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Sod House in Custer County, Nebraska, 1886



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Homeschoolers Exploring Boston, 2016

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# Dear Student

Welcome to *Our Star-Spangled Story*. American history is not something sitting closed up in a box or in a book, far away and long ago. American history is a story, and you're in it! God is writing history every single day. He made you to be a part of it.

People have done a lot of living in this place called America:

- People built houses and planted crops.
- People explored places that weren't on any map.
- People sacrificed for what they believed to be right.
- People worshipped God and shared Jesus with others who didn't know Him.
- People enjoyed happy dinners around their kitchen tables with their families.
- People gathered for celebrations.
- People comforted each other when they lost someone they loved.
- People moved to new places to find better homes for their families.

American history is a big story of people living their lives, facing problems, finding solutions, and working hard. American history is a lot of little stories, funny stories, scary stories, stories of singing and dancing, stories of disagreement, and stories of working together.

American history is about people. We hope you enjoy meeting people from American history in this book. We hope you learn from their stories. We still have a great deal of work to do in our country: victories to celebrate, problems to overcome, people to help, and faith to share. We pray you will bring glory to God in your own part of the story of American history.

Charlene Notgrass, Bethany Poore, and Mary Evelyn McCurdy

# Dear Parent

Thank you for choosing *Our Star-Spangled Story* to help you explore American history with your child!

We present this curriculum to honor the Lord and His work in history. We are privileged to have the opportunity to show your family what American history is really about: people living their lives here in this place we call America. We pray your family will grow and learn through the journey we present in these pages. We hope you make memories as you read, discover, create, sing, laugh, dance, and connect with each other.

We at Notgrass History believe that you are in charge of your child's education. You know the needs, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and interests of your own child. You also know the bigger picture of the needs and commitments of your family.

We design our curriculum to be a tool to make learning rich, meaningful, simple, and fun. Curriculum should not be a burdensome taskmaster. The next few pages will give you some suggestions, but you get to decide how to use this curriculum in a way that works best for your family!

Don't worry about dates and details. Don't worry about making sure you remember everything. Unlock a creaky old door, step into the past, meet people just like your family, and hear what they have to say. Enjoy the journey of a rich story that you and your family are part of writing every day.

Charlene Notgrass, Bethany Poore, and Mary Evelyn McCurdy



# How to Use *Our Star-Spangled Story*

*Our Star-Spangled Story* is a one-year American history course designed for students in grades one through four. The curriculum has thirty chronological units of three lessons each. We recommend completing one unit most weeks. If your school year has thirty-six weeks, this allows you six weeks of flexibility.

In addition to history, this curriculum incorporates literature, music, creative writing, geography, and art. It also brings up many concepts that you can use for conversation to deepen your child's Christian worldview. Each lesson ends with a Bible verse.

We wrote the lessons in a narrative style and richly illustrated them with color photographs and maps. We designed every part of the curriculum to help your student connect with history in a personal way. Part 1 and Part 2, the main lesson texts, include all of the instructions for what to do each week and each day.

## How to Use *Our Star-Spangled Story Part 1 and Part 2*

Part 1 is the lesson book for the first semester. It has forty-five lessons that cover life in America from before Europeans came through the late 1800s. Part 2, for the second semester, has forty-five lessons that cover from the late 1800s through modern times.

Parents can read lessons aloud or students can read lessons by themselves. We encourage you to enjoy looking closely at the photos and illustrations. Talking about them is a great way to learn.

At the end of each lesson is a blue box with activity ideas. Don't look at these as a checklist that you must complete. Look at these as ideas to choose from to enhance your study. Let your student's grade, age, abilities, needs, and interests be your guide as you select activities. The activities should challenge your student, but he or she should also feel competent and successful.





The Lesson Activities at the end of each lesson include some or all of the following:

- Instructions for what to do with *Star-Spangled Rhythms and Rhymes*, *A Star-Spangled Timeline*, *My Star-Spangled Student Workbook*, and the literature.
- Many locations mentioned in the lessons are shown on the “All Around the USA Map” at the back of the book. We note these so that you and your student can find them on the map if you wish.
- Three review questions highlight key facts and concepts from the lesson and help your student think critically about what he or she learned. We recommend using these as oral discussion questions. You may also occasionally want your student to answer the questions in writing.
- The Hands-On History Ideas provide inspiration for pretending, playing, and building. Don’t view these as assignments, but as ideas and encouragement for your child to have fun, use his or her imagination, and be creative. We also include one project for each unit. We discuss these below.

## Unit Projects

Each unit includes a project idea connected with one of the lessons. Projects include arts and crafts, recipes, and games. You will find the instructions on the last page or pages of each unit. We recommend reading the instructions and gathering the supplies early each week. You can complete the project on the day it is assigned or on another day that is convenient. You might also wish to make the project an activity for your entire family to enjoy together.

### Parental Supervision Required

Please review each project and discuss with your child what he or she may do alone and what he or she needs your supervision to do. The projects include the use of scissors, the oven, and the stove. Some children may be allergic to recipe ingredients or craft supplies. Notgrass History cannot accept responsibility for the safety of your child in completing these activities. Thank you for being a conscientious parent who takes responsibility for your child’s safety.

Like all components of *Our Star-Spangled Story*, the unit projects are optional. We offer them as extra learning experiences. You, the parent, are the best one to decide if you are able to schedule time to complete them.

## How to Use *Star-Spangled Rhythms and Rhymes*

*Star-Spangled Rhythms and Rhymes* is a collection of 60 songs, poems, and dances enjoyed throughout American history. Each selection goes along with a particular lesson in the curriculum. The Lesson Activities at the end of two lessons in each unit will guide you to the appropriate selection. Visit [notgrass.com/ssrr](http://notgrass.com/ssrr) to stream or download audio recordings. Visit [notgrass.com/dance](http://notgrass.com/dance) to watch demonstrations of the dances.



## How to Use *A Star-Spangled Timeline*

*A Star-Spangled Timeline* provides an easy way to review material in the lessons. Students can get a better sense of what was happening during each particular era. At the end of each unit, we tell you what pages to look at in the timeline.

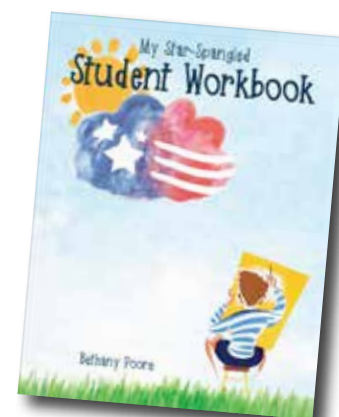
## How to Use *My Star-Spangled Student Workbook*

*My Star-Spangled Student Workbook* has one activity page for each lesson. Each week, students have a coloring page, a drawing or writing activity, and a unit review.

**Coloring:** Our favorite medium for coloring is quality colored pencils such as Prismacolor®. These provide rich color and the ability to color in detail.

**Drawing or Writing:** We suggest that you have your student complete a combination of drawing and writing activities throughout the curriculum. The grade, age, ability, and interests of your child should determine whether he or she does more drawing or more writing and the level of work you expect.

For example, a fourth grader should generally write a longer composition than a first grader. A first grader might not include as much detail in a drawing as a fourth grader.



As the parent and teacher, you know if your student is learning, making personal connections with history, and meeting appropriate challenges. We suggest that you have your student talk about their drawings and writing. This is a great opportunity to discuss your student's thoughts on what he or she is learning. You may wish to address any grammatical or spelling corrections.

**Unit Review:** The Unit Review page always follows the final lesson of the unit. These are intended to be a simple review of the key points covered in the unit. It is not necessary to test your student over *Our Star-Spangled Story*, but if you feel your student would benefit from testing, you can use the Unit Review as a weekly test. If you feel your student needs more challenging assessment, you can use the review questions included with each lesson as an oral quiz.

*My Star-Spangled Student Workbook* is the only consumable book in this curriculum. If you are using the curriculum with more than one child, you can purchase additional copies of the *Student Workbook*.

## How to Use *Our Star-Spangled Story Answer Key and Literature Guide*

This booklet for parents contains answers for the lesson review questions in the text and for the *Student Workbook* activities. It also includes a guide and discussion questions for the literature titles.

## How to Use the Literature

We chose eight literature titles to complement the lessons in *Our Star-Spangled Story*. All of the titles are in print and available from Notgrass History and other sources.

You can read them aloud with your student, which is a fun and memorable way to spend time together. You can have your child read the books on his or her own. Or you might do a combination depending on what else you are doing as a family.

We give you three to five weeks in which to read each book. Each book coincides with the historical context of the lessons you study during that period. You may wish to read them slowly, one chapter each day. Or your student may like to read an entire book in one sitting! If reading the literature adds too much pressure to your homeschool schedule, feel free to skip some or all of them. Each book adds a rich perspective to a certain period in American history, but you don't have to read the literature to understand the lessons.



These are the literature titles we recommend:

- *Benjamin West and His Cat Grimalkin* by Marguerite Henry (Units 1-4)
- *Toliver's Secret* by Esther Wood Brady (Units 5-9)
- *Freedom Crossing* by Margaret Goff Clark (Units 10-12)
- *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder (Units 13-15)
- *Mountain Born* by Elizabeth Yates (Units 16-18)
- *Emily's Runaway Imagination* by Beverly Cleary (Units 19-22)
- *The Year of Miss Agnes* by Kirkpatrick Hill (Units 23-26)
- *Katy* by Mary Evelyn Notgrass (Units 27-30)

We chose these books with careful consideration. Some of the books have minor elements or dialogue that we want you to be aware of in advance. You can find our notes in *Our Star-Spangled Story Answer Key and Literature Guide*. You are the best one to decide what your child is ready to read or hear.

## How Much Time Will Each Lesson Require?

Each lesson takes about ten to fifteen minutes to read straight through. Beyond that, the amount of time you invest will depend on the additional activities you choose. You can usually complete the lesson and all the activities except “Hands-On History” in under an hour. The time needed for “Hands-On History” varies depending on what activities you choose and from one student to another. You can use *Our Star-Spangled Story* three days per week, or spread the lessons and activities over all five days of your school week. The curriculum has a total of ninety lessons divided into thirty units.

## What Supplies Will My Student Need?

Students will need a pencil and colored pencils. Unit projects will require additional supplies. You can access a complete supply list on our website ([notgrass.com/oss](http://notgrass.com/oss)). The individual unit project instruction pages also list these materials.

## How Many Activities Should My Student Complete?

You know best what your student is capable of accomplishing. We include a variety of activities in each lesson so that the curriculum is flexible.

A parent may require a fourth grader who is academically gifted to read the daily lessons and complete every activity at the end of each lesson independently. On the other hand, the parent of a first grader with learning challenges may decide to read aloud each lesson and pick and choose from the activities.

The variety of activities makes it easy for your student to have a positive, rich, engaging, unique learning experience. You should not feel pressure to complete every assignment.

## How Can I Make My Homeschool Experience Easier?

As you look ahead to your school year or evaluate midway, consider how you might make your student's education less complicated and richer by using *Our Star-Spangled Story* as a large part of his or her learning for the year.

*Our Star-Spangled Story* is much more than history. You can also use this curriculum as all or part of your geography, literature, creative writing, music, art, and handwriting practice. You may find that eliminating busywork in an entirely separate subject and incorporating that subject into this study makes for a less stressful, more engaging, more memorable school year!

## How Can I Help My Struggling Student?

For students who struggle with reading or writing, feel free to make adjustments to help them be successful and not become frustrated. You or an older sibling can read the lessons and literature aloud. Struggling students might also benefit from reading aloud to you.

You can easily alter, shorten, or orally complete the writing activities and review questions. You can also eliminate them if you feel your student is not ready. We designed *Our Star-Spangled Story* to be flexible to meet the needs of individual families and students.

## How Can I Use *Our Star-Spangled Story* with Multiple Ages?

While we designed *Our Star-Spangled Story* especially for first through fourth graders, other ages can certainly benefit. Younger siblings can listen in on the lessons and literature, look at the pictures, and take part in the hands-on history ideas. Students older than fourth grade who have learning challenges or a particular learning style might benefit from this format for learning history.

If you have more than one child in grades one through four, you may enjoy reading the lessons aloud together. Afterward, you can also enjoy many of the activities together. You can assign each child different activities, depending on his or her age and skill level.

## Sample Walk-Through of Unit 5

You can easily complete *Our Star-Spangled Story* in three days per week. For example, when teaching Unit 5, you can do everything for Lesson 13 on Monday, everything for Lesson 14 on Wednesday, and everything for Lesson 15 on Friday.

However, if you want to spend less time each day and spread the lessons over a five-day week, here is an example of how you can do that with Unit 5.

Bruce and Jennifer Smith have three children. Sam is in fourth grade, Lily is in second grade, and Allen is four years old.

**Monday:** Jennifer and all three children gather on the couch. Jennifer opens to Unit 5 and reads aloud Lesson 13, “A Midnight Ride with Paul Revere.” Jennifer, Sam, and Lily discuss the review questions at the end of the lesson. They all listen to “War Song” while they read along in *Star-Spangled Rhythms and Rhymes*. They listen to “War Song” a second time and sing along. Sam and Lily each color the picture for Lesson 13 in their own copy of *My Star-Spangled Student Workbook*.

**Tuesday:** Jennifer, Lily, and Allen work together to make the Unit 5 project, “Revere and Son Shop Window.” Sam works alongside them making one of his own.

**Wednesday:** Jennifer and all three children gather on the couch to read Lesson 14, “Thirteen Colonies and Independence.” Jennifer, Sam, and Lily discuss the review questions at the end of the lesson. They all sing along with “Yankee Doodle” from *Star-Spangled Rhythms and Rhymes*.



Sam completes the Lesson 14 writing activity in his workbook. Lily completes the Lesson 14 drawing activity in her workbook. Later that day, all three children pretend they are carrying messages to troops inspired by the “Hands-On History” idea.

**Thursday:** Jennifer and all three children gather on the couch to read Lesson 15, “James Madison and the Constitution.” Jennifer, Sam, and Lily discuss the review questions at the end of the lesson. Sam and Lily complete the Lesson 15 / Unit 5 Review page in *My Star-Spangled Student Workbook*. Later that day, all three children build with blocks inspired by the “Hands-On History” idea.

**Friday:** Jennifer and her children enjoy singing along again with “War Song” and “Yankee Doodle” from *Star-Spangled Rhythms and Rhymes*. They look at a section of *A Star-Spangled Timeline* as instructed at the end of Lesson 15. After supper Bruce reads the first three chapters of *Toliver’s Secret* with the whole family.

## Encouragement for the Journey

Remember that God designed your family and the daily responsibilities you carry. A homeschooling mother who has one child can complete more activities in *Our Star-Spangled Story* than a homeschooling mother who has seven children and an elderly grandparent living in her home. God will use the efforts of both of these mothers.

God does not expect you to do more than you can do. Be kind to yourself. He knows exactly what you and your children need this year. We encourage you to pray about your family’s experience using *Our Star-Spangled Story*. Let it be a tool to help you have a wonderful learning experience with your children.

Remember that out of all the parents in the world to whom God could have given your children, He chose you. He is the one who put your family together. He knows what He is doing. Trust in His choice. God created you. He created your children.

Relax and remember that this is the day that the Lord has made. Rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24)!

We are here to help you. If you have questions or simply need some encouragement, send us an email ([help@notgrass.com](mailto:help@notgrass.com)) or give us a call (1-800-211-8793).