

# TruthQuest HISTORY

## How do I begin? What advice would veterans give?

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### **Adrienne, of Illinois, suggests:**

"When I first began, I felt a little overwhelmed about implementing TruthQuest History. I followed, however, the suggestions for making a loose schedule and not getting locked into rigidity. At first, I wanted to squeeze in every little detail, but then God laid it on my heart to stick to the highlights with my young children. I must say I just love TQH, and I feel more relaxed now that we've found a groove and are progressing.

I always read the commentary in the guide first as we begin a new topic. Then, if we are moving over a particular topic quickly, I may simply read a chapter from the one spine we are using, or we may just read the commentary and let it go at that. If we're taking time to read more about the topic, I will often read a simple, related picture book for my two younger children. In that case, I may not read the chapter from our spine. For my older daughter, I assign a harder book and she must read a certain number of chapters per day. I may also read aloud a longer chapter book to everyone. We will begin a wall timeline. I love this approach to history because I can see my children making connections."

### **Kimberly, of North Carolina, offers a quick intro—with a little humor:**

"Any of us who have used TruthQuest History for any length of time know you have to make it your own. That's why I really encourage you first to pray... or we can get into that mommyness that says, 'Let's do it all!' Now, our second rule: never underestimate the wisdom of Dad. Okay, you've prayed, you know Hubby is going to have veto power, and you are breathing. This is good!

Now, remember the goal of TQH is KNOWING GOD and seeing how people chose to interact with Him through their beliefs and actions, or chose not to (and thus suffered the consequences.) So, I really do think you need to get the BIG PICTURE first by scanning the entire manual.

Next, break it into chunks. Find a pencil, and as you peruse your guide, lightly (notice I said

lightly) mark those topics that interest you and/or that you think would interest your family. When you are finished, you may see that mommyness I mentioned. If so, give the book to Hubby with a nice eraser and let him sift the wheat from the chaff, not that any history is chaff, but do we really need to read every Daniel Boone book available? You get my point.

I do hope you newbies can hear my heart in this. I'm serious, but in a fun sort of way. The temptation is to read every book and study every topic, but that will just bog you down. Enjoy it! Don't make it drudgery!"

### **Kimberly later added this:**

"If you are a new TruthQuest History user and are struggling to 'get it going,' you are not alone.

The first year we used TQH, it was January before I think I 'saw' how to make it work for our family. 'Why didn't I stop TQH before that?' you might ask. Because I knew in my heart that God had brought us to this curriculum and He wanted us to use it. So I had to let go of my tendencies and learn to lean on Him. (This, of course, was a good thing—even if I was kicking and screaming!)

Now, I can't tell you exactly how to use it for your family. But I will say this:

PRAY -- if God has brought you to this curriculum, He will bring you through.

TALK with your hubby -- God provides them with wonderful insight into their children (since they are accountable to Him for them).

READ -- pick one book in the section that you are in right now and start reading it. Don't go back and try to re-do the sections you think you did wrong, and don't try to figure out how the next twenty sections are going to work. (Trust me on this -- the time will come for that.) Just pick a book that you have access to, and start reading. If it's one on the TQH list, the children will probably beg for more!

If you are like me, you may want to read the TQH commentary from the beginning to the section you are currently studying, and think about it. History was not taught to me the way I have been learning it with TQH. For us old folks, it takes some time to adjust our thinking to this new approach. The children adapt much more quickly.

When you finish that book, pick the next one. If it is three sections later, just read the commentary from the intervening sections, discuss as you like, and then start that next book. It's also a wonderful thing if Dad will read-aloud his own book to the kids!

Keep doing this and you will begin to get the ebb and flow of how it works in your family. My first year using TQH, was not planned -- it was documented. By that I mean that I wrote down

what we did after we did it. (This is totally out of my norm, but it worked). As I moved along, I began to see how to lay out a plan for our family.

We currently use our 'Literature Lunch' to listen to an audio book for history. We also use our before-bedtime book as a history read-aloud.

As we finish topics, we re-read the TQH commentary that was before our book and then read the commentary that precedes our next book, and off we go again. Though my tendency is to want everything to be 'linear,' the more resources I encounter, the more I realize that isn't a reality. But the good news is that it really doesn't matter—stay with me here—whether you read something aloud first or whether the TQH commentary brings up a topic first, because the key is to continue weaving discussion of the issues as you encounter them. Studying history is a "living" activity (unlike most of my school experiences with it); it is alive because it is HIStory.

At times, we 'notebook' or do a project, but, really, our way of doing TQH is based more on reading and discussion. As my boys have gotten older, I do have them document more things and we will move to writing essays soon. So far, our ThinkWrites have been 'ThinkNarrates!'

So, while what we do isn't going to be exactly what you do or should do, trust the Father. He will lead. Relax, TQH is fun. It's not meant to be stressful. Rather, it's meant to develop an insatiable love for God, and to begin naturally seeing Him throughout all that has happened in this world. At first, you may have to search because our minds have been programmed to think of history as names, dates, people, and places. But once you begin to the Quest for Truth, with God as the central figure, it becomes second nature. You don't have to strain anymore because you develop a finely-tuned Biblical focus, and it's like an aha moment!

Finally, what TQH looked like in our home five years ago, when the kids were little and did lots of drawing and play-acting, is not what it looks like now. The beauty of TQH is that it grows with your family!"

**Michelle, of Iowa, suggests:**

"I am a planner. I once had my curriculum all figured out, exactly what we'd all be doing until graduation, and then I began to feel led to use TruthQuest History instead. I felt like someone had pulled the rug out from under me. What was I supposed to do? What exactly would we be doing each and every year for the next 12+ years? What if it didn't turn out 'right' for one of my children? What if they all turned out historically illiterate because I messed up and didn't plan correctly? I wanted to see the end from the beginning, in extreme detail, now already! I furiously used I-don't-know-how-many sheets of paper trying to get all my kids to cycle through all of history chronologically and in depth starting and finishing in all the right places.

Somehow, the Lord got hold of me in the midst of my frantic 'spinning.' If I remember it all

rightly, He basically put the following thoughts into my mind:

'Just what makes you think that the success of My precious children depends upon your schedules and plans? What is it with you and this need to see the end from the beginning all the time? You aren't big enough to do that. That's My job, daughter. I called you to love and disciple and teach and train. I told you I would be in charge of handling the 'big picture.' You are trying to drive, again, dear daughter. Move over and let Me. It doesn't matter exactly what guide you are using in 2012. Just begin at the beginning and keep pressing forward. If you go too slowly, I'll prod you. If you go too fast, I'll slow you down. Just remember to listen, okay?'

No one will die if they pick up history in the middle and have to wait for the early stuff later. No one will die if some part gets skipped or hurried over. The process is more important than the aggregate of the details. Seeing God in human life is more important than who did what when. They can look that part up later if, gasp, you leave a hole, or forget, or run out of time.

I know that it only works for me when I do a reasonable amount of planning. When I try to super-plan, I lose it somehow. I'm not saying don't ever plan. I am saying, don't stress over long-term plans. Set a few goals prayerfully, pick up where you decided to start, and just move forward. It'll get you there.

Now, I pray about whether I need to worry about how long we take, or whether I can just meander. I've gotten different answers at different times. If I feel I need to "keep moving," I divide up the guide and set some targets. Otherwise, I just make a list of things I'll do (I type up a copy of the TQH guide's Table of Contents with more space between the items, and then jot down the various places we can use some of our own wide-ranging resources-such as articles to read, Hands-and-Hearts kits, History Pocket books, and ATTA timeline figures-and paperclip this outline inside the cover of my guide) and we keep doing the next thing."

**Michelle, of Illinois, says:**

"After you have sought the Lord and the counsel/approval of your husband (and are confident you are in God's will, go forward boldly! This is not the land of second guessing. What the Lord has planned for your family is not necessarily (and rarely is) what He has planned for another family."

**Dawn, of Indiana, suggests:**

"If you feel uncomfortable with TruthQuest History, it may well be that TQH is not for your family. However, there is also the possibility that it will work just fine, but that Father is desiring to do a work in you first. I would strongly encourage you to get away with a notebook,

your Bible, and Father, even if it's just a few minutes here and there. Write out to Father your fears and frustrations, specifically and clearly defined, about implementing TruthQuest History. Then, take time to pray over each of these 'stumbling blocks,' such as having no defined schedule, a feeling of being lost, or whatever comes to mind. This will take some time, but do it anyway. When you are done, you will have clarity to know if TQH doesn't fit your family, or if the issue is something Father wants to work out in you.

For me, out of my time of frustration and prayer, I found that I was trying to use nonBiblical methodology. I was trying to do school with TQH, rather than using it the way it was intended as a guide, as a docent, if you will, to history...to allow me to teach history to my children, to allow me to lead my children in discussions, to allow me to be the director of the history education my children were getting. For me, history became less and less about making certain that the children were 'getting it,' and more about helping my children love the Lord, desire to know Him more, and be in awe of His great and mighty hand. Until I got to that place, I found history to be frustrating and I was constantly 'spinning my wheels' trying to find the 'right way to do' TQH.

Remember that Michelle's entire vision for TQH is that each family would determine what the Lord is calling them to do with it. For example, we might feel undone when we see that TQH does not give daily assignments to 'verify' that learning is taking place. This fear showed me that my heart was straying back to 'Egypt,' when I found myself tempted to look to the world's methodologies to define education taking place in my home. But I rather need to look to God for understanding of His way of teaching (which is really discipleship). Otherwise, I get caught up in the 'what' of education, as I was indoctrinated under it as a student, that education is a series of things to do, rather than a state of the heart/mind."

### **Rebecca, of Michigan, suggests:**

"You know how you don't know what you're going to have for lunch two weeks from now? But you know you are going to eat lunch. That's how we do TruthQuest History. I don't know what will be at the library. I don't know what will turn up at the next yard sale or on paperback swap. I don't know what we'll be in the mood for, or if an unexpected field trip opportunity will present itself. I don't know what kind of activities I'll stumble across online. Whatever is in my TQH cupboard when we're ready to 'eat,' that's what we'll choose from. Don't take this to mean we're unprepared. I'm always looking forward to the next section, taking inventory of what I have and hunting for a few things I don't want to miss...so when we're hungry for the next topic, the cupboard is full!

So, here's how we do TruthQuest History. We take the topic, i.e. Pilgrims. I gather all the resources I have around the house. I go to the library and check out books on Pilgrims. I put it

all on a shelf in my house. We have TQH time at 1:00 every day. That's the plan anyway. Some days life happens and TQH doesn't! I decide which ones we have to read aloud. If you don't like reading aloud, keep it simple, or assign an older child to read aloud to the group, or find some audio books. The rest of the books remain on the shelf. The kids have a list of school to-do's. Reading a TruthQuest History book independently is on their list about every other day. So, we'll read through the books until we run out, or until we get sick of them. Then we move on to the next topic. If I have some activities to go along, then I'll sprinkle those in among the readings.

Here's a tip I heard and it's working great. Instead of writing down a schedule of the future, keep a record of what you accomplish each day. Sometimes I feel like we haven't done very much history, but when I look back at the list of books we've read and the projects we've done, why, we've been truly busy and we've accomplished an amazing amount. It encourages me to see how much we've done instead of feeling always behind schedule or continually spending my time revamping the schedule."

**Kimberly, of North Carolina, suggests:**

Ask the Lord for wisdom in meeting the educational needs of your family. I think all the 'human progress' (or stinkin' thinkin') of the last century has affected us in the body of Christ more than we realize. Our worldview is so full of the world, we tend to leave God out of any decision that is not church-related. Praying about the process of home-educating our children isn't an option, it is essential. When I fall into the trap of leaving God out of the process, I fail.

Seek your husband's insights on planning.

Decide what role TruthQuest History is going to play in your house. Is it your second priority or your fifth? How does the Lord want you to use it? In our house, TQH plays a major role second only to Bible most days because we feel it is effectively providing us the opportunity to teach our children to think biblically.

Make a photocopy of your TQH guide's Table of Contents; cross off items you plan to omit; highlight items of special insight; total the number of sections that remain, counting the special topics twice. Divide the total by the number of weeks you wish to spend on this TQH guide so you can see how much you would like to cover in one week. Mark the weeks right onto the guide's Table of Contents so you have a general schedule by week. Make any adjustments to the schedule, especially if some of the topics will be covered in other 'subjects,' such as literature, government, etc.

Now focus in on the first six weeks of the schedule. In the main body of the TQH guide, on the pages listing book recommendations for the topics you'll first be covering, pencil a checkmark beside any book you already have, or write in the title of one not listed which you would like to read. If Michelle says 'don't miss' a book, we do everything in our power to read it, so I pencil an arrow next to all those citations! I also use an asterisk for any listed books we would like to purchase for our home library. If we find an author we really enjoy, we watch for other books by

them as well. You can write Look next to any topic for which you don't already have reading material. Gather a list of Look topics, and begin the enjoyable treasure hunt for materials through your public library's online database, church library, homeschool catalogs, websites, encyclopedias, used book sellers, online book-sale loops, etc. Repeat this process as the next six weeks of study draw near.

Spend time each week reading Michelle's commentary aloud. This will help to keep everyone on track.

Avoid overzealously seeking as many books as possible on each subject, thereby burning out your children. Just pick one or two. Don't be afraid to include nice pictorial books which are ideal even for older students trying to cover many topics in a year. I must admit, though, that our reading varies by our interest. We read umpteen Davy Crockett books, but breeze through other subjects. I do not use a 'spine' book regularly (an interesting narrative overview of an entire period of history), but I do have at least one for each time period in our library to use in covering topics about which we will not be reading many individual books. (Editor's note: Other families use spines regularly, as you'll see others mention elsewhere in the section.)

I let my young boys move a bit while I'm reading aloud if it does not distract from the story. Yes, I do have parameters. One sometimes hides behind the sofa poking out a 'weapon,' waiting to sabotage the 'enemy.' They are allowed to sneak around and hide, but they cannot fire any 'weapons' during my reading, because it distracts me! They build blanket forts; they color or draw; they set up Playmobil figures. We've even read outside while they hang from trees! When it 'gets good' (according to them), they sit down next to me so they 'don't miss anything.' I also read during meals, and my husband often continues the books at bedtime. They still hear, even the details. I know...because I ask! As for reading aloud something TruthQuest History families often do I would say that you first need the right book, and then you need the right time. Lunch has often been a good time to start a book at our house because mouths are full and ears are open. Once you get most good books going, they just go on their own, and the kids will beg you to finish. I would look for one of the books Michelle cites as a 'don't miss' book; these usually work really well.

For hands-on projects I got a great idea from Kate Estes of Hands N Hearts: I write on a post-it note the name of the project and stick the note to the first page in the TQH guide where we could do the project. If we don't get to it on that page, I just keep advancing it until we do.

Daily submit your general plan to the Lord. He may slow you down, speed you up, or cancel something altogether! Continue to get feedback from your hubby as history truths are discussed at dinner, etc.

Use a highlight marker to note books/resources used. This is a record of what has been covered, in addition to any student notebooks, writings, and projects.

Relax and enjoy the wonderful books Michelle has helped us to organize! By all means, don't feel defeated if TQH doesn't go as you might originally have hoped. It is very different from traditional school, and does take some adjustments, usually more on the part of Mom than

anyone else. But now, if for some reason we are 'off' from history for a few days, my boys beg to do it! Learning at its best! You may end up like so many of us who have found that TQH becomes your summer reading as well!

**D., of California, suggests:**

Prayerfully read through the entire guide if you can...even if in the bathroom!

Determine how long you want to take on the particular period of history (you can always change your mind later) and then divide your TQH guide into sections that work for you. (Kimberly has described this process in detail above.)

Looking at the notes Michelle gives on individual books, seeking her favorites, use the internet to see what your library or other resources have available. Gather just a few. You really don't need ten books on Columbus or Cleopatra. Really, one or two books per subject is more than sufficient, unless you really want to go down that bunny trail. Then by all means go for it!

Use a 'spine' (an interesting narrative overview of an entire period of history) to provide quick information on topics you only want to skim. (Michelle cites the pages or chapters which apply to the topics in each TQH guide from several popular spines for various ages. Not everyone uses a spine, but it can be helpful to beginners.)

Read the guide's commentary aloud and try to answer the ThinkWrite™ questions, even if they are a little tough for those of us who did not earlier like to study history.

Read aloud to your children, when possible, though surely you cannot read aloud all their books. One day they will not be at your feet, on your lap, behind your shoulder, or under your chair. Read even to your boys who are turning into men at the teenage stages. They will never forget how important you deemed the time.

Abandon a book that bores you or your children. And, don't be afraid to skip sections you don't want your littlest ones to hear. There is plenty of time for them to learn more later.

Remember that this is a God-sent guide to history because as you leaf through the pages you see His handiwork, and Michelle constantly refers your children back to God.

RELAX!

**Kim, of Arkansas, suggests:**

"When my kids were younger, I spent as much time and read as many books as possible until they were ready to move on. I also added lots of hands-on projects. Now that my kids are in high school, though, we have more of a time crunch to complete all the necessary history before they graduate. So, at this point, I decide what we need to cover in one semester, and divide the guide by the number of weeks we will do school. By doing that I can see if we have time for one or two additional books per topic, or only the spines."



**Maridel, of Florida, suggests:**

Educate yourself on the value of using living books in learning.

Pick a 'spine' reference that is interesting to your family (from the list in guide). Some are free online!

Don't worry about planning out your whole year. Just begin with the first couple topics, using only your spine, to get a feel for TQH. (Editor's note: Michelle is cringing, though, that someone might not enjoy the 'don't-miss' books in the first topic of American History for Young Students I! )

Start adding in living books as you get more comfortable. God provides needed resources as we pray!

Use the internet to locate or reserve books at your local library. They'll be ready for pick-up!

Don't go overboard on each topic, no matter how many wonderful books there are!

Remember, using living books means you're accomplishing other 'subjects' at the same time, since you can incorporate language arts, art history, science history, government, economics, etc.

**April, of South Carolina, suggests:**

"Relax! Read the beginning of the guide and realize that flexibility is a wonderful thing! You don't have to cover everything in depth. Sometimes just reading the guide's commentary or a 'spine' resource' is plenty!"

**Kris, of Wisconsin, suggests:**

Let go of the notion that education means textbooks and workbooks. Adding literature in the form of biographies, historical fiction, and topic-specific readings makes history come truly alive and enriches your learning experience a hundredfold!

TQH is flexible. You can cover the topics as little or as much as you see fit.

Engage your children in thought-provoking discussions, or encourage them to pen their opinions, thus improving their writing and critical thinking skills.

You have so many choices as far as books go, and they are so good, that you cannot go wrong, even if you only choose one!

Pray diligently, and then relax. Get rid of preconceived notions about structuring your children's learning to the minute. TQH gives you the freedom to explore your children's interests. When kids are interested in something, they learn easily, and absorb more. You will probably learn more than you ever knew, too, and enjoy your time with your children. Reading together is a special, cozy, cuddling time for us, and your kids will treasure the experience.

**Amy, of Minnesota, suggests:**

We have loved every minute of TQH, especially me!

Remember that the guide is your slave, not your master.

Do not feel compelled to go through each and every subject in a guide. With some subjects, you may have trouble locating a resource; if you are interested in pursuing it regardless, try the encyclopedia. But if it's an unimportant topic that generally doesn't interest your kids, pass on it.

Do not feel like you need to read five or six books on every topic. I made this mistake initially. Michelle has provided wonderful suggestions for each topic, and I've found that a couple books (plus a spine), will more than provide the flavor of the topic.

On a personal note, I hated history in high school and actually flunked a freshman semester. I saw no use for it and thought it was the dullerest thing I'd ever encountered, so I simply didn't try. Imagine my amazement when my husband-to-be told me on our first date that he had a history major! Now we are learning things that he has never even learned! So if anyone wonders if this is a complete program, have confidence! It is the best program out there!

**Kim, of Ohio, suggests:**

"I know it is hard to "relax" when you've used programs that have everything laid out (especially if you're a Type A person like me), but TQH will give you freedom if you just sit back, relax, and choose only the things that best fit the needs of your family. Many times I reserved several books from my public library, brought them home, and then weeded! You don't have to choose every book. Just read through the best ones, and pick sections out of the others. Some books took a day to read; others took a week. You can figure that out once you hold them in your hands. So, pray, pray, pray before you start your weeks, and the Lord will show you what He wants His kids to get!"

**Terri, of Pennsylvania, suggests:**

"When I start to doubt this approach, it is not hard to take a close look at what my children are really learning and to realize that their education is far superior to what I as a public school student received. My children remember more of what they have encountered than I ever did, they are better able to critically evaluate what they are reading, and they devour books!"

**Tami, of Minnesota, suggests:**

"I don't schedule certain books (freedom!), other than the spine book I read-aloud. We simply check out as many books as we can find on two weeks worth of topics and put them in our 'history basket.' We use a large dishpan, and it works perfectly! Every day, my young daughter reads for thirty minutes from her choice of books in the basket. At the end of the week, I record the titles of the book she has read. Simple and easy!

Remember that a living books curriculum trusts much to good books. TQH is not like a textbook that has all the content you need to know within its pages. It's a guide through the wonderful world of living books, seasoned with a Christian perspective in the commentary. I wouldn't get very excited just looking at a TQH guide, but wait until you try some of the books listed by reading aloud and discussing!"

**Phyllis, of California, suggests:**

"I tend to perfectionism, but the Lord gave us five children to help me over that, I think! Anyway, here are some things I do:

I divvy up the guide at the beginning of the year so I know about how much we need to cover. This is only a guideline; it is not set in concrete. The TQH sections cannot always be equally divided, since some sections are so full of material. But even so, you can roughly figure out how many pages you need to cover.

Then I decide what we will read. I go through the section we are studying and mark any classics or favorite books I want my kids to read. If I have copies at home, I get the books out to see the total number of pages, and then determine the number of pages I think we can cover in a day/week. This too must be flexible. If I don't own the book, I look it up on our library's online catalog, and can usually get the total number of pages there. If Michelle says a book is 'don't miss,' we try to include it. I look at the ThinkWrite™ exercises and see what books will give my child the most information in order to answer the questions. Yet another way I decide what books to use and what to skip is to see what my library has available. I can go online and order books from our inter-library loan system, but sometimes the books I want to check out aren't available. I just find another one that I feel might be comparable, or just skip it altogether.

I use my computer to create a schedule for 9-12 weeks at a time, using the books I have chosen and the TQH commentary we'll be reading. I make one copy for my child and one for myself. We can then check off the assignments as we go.

Here is another helpful idea. We can be reading more than one book at a time. When I want to go on to another section and my child is still engrossed in a book, I know she can continue to

read that book while delving into books on the new topic also. Reading little bits from several books at a time is okay, too. Eventually they get read, and if you're doing narrations as Charlotte Mason suggests, students don't easily forget what they've read/heard. The emphasis here is on 'little bits.' Don't overwhelm them."

**Deborah, of Maryland, suggests:**

"TruthQuest History is definitely not a textbook curriculum with a daily plan and clear objectives to know when it is completed. TQH is a living curriculum, and, as such, is open-ended on how you implement it. Do not make it more complicated!

You have two choices. You can simply plug through the guides without a strict timetable—taking your time on some topics and skimming through others—without pre-planning, just naturally allowing this to flow, and letting the books you find determine your choose. OR...

You can have a strict completion goal. If you know you want to finish a guide in one year (because of how many you need to complete before graduation), take the number of topics in your TQH guide, and divide by the number of weeks in your schoolyear. Then, you know you need to cover at least one topic a week, and sometimes two in order to finish. Keep that as a guide. Some topics are short, and some are long; but, basically, it will work out. If you cannot finish a topic in one week, then you know other weeks will require two topics or more to 'catch up.' You can skim topics by just reading the TQH commentary and maybe a 'spine' selection. Sometimes, the availability of supplementary books determines which topics will be skimmed. If one year seems too fast over all, then plan for two years per guide.

Choosing the books is the most difficult, because we want them all! If you are taking the 'go as you please' route, you can try to get in many books per topics, but if you want to be done by a certain date, you'll have to be more realistic. A 'spine' and maybe one book which the students read themselves is about it. If you get children's picture-books, you can get a whole stack and just spend a day or two reading/looking at them. You can plan one adult read-aloud per week (or two weeks), as well.

Even if you take the meandering route, there will still be stuff you miss. There is simply too much information and too many good books! But, it's not about knowing all the 'facts.' It's about understanding the 'big picture' over time. Enjoy!"

**Angie, of Iowa, suggests:**

"There really isn't a right or wrong way to do TruthQuest History.

Here's what we do. We always make sure to read all the TQH commentary and have oral discussions about it. It is rich and gets my son thinking. Sometimes the Think Writes are done orally, sometimes written. We usually have one or two 'spines' on hand for each TQH guide.

These 'spines' are books that cover a wide range of topics during a particular era. You may read the entire 'spine' (like we do with Guerber's books), or just chapters/sections of the 'spine,' as they come up. In addition to the spine(s), we pick several books and, sometimes, movies and/or documentaries to go with them. It depends on: the depth of the topic (some just don't have extra info available), what's available (we use interlibrary loan a lot), and if it's a topic we want to cover more deeply (an interest to our teen or something we feel he needs to know more about). I generally have more books than we can read, but I like having a selection. I also throw in some picture books for our teen to read to his younger brother. Some add in timelines, journaling, arts and crafts, etc.

Michelle's lists of books are suggestions. I try to find the one's she marks as 'don't-miss' reads. Otherwise, I use what's available from the library. I do like to own the spine, but that's because we'll use it longer than our six-week library timeframe."

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Not all families use a 'spine.']