was being a good example, but it was just so easy and fun to do the right thing that I felt a little guilty.

Young readers can read picture books or short chapter books filled with pictures when they read alone. The important thing is for the books to be easy to read and enjoyable.

Lavish children with good reading material! What are their interests? What kind of stories do they like? The AMELIA BEDELIA series is wonderful for children because of how it plays with words. Amelia is asked to draw (close) the drapes and she takes out a sketch pad and pencil and draws them. What always saves Amelia from being fired is her yummy desserts.

Later on add all kinds of books. Most people enjoy reading when they like the characters in the stories they are reading. Series are wonderful because children like characters in books and want to spend more time with them. They can do this by reading more books in the series.



BUILD A HOME LIBRARY

Building a home library will give your entire family unlimited access to excellent books. You will gather living books for your home library to nurture your children's love of reading. Let's talk for a minute about literature.

BOOK GENRES

When we talk about books for our children and teens, let's begin with genres. It's great for our kids to read a wide selection of different kinds, or genres, of books.

There are 4 main genres of literary works:

1. Nonfiction (true)
2. Fiction (imaginary)
3. Poetry (written to be read aloud)
4. Drama (written to be performed)

I'll just mention nonfiction and fiction today.

NONFICTION

Informational - true facts about a topic or group of topics.

The Archaeology Book by David Downs from Master books is full of beautiful photographs and illustrations - a great way to learn about archaeology! *Whatever Happened to Penny Candy* by Richard Maybury is the best way to learn about inflation and basic economics I've ever found. *The Good Fight: How World War II Was Won* by Stephen Ambrose is also full of photographs and an excellent overview of World War II for children and adults.

Histories - a detailed chronological record of past events during a period in the past.

Plimoth Plantation by William Bradford is a history of Plymouth Plantation, the first English settlement in New England. *Judges (Bible)* covers the time between Joshua's death and the arrival of Samuel.

Biographies - true story of a real person's life.

Reese Howells, Intercessor by Norman Grubbs is a favorite biography in our house. We also love *These are My People* by Milly Howard about Gladys Alyward.

Autography - a real person tells the true story of their own life. *The Autobiography of Ben Franklin* is still popular almost 250 years later.

FICTION

Realistic Fiction - a pretend story that could happen in real life.

There are so many examples of this. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, and *Safely Home* by Randy Alcorn are great examples of realistic fiction.

Historical Fiction - a pretend story set a specific time period with a true setting and pretend characters (though sometimes minor characters are real people).

The Singing Tree by Kate Seredy is set in Hungary during World War I while *The Bronze Bow* is set in Israel at the time of Jesus. They are both historical fiction.

Science Fiction - a pretend story set in the future with a pretend setting, pretend characters, and elements of technology and astronomy.

Perelandra is one of the 3 science fiction books written by CS Lewis.

Fantasy - a pretend story that could never happen in real life.

The Lord of the Rings trilogy is a fascinating fantasy.

Mystery - a pretend story with puzzling events where characters uncover clues to solve the puzzle.

The Mysterious Affair at Styles is Agatha Christie's first mystery novel. Nancy Drew is a famous fictional detective in over 50 mysteries for children.

Fairy Tale - a folk tale with magic often set in the Middle Ages involving castles, royalty, and dragons.

Little Red Riding Hood is a fairy-tale set-in Germany while *Beauty and the Beast* is a fairy-tale set-in France.

Tall Tale - a folk tale that is highly exaggerated.
John Bunyan is an American tall tale.

Fable - a folk tale that teaches a lesson.

Thousands of years ago, Aesop wrote fables that are still read today.

Myth - a folk tale about imaginary people, usually idol/gods and idol/goddesses.

The days of the week are named after idol/gods in the Norse myths.

Legend - a folk tale about a real person often highly exaggerated and hard to believe is true.

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King Arthur was a real king but it's hard to know what he was truly like because all the stories about him are legends.

POETRY

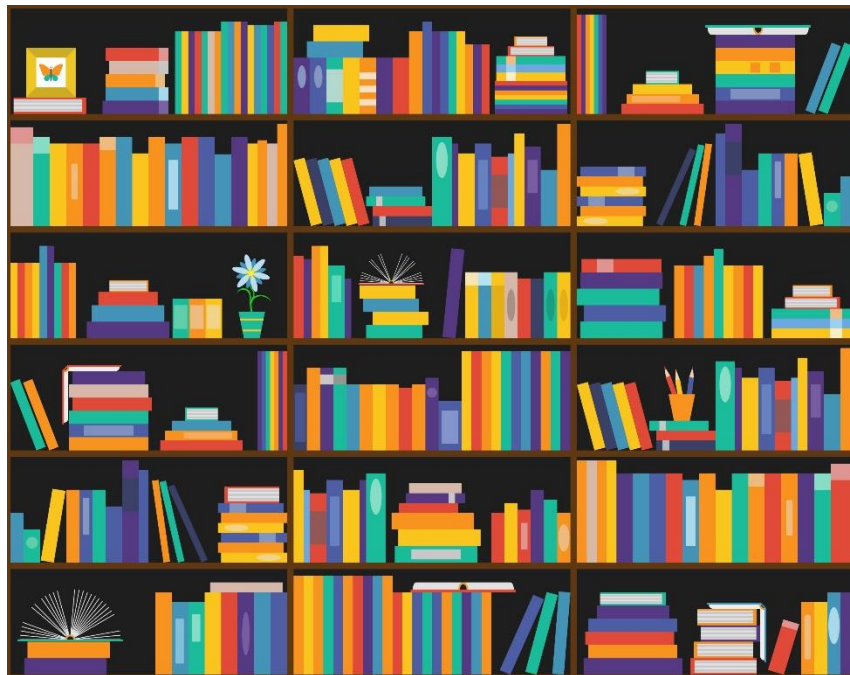
Poetry - verse (sometimes rhyming) written to evoke an emotional response and created to be read aloud.

Shakespeare wrote sonnets, poems with a specific rhyme sequence. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a book of poetry.

DRAMA

Drama – a story written to be performed on stage or on camera.

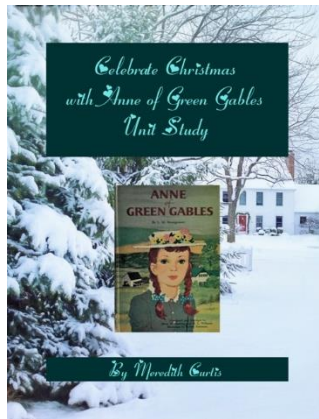
Shakespeare wrote amazing plays – tragedies and comedies. *Our Town* is another favorite play in our house.



Our home library has poetry and plays, but fiction and nonfiction make up the bulk of our books.

ENJOYING LITERATURE

"Mrs. Rachel Lynde lived just outside where the Avonlea main road dipped down into a little hollow, fringed with Alders and Ladies' Eardrops and traversed by a brook that had its source away back in the woods of the old Cuthbert place; it was reputed to be an intricate, headlong brook in its earlier course through those woods, with dark secrets of pool and cascade; but by the time it reached Lynde's Hollow, it was a quiet, well-conducted little stream, for not even a brook could run past Mrs. Rachel Lynde's door without due regard for decency and decorum; it probably was conscious that Mrs. Rachel was sitting at her window, keeping a sharp eye on everything that passed, from brooks and children up, and that if she noticed anything odd or out of place she would never rest until she had ferreted out the whys and wherefores thereof," (Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery, opening paragraph)



From the moment we read this paragraph, we are hooked! To the little town of Avonlea we go, across the Lake of Shining Waters, greeting beloved folk, especially the inhabitants of Green Gables. Literature takes us to delightful places such as Prince Edward Island.

EVERYONE LOVES A STORY

All people in all places around the world love stories.

It must be because our Creator is the Master Storyteller, and we live in anticipation of the final climax: His Glorious Return and the final destruction of our enemy and all those in his bondage.

When families gather, there are always stories: "I remember when I met your mother..." "The first time he ever..." "When I was your age..." Once we hear the beginning of a good story, we are hooked, wanting to hear the rest of the tale.

We teach our children to read so that they can read the Bible, drawing closer to their Savior and Redeemer, Jesus. That is the most important reason.

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We also want them to read to learn. They will read all kinds of writing that brings knowledge and information.

There is a third reason we teach our children to read: we give them a passport. This passport can take them on any adventure they would like to embark on, to places where they can meet people they've dreamed of meeting, or to any place in the entire world, real or imaginary.



When children are young, teach them to value reading as a treat and privilege - something they look forward to!

If your child is always having to write a book report or read books he doesn't like, reading may not be a great joy in his life. If television is always on, he will most likely choose it because watching television is a passive activity that requires no mental exertion! Remove the computer and the television as competitors by limiting their use. You might have television-free and computer-free hours between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Give children books to read that interest and excite them. Has your son read *Treasure Island* or *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*? Has your daughter read *Anne of Green Gables* or any of the Elsie books?

Clue into which movies your child enjoys and look for books in similar genres. For example, if your child likes *The Lord of the Rings* movies, he might love the books. If your teen loves science fiction, she might enjoy CS Lewis' space trilogy or *The Man in the Moon* by HG Wells.

Give books as presents, communicating that books are special. I always give my children and grandchildren a book along with another present for birthdays and Christmas. It places high value on books!

Don't make your child write book reports when he/she is young any more than once a year. Instead talk about the books your young child reads and keep talking with them when they are older. Let your conversations age with your child so that by the time he/she is in middle school, you are talking about whether the ending was satisfying and why or why not. This helps to move right into literary analysis.

Literature, like music, paintings, sculpture, and ballet, is a work of art.

All the elements of art can be found in literature with different names. Just as there is **line** in art, there is a **plot line** in literature. But be careful not to analyze literature by picking apart the various elements as in works of art, literature should be enjoyed and analyzed as a whole.



The whole book is more than the sum of its parts (plot, setting, characterization, point of view, theme, tone, style). Begin literature analysis by talking about the emotions felt while reading a book. Talking is better than writing, though in high school children should write about literature too.

TALK ABOUT LITERATURE WITH YOUR CHILDREN

To talk about books with your children, learn to ask questions:

- Do they like the book? Why?
- Who was their favorite character? Why?
- Would they have given it a different ending?
- Were they scared?
- Do they wish they could meet the characters in the book?
- Who would they want to hang out with?
- Would they have been so brave?

Give children classic books to read. These are books of literary and moral excellence. Surviving the test, these books have been enjoyed by generations of children.

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I have booklists on my old website (Joyful and Successful Homeschooling) that you are welcome to use download and use: [Free Reading Lists](#).

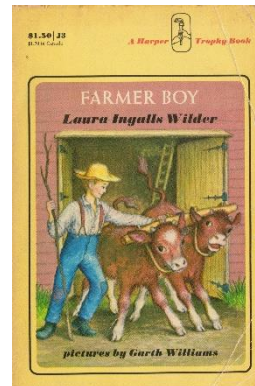
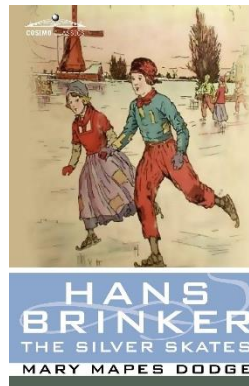
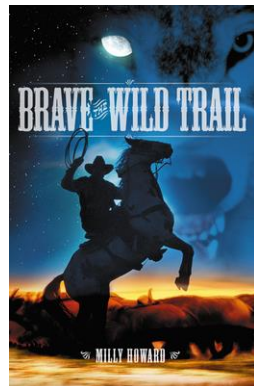
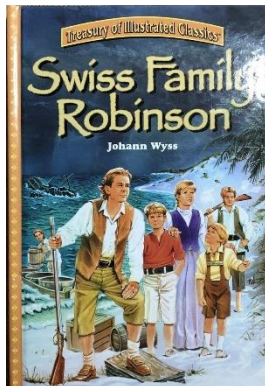
Realize that books have been "dumbed down" in the last 100 years, so our family looks for older books that will stretch reading abilities.

One publisher that values older books is [Salem Ridge Press](#), whose goal is to bring back wholesome children's books from the 1800's and early 1900's.

Above all, read aloud! There is nothing better to instill a love of literature than reading aloud. Cuddle up and begin a good book. It couldn't hurt to pop some popcorn or make some cookies for children to munch on while they listen.

Here are some great read alouds:

- *Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann Wyss
- *Brave the Wild Trail* by Milly Howard
- *Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates* by Mary Mapes Dodge
- *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder



BOOK CLUBS

One thing that we enjoy are book clubs with other homeschooling families. Once a month we meet, enjoy yummy snacks, and discuss a book that we've all read. Moms and children all read the book. Not only has it been fun, but the children are learning more about literature than ever before as we discuss the book together.

Maybe you haven't read good literature, and you feel overwhelmed. Relax! There are lots of great books out there. Grab my list or someone else's and go on a book hunt at used bookstores and the public library. Just start reading aloud with your children.

MEREDITH CURTIS

When homeschooling moms tell me that they have trouble teaching their children, I suggest that they (the moms!) read good literature. Whenever a mom has followed my suggestions, her ability to homeschool and her enjoyment of homeschooling improves dramatically. Along with studying the Bible, reading good literature affects all areas of academic pursuit.

Read, read, read good literature that will satisfy your soul and glorify God! And teach your children to do the same.



COLLECTING BOOKS

Books, books, and more books! That's the way life is for homeschooling families.

Every good school has a good library and home schools are no exception.

But what books should line your shelves?

I'll give a quick overview of what kind of books will benefit your children and you during your family's homeschool adventure.

Remember you can build a library slowly. Don't rush out and buy everything.

Look for sales and become a frequent shopper at used bookstores and thrift stores. I have picked up many classic books for 25 cents.

SHOPPING FOR HOME LIBRARY BOOKS

My favorite place to get books is at the public library sales. The libraries often toss out older, more conservative books to make way for modern silliness. That's great for us! We can pick up expensive classic books for a song.



I often shop at these used bookstores online for vintage books:

- Bright Light Books
- Abe Books
- Thrift Books
- Ebay (not a used bookstore but lots of great deals!)

You can also find books online that you can download and print or just read on your tablet.

The Library of Congress does have eBooks you can read online or download. Their site is a little harder to use, but AMAZING! You can find photos, charts, maps, along with books galore!



- Christian Classics Ethereal Library
- The British Library UK
- OCLC Library (Net Library)
- Carnegie Mellon University

Project Gutenberg is my favorite of these sites, but simply Google the name of the book you are looking for with the words digital and free.

BOOKS LOVELY BOOKS

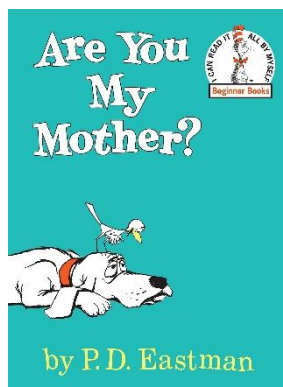
When you start a library, you will want to purchase books in several different genres and categories. Here are the main categories in our home library:

- Picture Books
- Stories & Books for Young Readers
- Classic Literature
- Inspirational Literature and Works
- Historical Fiction
- Biographies
- Journals
- Cookbooks
- Activity Books
- Living Books on All Kinds of Subjects
- Reference Books & Maps

Let's talk a bit about these books and some examples of quality reading material in each category.

PICTURE BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND EARLY READERS

Are You My Mother? by P.D. Eastman was my husband's favorite book as a child. It's on our shelves too and our children enjoyed it just as much as he did back in the sixties.

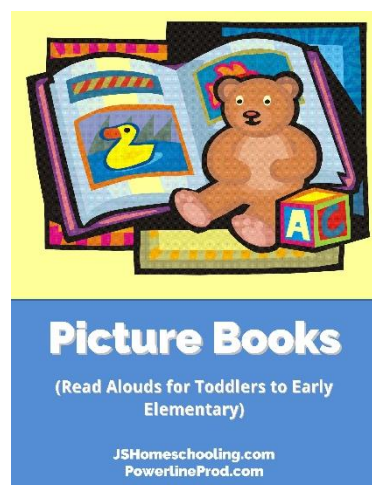
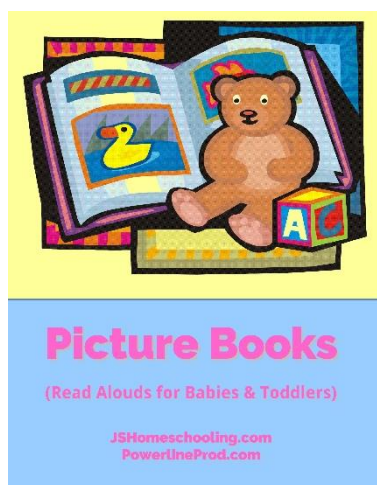


A picture book purchase should be based on the story and the illustrations. There are picture books in our library that are practically works of art.

My mother was a children's librarian, so she introduced me, and decades later my children, to delightful stories in well-written beautifully illustrated picture books. Like Momma, I fell in love with authors like Eric Hill, Margaret Wise Brown, Jack Kent, and Don Freeman. I read classics like *Goodnight Moon*; *Where's Spot?*; *Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?*; and *Corduroy* to my little lambs. The gentle illustrations of Gyo Fujikawa delighted us and Ezra Jack Keat's creative artwork fascinated us.

You can download reading lists with our family's favorite picture books! You can download them or just bookmark the page. Moms tell me they pull up my reading list page when they shop for books. I love that!

Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>



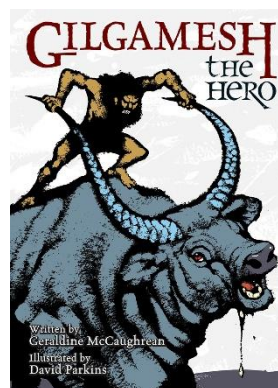
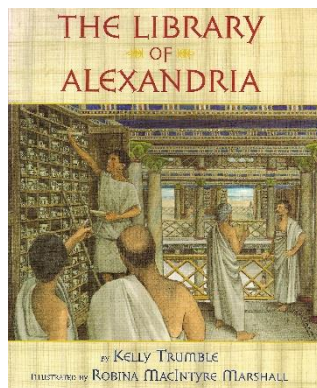
PICTURE BOOKS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Do you know that no one is too old to read a well-written, beautifully illustrated picture book?

There are picture books written for older children that our family uses for unit studies. *The Library of Alexandria* by Kelly Trumble is a lovely book about the largest library of the ancient world. *The Temple at Jerusalem: From Solomon to Herod and Beyond* brings Ancient Israel alive for the whole family! These books are wonderful for reading aloud in unit studies.

The oldest writing, besides the Bible, *Gilgamesh*, is available as a picture book, *Gilgamesh, the Hero* by Geraldine McCaughrean. My teens read this version in their Foundations of Western Literature course because the original version has inappropriate content. Gilgamesh did some horrible things which the picture book is more discreet about.

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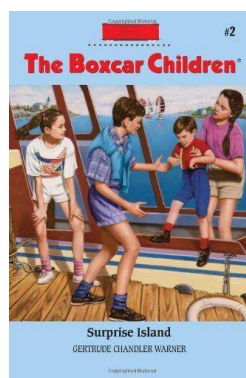
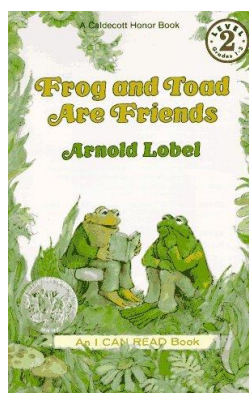


BECOMING A FLUENT READER

Once my children finished reading their phonics curriculum readers, it was time to enter the joy of reading on their own. The stumbling block was fluency. They needed easy-to-read books that were fun to read – the more the merrier! These books were quick reads and gave them confidence. My son loved the Three Cousins Detective series and the Frog and Toad series.

Once my little lambs read massive amounts of these easy books, they could move on to easy classics like the Boxcar series and Laura Ingalls Wilder's delightful books. My son became a fluent reader with the Childhood of America biography series and Hardy Boys mysteries.

Provide as many of these easy-to-read books as you can and don't worry if they read them over and over again.

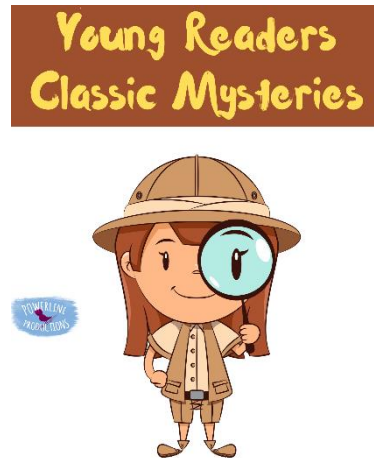


As soon as they can read easy books fluently, introduce classics like *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, *Ginger Pye*, and *Bambi*. Two series my children loved at this age were the Paddington Bear series and the Thornton Burgess animal books.

I like books where children respect their parents and good morals prevail. Many of the books written after 1960 (except for some great authors' works) are full of rebellion, feminism, and even bad language. In addition, the writing is dumbed down at all levels. Older books increase children's vocabulary.

Here are some of my free book lists. You can download them or just bookmark the page. Moms tell me they pull up my reading list page when they shop for books. I love that!

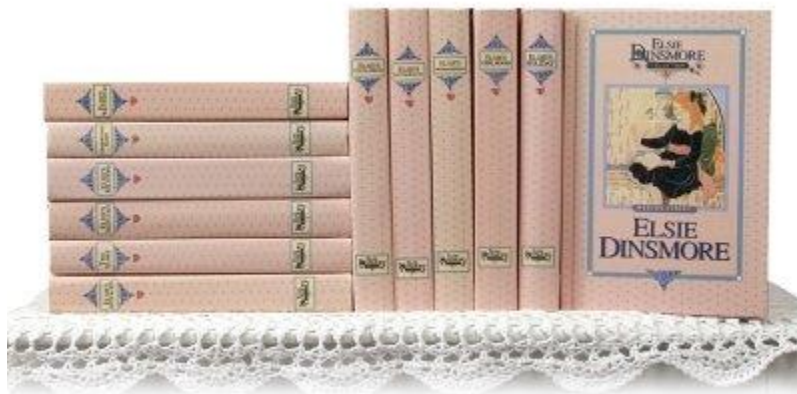
Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>



CLASSIC LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

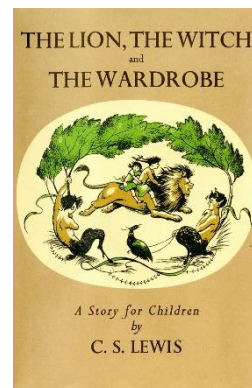
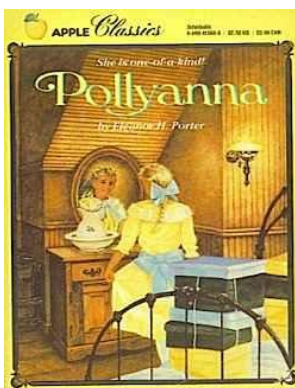
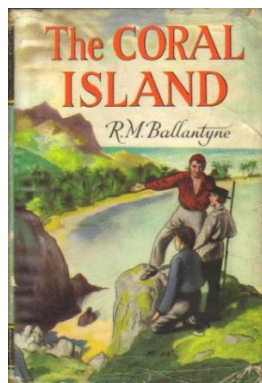
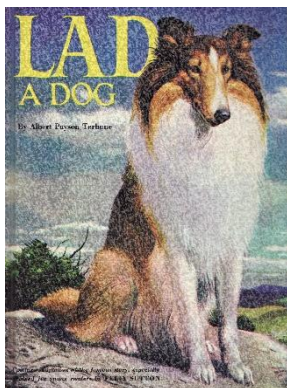
My mother read *Little Women* and cried when Beth died. I cried too and so did each of my daughters as they read the well-loved, well-worn pages of this classic by Louisa May Alcott. Louisa May Alcott wrote several other books, too. Have you read *Little Men*, *Jo's Boys*, *Rose in Bloom*, *Eight Cousins*, or *Jack and Jill*? They are all a delight!

Back in her day, Martha Finley's books about a little southern bell named Elsie were even more popular than Miss Alcott's books. Have you ever read any of the *Elsie Dinsmore* books?



Swiss Family Robinson is an excellent classic to have available for your children to pick up and read. In fact, this is one of our favorite family read-alouds.

YOU CAN BUILD A HOMESCHOOL LIBRARY



The world is filled with a wide variety of lovely books for children. I am still discovering books and purchasing them for my grandchildren.

Boys will love to go on adventures around the world with RM Ballantyne and explore Africa with the Tarzan books. Girls will love meeting Pollyanna and Anne as well as The Little Princess. Children will delight in the world behind the wardrobe in the Narnia books and the Secret Garden.

ANIMAL LOVERS

Animals lovers will find a wide variety of choices! Start with the Beatrix Potter and Thornton Burgess books. Then move on to Dr. Doolittle – what a fun series with the zany vet. For horse lovers, nothing beats Marguerite Henry's novels.

Dog lovers have a plethora of stories. Here are just a few!

Picture Books

- *The Pokey Little Puppy* by Jeanette Sebring Lowrey
- *Harry the Dirty Dog* by Gene Zion
- *Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill
- *Pretzel* by Margaret Rey
- *Clifford the Big Red Dog* by Norman Bridwell
- *Madeline's Rescue* by Ludwig Bemelmans
- *Good Dog Carl* by Alexandra Day

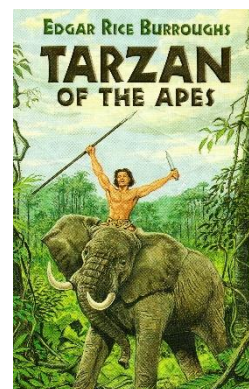
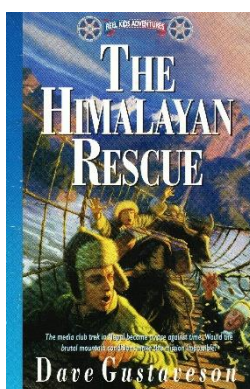
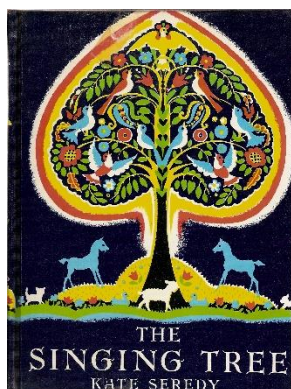
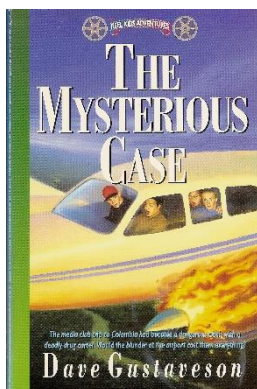
Novels

- *Lassie Come Home* by Eric Knight
- *Big Red* by Jim Kjelgaard
- *Snow Dog* by Jim Kjelgaard
- *Irish Red* by Jim Kjelgaard
- *The Bravest Dog Ever: The True Story of Balto* by Natalie Standiford
- *The Original Adventures of Hank the Cowdog* by John R. Erikson
- *The Incredible Journey* by Sheila Burnford
- *Old Yeller* by Fred Gipson

- *Ribsy* by Beverly Cleary
- *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- *Souder* by William H. Armstrong
- *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls

HISTORICAL FICTION

We add historical fiction to history and books set in other places for geography. The Singing Tree brings both Hungary and World War I alive! I love learning geography with the Reel Kids Adventure series where a group of Christian kids travels the world making videos and sharing their faith.

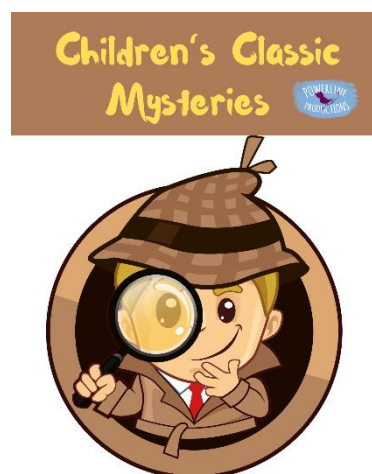
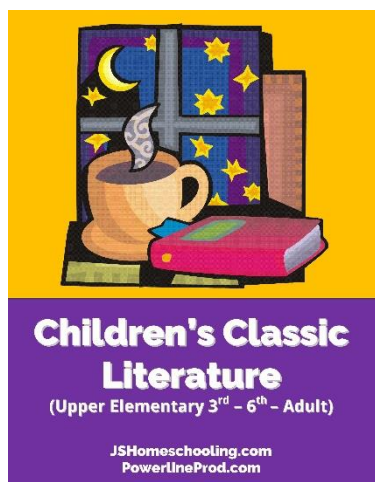


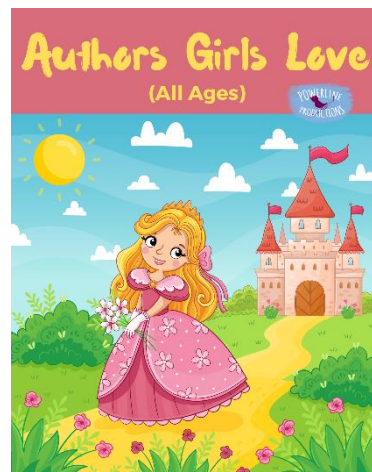
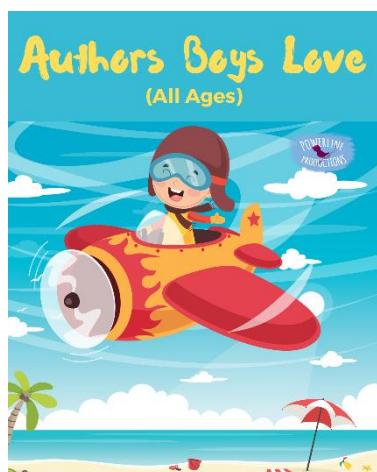
ONE MORE THING ABOUT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

One final world about classic children's literature. It is for all ages! Adults will love *Little Woman*, *The Secret Garden*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *The Coral Island*.

You can download reading lists with our family's favorite literature and living books for children! You can download them or just bookmark the page. Moms tell me they pull up my reading list page when they shop for books. I love that!

Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>





CLASSIC LITERATURE FOR PRETEENS & YOUNG TEENS

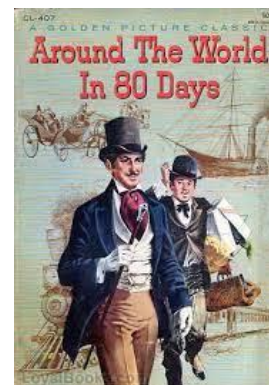
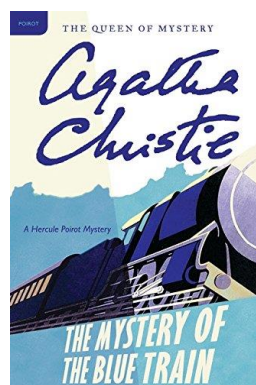
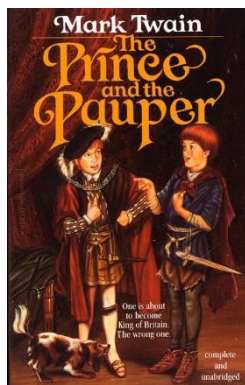
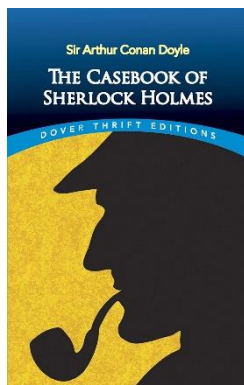
Once a preteen reaches a certain reading level, he/she will enjoy the same literature you and your husband read, provided he/she has similar taste in reading material.

Many homeschool moms and dads have never read the classics, but it's not too late to pick up a book and read it.

My friend, Laura, took a couple of years and read classic novels along with her preteens. Her love for reading grew along with her enjoyment of homeschooling!

Preteens and young teens love mysteries. Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot are favorites! They also enjoy Mark Twain – they are old enough to get his humor, too!

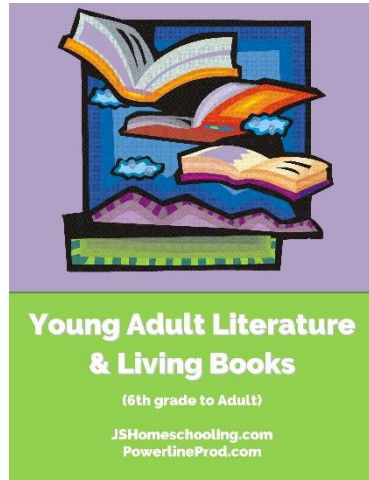
Often *The Scarlett Letter* and *To Kill A Mockingbird* are assigned in middle school but I find that high schoolers can understand the themes better and in a deeper way. Middle schoolers enjoy action, adventure, humor, tender stories, and a good whodunit. CS Lewis' *Space Trilogy* and the *Lord of the Rings* books are really enjoyed at this age.



One thing I really love to start at this age is book clubs. Whether it's a small group of preteens or you and your son at the local ice cream shop, books clubs are a blast! And you really do dig so much out of the book. There's more in a later chapter about book clubs.

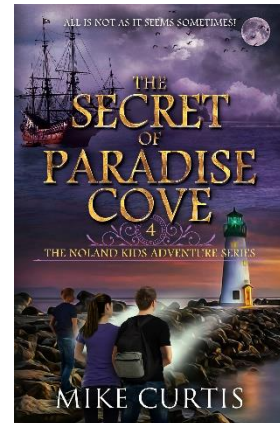
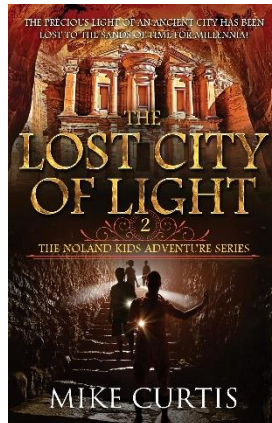
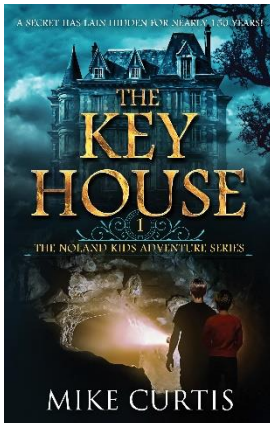
You can download reading lists with our family's favorite literature for the middle school years! You can download them or just bookmark the page. Moms tell me they pull up my reading list page when they shop for books. I love that!

Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>



NOLAND KIDS AVENTURE SERIES

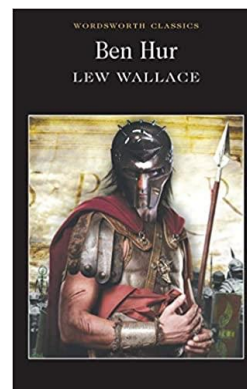
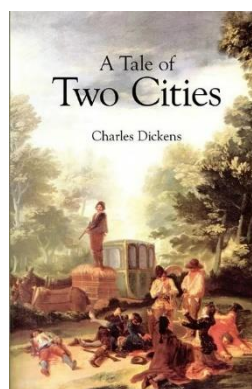
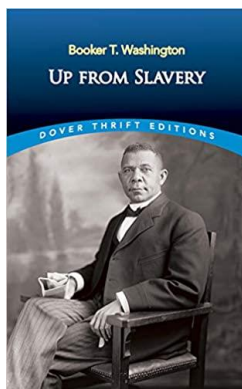
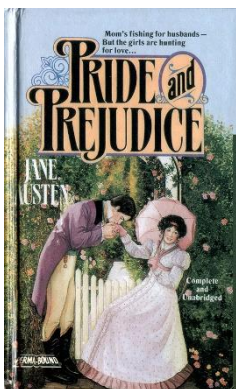
My husband has written an amazing series for children, preteens, and teens. [The Noland Kids](#) go on adventures all over the world growing in Christ along the way. If your children love mystery and adventure including pirates, lost treasure, ancient prophecies, battles, and a lost city, they will love meeting Caleb, David, and Lizzie.



CLASSIC LITERATURE FOR TEENS, & ADULTS

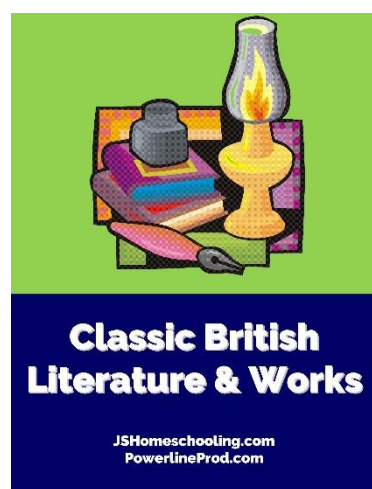
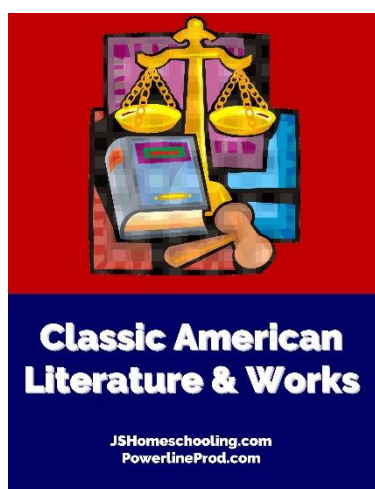
Teens can enjoy more difficult classics now – *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Ben Hur*, and *The Last of the Mohicans*. They can even read great works like *City of God*, *Plimoth Plantation*, and *Federalist Papers*. And they will still enjoy all the books on the Young Adult list and many on the younger list. A good book is a good book!

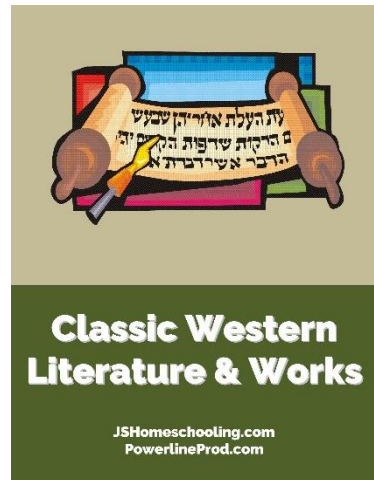
There are many good Christian novelists, too. Our family's favorites are Frank Peretti and Randy Alcorn. Both are amazing story tellers who write from a conservative Christian worldview.



Here are our lists for teens. They are divided up into four lists because I teach four different kinds of English classes in high school, and we read different literature in each. Now, it's how my brain works now when it comes to high school literature and works.

Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>





HISTORICAL FICTION

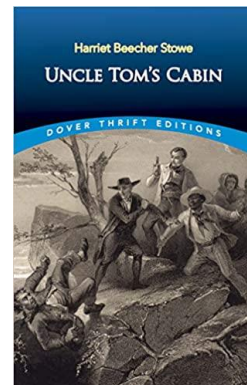
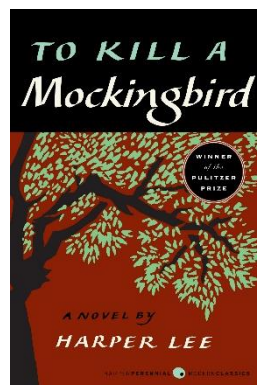
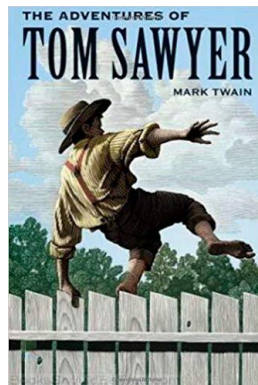
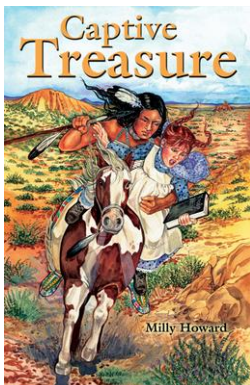
Historical Fiction is one of my favorite teaching tools. I always assign historical fiction books in history and Bible classes to help make the era we are studying come alive.

I always assign historical fiction books in history and Bible to help make the period we are studying come alive.

AMERICAN HISTORY

For **American History**, *Amos Fortune Free Man* by Elizabeth Yates, *Sarah Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

My younger children enjoy **The Childhood of Famous American** series (biographies focusing on childhood), **We Were There** (stories set at historic events; some are out of print and others being reprinted as I write this), and the **Christian Heritage** series (stories set throughout American history, but now out of print—look for it at used bookstore).



YOU CAN BUILD A HOMESCHOOL LIBRARY

Older children enjoy classics by Mark Twain (*Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*), James Fenimore Cooper (*Last of the Mohicans*, *Deer Slayer*), and Nathaniel Hawthorne (*House of Seven Gables*, *The Scarlet Letter*). These works are not thought of as historical literature, but they are great to read while you are studying corresponding history.

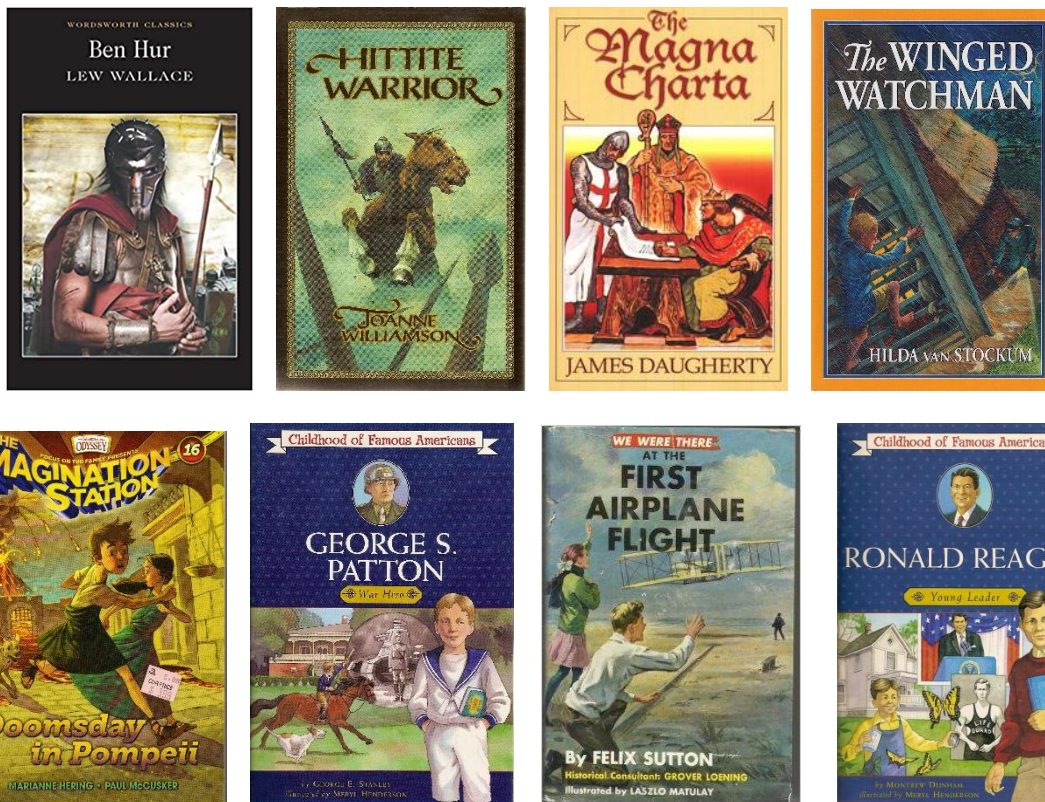
WORLD HISTORY

When it comes to **Ancient History**, I love *Adam and His Kin: The Lost History of Their Lives and Times* by Ruth Beechick, *Hittite Warrior* by Joann Williamson, and *The Bronze Bow* by Elizabeth George Speare.

The **Middle Ages** came alive with *Otto of the Silver Hand* by Howard Pyle, *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott, and *The Magna Charta* by James Daugherty.

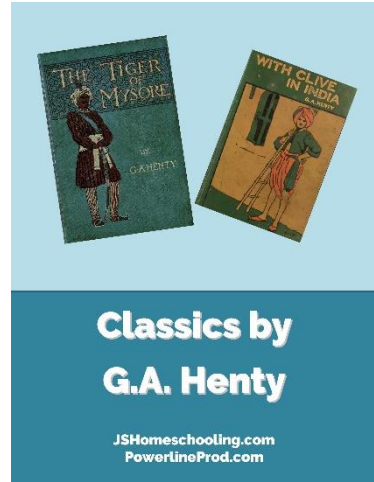
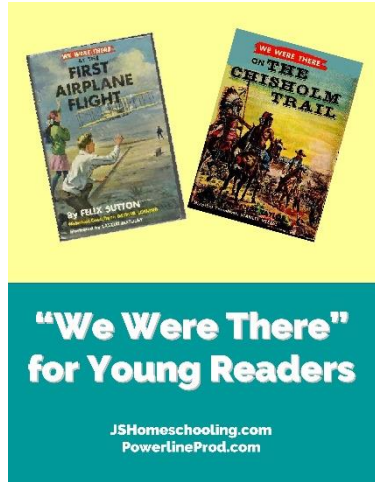
Our family's favorite historical fiction authors are R.M. Ballantyne (*Rover of the Andes*, *Fast in the Ice*, *Coral Island*), Howard Pyle (*Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Men of Iron*, *Otto of the Silver Hand*), Robert Louis Stevenson (*Treasure Island*) and G.A. Henty (*In Freedom's Cause*, *The Dragon and the Raven*, *With Lee in Virginia*, *The Young Carthaginian*).

I just keep my eyes open for used book bargains and book sales, picking up historical fiction as I find it.



There are some series that we really love when it comes to historical fiction. The “We Were There” series is for younger children along with Focus on the Family’s **Imagination Station**

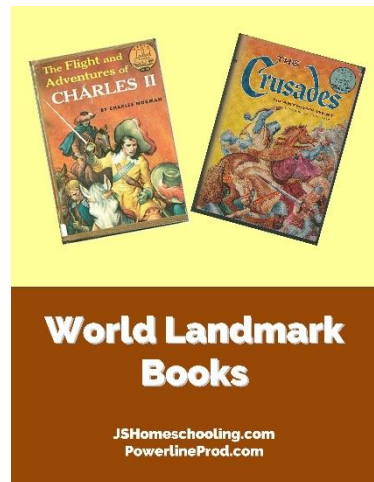
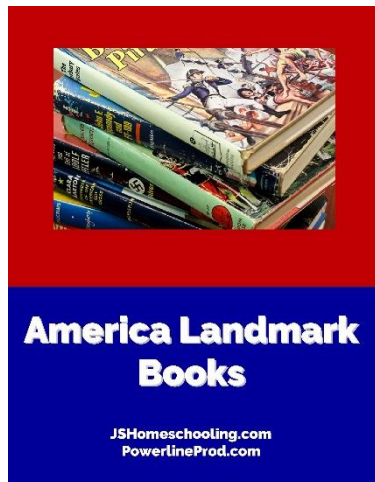
series, and the GA Henty and Landmark books are for upper elementary to high school. Great books!



Older children enjoy classics by Lew Wallace (*Ben Hur*, *Prince of India*, *The Fair God*), Charles Dickens (*Tale of Two Cities*, *Oliver Twist*), Rudyard Kipling (*Kim*, *Jungle Book*), and Jane Austen (*Pride & Prejudice*, *Persuasion*, *Sense & Sensibility*)

Biographies are also a great way to learn about history!

Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>



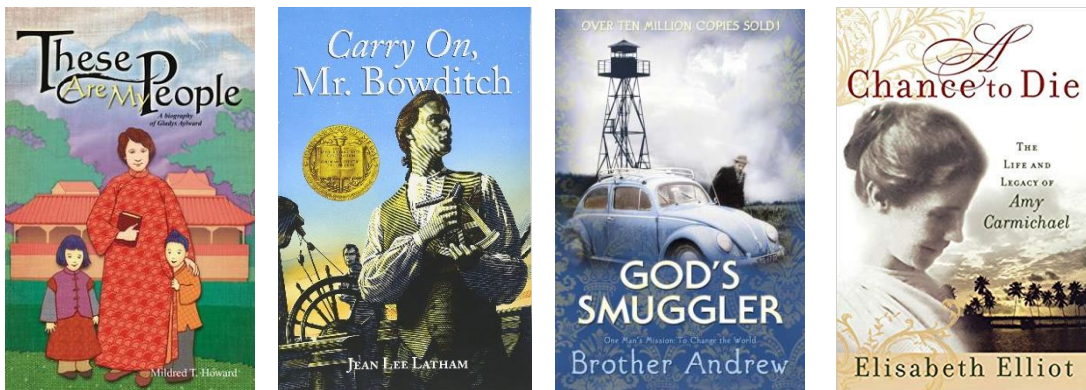
BIOGRAPHIES

This is my favorite way to learn about people from other times and places.

Biographies, like historical fiction, introduce us to the time and place we are studying by seeing it through the eyes of one person, the subject of the biography.

When I read a well-written biography, I feel like I have a new friend. Of course, usually this new friend lives somewhere far away and is no longer alive!

When I was a little girl I read every single book in the Childhood of Famous American series, a set of biographies written for children, that I could get my hands on. Soon after he learned to read, my son Jimmy gobbled them up too.



Autobiographies are biographies written about the author.

Two autobiographies that our family enjoys are *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington and *The Autobiography of Ben Franklin* by Benjamin Franklin.

Collections of biographies are wonderful to learn about several people at once. *The Light and the Glory* by Peter Marshall & David Manuel contains biographies of Americans while *Mr. Pipes and the British Hymn Writers* by Douglas Bond shares the stories of songwriters.

LOGS, DIARIES, JOURNALS

Closely related are diaries and journals. We read *The Log of Christopher Columbus* in US History class, his personal account of his famous voyage across the Atlantic in 1492. A few years ago, I read *The Journals of Captain James Cook* and loved it!

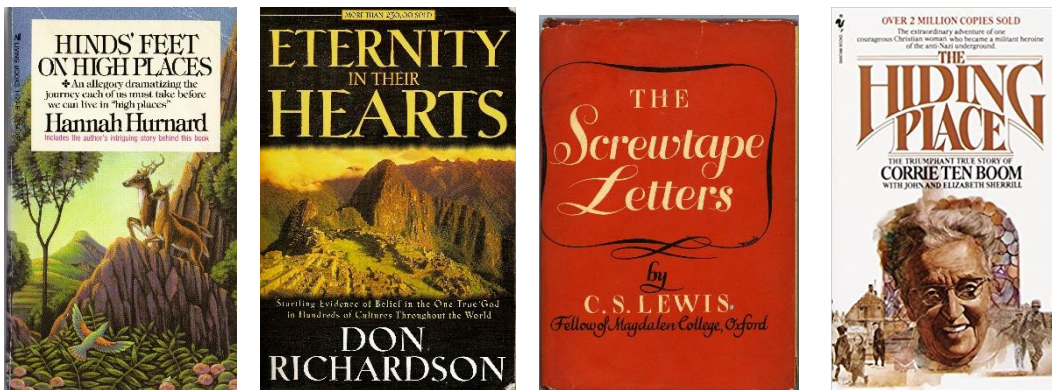
Journals can inspire. When missionary David Brainerd died at a very young age, his father-in-law-to-be published his journal. *The Diary of David Brainerd* inspired millions of men and women to head to the mission field!

INSPIRATIONAL BOOKS

Inspirational books are for all ages and help us grow closer to the Lord. *Search for Significance*, *Victory Over Darkness*, and *The Screwtape* are wonderful examples of this category of books.

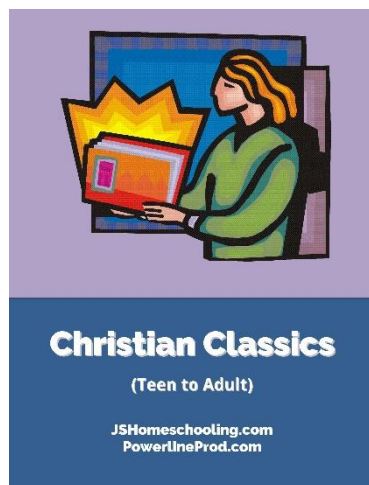
My children have a deep desire to grow in their walks with Jesus in their teen years. They have enjoyed some of my favorite books and have discovered their own favorites.

More Curtis favorites, both classic and modern, to inspire spiritual growth: *A Christian's Secret to a Happy Life* by Hannah Whittell Smith, *Hinds Feet on High Places* by Hannah Hannard, *Prison to Praise* by Marlin Carothers, *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom, *Eternity in their Hearts* by Don Richardson, and *Search for Significance* by Robert McGee.

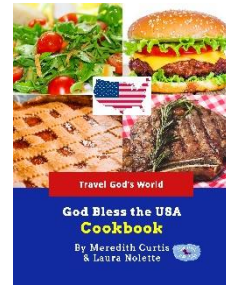
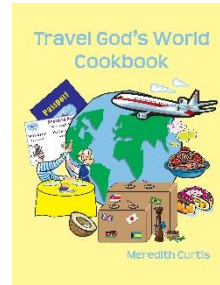
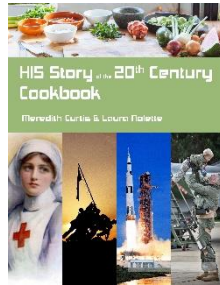
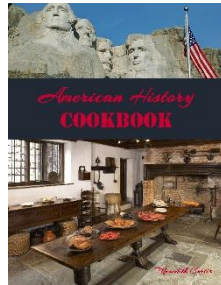
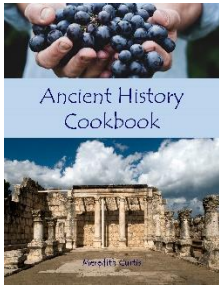


You can download reading lists with our family's favorite Christian Classics. You can download them or just bookmark the page. Moms tell me they pull up my reading list page when they shop for books. I love that!

Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>



COOKBOOKS



Cookbooks are always fun, especially historical, or geographical ones with recipes you can use to supplement history class. We have enjoyed finding vintage cookbooks and updating the recipes.

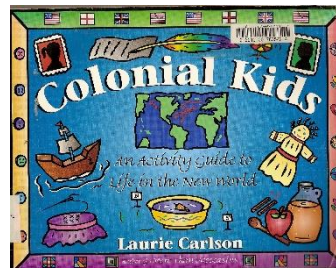
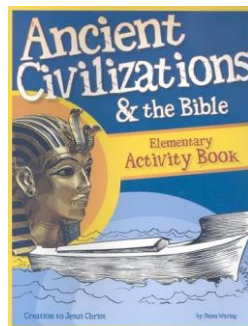
We have also researched recipes from other time periods and places around the world to come up with our own history and geography cookbooks! Our cookbooks have interesting food and agriculture facts along with history tidbits to spice them up. Don't underestimate their value in the homeschool library.

Our Cookbooks:

- [*Ancient History Cookbook*](#)
- [*American History Cookbook*](#)
- [*HIS Story of the 20th Century Cookbook*](#)
- [*Travel God's World Cookbook*](#)
- [*God Bless the USA Cookbook*](#)

ACTIVITY & PARTY BOOKS

These are a great investment if you use unit studies to learn or want to add fun to history. Because I usually need someone else to come up with creative hands-on activities, these books are important books for me, the teacher. Sometimes, ideas I come across in these books start my own creative juices flowing.



MEREDITH CURTIS

One of my favorite activity books has been *Classical Kids: A Guide to Life in Ancient Greece & Rome* by Laurie Carlson. She has more books in this series. Diana Waring also has some neat history activity books, including *Ancient Civilizations and the Bible Activity Guide*. We have used all her activity books for World History unit studies and had a blast!

I have also created some activity books based on parties we have had in our homeschool co-op: medieval banquets, luaus, Victorian teas, archaeology digs, and modified Ancient Greek Olympics. These are fun books to read as well as a how-to-guide to plan and host your own history party.



Our History Party Books:

- [*Let's Have Our Own Medieval Banquet*](#)
- [*Let's Have Our Own Luau*](#)
- [*Let's Have Our Own Victorian Tea*](#)
- [*Let's Have Our Own Archaeological Dig*](#)
- [*Let's Have Our Own Ancient Greek Olympic Games*](#)

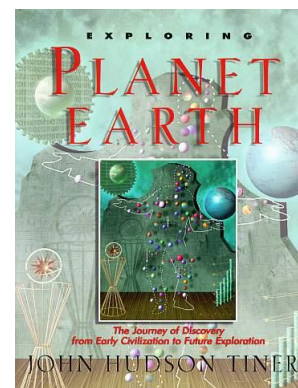
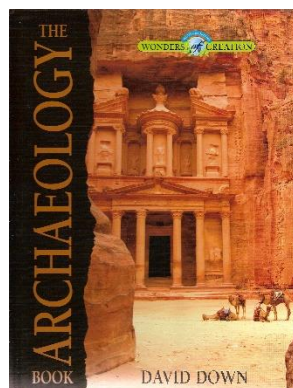
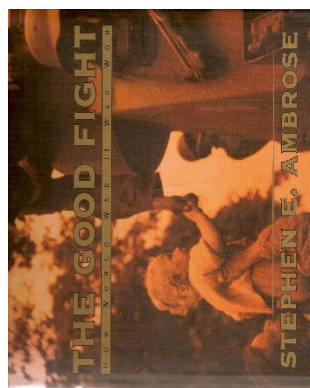
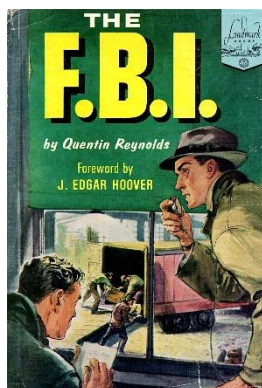
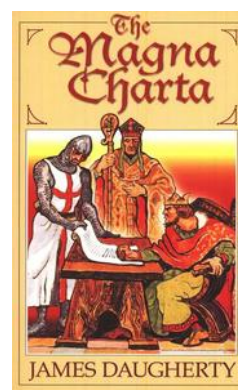
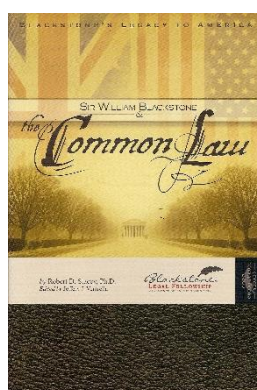
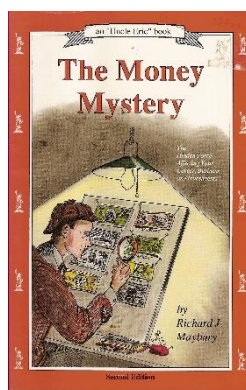
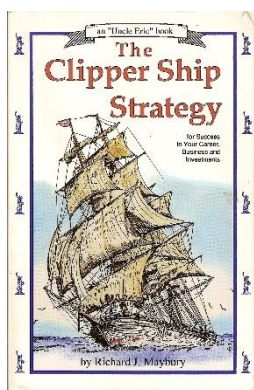
LIVING BOOKS ON ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

These books make learning fun! Instead of dry facts and information, living books breathe life into learning about whatever topic they are about. Your child will enjoy these books and become fans of learning!

Landmark books, Genevieve Foster's history books, and Memoria Press' Famous Men series are all painless ways to learn history. For Science, we have enjoyed *Exploring Planet Earth: The Journey of Discovery from Early Civilization to Future Exploration* by John Hudson Tiner and *Dry Bones and Other Fossils* by Gary & Mary Parker.

Economics comes alive with Richard Maybury's Uncle Eric series including *Whatever Happened to Penny Candy?*. Financial management is easy to learn and remember with Larry Burket or Dave Ramsey. Government is more fun when you read vintage classics by William Blackstone and John Locke, but who can resist *The Magna Charta* by James Daugherty.

A "living book" is one that seems to breathe life into the subject that it's about, so read a page or two before you purchase the book. If it doesn't spark your interest, chances are that it won't spark your children's interest either.



GREAT BOOKS

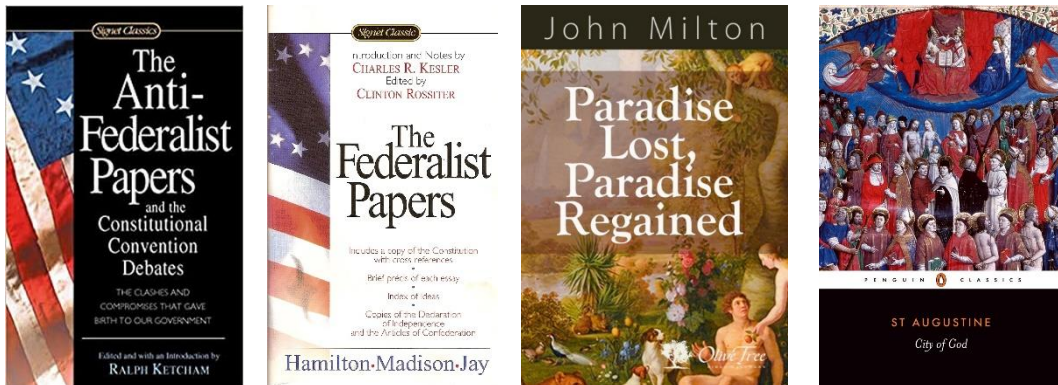
Great books have impacted people over generations and in so doing changed the world. People still quote from Adam Smith's *Wealth of the Nations*, and it was published in 1776.

Great books can be wonderful, such as *City of God* by St. Augustine or terrible, such as *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx.

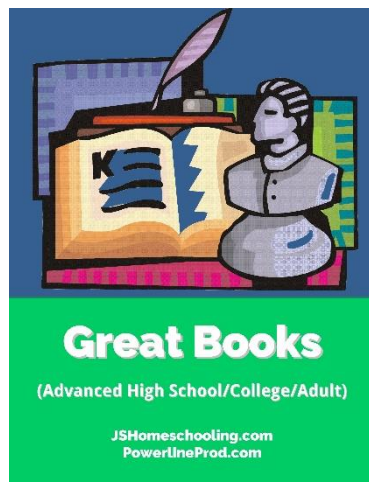
What makes a book "great" is that it has impacted the world. Most of these books cannot be read and understood until junior and senior year or college but pick them up as you find them.

You can use my Great Books Reading List on my website PowerlineProd.com.

Free Reading Lists: <https://www.powerlineprod.com/books/reading-lists/>



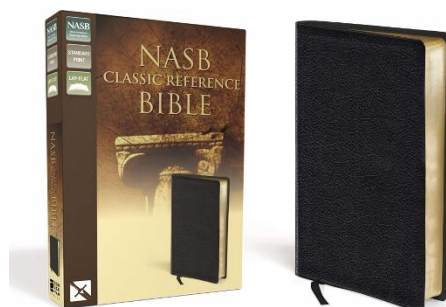
You may find yourself making a list of great books that you want to read too. Maybe you can read them together with your son or daughter.



BIBLES

Have several Bibles in the house so that there is always a Bible handy to look something up. We have several different translations.

Our favorite translations are the NASB (New American Standard Bible), the RSV (Revised Standard Bible), and the NKJV (New King James Version. Of course, every home should have a King James Version and a Geneva Bible.



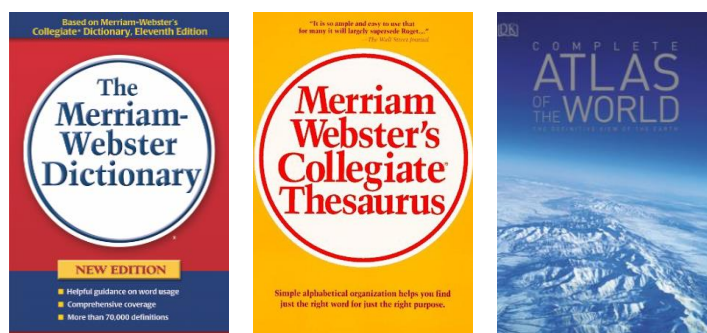
A Greek and Hebrew Interlinear Bible is a great Bible study tool along with Vine's Concordance (though many Bibles today have concordances). I also like to have nice Bible maps.

We stay away from paraphrased versions like *The Message* because it's too easy to twist passages to suit the culture.

REFERENCE BOOKS

Yes, I know that you can use your online dictionary, but there is nothing quite like having a large *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* of your own. Place it next to *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus* and you are ready to do school right!

Even though there are plenty of maps online, there is nothing like a easy-to-read atlas and globe. Maps are fun to pour over and imagine where you would travel if you could go anywhere.



STORING BOOKS

As you collect books for your home library, where should you store them?

BOOKSHELVES

We love tall bookshelves that line many walls in our home. Every book and textbook have a home shelf. I also used to leave one shelf empty for the books we were using that current school year.

We always had lots of bookshelves, but when we moved into our current home, we added even more bookcases. In the homeschool room, I divided our books into topics. Several shelves were devoted to geography, several to apologetics, and several to Bible. With great delight, I had three bookshelves to fill with my historical living books and historical fictions, so I filled them in order from Creation to Modern Times. Today, I have five bookshelves that house history books and historical fiction. I love it!

What fun we had over the years looking for books in historical order! We even had fun figuring out where books should go! It was a history lesson in itself.



In each of the children's bedrooms, they had their own bookshelf.

BASKETS

Baskets are another way to store books. Baskets can slide under the coffee table or hide in the corner of a room. You can even hang baskets on the wall. My daughter places baskets of books on the hearth of her fireplace.

TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF BOOKS

- Read books with clean hands.
- Use a bookmark instead of dogearing pages (I confess I do that) or leaving a book open.
- Don't spill food or drink on books.
- Interior walls are best for bookshelves providing air circulation but not too much temperature fluctuation.
- Stand books upright with spine facing out.
- Don't crowd books too tightly together or tilt them.
- Keep books out of direct sunlight (hard in my home state of Florida). Sunlight can fade the covers.
- Keep books away from humidity.
- Dust jackets are there to protect the book cover. Leave them on.
- Dust books regularly because dust can actually damage paper over time.



A COMFORTABLE PLACE TO READ

It's more fun to read if there is good light and a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Recliners, bean bag chairs, sofas, and other comfy seats are great for reading. So is laying down and snuggling under a blanket on a couch or bed. Outside, hammocks, rocking chairs, gliders, or lying down on a blanket are great places to read.



BOOK NOOKS

Recently, I created a book nook for my grandchildren with 6 small bookcases put together in a U-shape with pillows and little chairs in the center. The books contain US geography, world geography, Bible, and picture books that are cheery, colorful, and fun to read.

On top of the shelves in the book nook are globes, puzzles, and games for them to play with.

Another grandmother-friend turned an old wardrobe into an entrance to a room in her attic. Yes! Her grandchildren go through the wardrobe to enter not Narnia but a place to relax and read. I just love that! So creative!



BOOK CLUBS

After my oldest daughters graduated, I discovered book clubs. It started when my youngest son was trying to read *Last of the Mohicans* in seventh grade but not really enjoying it.

“Let’s try a book club. We could get our kids together, serve snacks and discuss *The Last of the Mohicans*,” I said to my friend Laura whose son was reading the same book.

My friend agreed. It worked out perfectly since we were using the same curriculum and our children were reading the same books.

We all decided to read the first five chapters of the book for book club. Laura and I planned to serve hot chocolate and a variety of yummy treats like popcorn and cookies.

The first meeting was a wake-up call for everyone! The book was super-hard for our middle schoolers to read. I was confused by who was who because they were referred to by different names. I don’t think we would have realized that if we hadn’t been talking about the beginning of the book in book club.

Laura volunteered to make a little chart with names, including every name used for each character along with a descriptive sentence about each character. This helped me and the kids tremendously.

We rescheduled the book club to go over the first five chapters. At that meeting, everyone had an opinion about the characters, the setting, and the storyline (plot). We discussed the French and Indian War, including various battles since the story was set during that time.

We met three more times until we finished the book. The next book was easier, so everyone read the whole book and we gathered for book club.

EVERYONE GET COMFORTABLE

What makes book clubs so popular is the relaxed environment. You are sitting in a comfortable chair or couch. You are eating and drinking things you enjoy. Best of all, you are talking to your friends and family. Everyone shares their opinions respectfully!

To have your own book club, you will need:

- A discussion leader
- Everyone to read the book and bring the book along
- A comfortable place to sit where everyone can see each other (circles work great!)
- Yummy food
- Yummy drinks

QUESTIONS TO ASK

I started every book club with this question, “Did you like the book? Why or why not?” This often starts lively discussions because people have different opinions about the same book.

Here are some things I like to cover in book clubs:

- Plot
- Characterization
- Setting
- Mood/Tone
- Theme
- Worldview
- Foreshadowing

I don’t try to cover all of those topics in each book club. I will usually keep the discussion going by asking the questions, “What did you like about this character?” followed up by, “Why?” Then I will ask the kids who they didn’t like and why.



Another one of my favorite questions is “Was the ending satisfying?” So many times, we have ended up with folks sharing a new ending and others standing firm that the original ending is the best! It’s such fun when the discussion gets lively!

RABBIT TRAILS

We embrace rabbit trails because they lead to us learning more than we could ever imagine. One rabbit trail started with a young girl admitting that she thought Robin Hood would make a great husband. Several other teens quickly disagreed. A lively discussion followed where the character Robin Hood was thoroughly dissected from every angle. That would never have happened writing a paper about *Robin Hood*.

Another time we were discussing the *City of God* by Augustine. We were amazed at the things that Augustine was addressing. So much was like things going on today in our culture. This led

YOU CAN BUILD A HOMESCHOOL LIBRARY

to some deep thinking about how to live a godly life as a Christian, to be in the world, but not of it.



RESPECT

Differing opinions is an important part of education. In America, we value freedom of speech. However, free speech doesn't mean being crass, ugly, or rude. We share our opinions politely and we respect people's opinions that are different from our own. The exception to this is that the Bible has the final say.

THE BLESSINGS OF BOOK CLUBS

What started out as something to do to make school more fun turned out to enrich our children academically. Discussing literature made the children read more thoroughly and even underline and highlight paragraphs to discuss in book club.

As we discussed the elements of literature (plot, setting, characters, theme, point-of-view, voice) in a natural way, these things became easier and easier to understand and talk about. The kids loved discussing foreshadowing because it was like solving a mystery. Symbolism was another fun topic because everyone brings a fresh perspective.

Yes, we loved sitting in comfortable chairs to talk about books and eat cookies, but we began to enjoy literature at a deeper level. Book clubs have enriched my children's education and enjoyment of literature! I highly recommend them to you!

MEREDITH CURTIS



Happy book shopping and library building! (I love both - hope you do too!)

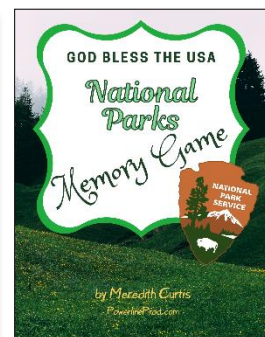
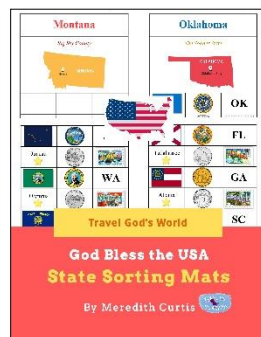
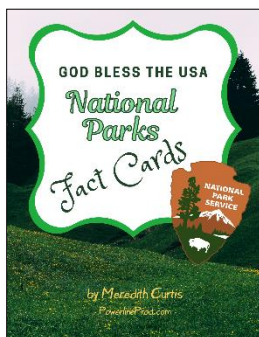
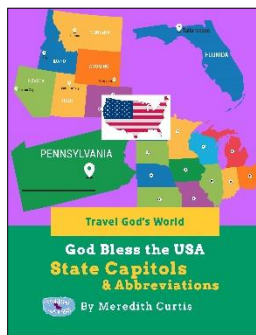
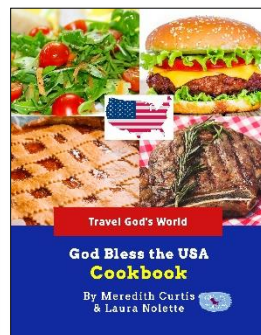
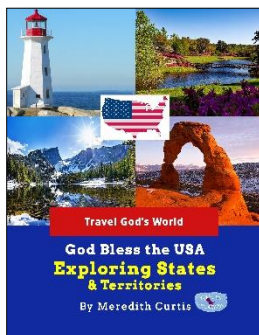
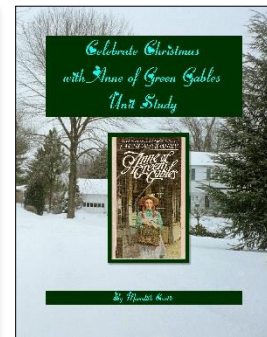
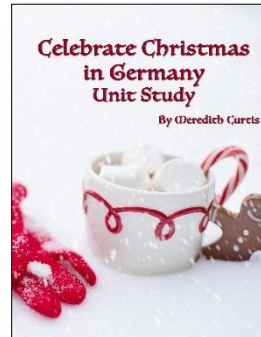
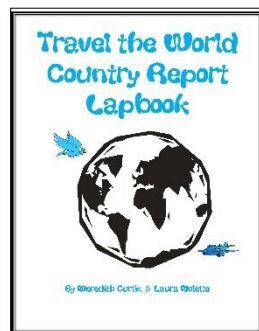
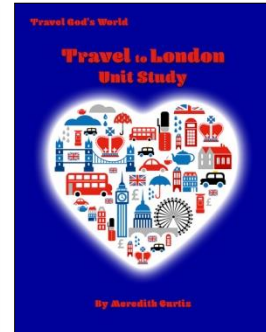
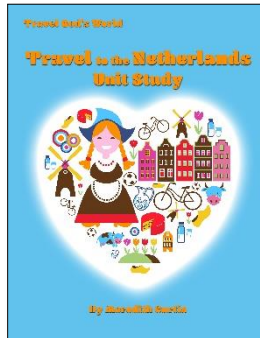
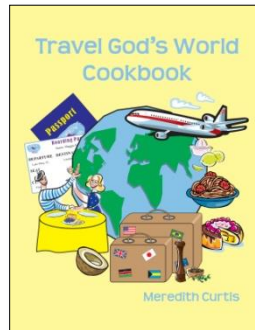
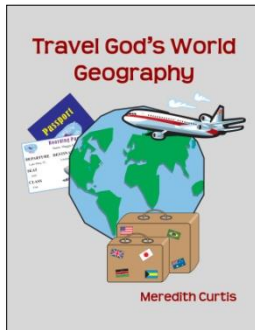
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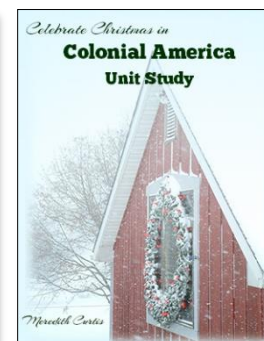
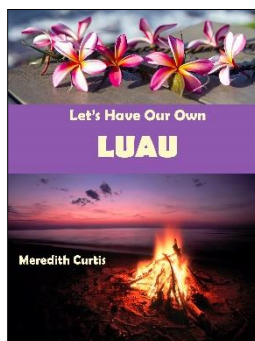
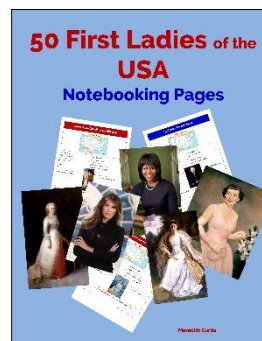
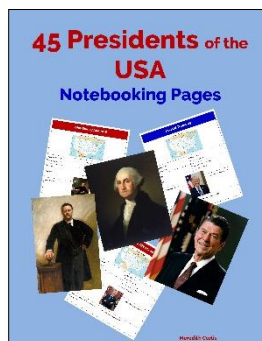
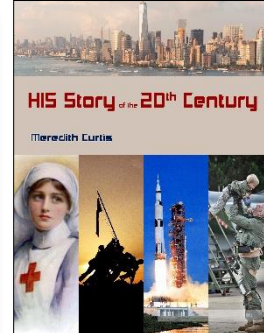
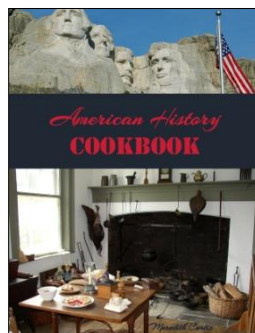
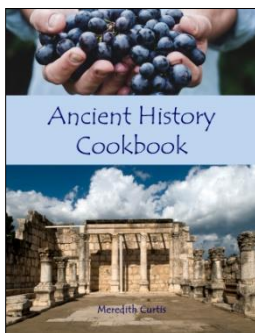
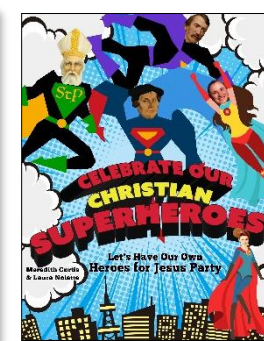
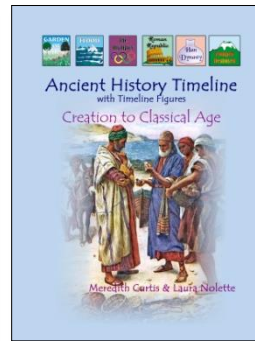
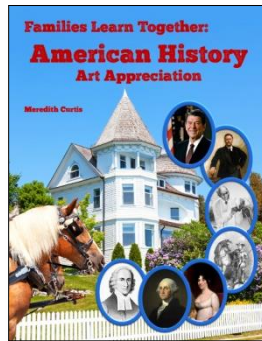
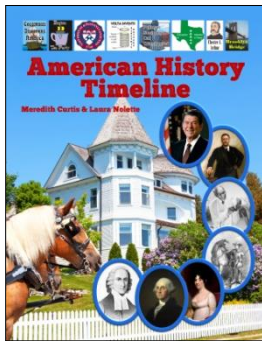
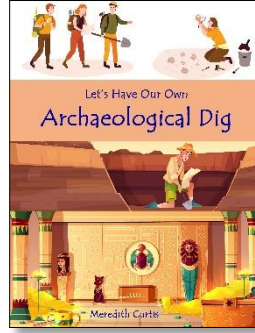
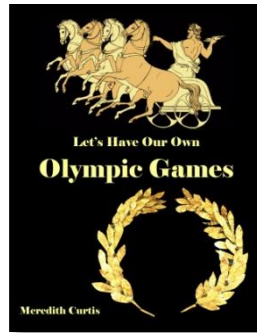
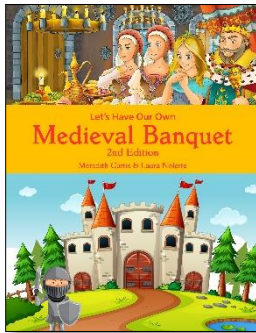
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TEACH HISTORY THE FUN WAY

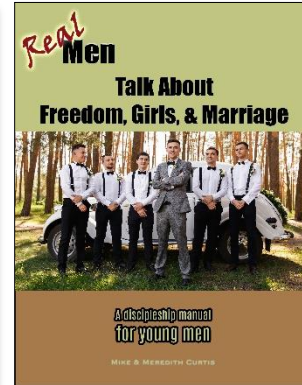
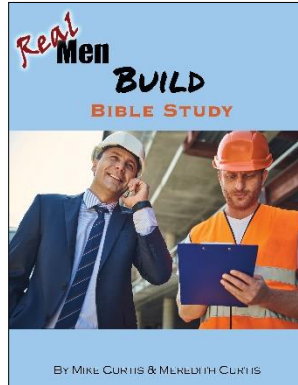
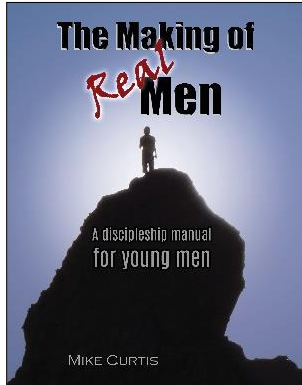


HIGH SCHOOL & MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSES



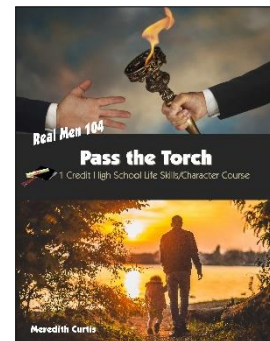
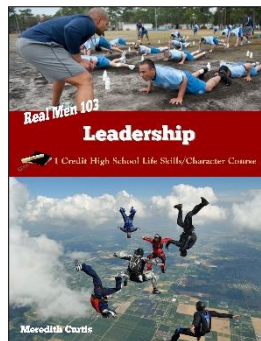
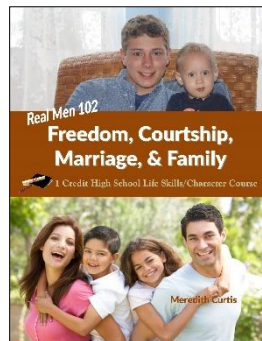
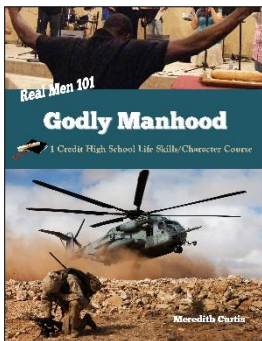
REAL MEN DISCIPLESHIP MANUALS

God calls fathers to impart life to their sons, passing the baton in the race of faith. These Bible studies were created for fathers (or mentors) to go through this material with their sons. Pastor Mike Curtis used these materials to mentor his own son and other young men in the church. These manuals cover tough issues that fathers and sons need to talk about and live out in their lives.

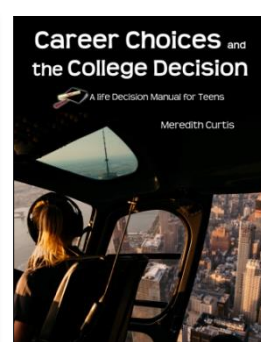
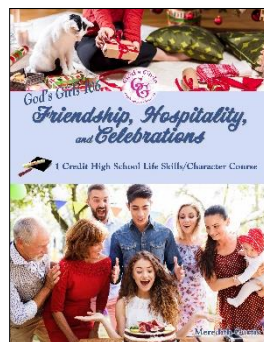
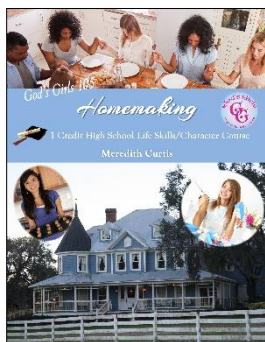
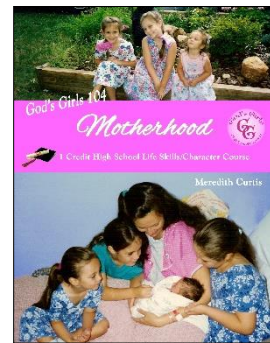
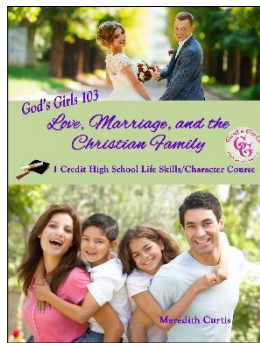
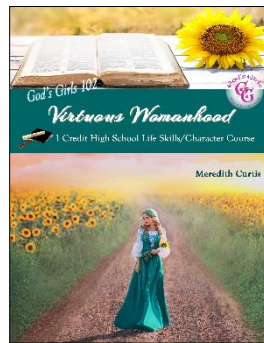
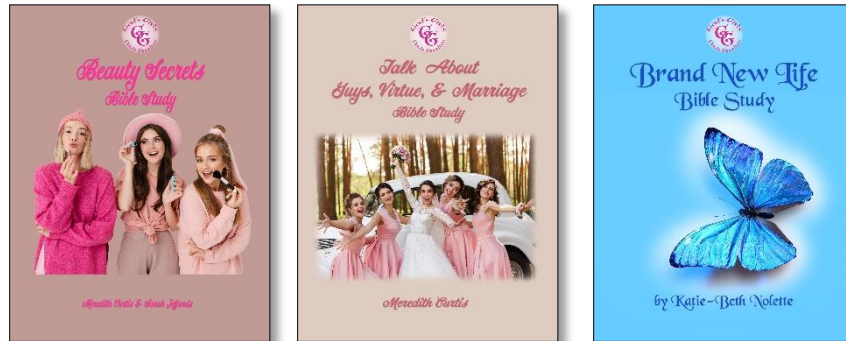


REAL MEN HIGH SCHOOL ELECTIVES

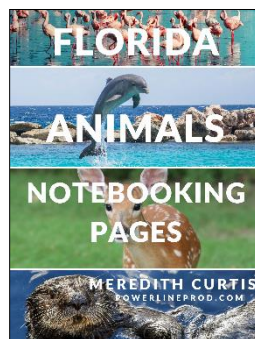
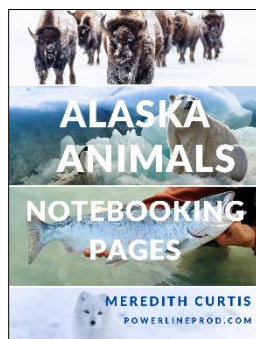
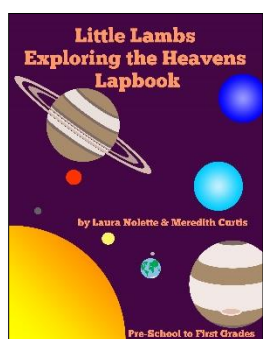
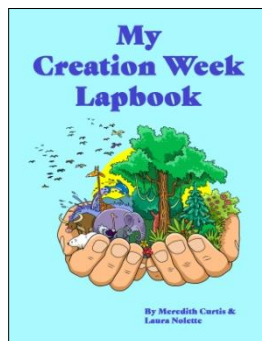
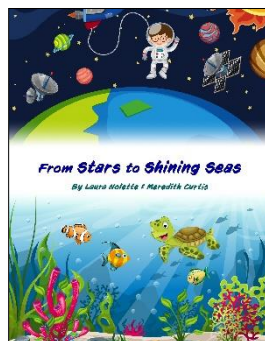
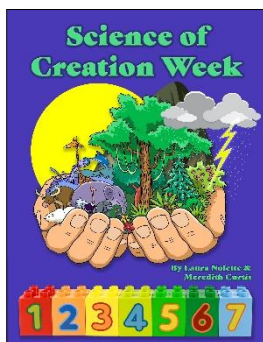
Do you want to prepare your sons to become godly husbands, fathers, church leaders, and pillars in their communities? These one-credit high school life skills classes build character and prepare young men for the future. Using living books, Scripture, and practical assignments, young men will learn to become the man God has called them to be.



GOD'S GIRLS BIBLE STUDIES & HIGH SCHOOL ELECTIVES



TEACH STEM THE FUN WAY



LADIES

