

History & Geography Curriculum Q & A

Q: Does anyone have any good recommendations for a general overview of history? I'm also looking for a good way to teach geography - really learning where countries and states are, to be able to relate them to each other and explore historical and present day relationships and conflicts. Any suggestions?

A: I don't know if this covers colonization and revolution, but Charles Dickens wrote *A Child's History of England*.

For geography, we do lots of map tracing and drawing of historical and current maps. It is typically easy to find a map of whatever we are looking for on google (related to whatever history we happen to be reading about) to print out and trace, but I also have several map resources, such as [Map Trek Outline Maps - all formats](#) and multiple atlases, mainly to add hand drawn features to traced outline maps.

Also, many library history books have decent maps for copying or tracing. [Sheppardsoftware.com](#) has "games" for memorizing capitals.

A: We followed the Ambleside Online Charlotte Mason curriculum (<https://www.amblesideonline.org/>) a lot in the early years, and through it found out about the wonderful Henrietta Marshall history books. She's British, but her history of the US is called *This Country of Ours*, and it has a lot of detail on early colonization that I had never known before.

It's not quite as good as her history of Britain, *Our Island Story*, but that's setting the bar pretty high. We found the latter to be the ultimate in history-as-a-ripping-good-bedtime-story.

The Baldwin Project has both in full text online, so you can try sample chapters and see what you think. The TCOO link is here: (http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=marshall&book=country&story=_contents)

For geography, I was going to mention *exactly* what L. just did - tracing maps, and Sheppard Software, which has a ton of geography games and puzzles at varying levels of difficulty.

A: We have been enjoying the Oxford University Press series for middle school and will continue with it next year. [The Medieval and Early Modern World Series](#) is a set of 7 books. The last three books in that series cover the ages of exploration, empires, and revolution that you are interested in.

I also like the US history books by [Joy Hakim: A History of US](#). This is a set of 10. However, books 2 and 3 cover the colonies and the revolution.

As for geography, we use our globe to accompany the maps in the history books and anything we print from online research.

A: I would offer up some less traditional approaches to spice things up. We used a lot of these and my now-grown homeschoolers can talk history with the best of them - especially my son Sean, who knows more military history than most college profs.

History through movies (for visual learners) and historical fiction (for those who prefer reading) - These bring out the human side of history and we had great discussions comparing the fictional vs factual versions of history.

Biographies are also great for kids who are people-oriented. My daughter learned a LOT of history this way; she needed the personal/social context for the facts to make sense to her.

Larry Gonick created [The Cartoon History of the Universe](#) that my kids loved. A fun overview of the "big picture" - it catalyzed further exploration of many topics my kids might not otherwise have thought interesting.

For hands-on learners, consider cooking foods, creating art, trying crafts of the time and culture being studied. Build architectural models, do science projects of the times, etc.

Regarding geography: One of the best expenditures we made was purchasing classic classroom pull-down maps of both the US and the world, as well as a globe. We mounted them out of the way but

very visible over a wide doorway. Then when something came up in current events, we would pull down the maps, discuss the event, see connections with other locations, etc. Often we would start on one side of the world and 30 min later marvel that we ended up talking about something on the opposite side of the world! All things are connected....

A: [Genevieve Foster books](#) are horizontal histories and tell about the world at a particular time from multiple perspectives/countries. Relatively basic and not without fault but also really wonderful. Great for people who enjoy the story and personal part of history more than dates or battles.

Mapping the World by Art by [Ellen Mchenry](#) is a lovely geography and drawing program.

Oh, and I just remembered a children's book we enjoyed long ago called [George vs. George](#) and [Tales of the American Revolution](#) from both Georges' (as in King George and George Washington) perspectives.