

The Classical Academy of Naples

A Classical Approach to History

by Susan Wise Bauer

The logical way to tell a story is to begin (as the King said to Alice) at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end. Any story makes less sense when learned in bits and pieces. If you were to tell your five-year-old the story of Hansel and Gretel, beginning with the house made of candy and cookies (because that's likely to be the most interesting part of the story to the five-year-old), then backing up and telling about the woodchopper's unfortunate second marriage, then skipping to the witch's demise, the story isn't going to make a coherent whole in the child's mind.

History is no different. Yet it's too often taught unsystematically, as a series of unrelated bits and pieces: American history this year, ancient history the next, eighteenth-century France the year after that. By the time you graduated high school or college, you'd studied King Tut, the Trojan War, the Bronze Age, the rise of the city-state and the Exodus. Chances are you studied these subjects in different years, out of different textbooks. You probably can't put them into chronological order in your own mind. Furthermore, you probably spent twice as much time on American history as you did on the history of the rest of the world combined. American history is important for Americans, but this myopic division of the curriculum does the Founding Fathers a disservice. Children who plunge into the study of the American Revolution with no knowledge of the classical models used by Jefferson and Washington and their colleagues can achieve only a partial understanding of American government and ideals. And American history ought to be kept in perspective; the history curriculum covers seventy centuries, America occupies two of those centuries.

A common assumption made by history programs seems to be that children can't comprehend (or be interested in) people and events distant from their own experience. So the first-grade history class is renamed Social Studies and begins with what the child knows — first herself and her family, then her community, her state, her country, and only then the rest of the world. This intensely self-focused pattern of study encourages the student of history to relate everything she studies to herself, to measure the cultures and customs of other peoples by her own experience. If you begin your child with herself and only then move outwards, you can easily give her the impression that she is the center of the universe, and that history which doesn't directly coincide with her particular wants and preoccupations is unnecessary.

The goal of the classical curriculum is entirely different. The student learns the proper place of her community, her state, and her country by seeing the broad sweep of history from its beginning and then fitting her own time and place into the pattern. How do you study history from the beginning?

Spend one year on each period, starting with the Ancients and working your way up to Modern Times. You can begin this cycle in any grade. Spend sixth grade on the Ancients, seventh on the Medievals, eighth on the Late Renaissance period, and ninth on Modern Times. Or start in first grade and finish in fourth grade. Whenever you finish, start over again and cover the material in greater depth.

Don't feel that you need a "history text." Instead, use a chronological survey of history as your base text and collect resources from your library.... For elementary students, our favorite history survey is *The Usborne Book of World History*. Middle-grade students can use *The Kingfisher Illustrated History of the World*, while high school should use *The Timetables of History*. These texts will introduce you to countries, civilizations, and personalities. Now go to the library for supporting materials. Write book reports and compositions, do projects, color maps, and recreate battles with toy soldiers. Middle grade students can begin to read simplified sources such as retellings of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and original documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Older students can read more difficult original sources — Aristotle's *Ethics*, the Federalist Papers. The library is packed with colorful, informative and fascinating books on everything from ancient African civilization to the beginnings of the Atomic Age. So don't tie yourself to a text. Tell the story of history to your child — from beginning to end.

We divide history into the following periods:

- Ancients, BC 5000-500 AD
- Medieval/Early Renaissance, 500-1500
- Late Renaissance/Early Modern, 1500-1840
- Modern Times, 1840-Present

Ancients

Theme	List of Topics <small>This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.</small>	
The Ancient World (Pre-historic- 500B.C.)	Continents The first humans First Farmers Ancient Egypt Indus valley Ancient Crete The Myceneans Shang Dynasty The Hittites Babylon	Cheops, pharaoh of Egypt (2700-2675 BC) Abraham (c. 2100 BC) Hammurabi (c. 1750 BC) Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt (c. 1480 BC) Moses (c. 1450 BC) Tutankhamen (c. 1355 BC) Nebuchadnezzar (1146 - 1123 BC) King David (c. 1000 BC) Homer (c. 800 BC)

	<p>The Assyrians The Hebrews The New Kingdom of Egypt The Phoenicians America The founding of Rome Greek Dark Ages The Zhou Dynasty The Persian Empire The Arts Science and Technology</p>	<p>Romulus (753-716 BC) Sennacherib (705-681) Lao-tse (Chinese philosopher, b. 604 BC) Pythagoras (581-497 BC) Confucius (Kung Fu-tse) (551-479) Buddha (Siddharthat Gautama) (550-480 BC) Darius I of Persia (522-485 BC)</p>
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Theme	List of Topics This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.	
<p>The Classical Period (499 B.C.- A.D. 500)</p>	<p>Classical Greek Greek City-States Alexander the Great India: The Mauryan Empire China: The Qin Dynasty Africa Judea The Roman Republic The Roman Empire The Celts China: The Han Dynasty Christianity The Americas The Decline of Rome The Barbarians Japan The Maya The Arts Architecture Science and Technology</p>	<p>Socrates (470-399 BC) Hippocrates (b. 460 BC) Plato (427-347 BC) Aristotle (384-322 BC) Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) Shi Huangdi (first emperor of unified China, 221-207 BC) Hannibal (fought with Rome c. 218-207 BC) Judas Maccabeus (c. 168 BC) Cicero (106-43 BC) Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) Virgil (70-19 BC) Caesar Augustus (c. 45 BC-14 AD) Jesus Christ (c. 4 BC-33 AD) Caligula (died 42 AD) St. Paul (c. 45 AD) Nero (died 68 AD) Marcus Aurelius (ruled 161-180 AD) Constantine the Great (ruled 306-337 AD)</p> <p>Attila the Hun (c. 433-453) St. Augustine (writing c. 411)</p>

Medieval

Theme	List of Topics This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.	
<p>The Middle Ages (501-1460)</p>	<p>The Byzantine Empire Monasticism Sui and Tang China Islam Persecution of the Jews North America Bulgars and Slavs The Carolingians The Abbasid Dynasty Ghana Magyars and Bohemians Anglo-Saxon Britian</p>	<p>King Arthur (the original Arthur was probably killed in 537 at the Battle of Camlan) Gregory of Tours (540-594) Mohammed (570-632) The Venerable Bede (672-735) Charles Martel (688-741) Charlemagne (ruled 768-814) Alfred the Great (849-899) Leif Ericson (discovered America c. 1000) Omar Khayyam (1027-1123)</p>

	<p>The Holy Empire Capetian France The Americas The Vikings The Normans The Crusades Knighthood Henry Anjou Shoguns and Samurai European Trade Venice Charter and Parliament Religion in the middle Ages The Mongol Empire Aztecs and Incas Medieval Explorers The Hundred Years War The Black Death The Ming Dynasty Constantinople The Arts Architecture Science and Technology</p>	<p>Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) Genghis Khan (b. 1155) Chretien de Troyes (1144-1190) Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) Chaucer (c. 1340-1400) Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) Jan van Eyck (c. 1390-1441) Johann Gutenberg (c. 1396-1468) Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510) Christopher Columbus (1482-1506) Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512) Leonardo da Vince (1452-1519)</p>
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Renaissance

Theme	List of Topics <small>This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.</small>	
<p>The Renaissance (1461-1600)</p>	<p>The Aztecs The Inca Empire The conquest of Spain The Renaissance Italy European Explorers The Songhay Empire Tudor England The Portuguese Empire The Reformation The Ottoman Empire The Moguls of India The Conquistadores The Hapsburgs The Spanish Armada French Wars of Religion Russia Dutch Independence North America Japan and China The Arts Architecture Science and Technology</p>	<p>Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510) Christopher Columbus (1482-1506) Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512) Leonardo da Vince (1452-1519) Erasmus (1465-1536) Michelangelo (1475-1564) Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) Titian (1477-1576) Thomas More (1478-1535) Ferdinand Magellan (1480-1521) Martin Luther (1483-1546) Raphael (1483-1520) Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) Correggio (1494-1534) Giovannie Angelo de Medici (1499-1565) Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) Nostradamus (1503-1566) John Knox (1505-1572) John Calvin (1509-1564) Hernando Cortes (enters Mexican capital, 1519) Pieter Brueghel (1520-1569) Palestrina (1525-1594) Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) Philip Sidney (1551-1586) Walter Raleigh (1554-1618) William Shakespeare (1564-1616) Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)</p>

		Jan Brueghel (1568-1625) John Donne (1572-1631) Inigo Jones (1573-1652) Rene Descartes (1596-1650)
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Theme	List of Topics	
	This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.	
Trade and Empire (1601-1707)	Japan in isolation The Stuarts Early American settlers The Swedish Empire The Thirty Years' Wars France and Richelieu Decline of Spain East India Companies The Dutch Empire English Civil War The Qing Dynasty of China The Sun King Decline of Mogul India The Ottoman Empire Salem Village and the Witch Hysteria Slavery in the United States	The Age of Reason Slavery and Pirates African States Ireland Russian Expansion The Great Northern War The Spanish Succession Colonial America The Arts Architecture Science and Technology Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) Jan Brueghel (1568-1625) John Donne (1572-1631) Inigo Jones (1573-1652) Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

Theme	List of Topics	
	This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.	
Revolution and Independence (1708-1835)	Austria and Prussia Scotland: The Jacobites Agricultural Revolution Industry: Early Revolution The Seven Years War Native American communities and cultures Trade with China The Age of Logic Modernizing Russia Exploration in Oceania The Birth of the U.S.A.	The Making of the Constitution The French Revolution The Napoleonic Wars The end of Slavery The British in India Revolt in Latin American Lewis and Clark Expedition Westward Migration Women in the American The Arts Architecture Science and Technology

Modern Era

Theme	List of Topics	
	This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.	
Unification and Colonization	Industrial revolution Conflict: Texas and Mexico The Opium Wars	The British Empire The Plains Wars The Boxer Rebellion

(1836-1913)	The Crimean War Japan The American Civil War Canada Europe: Ireland, Germany, Italy etc. Southeast Asia	Woman Suffrage The Balkan Wars The Arts Architecture Science and Technology
Theme	List of Topics <small>This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.</small>	
The World at War (1914-1949)	The Start of World War 1 Battles of WWI Unrest in Ireland The Rise of Fascism U.S.A between the Wars China in Turmoil The Great Depression Weimar and Hitler The Spanish Civil War China and Japan at War	German Expansion World War II The United Nations Indian Independence Israel The British Commonwealth Communist China The Arts Architecture Science and Technology
Theme	List of Topics <small>This list is a sample of topics that may be covered in class.</small>	
The Modern World (1950 to Present)	The Cold War Space Race World Economy Wars in Asia Civil Rights Terrorism Famine in Africa	New Nations War in the Middle East The Scientific Revolution Asian "Tiger" Economics World trouble spots Current events and issues The Arts Architecture Science and Technology

Student Objectives

Chronological Thinking

- A. Distinguish between past, present, and future time.
- B. Identify the temporal structure of a historical narrative or story.
- C. Establish temporal order in constructing students' own historical narratives.
- D. Measure and calculate calendar time.
- E. Interpret data presented in time lines.
- F. Create time lines.
- G. Explain change and continuity over time.

Historical Comprehension

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative.
- B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
- C. Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses.
- D. Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- E. Appreciate historical perspectives.
- F. Draw upon data in historical maps.
- G. Draw upon visual and mathematical data presented in graphs.
- H. Draw upon the visual data presented in photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings.

Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- A. Formulate questions to focus their inquiry or analysis.
- B. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions.
- C. Analyze historical fiction.
- D. Distinguish between fact and fiction.
- E. Compare different stories about a historical figure, era, or event.
- F. Analyze illustrations in historical stories.
- G. Consider multiple perspectives.
- H. Explain causes in analyzing historical actions.
- I. Challenge arguments of historical inevitability.
- J. Hypothesize influences of the past.

Historical Research

- A. Formulate historical questions.
- B. Obtain historical data.
- C. Interrogate historical data.
- D. Organize needed knowledge of the time and place, and construct a story, explanation, or historical narrative

Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

- A. Identify problems and dilemmas in the past.
- B. Analyze the interests and values of the various people involved.
- C. Identify causes of the problem or dilemma.
- D. Propose alternative choices for addressing the problem.
- E. Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.
- F. Identify the solution chosen.
- G. Evaluate the consequences of a decision.