

Fostering Wonder

History Grade 1 — British + American History Sample

Information Pages · Week 1 Lessons · Sample Term Celebration Week

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HISTORY — GRADE 1

Open-and-Go Format | 2 Lessons per Week | Estimated to be about 20 minutes each

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This curriculum uses living books to bring history alive for young learners. Each lesson includes a short preparation, a brief reading, and oral narration.

About This Curriculum

Lesson Structure (20 minutes total): - **Pre-Reading (3–5 minutes):** Introduce vocabulary, show a map or image, set the scene - **Reading (10–12 minutes):** Parent reads aloud while child listens attentively - **Narration (5 minutes):** Child tells back what they heard in their own words

About Pre-Reading Activities: The pre-reader activities at the beginning of each lesson are brief preparations meant to help the child attend to the reading with understanding.

- **Vocabulary:** Prepares words from the reading that may be unfamiliar, could become stumbling blocks to attention, or are important to the passage. Some entries also identify key figures who will appear in the assigned reading. Writing only the key figures' names on a classroom blackboard or whiteboard before the lesson can give the student a clear visual reference for the people they will encounter in the passage.
- **Map Activity:** Gives simple geography practice so the student can picture the locations named in the reading.
- **Image Activity:** Appears in selected lessons when additional images may be helpful. These suggested images provide optional visual support and may be found and printed in advance or displayed on a digital device before the reading. Previewing a relevant image can help the student form a clearer mental picture of the people, places, or events in the passage and support understanding as the text is read aloud.
- **Engaging Thought:** Gives the student one simple idea or question to listen for during the reading.

Charlotte Mason wrote in *Home Education* (Volume 1, p. 145), "Attention is hardly even an operation of the mind, but is simply the act by which the whole mental force is applied to the subject in hand." She continued, "This act, of bringing the whole mind to bear, may be trained into a habit at the will of the parent or teacher, who attracts and holds the child's attention by means of a sufficient motive."

Picture Study Suggestion: Picture study is an easy lesson to pair with history. Choose one artist for each 12-week term and place one or more pictures from that artist where the student can study them. Once a week, have the student look carefully at one painting or art piece for about 1–2 minutes. Then hide the picture and invite the student to recall as much as possible: colors, people or animals, landscape, facial expressions, and other details.

For this sample, one Grade 1 picture study selection is shown:

- **Picture Study: Bayeux Tapestry scenes**

The full curriculum includes two additional picture study selections for the other terms.

Optional picture study resources may be purchased separately from A Humble Place if desired; families may also use public-domain images or other art resources.

Charlotte Mason wrote in *Home Education* (Volume 1, p. 309), "When children have begun regular lessons (that is, as soon as they are six), this sort of study of pictures should not be left to chance, but they should take one artist after another, term by term, and study quietly some half-dozen reproductions of his work in the course of a term." She also wrote, "We cannot measure the influence that one or another artist has upon the child's sense of beauty, upon his power of seeing, as in a picture, the common sights of life; he is enriched more than we know in having really looked at even a single picture."

For the term celebration week, the student may choose a favorite work from that term's artist and try to recreate it. This recreation is not meant to look exactly like the original; instead, give the student about 7–10 minutes to focus on one specific section of the painting or artwork and try to create that portion, knowing it may not look exactly like the artist's creation. The point of this activity is for the student to notice details and begin to understand the artist's style. This may be done by using the same medium when practical, sketching or modeling the work, copying the art piece with tracing paper and a light box, or creating a new piece inspired by the artist's technique.

Composer Study Suggestion: Composer study is another simple lesson that pairs naturally with history. Choose one composer for each 12-week term and listen to a few pieces of that composer's music during the term. This may be done through any music streaming app, by watching a choir, early music ensemble, lute or consort performance, or orchestra performance on YouTube, or by attending a live performance when possible. The parent may briefly name the composer, the country or place connected with him, and the broad time period in which he lived, but the main work is simply to listen attentively and grow familiar with the music.

Because this course includes both British history and American biography, these composers are chosen from the broad historical world touched by the year rather than matched exactly to every weekly lesson.

For this sample, one Grade 1 composer study selection is shown:

- **Composer Study: Hildegard of Bingen** (medieval world, c. 1098–1179)

The full curriculum includes two additional composer study selections for the other terms.

After listening, the student may share what they noticed: instruments, voices, mood, tempo, repeated melodies, quiet or loud moments, or the kind of scene the music brought to mind. The goal is not formal music analysis, but regular acquaintance with beautiful music connected to the broad historical world of the course.

Using the Century Chart: The century chart included with the Grade 1 History curriculum package should be used as a tool to better help the student place the events and people studied this year in their mind. The parent may be the one to enter the information while the child watches and learns alongside you. It is a good idea to place this chart somewhere visible in the schoolroom so that your student may refer to it whenever needed.

The **Teacher Resources** file that comes with this curriculum is included to support the century chart work. It gives parents a simple date reference for the people, places, and events studied in the lessons, so entries can be placed in the correct century without interrupting the flow of the living-book reading. Families do not need to add every date or event listed; instead, parent and student may choose the people, places, and events that seem most meaningful or valuable to remember. Use this resource as a quiet parent aid, not as extra memorization work for the student.

Charlotte Mason wrote in Volume 1: "Then let the child himself write, or print, as he is able, the names of the people he comes upon in due order, in their proper century. We need not trouble ourselves at present with more exact dates, but this simple table of the centuries will suggest a graphic panorama to the child's mind, and he will see events in their time-order."

About Narration Prompts: The narration prompts in this curriculum are only suggestions. They are meant to spark conversation about the passage, not to be followed word for word. If your child naturally begins talking about what they heard, you do not need to use the prompt at all. The goal of narration is simply for the child to tell back what they experienced in the reading, in their own words and in their own way. Any prompt that opens that door is enough.

Educationally Appropriate content

All books in this curriculum carry strong academic credentials and are appropriate for educational purposes.

Why British History First?

Charlotte Mason wrote in *Home Education* (Volume 1) that "the early history of a nation is much better suited for children than more recent history because events move in a few broad, simple lines, like an adventure." She recommended that children begin with the foundational stories of their cultural heritage — the legends, heroes, and defining moments that shaped the language, laws, and values they inherited.

For American children, this means understanding Britain: the land from which our language, legal traditions, and many founding ideals originated. The stories of King Arthur, Alfred the Great, and the Norman Conquest are not foreign history — they are the deep roots of American history. A child who knows why Magna Carta matters, who has met the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans, will understand the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution far more richly when they encounter them.

Mason also emphasized that young children should "linger happily with the life history of one man living in a single time period until he's practically thinking the same thoughts as that man." This curriculum follows that principle: children dwell with Alfred, Franklin, Washington, and Lincoln — not racing through outlines, but coming to know real people in real times.

By pairing British history (*Our Island Story*) with American biography (the d'Aulaire books), this curriculum gives children both the roots and the branches of their heritage. They see the connection: the same love of liberty that drove Alfred to fight the Danes drove Washington to fight for independence. History becomes one continuous story, not isolated fragments.

Why American Historical Figures Are Included

Charlotte Mason encouraged families to begin history with the early story of their own nation and heritage before moving into more modern periods. For American students, that includes the British history that shaped America's language, law, and founding ideals. At the same time, many public schools and charter school programs require primary-grade students to study United States history and important American figures.

For this reason, *Fostering Wonder* includes both British history and selected American biographies in Grade 1. The American history lessons on Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln help families meet common school requirements while still preserving a Charlotte Mason approach.

Academic skills addressed:

- Historical thinking and chronological understanding
- Narrative comprehension and oral narration
- Vocabulary acquisition through context
- Map skills and geographical awareness
- Character study and moral reasoning
- Understanding of cause and effect in history
- Exposure to primary and secondary historical sources
- Connection of British and American historical narratives

Required Books

Affiliate disclosure: Some links below are Amazon affiliate links. As an Amazon Associate, Fostering Wonder may earn from qualifying purchases.

Book	Author	Format	Link
<i>Our Island Story</i>	H.E. Marshall	Free online text	UPenn Digital Library
<i>Our Island Story</i>	H.E. Marshall	Alternate print edition — page numbers may differ; use chapter titles if needed	Amazon
<i>Benjamin Franklin</i>	Ingri & Edgar d'Aulaire	Book — Terms 1–2	Rainbow Resource
<i>George Washington</i>	Ingri & Edgar d'Aulaire	Book — Terms 2–3	Rainbow Resource
<i>Abraham Lincoln</i>	Ingri & Edgar d'Aulaire	Book — Term 3	Rainbow Resource

Our Island Story — H.E. Marshall (1905). Classic narrative history of Britain, used in Charlotte Mason and classical education programs worldwide. Covers British history from legendary origins through the Victorian era in an engaging, story-based format appropriate for young learners. In this Grade 1 curriculum, *Our Island Story* covers Chapters 1–37, from the mythical origins of Britain through the Norman and early Plantagenet kings (ending with Henry III and Hubert de Burgh). The story continues in Grade 2. Develops historical thinking, narrative comprehension, geographical awareness, and vocabulary acquisition.

Benjamin Franklin — Ingri & Edgar d'Aulaire (1950). Caldecott Honor-winning biography. The d'Aulaires are recognized as masters of children's biography, and their works are standard texts in

classical, Charlotte Mason, and Waldorf education programs. Develops reading comprehension, understanding of cause and effect, character study, and knowledge of American history and the founding era.

George Washington — Ingri & Edgar d'Aulaire (1936). Caldecott Honor-winning biography and foundational text in American history education. Introduces the Revolutionary War, the founding of the United States, and the character of civic leadership. Develops historical knowledge, narrative comprehension, and understanding of American ideals.

Abraham Lincoln — Ingri & Edgar d'Aulaire (1939). Caldecott Medal winner and one of the most celebrated children's biographies ever published. Standard text in elementary education nationwide. Introduces themes of perseverance, self-education, moral courage, and the Civil War era.

Parent Preparation for the End-of-Year Project

Week 36 includes a simple end-of-year research and presentation project. Before Week 36, purchase one freestanding trifold presentation board for the student. The student will choose topics from Weeks 25–35, gather details from the history readings, arrange written information and visuals across the three panels, and use the finished board during the final presentation.

WEEK 1

Lesson 1 — Our Island Story *Chapter 1: "The Stories of Albion and Brutus"* (pages 13–14)

Pre-Reading:

Vocabulary:

giant (a huge person in a story), island (land with water all around it), prince (the son of a king), conquered (won by fighting), Brutus (the legendary founder of Britain), Albion (the ancient name used for Britain)

Map:

Show the child Great Britain on a modern map of the United Kingdom. Point to the large island just northwest of France, across the English Channel.

Engaging thought:

"Listen for the old story people told about Britain's beginning."

Read aloud Chapter 1, pages 13–14.

Narration prompt: "Tell me how the story begins with Neptune, who loved the sea, and his son Albion, then continue narrating the rest of the story from there."

Lesson 2 — Benjamin Franklin *Pages: 1–4*

Pre-Reading:

Vocabulary:

colony (a place ruled by another country far away — America was ruled by England), tradesmen (people skilled in a particular job or craft), Benjamin Franklin (an American printer, inventor, and leader), Josiah Franklin (Benjamin Franklin's father, a candle and soap maker)

Map:

Then find Boston, Massachusetts on a map. Explain: "Boston is in the state of Massachusetts."

Image:

Search the web for: colonial candle making illustration.

Engaging thought:

"Listen for how a busy household and a useful trade shaped Benjamin Franklin as a boy."

Read aloud pages 1–4.

Narration prompt: "Tell me how Benjamin's story begins with his family in Boston, then continue narrating the rest of the story from there."

SAMPLE TERM CELEBRATION WEEK

No new readings are assigned during the term celebration week. This week gives the student time to review the stories, people, and places that have been met during the term.

Lesson 1 — British History Review

In Terms 1 and 2 of the actual curriculum, Lesson 1 reviews the term's *Our Island Story* readings. Four narration prompts are provided, the student chooses one prompt and tells back what they remember, and the lesson also includes a map activity using locations from the British history readings.

Lesson 2 — American History Review

In Terms 1 and 2 of the actual curriculum, Lesson 2 reviews the term's American history readings. Four narration prompts are provided, the student chooses one prompt and tells back what they remember, and the lesson also includes a map activity using locations from the American history readings.

In the full curriculum, term celebration weeks are placed at the end of each term and reflect the readings and map work completed during that term.