

Homeschool Overview Guide for Unit Study Curriculum Guides (Heroes of History Series)

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Using Heroes of History Books and Unit Studies in Your Homeschool Classroom.....	4
Adaptations for the Parent’s Role	6
Teaching Social Studies with Unit Study Curriculum Guides.....	9
Teaching Language Arts with Unit Study Curriculum Guides.....	13

Introduction

This Overview Guide is designed to help you make the most effective use of the Heroes of History Unit Study Curriculum Guides. Whether you are a homeschool parent or teacher, the Unit Study series can be utilized in a way that will ideally suit your needs.

Each Unit Study Curriculum Guide is based on a corresponding Heroes of History biography, bringing to life a particular time and place where an individual has powerfully impacted American history. Whether you are interested in taking a field trip, having a weekly group discussion, or completing an arts and crafts project, the Unit Study Curriculum Guides are a resource that you will not want to be without!

Full of wonderful ideas and activities, each Unit Study Curriculum Guide

- presents valuable character qualities.
- integrates important Social Studies concepts.
- provides activities for studying the times and places in which the hero lived,
- includes chapter questions, vocabulary exercises, and a variety of Language Arts projects.

The following chart lists Heroes of History biographies with the time period they cover, the Social Studies concepts emphasized by each book, and other subject areas that are supported by related Heroes books.

Biography Title	Time Period	Social Studies Concepts	Other Topics
<i>The Beginnings of a Nation</i>			
<i>Christopher Columbus: Across the Ocean Sea</i>	1451–1506	Exploration of the world; European–Native American relations; islands in the Caribbean Sea; monarchies in Spain, Portugal, and Italy; early mapmaking; early trade routes	Navigation, sea adventures, fifteenth-century religious conflicts, shipbuilding, perseverance
<i>John Smith: A Foothold in the New World</i>	1580–1631	Exploration of the world, the Jamestown colony, European–Native American relations, war, England, early trading practices	Sea adventures, initiative
<i>William Penn: Liberty and Justice for All</i>	1644–1718	The fight for religious freedom, Pennsylvania, colonial times, England	Seventeenth-century religious conflicts and convictions, the Black Plague
<i>The Establishment of a Nation</i>			
<i>Benjamin Franklin: Live Wire</i>	1706–1790	Diplomacy, American Revolution, colonial times, Declaration of Independence, Boston	Electricity, inventions, printing business, creativity
<i>George Washington: True Patriot</i>	1732–1799	American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, Constitutional Convention, Virginia, the thirteen colonies, the presidency, the French-Indian War	Plantations, surveying, military strategy, leadership
<i>John Adams: Independence Forever</i>	1735–1826	American Revolution, Declaration of Independence, forms of government, Massachusetts	Diplomacy

<i>The Exploration of a Nation</i>			
<i>Meriwether Lewis: Off the Edge of the Map</i>	1774–1809	Native American Relations, the Louisiana Purchase, the early military, the Corps of Discovery, life on the frontier,	Navigation, courage, botany, animal identification, exploration
<i>Daniel Boone: Frontiersman</i>	1734–1820	Native American relations, Kentucky, life on the frontier, the French-Indian War	Navigation, surveying, exploration
<i>The Fracturing of a Nation</i>			
<i>Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom</i>	1809–1869	Civil War, slavery, Illinois, the presidency	Eloquence
<i>Harriet Tubman: Freedombound</i>	1820?–1913	Civil War, slavery, Reconstruction, Maryland	Commitment
<i>Clara Barton: Courage Under Fire</i>	1821–1912	Red Cross, Geneva Conventions, Civil War, slavery, Maryland, Virginia, Washington D.C.	Compassion
<i>The Growth of a Nation</i>			
<i>Theodore Roosevelt: An American Original</i>	1858–1919	Spanish-American War, American foreign relations	Conservation
<i>Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Storybook Life</i>	1867–1957	Homestead Act	Resilience
<i>Douglas MacArthur: What Greater Honor</i>	1880–1964	World War I & II	Military life, loyalty, confidence
<i>The Inspiration of a Nation</i>			
<i>Thomas Edison: Inspiration and Hard Work</i>	1847–1931	New Jersey, New York	Invention of light bulb and motion pictures, patents, creativity
<i>George Washington Carver: From Slave to Scientist</i>	1864?–1943	Slavery, Reconstruction, Alabama	Plant science, innovation
<i>Orville Wright: The Flyer</i>	1871–1948	North Carolina	Aviation, perseverance
<i>The Future of a Nation</i>			

<i>Alan Shepard: Higher and Faster</i>	1923–1998	World War II, Korean War	Aeronautics, space travel, military life, discipline
--	-----------	--------------------------	---

Using Heroes of History Books and Unit Studies in Your Homeschool Classroom

American History Curriculum

Some homeschooling parents use the Heroes books and Unit Studies as their American history curriculum, selecting one or two titles from each time period. As homeschool students read the books and complete a variety of related projects over the course of the year, they gain insight beyond the events of history. They also gain insight into the lives of individuals who helped shape the time periods of the European exploration of the continent, the American Revolution, the expansion of the country, the Civil War, Reconstruction and the economic growth of the nation, and World Wars I and II.

For example, if you were studying the Civil War period (The Fracturing of a Nation), you might first assign your child to read *Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom*, and later, *Harriet Tubman: Freedombound*. As your child reads about this period in history from the perspectives of a former slave and a president, and engages in Unit Study activities, he or she will gain a broader perspective on the Civil War time period.

Another way to provide multiple perspectives on a time period would be to read aloud one book while your child reads and completes the Unit Study activities for another book from the same period. You could also have your child read the second book as an independent reading book. Either of these methods would allow him or her to learn about multiple perspectives without having to complete the assignments or activities from two different books.

Using Heroes of History Biographies to Enhance Other Classroom Themes

If you already have a Social Studies curriculum in place, you may choose to use the Heroes books and Unit Studies as enrichment. In this case, you may choose fewer titles or go through the books more slowly. For example, the Heroes biographies provide excellent material for character education. You might choose to focus on a different character quality for each title you read. Upon the completion of each chapter, you could discuss the ways this quality was demonstrated in the character's life and how students might demonstrate the quality in their own lives.

Other alternatives might be to choose books that support a theme you are studying or to choose books that match your child's interests. For example, if your child was studying electricity as part of a science unit, you might have him or her read *Benjamin Franklin: Live Wire* or *Thomas Edison: Inspiration and Hard Work*. Either book would add greater depth to the student's study. Alternatively, if you knew that your child had an interest in aviation, you might assign *Orville Wright: The Flyer*.

Using Heroes of History Titles as Family Read-Alouds

Because of the engaging stories, compelling figures, and important historical themes that are a part of each Heroes of History title, the books make excellent read alouds. Younger siblings may simply enjoy the interesting story while older children will benefit from learning about the important historical events that were a part of our country's founding and growth. Around the dinner table, the books may spur engaging family conversations. For example, your family may enjoy discussing the important character qualities evident in the lives of various characters you are reading about or the effects of historical events on our country today.

Curriculum Timeline

If you are using the books as supplemental materials, you have great flexibility in when and how many books your child reads. However, if you are using the books as a key component of your Social Studies curriculum, you might find it helpful to map which books will be read and the period of time your child will need to complete the books in order to ensure that the whole of American history is covered by the end of the school year.

The following chart outlines two learning tracks. The *one year track* assumes that each book will take six weeks to complete. Of course, you have the flexibility to complete the track more quickly or slowly. The *two year track* allows three months for the completion of each book and might be a better alternative if you want a more in-depth study of history and geography.

<i>One Year Track</i> Months and Section	Biography Title	<i>Two Year Track</i> Months and Section
September to mid-October The Beginnings of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Christopher Columbus: Across the Ocean Sea</i> <i>John Smith: A Foothold in the New World</i> <i>William Penn: Liberty and Justice for All</i>	Year 1: September through November The Beginnings of a Nation
Mid-October through November The Establishment of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Benjamin Franklin: Live Wire</i> <i>George Washington: True Patriot</i> <i>John Adams: Independence Forever</i>	Year 1: December through February The Establishment of a Nation
December to mid-January The Exploration of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Meriwether Lewis: Off the Edge of the Map</i> <i>Daniel Boone: Frontiersman</i>	Year 1: March through May The Exploration of a Nation
Mid-January through February The Fracturing of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom</i> <i>Harriet Tubman: Freedombound</i>	Year 2: September through November The Fracturing of a Nation

Mid-January through February The Fracturing of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Abraham Lincoln: A New Birth of Freedom</i> <i>Harriet Tubman: Freedombound</i> <i>Clara Barton: Courage Under Fire</i>	Year 2: September through November The Fracturing of a Nation
March to mid-April The Growth of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Theodore Roosevelt: An American Original</i> <i>Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Storybook Life</i> <i>Douglas MacArthur: What Greater Honor</i>	Year 2: December through February The Growth of a Nation
Mid-April through May The Inspiration of a Nation	Students read one of the following titles: <i>Thomas Edison: Inspiration and Hard Work</i> <i>George Washington Carver: From Slave to Scientist</i> <i>Orville Wright: The Flyer</i>	Year 2: March through May The Inspiration of a Nation
June The Future of a Nation	Students read the following title: <i>Alan Shepard: Higher and Faster</i>	Year 2: June The Future of a Nation

Adaptations for the Parent's Role

Every homeschool classroom operates differently. In some classrooms, parents are involved with and direct every aspect of their child's study, while in other classrooms, students work independently and the parent simply does a daily check in. The Unit Study Curriculum Guides allow you to decide how much involvement you want to have with your child's study of the Heroes of History character. Depending on your preferences and your child's needs, you may choose to guide each part of the reading and study, or you may allow him or her to work independently.

Parent-Directed Study

If you want to be very involved with your child's study of the Heroes of History character, the Unit Study Curriculum Guides will provide a foundation from which to work. Here are some ways you could use each chapter.

- **Key Quotes.** Display selected quotes and discuss their meaning and relevance to the character of study with your child.
- **Display Corner.** Collect Display Corner items and present them as an introduction to the times and places in which the character lived. You may also wish to create a display of the items in a corner of your teaching area.

- **Chapter Questions.** Have your child answer the questions listed for each chapter and then use the answer key in the back to help correct the first four questions. You will need to grade the last two on your own since answers will vary. After your child has answered the chapter questions, discuss the chapter with him or her, using the questions as discussion starters.
- **Student Explorations.** Based on your child's learning style and ability level, assign or give him or her options for a project from this chapter. Give class time for your child to complete the project, provide the necessary materials, and offer assistance along the way.
- **Community Links.** Using ideas from this section, arrange for a guest speaker or set up a field trip.
- **Social Studies.** Using the maps and timeline provided, have your child mark the locations listed in the book and record the list of events on the timeline. You may choose to do this together or ask your child to do it individually and check their work later. Use the list of terms to play one of the suggested games.
- **Related Themes.** This section may be helpful to reference as you plan future units of study.
- **Culminating Event.** Use the suggestions in this section (or come up with your own) to organize an event that will wrap up your study of the Heroes of History character and allow your child to share his or her completed project.
- **Books and Resources.** Use this resource list to collect books, articles, and movies for your child's study of the Heroes of History character. These can be available for your child to use as resources for projects or as independent reading.

Student-Directed Study

If you are a homeschooling parent with minimal time, or whose child needs minimal direction, the Unit Study Curriculum Guides will help you to create a meaningful Unit Study. Each section of the Guide can be easily adapted to allow your child to work independently.

- **Key Quotes.** Have your child memorize and illustrate the meaning of one of the quotes independently. When completed, he or she can share the illustration with you and explain the quote's relevance to the character.
- **Display Corner.** Have your child locate some of the listed items from around the house or library. Ask him or her to explain the significance of these items in relation to the character of study.
- **Chapter Questions.** Have your child answer the first four questions listed for each chapter and check his or her own answers, using the answer key in the back of the guide. You may choose to not assign either of the last two questions in each chapter or just assign one, since they will require your time for grading. However, since the final questions generally require the highest level of thinking, it is recommended that your child complete these questions as often as possible.

- **Student Explorations.** Based on your child's learning style and ability level, assign or allow him or her to choose a project from this chapter, assigning a due date that you will review the project.
- **Community Links.** Using ideas from this section, schedule a guest speaker or set up a field trip.
- **Social Studies.** Copy the maps and timelines from this section or allow your child to work directly in the guide. Have him or her mark the listed locations on the map and events on the timeline. You will need to check the work against a map or atlas.
- **Related Themes.** This section may be helpful to reference as you plan future units of study.
- **Culminating Event.** For a simpler culminating event, you may choose to ignore the suggestions for food, clothing, and music, and just make this a time for your child to share his or her completed projects with neighbors, friends, or relatives.
- **Books and Resources.** Your child can review this list independently and check out resources for their project. You could also use this section to help your child find an independent reading book.

Working With Children of Varying Ability Levels and Learning Styles

The Heroes of History Unit Study Curriculum Guides are intended to address a wide range of ability levels and learning styles. Every parent knows that children of the same age often have very different abilities. Some children are able to work independently and seem to pick up important academic skills naturally. Others need more instruction. Also, in many homeschool classrooms, siblings of different ages are working together. The Heroes of History Unit Study Curriculum Guides can be used to support children of varying ability levels.

You can ensure that the needs of each child are met by *adjusting the level of support* or *varying the assignments* given, depending on what most benefits the child. For example, when working with a younger sibling, you might give him or her the same assignment as an older child but *provide more support* while the older child works more independently. Alternatively, you may choose to *adjust the assignments* you give to a child, depending on his or her ability level. For example, when working with the Key Quotes section, you could make sure that older or higher level children are assigned the longest and most complex quotes.

In addition to the varying ability levels in your homeschool group, some children may have non-typical learning styles. For example, consider the assignment of chapter questions. The basic purpose of the having students complete the questions is to check their understanding of the chapter they have just read. However, it is not necessary that all children complete this task in writing. Some children may have much success communicating their understanding of a chapter through a detailed drawing that captures the characters and events. Others may most benefit from working through their thoughts about the chapter in a group discussion, while still others may find it easiest to express their understanding by recreating the events in a short skit.

Here are some ways you can adapt activities in the Unit Study Curriculum Guides:

- **Key Quotes**

- Assign shorter or less complex quotes to younger children. Higher level students may memorize several of the quotes and also demonstrate their meaning through an illustration or skit.

- **Chapter Questions**

- Questions for each chapter are arranged from simpler to more complex. Assign lower level students to work on the first three questions independently. Complete the last three questions together. Older children may be able to complete all of the questions independently.

- **Student Explorations**

- Projects in each section are arranged from simpler to more complex. Assign projects based on your knowledge of your child's learning styles and ability levels or create a list of projects suited for your child and allow him or her to choose their own project from that list.

- **Books and Resources**

- Each resource in this section describes the appropriate age level and gives an idea for which types of students the book or movie would be most appropriate. Use this information to select specific books for your child or to offer an alternative biography of the character for a younger sibling or lower level student to read.

Teaching Social Studies with Unit Study Curriculum Guides

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is the largest association in the United States devoted solely to the content area of social studies. Regarding the place of Social Studies in the school program, NCSS states, "Social studies provides coordinated, systematic study, drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/>).

Given the diversity of lives and experiences covered by the Heroes of History biographies, the series lends itself very naturally to the study of social studies. All titles can also be used as jumping-off points for further study in one of the other disciplines encompassed by or naturally integrated with social studies. For example, if your class was reading *John Adams: Independence Forever*, the book could serve as an excellent introduction to further study of political science and the American form of government. If a class was reading *Benjamin Franklin: A Useful Life*, you might choose to devote a week to teaching science to study ocean currents, since Franklin was instrumental in charting the Gulf Stream.

Key Social Studies Themes

Following is a list of general themes or concepts that a quality social studies program should include. Unit Study Curriculum Guide examples are provided after each concept listed, demonstrating how naturally these themes are incorporated into every Heroes of History book and Unit Study.

- **Culture and Cultural Diversity**
 - Example: “Using the book *In Their Footsteps*, locate a site in your community that is significant to black history and make a mini-documentary about it.” (From *Harriet Tubman Unit Study*, suggested Student Explorations project)
- **Time, Continuity, and Change** (the ways human beings view themselves in and over time)
 - Example: “Plot these important events from history and Abraham Lincoln’s life on the timeline above.” (From *Abraham Lincoln Unit Study*, suggested Social Studies activity)
- **People, Places, and Environment**
 - Example: “Draw a journey map for George Washington Carver, showing the chronological order of the places he lived and the dates of his stay in each location. Explore how some of the place names have changed since the time of the story, and give reasons for such changes.” (From *George Washington Carver Unit Study*, suggested Social Studies activity)
- **Individual Development and Identity**
 - Example: “Read *The Adams Chronicles: Four Generations of Greatness*. How did John’s character and legacy contribute to the success of his son, John Quincy Adams?” (From *John Adams Unit Study*, suggested additional reading from Books and Resources section and possible discussion question)
- **Individuals, Groups, and Institutions** (and the interactions between them)
 - Example: “Discuss the meaning of the following quote by Clara Barton: ‘An institution or reform movement that is not selfish must originate in the recognition of some evil that is adding to the sum of human suffering, or diminishing the sum of happiness.’” (From *Clara Barton Unit Study*, suggested Key Quotes assignment)
- **Power, Authority, and Governance** (how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance)
 - Example: “Do you think a government benefits its people by supporting certain religions and repressing others? Explain your answer.” (From *William Penn Unit Study*, Chapter Question)
- **Production, Distribution, and Consumption** (how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services)
 - Example: “Visit a local power plant to find out how electricity is distributed in your community. Many traditional power plants have been shut down or are under security restrictions, but some have turned into museums and are open for tours. Speak with your local chamber of commerce or go to www.google.com and search for ‘power plant,’ ‘electricity

company,' 'museum,' and the name of your city to find possible sites to visit.” (From *Thomas Edison Unit Study*, suggested Community Links field trip)

- **Science, Technology, and Society** (and the relationships between them)
 - Example: “Display photographs of each of the Wright model flyers from 1899, 1900, 1902, and 1903 (available at www.wright-brothers.org in the ‘Aviation Hanger’) and current newspaper articles about recent advances in aviation technology.” (From *Orville Wright Unit Study*, suggested Display Corner item)
- **Global Connections and the Interdependence of the World**
 - Example: “Upon Douglas’s departure from Japan, a newspaper wrote, ‘What he gave us was not material aid and democratic reform alone, but a new way of life, the freedom and dignity of the individual.’ Describe the ways that Douglas brought new life to Japan.” (From *Douglas MacArthur Unit Study*, Chapter Question)
- **Civic Ideals and Practices** (the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic)
 - Example: “Prior to the expedition, Thomas Jefferson expressed his ideals for the way Native Americans and white people would interact as pioneers moved westward. How did Jefferson’s ideals contrast with what Meriwether Lewis encountered? How did future relations between Native Americans and the United States contrast with Jefferson’s ideals?” (From *Meriwether Lewis Unit Study*, suggested Student Exploration essay question)

A case could be made that each biography covers each of the themes in some way. However, the following chart indicates which Heroes of History books most naturally integrate the specific themes:

Theme	Relevant Heroes of History Characters
Culture and Cultural Diversity	Christopher Columbus, John Smith, William Penn, Meriwether Lewis, Daniel Boone, Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver
Time, Continuity, and Change	All characters
People, Place, and Environment	Christopher Columbus, Meriwether Lewis, Daniel Boone, Harriet Tubman, Laura Ingalls Wilder
Individual Development and Identity	All characters
Individuals, Groups, and Institutions	William Penn, John Adams, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Clara Barton, George Washington Carver, Theodore Roosevelt, Douglas MacArthur
Power, Authority, and Governance	John Smith, William Penn, George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt
Production, Distribution, and Consumption	Christopher Columbus, Orville Wright, Thomas Edison, George Washington Carver
Science, Technology, and Society	Benjamin Franklin, George Washington Carver, Thomas Edison, Orville Wright,

	Alan Shepard
Global Connections and the Interdependence of the World	Christopher Columbus, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Clara Barton, Theodore Roosevelt, Orville Wright, Douglas MacArthur, Alan Shepard
Civic Ideals and Practices	William Penn, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Clara Barton, George Washington Carver, Douglas MacArthur

By using the chart to select the books your student will read, you can ensure that he or she will gain experience with each of these themes. If you don't plan to have your student read the entire chronology and are choosing a few books as supplemental reading, you can select titles based on themes you feel are most important to study and discuss.

Key Social Studies Skills

(Material in this section is adapted from *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, produced by the National Council for the Social Studies, the largest association in the country devoted solely to social studies education. You can read more from this document or order a full copy here: [http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/.](http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction/))

In addition to the integrated study of the above concepts, the National Council for the Social Studies suggests that social studies programs allow students to practice and grow in the following areas:

- **Acquiring information and using data.** The program should increase the student's ability to read, study, search for information, use social science technical vocabulary and methods, and use computers and other electronic media.
- **Developing and presenting policies, arguments, and stories.** The program should increase the student's ability to use the writing process and to classify, interpret, analyze, summarize, evaluate, and present information in well-reasoned ways.
- **Constructing new knowledge.** The social studies program should increase the student's ability to understand unfamiliar categories of information, establish cause/effect relationships, determine the validity of information and arguments, and develop a new story, model, narrative, picture, or chart that adds to the student's understanding of an event, idea, or persons.
- **Participating in groups.** The program should increase the student's ability to express and advocate reasoned personal convictions within groups, participate in negotiating conflicts and differences or maintain an individual position because of its ethical basis, work individually and in groups, and accept and fulfill responsibilities associated with citizenship in a democratic republic.

Within each Heroes of History Unit Study, many opportunities to practice skills are already integrated into the chapter activities. Consider the following examples:

- **Key Quotes.** Either individually or in groups, students can research the context of a selected quote, interpret its meaning, make a case for its relevance to the character under study, and present findings to the class.
- **Display Corner.** Either individually or in a group, students can research the context of an item included in the display, make a case for its significance to the character of study, and present findings to a larger group.
- **Chapter Questions.** After students complete their responses to the questions, a class discussion of the chapter gives them an opportunity to explain their reasoning and allow opportunities for debate and construction of new ideas.
- **Student Explorations.** Most project options in the this section require students to analyze and synthesize information and insights gained from the book and demonstrate understanding of its themes. For example, if students choose a writing activity, they will gain practice with going through the writing process, asserting an opinion or developing a relevant narrative, demonstrating their mastery of related technical vocabulary, all while consulting the Heroes of History title and citing outside resources.
- **Social Studies.** The activities in this chapter require students to search the book and outside resources to find geographical features and complete a timeline, learn technical terms related to the character of study, and apply their new geography knowledge to conceptual questions. (You may also want to consider purchasing the *Heroes of History Maps of the United States* workbook. This will give students opportunities to research and gain additional information about the relevant state including its major industries and natural resources, its rank in population and total area, and much more. Learning these additional facts about the state of interest will give students a more complete understanding of the area from which the Heroes of History character came as well as the development of the state since the time of the character’s residence there.)
- **Books and Resources.** Either individually or with a partner, students who read one of the additional biographies listed in this section can compare information gained from the two books or contrast author perspectives on the character.

Teaching Language Arts with Unit Study Curriculum Guides

In addition to providing material for the teaching of social studies concepts and skills, the Heroes of History biographies and Unit Study Curriculum Guides can support the teaching of language arts skills and strategies for students of varying ability levels.

The Chapter Questions section offers the most natural place for students to practice and demonstrate language arts skills. Students will be asked to interpret vocabulary, search the text for answers, make inferences, and connect the text to their own life. After students have completed the questions for each chapter, you may also wish to have them answer additional teacher-created questions in a separate

journal, giving them regular practice in using some of these essential skills and strategies. This could be as simple as using one of the sample questions below as a template to create a question appropriate to the book being read.

The Student Explorations section also offers opportunities for students to practice language arts skills. A variety of writing options are available, which ask students to demonstrate their ability to compare and contrast, express an opinion, sequence events, and understand theme. In order to produce a quality piece of writing, students will gain practice with going through the writing process and consulting and citing outside resources. Many of the other sections (Hands-On, Arts and Crafts, Media) also require students to synthesize the information acquired from the book.

The Books and Resources listings can also contribute to increasing students' abilities with language arts skills. By reading one of the additional books listed in this section, students have opportunities to make connections between the texts and compare and contrast author purposes and themes for each book. In addition, watching educational movies or reviewing websites will require students to employ important media literacy skills as they learn to distinguish between helpful, relevant information and that which has more “fluff” than substance.

Essential Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies

(Material in this section is adapted from Washington State Grade Level Expectations for Reading: <http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/ReadingAssessment.aspx>; California Academic Content Standards for English Language Arts: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/engmain.asp>; Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/index.html>.)

Below is a list of essential skills and strategies that *all* children should master, along with sample questions for practice with these skills.

- **Understand theme/main idea and supporting details**
 - What was the main idea or key concept of this chapter?
 - What is the lesson or theme of this story?
- **Summarize with evidence from the reading**
 - Tell what happened in this chapter in 20 words or less.
 - Tell the five most important events from this chapter in order.
- **Make inferences or predictions based on the reading**
 - (Before reading) What do you think will happen in this chapter? Use evidence from the previous chapters to support your prediction.
 - (When an idea or cause is not clear) Why do you think [the character] did [an action]? Support your answer with evidence from the book.

- **Interpret vocabulary important to the meaning of the literary text**
 - What does [vocabulary word] mean? What words or phrases around this word helped you to figure out its meaning?
 - Use [vocabulary word] in a sentence. Include words or phrases in your sentence that will give clues about the word's meaning.
- **Sequence events or steps from the reading**
 - Describe the events of this chapter, using sequence words (first, next, then, finally).
 - Tell the steps that [the character] took to accomplish [an event].
- **Compare and contrast elements within and between texts**
 - How is [character/idea #1] like [character/idea #2]? How are they different?
 - How was the [event/character/idea] in this story similar to the [event/character/idea] in another story?
- **Make connections within and between texts** (cause & effect)
 - What was the cause of [event]?
 - How did [character/event/idea] affect [another character/event/idea]?
- **Analyze the author's purpose**
 - Why do you think the author wrote this book? To inform? Entertain? Persuade? Explain your answer.
 - Why do you think the author wrote the chapter in this style?
- **Understand literary elements** (genres; story elements such as plot, character, setting; stylistic devices; problem/resolution)
 - What was the problem in this chapter and how was it solved?
 - What kind of person is [character]? What actions or words from the book show you this person's character?
- **Extend information beyond text**—apply information, give a response to reading, express insight gained from reading
 - What lesson do you think [character] learned? How do you think he will act differently in this situation next time?
 - Do you agree with [character's] actions? Why or why not?

Essential Writing Skills and Strategies

(Material in this section is adapted from Washington State's Assessment of Student Learning Writing Checklist. You can find the complete document at <http://www.k12.wa.us/assessment/WASL/WritingAssessment.aspx>.)

Writing for a variety of purposes

During the course of the Unit Study, your child will have the option to write in a variety of forms. It is important that your child gain experience in each of these genres of writing and learn to appropriately adjust his or her style depending on the purpose of the writing and the intended audience. For example, within the task of letter writing, a child might take two very different tones depending on who

would be reading the letter. Whereas a letter to a friend might use personal, informal language, a letter to a museum would likely be more formal and businesslike. In another instance, a child might be writing to a single audience (the parent), but the form of the writing might change depending on whether the task was answering chapter questions or completing an informational report.

The Heroes of History Unit Studies give your child opportunities to

- **Inform** (reports, newspaper articles)
- **Persuade** (essays, advertisements, brochures)
- **Tell a story** (fictional stories, accounts of a real event)
- **Respond to literature** (chapter questions, poetry)
- **Summarize**
- **Entertain** (poetry, humorous stories)
- **Communicate** (letters, emails, journal entries)

Going through the writing process

Some of these tasks will require more time than others. For chapter questions and other shorter assignments, your child may simply think through the question, reference the Heroes of History text, and write his or her response in an organized and coherent manner. More extensive tasks may also require that he or she reference and cite outside sources and/or go through the entire writing process, as listed below:

- **Prewriting:** The child generates ideas and makes a plan for how the writing will be organized.
- **Rough Draft(s):** The child gets ideas down on paper in a rough draft form. When the draft is finished, you give encouragement and suggestions for improvement.
- **Revising and editing:** The child improves the content, style, and organization of the paper, based on your feedback.
- **Editing:** The child corrects any spelling, grammatical or punctuation errors, based on feedback.
- **Publishing or final draft:** The child writes a final copy of the paper to share with an audience.
- **Evaluation:** The child reflects on the writing process, considers parent and audience feedback, and adjusts writing process in the future as necessary.

Considering the traits of good writing

It takes many subtle elements to produce a good piece of writing. Authors we admire seem to be able to weave these elements together seamlessly. As with reading comprehension, some students also seem to pick up these skills naturally and easily produce engaging, organized pieces of writing. For most students, however, it takes many years of instruction and practice to gain some level of mastery and control over these essential writing skills. For students just learning to write, the task can be overwhelming! As they write, they must consider the content of their message, the appropriateness of the style in which they are writing, the grammatical correctness of their writing, and organize all of this in a clear and logical manner. Below is a list of elements that are a part of all good writing along with some guiding questions:

- **Content**
 - Did I answer the question that was given?
 - Did I stay focused on my main ideas?
 - Did I give enough specific details and examples to support my ideas?
 - Did I include information that is interesting and necessary for my reader to know?
- **Organization**
 - Does my writing have an opening/introduction, a middle, and a conclusion?
 - Is my writing organized into paragraphs?
 - Did I use words that help show how my ideas are connected (e.g. first, another reason, in contrast)?
- **Style**
 - Did I show that I care about this topic?
 - Did I use language that fits my audience and purpose (e.g. formal vs. informal, narrative vs. informational)?
 - Did I use a variety of sentences types (e.g. some short, some long, beginning with different words)?
 - Did I use a variety of interesting words?
- **Writing Conventions**
 - Did I follow the rules of correct English usage (e.g. correct pronoun for subject, subject-verb agreement)?
 - Did I spell all of the words correctly?
 - Did I use correct capitalization and punctuation (periods, commas, quotation marks)?
 - Did I write complete sentences?

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Rachael Carson of RDC Ministries for her contribution to this overview guide.