THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL CURRICULUM

THE BIG BOOK OF
HISTORY STORIES

Includes Maps and Images

YEAR 3
THE BIG BOOK OF HISTORY STORIES
YEAR 3
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If you lived in Mesopotamia

Written by Jenny Phillips | Illustrated by Dan Burr
If you lived in Mesopotamia, your name definitely would not be Tom or Susan. Your name might be Yashub, Jushur, Atab, Dungi, Beli-Ashared, Amare, Lilith, or Ninki. If you lived before 2300 B.C., you would be considered an Akkadian if you lived in the northern part of Mesopotamia, and a Sumerian if you lived in the south. You would be part of a city-state, which was a city and its surrounding area. You would be constantly fighting with other city-states.

About 2300 B.C. a ruler named Sargon of Akkad, also known as Sargon the Great, came to power and conquered all of the Sumerian city-states. For the first time, northern and southern Mesopotamia were united under one ruler.

If you lived in ancient Mesopotamia, you would see cuneiform, one of the oldest writing systems. Cuneiform means “wedge-shaped,” and you can see why from the picture. All cuneiform writing was done by using a wedge-shaped stylus to punch characters into a wet clay tablet, which was then dried. Most of ancient Sumerian writings were about
mundane things like who sold to whom how many cows, but other things have survived as well, like the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Code of Hammurabi, and poetry.

Cuneiform characters were created in Sumeria, but Sargon adapted cuneiform for use with the Akkadian language, which was the official language of his empire.

Akkadians took the simple cuneiform characters and, using the same type of wedge-shaped tools, made them much more complex, almost like decoration. In fact, early archaeologists thought they were decorations. It wasn't until the Rosetta Stone was dug up in Egypt that historians could read the cuneiform script.
Prince Cyrus & the Shepherd

Written by Chris Jones, Illustrated by Dan Burr
The story we are about to read is a story that was written by the ancient historian Herodotus. How much of it is true? We do not know, but it is a fascinating story.

Once upon a time, there lived a king. He was very powerful and very rich, although his kingdom was surrounded by enemies. He was also a hard king who ruled with anger and harshness, so that the people feared him.

One night he had a dream about his daughter, that from her body came forth water, and it filled the whole earth. He woke in a cold sweat and summoned his wise men to tell him what this dream meant. They looked worried and said, “O King, we hate to tell you this, but it means that your daughter will have children that will be dangerous to you.”

“What should I do?” the King said. “My daughter is not even married yet!”

“Send her away,” they said. “If she marries one of the children of the other kings, the ones that pay tribute to you, her children will be inferior and cannot be a threat.”

The King thought this was good advice. He sent his daughter to marry the son of one of his weaker subject kings and slept well for a long time, safe in his kingdom. He did not even worry when the news came that his daughter was pregnant. How could her child be a threat to him?

But then he had another dream. In this dream, a vine came from his daughter’s belly that grew until it shaded the whole of his kingdom, and others as well. He was terrified that it meant something awful again, and he summoned the wise men. They confirmed that this was so. “It means that your daughter’s child is destined to become a king and rule over all he sees,” they said.

“That can never be,” the King said. “The child will have to die.” He sent men to take the child from its mother. When the child arrived, it was only a few days old. The King called his general and ordered him to take the child out and leave it on the hillside.
The Ministry of Christ
Through the Art of Carl Bloch

Written by Chris Jones, Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, and Logan Marshall
Jesus Tempted

When Jesus began his work as Messiah, he started by fasting for a long time. Satan saw him hungry, and thought he might be weak, and give in to temptation.

Satan stood before Jesus and said, “Here are stones. You are hungry. You can change them into bread.” But Jesus answered, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Satan tried again, telling Jesus to throw himself from the top of the temple, to show God would save him. But Jesus replied that scripture says not to test God, asking for a sign.

In a last, desperate attempt to get Jesus to do wrong, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms and wealth of the earth, and promised that Jesus could have it all if he would just bow and worship Satan. Jesus replied triumphantly, “Leave me Satan! For it is written that thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve!” Jesus passed the test. He never did sin, not then, or ever after.
Miracles

Jesus performed a number of miracles for the people. At a wedding in Cana, He turned water into wine. He healed blind men and made them see. He cured people who were lame, or paralyzed. He fed five thousand people with two loaves of bread and five fishes. He walked on the Sea of Galilee, and when the sea raged, He calmed the wind and waves. Three times He raised people from the dead. He showed that He could command everything on earth. He used His powers to help others.
"Healing of the Blind Man,"
1871
Efe & the Emerald
A Story of the Ancient Kingdom of Ghana

Written by Jenny Phillips  •  Illustrated by McKenzie Rose
This is the story of a fictional character named Efe from the ancient kingdom of Ghana, which existed from around 700 A.D. to 1240 A.D.

Efe watched as the items of the donkey caravan were unloaded. It was not a special camel caravan, unfortunately—that was a special event and didn’t happen every day. But donkey caravans arrived in the city daily, bringing things such as honey, metal, rare birds, tools, leather goods, and cloth. Today, Efe had been sent by her mother to get some honey. Efe gave a very small chunk of salt—just the size of a dime—to pay for the large pot of honey she had picked out.

Paying with salt? Yes! In the ancient kingdom of Ghana, salt was so important that it was used to buy things. It was literally worth its weight in gold. But there was no lack of salt and gold in the land. In the northern part of the kingdom lay great gold mines. The gold mines were so valuable that the exact location of the mines was a well-guarded secret. In the southern part of the kingdom lay huge salt mines. The salt and gold made the kingdom rich.
After passing fine houses made of acacia wood and stone near the market, Efe came to the village of sun-dried mud homes where her family lived. Efe’s mother and sister were outside making baskets. Most of the work and activity happened outside the home; inside the home was mainly for sleeping and storage. The sorrowful look on her mother’s face made Efe feel that she might have made the right choice to take the pendant. Things had been much harder since Father was taken away three weeks ago.

Efe quickly went into the home. Like a typical home in the village, the only items of furniture in the house were sleeping mats, a rug, a stool, and a little wooden chest. Quickly, Efe opened the chest and buried the pendant deep underneath the cloth inside.
A GRIOT’S TALE
The Story of Triumphant Sundiata

An African Legend retold by Katie Powell
Illustrated by Carolina Sagebin
Hundreds of years ago, in a land where the desert fades in the distance and the green trees radiate along the dry, brown background, there lived King Maghan. This king, though his kingdom was small compared to others around him, was very important, for he would one day have a son that would change the kingdom.

One day while speaking with a hunter who was passing through, King Maghan of Mali was given a prophecy. The prophecy said that if he was willing to do what was asked of him, the kingdom would flourish. The hunter explained that, although he was already married and had a son, the king was to marry again. In choosing his new wife, he should seek an unattractive woman who would bear another son. This child would be the heir to the throne and achieve amazing things.

The days continued, and finally two other hunters arrived at the kingdom with a rather repulsive woman. “We have brought this woman, Sogolon, and wish for you to marry her,” they told the king anxiously. As he looked thoughtfully at Sogolon, he thanked the hunters and agreed that she would be his bride. All of Mali was invited to witness the marriage celebration. Not long after, Sogolon gave birth to Sundiata, a son, followed by two daughters.
For years King Maghan had trained his first son, Dankaran, to be the heir to the throne. Dankaran’s mother, the king’s first wife, did not like that there was a new child who would take her son’s place. She was quickly overcome with anger and jealousy as she quietly watched the king give all of his attention to Sogolon and Sundiata.

It wasn’t long before everyone noticed that Sundiata was different. As he grew, he did not learn to do the things that other children learned. At the age of three, he could not walk, he could not talk, and he had an awkward look about him. He would hit and throw things at other children when his mom would invite them over to play, and he would ravage the food pantry when she was away.

While Dankaran and his mother rejoiced in Sundiata’s weakness, King Maghan began to worry. He could tell his time on Earth was coming to an end, and he didn’t know if Sundiata could become the great leader he was destined to be. Before he died, the king appointed the griot Balla Fasseke to care for and teach Sundiata, to ensure that the kingdom would reach its full potential.
SITTING BULL

Great Medicine Chief of the Sioux

Written by Mary Hazleton Blanchard Wade | Illustrated by Dan Burr
A little Indian papoose was cooing softly to himself in a tent of buffalo skins far out on the western plains. Like the rest of his people, the child had sun-tanned skin and high cheek bones. Yet, strange to say, his hair was not black like that of other children of his tribe—it was of a dark brown color. His mouth was beautiful, and when his mother bent down to kiss her little one in Indian fashion, she thought, "I have a baby of whom anyone may well be proud."

An Indian kiss is very quiet and gentle. When Sitting Bull's mother wished to caress him, she pressed her lips close to his cheek without moving them or making any noise whatever. It was her way of saying, "You are very dear to me, and I love you."

The child was not given a name at once. "We must let him grow for a while. When he does some special thing, or shows some special quality, we shall know better what to call him," said his parents.

They belonged to the powerful nation of the Sioux, or Dakotas, as they called themselves. Many brave and fierce tribes were banded together in this nation. They often went to war against their enemies and hunted the vast herds of buffalo that roamed over the western plains. It was no wonder that in this buffalo country the baby came to be called "Sitting Bull."
THE FIRST BOATS

The first boat used by man was probably the trunk of a fallen tree, moved about by means of a broken branch or pole. Then someone likely saw that a better boat could be made by tying a number of logs together to make a raft. But rafts are hard to move, so the heart of a log was hollowed out by means of a stone ax or fire, to make a still better boat, or strips of birch bark were skillfully fastened together to form a graceful canoe. Boats were also constructed of rough-hewn boards.

The Phœnicians were the first great sailors. Their boats, called galleys, were sometimes two to three hundred feet long. In enormous sail-and-oar vessels the Phœnicians crossed the Mediterranean in every direction, pushed out into the Atlantic Ocean, and went as far north as England. The chief improvement in boat making, from the time of the Phœnicians until the first trip of the Clermont steamboat, was to do away with oars and to use sails only.
It was not until about fifty years before the time of Columbus that oars were generally discarded and large boats were propelled entirely by sails. Sailboats were, to be sure, a great improvement over oar boats. Yet at best they were slow and unreliable, held back alike by calm and storm. The Pilgrims were ten weeks in crossing the Atlantic, and the regular trip, in the time of Washington, required six weeks.
THE STORY OF

GEORGE WASHINGTON

CARVER

Written by Mary Beyer, Illustrated by Marissa Thompson
Many, many years ago in the small town of Diamond, Missouri, a baby boy was born in a small log cabin to a woman named Mary. The baby’s skin was dark—just like his mother’s and father’s and big brother Jim’s. Surely the baby had no idea that at the time of his birth a war was being waged for his family’s freedom—and for the freedom of all African Americans. Although many people in America owned slaves and believed it was their right to do so, particularly in the Southern states where many workers were needed on the large plantations, the belief that slavery was morally wrong was starting to spread. Many Northern states had already passed laws against slavery, and now they were determined to free all slaves in every state.

Missouri was a slave state, which meant that it was still legal for people who lived there to own slaves. Mary, the mother of the newborn baby, had been a slave since she was 13 years old, when she was bought by Moses and Susan Carver. The Carvers were from Germany, but hoping for a better life, they had immigrated to America and bought a farm. They built a small cabin and worked hard on their farm. Soon the Carvers built themselves a bigger house, and when Mary was expecting her first baby, Jim, they gave her the small cabin to live in.
This story takes place from 1940 (when Germany attacked the Netherlands during World War II) through 1945, the five years that Germany occupied and ruled the Netherlands. Tessa and her family are fictional, but the events and circumstances in the book are based on facts.

Ten-year-old Tessa sat on the grassy bank of the canal that bordered her family’s tulip farm in the northern part of the Netherlands. As the white clouds floated lazily above her, she watched the windmills moving in the distance and let her bare feet dangle in the cool water. Finally, she picked up her wooden shoes and started to head back home across the flower fields, humming as she went, feeling tempted to chase the white butterflies that occasionally fluttered up from the flowers.

When she saw her older brother, Jasper, running across the field toward her, yelling her name, her heart dropped. What was wrong?
In a few seconds, Jasper stood before her panting. "Tessa!" he cried as he pointed north. "Look! Look at the smoke!"

Faintly in the far distance, Tessa did, indeed, see smoke. "What is it from?" she asked, trying to push down her feelings of alarm.

"The Nazis! They’ve invaded the Netherlands. Father just heard it on the radio."

"But . . . " Tessa stammered, "but when the war started eight months ago, the Netherlands proclaimed neutrality, just like it did in World War I."

"Well, Hitler decided to invade our country anyway. Father says Hitler wants us to be a part of Germany, but he also wants our air bases and ports and the use of our canals and rivers to help them fight other countries around us. Come on, Father said we should stay inside until we know what is happening."

The two siblings ran across the field towards their home.

Tessa and her family did not go out much as the battle continued. They sat around the radio listening for news. The fighting seemed to be getting closer and closer to their farm. Then they received the news: after just five days, the Netherlands had surrendered. The Dutch government and the royal family escaped and went into exile in London.

Tessa’s father gathered the family. "Do you know what this means now? We are under German occupation. I don’t know exactly how this is going to change the way we live, but it will."

He pulled the Bible off the shelf and read Psalms 115:11—"Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is their help and their shield." He took Tessa on his knee and spoke quietly. "No matter what happens, we will trust in God."
ISHTAR GATE OF BABYLON
(REPRODUCTION)

Photograph by Radomir Vrbovsky