

YEAR 4 HISTORY READ-ALOUD SUGGESTIONS

As part of the course, you are encouraged to select and read four books to your child(ren), one to go along with each of the four units in the course. It is recommended that you read for at least 20 minutes at the end of each lesson. However, to finish most books by the end of the unit, a longer reading time will be required. Some parents choose to do history lessons twice a week but the read-aloud book more often.

Books on this suggested list are ordered by Jenny Phillips' top picks, with #1 being the most highly recommended in each age category. Most book suggestions include a review by Jenny.

Year 4 History Book Pack

To make your homeschool experience easier and less expensive (two of the main goals of The Good and the Beautiful), we offer a *Year 4 History Book Pack*. This pack includes these top-recommended book for each unit:

Unit 1: *The Sign of the Anchor*

Unit 3: *Escape to Freedom*

Unit 2: *Ink on His Fingers*

Unit 4: *Rocket Genius*

Unit 1 Suggested Read-Aloud Books

All Ages (Grades 1–12)

1. ***The Sign of the Anchor*** by Evelyn C. Nevin
(Published by [The Good and the Beautiful Library](#))

The Sign of the Anchor is a beautiful story of a boy opening his mind and heart to this new savior, the Christus, and risking his life to get back to his family with the help of new friends who work to keep him safe in the spirit of Christianity.

Growing up in a loving family on a farm near Corinth, Greece, young Lykon only has to worry about whether or not his father will gift him a discus and how quickly he can learn to throw it well. Although mutterings of unrest, fear of the Roman soldiers, and a new religion based on one god, not many, filter through to Lykon's ears, he is not worried. But when his father is arrested for attending secret meetings, Lykon is separated from his parents and sent to Rome, where he is sold as a slave.

2. ***Son of Charlemagne*** by Barbara Willard

This thought-provoking book makes history come alive as it explores the life of Charlemagne and his sons and daughters in story form. The 183-page book is a fairly quick and easy read.

3. ***Galen and the Gateway to Medicine*** by Jeanne Bendick

This book offers a fun way to learn about a great historical figure—Galen, a medical researcher in the Roman Empire. The book is very informative, interesting, and easy to understand.

Younger Children (Grades 1–5)

1. ***A Triumph for Flavius*** by Caroline Dale Snedeker

This is a short (63 pages), engaging historical fiction book that follows the story of a young Roman boy, Flavius, who receives a captured Greek slave to serve as his pedagogue. Flavius and his slave become friends, and things get complicated when the slave realizes that his wife is enslaved in the city as well, and he wants to secretly visit her every day.

This book is written in language for a younger audience, yet it does contain some mature topics. For this reason, it is recommended for children in grades 3–5. Parents should be aware that the book contains a little taking the name of Roman Gods in vain (if that bothers you), the slave kissing his wife on the mouth a couple of times, and some mature topics, such as slavery and whole families being killed by Roman armies.

2. ***Pompeii . . . Buried Alive!*** by Edith Kunhardt

Even as an adult, I enjoyed this Level 3 book because it is packed with educational value and great illustrations. Readers will learn about volcanoes and what happened to the ancient city of Pompeii. Be aware that everyone in the city dies when buried beneath the volcanic lava and ash, but it is not treated descriptively. Also, there are a couple of pictures of skeletons when the story talks about how the ancient, buried city was rediscovered.

Older Children Only (Grades 7+)

1. ***Big John's Secret*** by Eleanore M. Jewett

Set during the Crusades, this story, published by Bethlehem Books, is a story of courage, brotherhood, mercy, faithfulness, and forgiveness. *Big John's Secret* is intriguing, and the moral, literary, and educational value of the book are very high. There is a slight bit of romance in the book.

Unit 2 Suggested Read-Aloud Books

Note: As this unit covers the Inquisition and the Reformation—sensitive historical time periods—families should carefully select the book that will work best for them.

All Ages (Grades 1–12)

1. ***Ink on His Fingers*** by Louise A. Vernon

In this shorter book, we read about the story of Johann Gutenberg, who invented the printing press, through the eyes of a fictional character: twelve-year-old Hans Dunne, apprentice to Gutenberg. I found this to be delightful historical fiction about an important part of world history that both boys and girls will enjoy.

2. ***The Smuggler’s Flame*** by Lori Rich

With engaging writing, Lori Rich tells the inspiring story of Tyndale’s translation and distribution of the Bible. I really enjoyed this book as Tyndale’s story came alive.

Intermediate Ages and Older (Grades 5–12)

1. ***Out of Many Waters*** by Jacqueline D. Greene

This off-the-beaten-track book was a great find! Not only is this historical fiction book well-written and uplifting, but the plot is captivating, the characters are compelling, and the time period is interesting. Two Jewish sisters are kidnapped by religious friars and sent to a monastery in Brazil for “reeducation” during the Portuguese Inquisition in 1654. When the sisters implement an escape plan, a suspenseful adventure ensues. Don’t judge this book by its cover; this is a fantastic and suspenseful story that most readers will really enjoy while also learning more about people, places, history, and Jewish religious customs. I do not recommend the sequel to this book because of an inappropriate scene.

2. ***Wings Like a Dove*** by Christine Farenhorst

This book tells the true story of a largely forgotten but important and heroic woman of the Reformation, Jeanne d’Albret, who becomes queen of Navarre. This powerful story inspires

as it skillfully tells of Jeanne’s incredible courage and kindness in a time fraught with dangers and persecution. The plot is intriguing, and the story is packed with meaning and educational value. Even reluctant readers should love this book. This book will likely be best received by Protestants.

3. ***Morning Star of the Reformation*** by Andy Thomson

This fantastic historical fiction book helps the Reformation come alive with a focus on John Wycliffe. Readers also learn about the Black Death and its impact on the time period. I found this book very inspiring and captivating. I enjoyed the Audible version.

Older Children (Grades 7+)

1. ***The Hawk That Dare Not Hunt by Day*** by Scott O’Dell

This historical fiction book centers around the dangerous journey of William Tyndale as he translates and prints the Bible in English. The story is seen through the eyes of the main character, Tom, a smuggler who makes a deal with Tyndale to help distribute the Bibles. The book is filled with adventure and suspense. This is an interesting and worthwhile read, and while it is wholesome and supports good concepts, it was not as inspiring as I hoped it would be.

2. ***The Beggars’ Bible*** by Louise A. Vernon

This historical fiction book focuses on the life of John Wycliffe. This well-written book is full of educational value. Because the plot is a bit complex and at times difficult to follow, I suggest this book for Grades 7 and above. However, younger children should be able to understand most of the book. Although I do recommend this very worthy book, I enjoyed *Morning Star of the Reformation* (another book on John Wycliffe) more.

3. ***The Sword of the Spirit*** by Joyce McPherson

This book is written well and in easy-to-understand language. However, the concepts and long list of

characters in the book are a little more difficult to follow, so I suggest the books for ages 12 or older. I think it would be most enjoyed by children 15+. After reading this book, I felt that I understood the life of William Tyndale very well. The author writes in the style of a fictionalized biography but bases all of the main events, details, and characters on true events and people.

Unit 3 Suggested Read-Aloud Books

All Ages (Grades 1 (or 3)–12)

1. ***Escape to Freedom*** by Ruth Fosdick Jones
(Published by The Good and the Beautiful Library)

What were all those strange noises Timothy Blaine kept hearing in the middle of the night—the creaking boards and scratching on the window panes? One night he discovers the answer: his parents are hiding runaway slaves! Timothy is proud when they ask him and his friend Jake to join in the thrilling work of running a station on the Underground Railroad. The boys soon learn that their families and other courageous men and women are risking everything to help the fugitives reach Canada.

2. ***Amos Fortune, Free Man*** by Elizabeth Yates
This book contains everything I love in a book: completely clean language, powerful messages, insights into history and cultures, an intriguing plot, elevated vocabulary, and exemplary writing. This book is based on the true story of a 15-year-old African tribal king who is captured by slave traders and sold as a slave in America. Resisting bitterness and retaining hope and dignity, “Amos” leads an incredibly admirable and inspiring life. This book, with profound lessons, motivated me to want to be a better person. This is also a book I highly recommend to adults. The reading, although it contains elevated vocabulary, is an easy and relatively short read. However, because it will be enjoyed more by an older audience, I recommend it for ages 9 and older.

3. ***Sojourner Truth*** by Peter and Connie Roop
This book is one of my favorite retellings of the life of Sojourner Truth. Every child needs to hear her heart-wrenching, yet inspiring, story. This short book is a combination of biography and fictionalized biography. Although it is very engaging, it might not hold the attention of children in Grades 3 and under.

4. ***Harriet Tubman*** by Ann Petry

I highly recommend this book! Written in a style that is part biography and part fictionalized biography (the author invents some of the dialogue, etc. but stays true to the facts), the story is incredibly inspiring and interesting. I loved the references to God and faith throughout the book. The book is also packed with educational value as readers learn not only about Harriet Tubman but also about slavery, the time period, and the Civil War. These are the kinds of books that help shape noble character.

5. ***Courage to Run*** by Wendy Lawton

This well-written book about Harriet Tubman is an inspiring page turner. Rich description, powerful messages, and high educational value make this book a great choice. I also love how God and faith are incorporated into the story.

6. ***The Story of Eli Whitney*** by Jean Lee Latham
(Published by The Good and the Beautiful Library)

Eli Whitney is famous for having invented the cotton gin, but little is known about the trials he endured as he developed it, the never-ending legal battles he was forced to fight, and his remarkable character and determination throughout the process. *The Story of Eli Whitney* is an inspiring look at the life of a determined young boy who overcame many obstacles and ultimately helped his country grow and prosper.

7. ***Uncle Tom’s Cabin: Young Folk’s Edition*** by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Published in 1852, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had an immense impact on the nation and the eventual abolition of slavery. The book is also a great story that shows the realities of slavery while also showing how love and faith can overcome all trials. This version was written for a younger audience by Stowe herself and does not contain inappropri-

ate language like the full version. There are two instances that could be considered taking God's name in vain, but I felt that the people were truly referring to God.

Younger Children (Grades 1–4)

1. ***Escape by Night*** by Laurie Myers

During the Civil War, 10-year-old Tommy and his sister are used to seeing wounded soldiers arrive in their town to be treated at the church, which had been turned into a hospital. But one mysterious soldier in particular catches Tommy's attention, and Tommy will soon be faced with a difficult decision. This book offers children a fun way to learn about history. I like that faith in God is woven into the book. I do not recommend all books by this author.

Intermediate Ages and Older (Grades 5–12)

1. ***The Inspiring Story of Harriet Beecher Stowe*** by Brenda Haugen

The title is true to its name—this is an inspiring story. The well-written book gives just enough information for the reader to understand the amazing impact one woman had on the world.

2. ***My Name is Sally Little Song*** by Brenda Woods

This is a well-written, interesting historical fiction with no objectionable material. I really enjoyed this book! I recommend this as a read aloud for children 9+ or an independent read for children ages 11+, as heavy subjects are included, such as death. However, the author does a great job of keeping a positive tone amidst the severe trials the young protagonists face. Most reluctant readers should like this book. The back cover reads: "Sally Harrison and her family are slaves on a plantation in Georgia. But when Master decides to sell Sally and her brother, the family escapes to seek shelter with a tribe of Seminoles who are rumored to adopt runaway slaves." The only thing I didn't like was the poor grammar some of the characters used, even though it was the author trying to make the characters authentic.

3. ***Underground to Canada*** by Barbara Smucker

This is another book by Barbara Smucker that I absolutely love! The story follows the escape of fictional slaves from Mississippi to Canada, but it is based on first-hand experiences found in the narratives of fugitive slaves. I love the way

Smucker does not shy away from faith in God in her books. She shows the wonderful traits of kindness, compassion, sacrifice, perseverance, friendship, and integrity while also showing the cruelty of slavery. The book is very engaging and packed with educational value. This book may be too intense for younger, sensitive children.

Older Children (Grades 7+)

1. ***Amazing Grace in the Life of William Wilberforce*** by John Piper

This short biography (76 pages) gives a glimpse into the life of one of my favorite historical figures—William Wilberforce. In fact, I am quite in awe of this man and his story, and I am amazed that more people are not aware of him. This book is very well written and inspiring, but an elevated vocabulary makes the book more challenging for young readers. For a longer, more challenging biography on Wilberforce, I suggest Eric Metaxas' book *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*.

Unit 4 Suggested Read-Aloud Books

All Ages (Grades 1–12)

1. **Rocket Genius** by Charles Spain Verra

(Published by [The Good and the Beautiful Library](#))

On March 16, 1926, history was made, for this was the day that Dr. Robert Goddard successfully tested the world's first liquid-fuel rocket. Now Dr. Goddard is well known as the father of the space age; his work paved the way for all space exploration that came after. But before this remarkable achievement, he was just a boy with an impossible dream. Young Bob was raised by loving parents who supported his many interests, but he was not taken seriously by the scientific community or the newspapers that mocked his wild idea. However, Bob refused to give up because he knew he was on the verge of an important discovery, one that would allow humankind to venture out into the vast universe beyond our earth.

2. **Ben Carson: A Chance at Life** by Janet and Geoff Benge

This well-written and engaging biography of Ben Carson's life is inspiring in many ways. Readers learn how a mother had a huge impact on her children, how reading changed a boy's life, how racism affected people, and how hard work brings wonderful blessings. This book left me wanting to be a better person and is a must-read for my own children.

3. **Ladycake Farm** by D. Jeanene Watson

(Published by [The Good and the Beautiful Library](#))

Little Joe's family has been saving money for a long time, and they are finally able to follow their dream of buying a 40-acre farm. As the only African American family in the rural town in the mid- 1900s, they face challenges, but they face them with a kindness and optimism that changes the hearts of those around them. This charming story of friendship between races and neighbors is a

treasure. The writing is witty and beautiful, and the characters are delightful.

Younger Children (Grades 1–4)

1. **I Have a Dream** by Margaret Davidson

If you are looking for a biography of Martin Luther King for younger children, this is a great choice. This well-documented book is both informative, inspiring, and interesting. I feel that the information was fair, clear, character building, and well organized.

Intermediate Ages (Grades 5–12)

1. **Teresa of Calcutta** by D. Jeanene Watson

This fantastic fictionalized biography follows the life of Mother Teresa from a little girl until her death. I found this book absolutely fascinating, engaging, and inspiring. The cover might not be appealing, but the book is very highly recommended.

2. **Sylvia & Aki** by Winifred Conkling

In a real but inspiring way, this book takes a look at the impact that racism and segregation laws had on children in the United States. Based on true events, this book follows two girls who find themselves at the center of landmark legal battles, while all they want is to be able to enroll in school.