

The Examined Life

The Middle Ages: From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of the Renaissance

INSTRUCTOR

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Syllabus—2008-2009 Academic Year

Recommended/Necessary Text

Susan Wise Bauer, The Story of the World, Vol. 2, From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of the Renaissance, 2007, Second Edition. We will read all of it in the course of the academic year.

FYI— The above book can also be purchased in CD format—read out loud. There is also an activity book that was developed by Susan Bauer. It is interesting and useful depending on your teaching methods--but not necessary.

Schedule

We begin the week right after Labor Day, reading our assignments. We meet once a month for a (hopefully) spectacular activity that ties into the readings we have been doing. Our first meeting is on September 19th at 10:15 at Matheson Hammock. See our registration materials for details.

Monthly Meetings

Included in this syllabus you will find the topics for the first three meetings. There will be eight meetings altogether. We will decide on the other five meetings together. Possible ideas: building a Viking ship or a medieval castle, or both, a joust, a medieval feast, a medieval market, something a-propos Marco Polo or Genghis Khan, a movie about Christopher Columbus, a pachamanca--how Inca and pre-Inca cultures cooked food, etc

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NOTES:

Weekly Assignments

Please read three stories per week in sequence.

Week 1

Wandering Through the Roman Empire

The Fall of Rome

The Celts of Britain

Week 2

Barbarians Come to Britain

Beowulf the Hero

Augustine Comes to England

Week 3

Medieval Monasteries

Writing Books by Hand

The Beauty of Constantinople

Meeting #1: Timeline

The children will make their own timeline out of a simple chain. They will clip dates onto the chain. Then they will clip cards onto the chain-cards that mention historical events the children already know about, for example, the Battle of Thermopylae, Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, the birth of Jesus Christ, the fall of Rome, etc. Over the course of the rest of the academic year, they will be given pre-printed cards to take home and clip onto their timeline.

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NOTES:

Week 4

Justinian, the Just Emperor

The Empress Theodora

The Church in the East

Week 5

A King Named Skandagupta

Monks in Caves

Muhammad's Vision

Week 6

Muhammad Flees to Medina

The Koran: Islam's Holy Book

The Fight for Mecca

Week 7

The Spread of Islam

The City of Baghdad

Sinbad in the Valley of the Snakes

Meeting # 2: A Day at a Monastery.

Children and their parents will experience what a day at a monastery would be like. An abbot or abbess will orient all novices to their new duties. They will work the land, cook a very simple meal, bake bread in a wood burning oven, fetch water, make a bed out of straw and a pillow from a stone, make candles, copy and illuminate a manuscript, teach reading, tend to the sick and to injured crusaders, eat in silence, listen to monastic music, etc.

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Week 8
Yang Chien Unites North and South
The Tang Dynasty
The Yamoto Dynasty of Japan
Week 9
A Tale of Three Countries: Korea, China, and Japan
The First People of Australia
The Long Journey of the Maori
Week 10
Clovis, the Ex-Barbarian
Four Tribes, One Empire
Islam in Spain and Africa
Week 11
Charles the Hammer
The Greatest King: Charlemagne
The Viking Invasions
Meeting # 3: A Fair in the Ancient City of Baghdad
Children will learn about what a visitor to Baghdad would have found at one of its markets: storytellers, snake charmers, food specific to the area (fried eggplant, anyone?), pilgrims on their way to Mecca, prayers to Allah five times per day while facing Mecca (where is Mecca?), the visit of a caliph, the sale of spices, as well as gorgeous carpets, jewelry, glassware, and luxury fabrics. Did you know the sofa, the ottoman, and the rugs in your house found their way into Western culture from the Middle East? Did you know the luxury fabrics, as well as inlaid woodwork and bejeweled metal work we associate with the Renaissance, came to the West, in part, from the East? We will have a fun fair addressing these concepts.

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NOTES:

Week 12
Eric the Red and "Eric's Son"
The Norse Gods
Thor and the Giant King
Week 13
The Vikings Invade England
Alfred the Great
The Battle of Hastings
Week 14
The English Language
Serfs and Noblemen
Stone Castles
Week 15
The English Code of Chivalry
The Samurai: Japanese Knights
A Command from the Pope
Week 16
Recapturing Jerusalem
Saladin of Jerusalem
El Cid and the "Reconquest of Spain"
Week 17
Richard the Lionhearted
John Lackland and the Magna Carta
Robin Hood

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Week 18
Robin Hood and the Butcher
The Scattering of the Jews
A Tale of the Diaspora
Week 19
The Clever Rabbi of Cordova
Ghengis Khan, Emperor of All Men
The Mogul Conquest of China
Week 20
Marco Polo Goes to China
The Forbidden City of the Ming
The Rus Come to Constantinople
Week 21
Ivan the Great and Ivan the Terrible
The Ottoman Turks Attack
The Sheep-Rocks
Week 22
The Capture of Constantinople
Suleiman the Law Giver
The Plague
Week 23
A New Way of Living
Henry V and the Battle of Agincourt
Joan of Arc

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Week 24
The Wars of the Roses
The Princes in the Tower
Ferdinand and Isabella Unite Spain
Week 25
Henry the Navigator, Prince of Portugal
Gold, Salt, and Ghana
Mansa Musa of Mali
Week 26
The Moghul Dynasty
Akbar of India
The Bad- Luck Servant
Week 27
Christopher Columbus
Vespucci and Magellan
The Mayans of Central America
Week 28
The Marvelous City of Tenochtitlan
The Incas
The Slave Trade
Week 29
Cortes and Montezuma
Martin Luther's List
Henry VIII's Problems

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Week 30
A New Way of Thinking
Gutenberg's Great Invention
The Spread of the Reformation
Week 31
The Council of Trent
The Revolution of Copernicus
Galileo's Strange Notions
Week 32
The Queen Who Almost Wasn't
Good Queen Bess
William Shakespeare
Week 33
Macbeth
Macbeth's Decision
Walter Raleigh and the New World
Week 34
The Lost Colony
The New-Found Land
Week 35
Jacques Cartier's Discoveries
Spain and England's War
Week 36
The World at the End of the Sixteenth Century

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