**Social Studies (History, Geography & Cultural Studies):**

**Recommended Methods and Resources – Charlotte Mason Style**

Resources: use the story books listed in a Charlotte Mason or Classical Education program that are related to your chosen period of history, and according to the ages or grade levels of the children. Lists of books can be found in …

* The CM-Australia Booklist from Homeward Curriculum ([https://www.Homeward.com.au](https://www.hearthward.com.au/))
* Ambleside Online ( <https://www.amblesideonline.org/index> )
* Heritage History ( <https://www.heritage-history.com/index.php?c=library&s=genre> )
* Honey for a Child’s Heart – updated 2021 ( <https://www.koorong.com/product/honey-for-a-childs-heart-gladys-hunt_0310242460> )
* Half a Hundred Acre Wood
( <https://www.halfahundredacrewood.com/classical-conversations-cycle-2-booklist/> )
* Timeline of Classics ( <https://iew.com/shop/products/timeline-classics> )

In the ‘HOMEWARD’ Program, History and Social Studies are explored through 'living books', real things, and creative activities. Rather than trying to memorise factual information about historical events and dates, the children engage with interesting stories about the lives of real people and fictional characters. When a child reads a well-written story from a particular time and place, the landscape scenery and culture or lifestyle of the people comes to life as we are taken on a journey back in time, or to far-away places. Dramatisations of specific scenes help the children to identify with the characters; and hands-on creative projects provide an engaging way to explore interesting aspects of the culture that stays with the child for a lifetime.

The ‘HOMEWARD’ program has a three-year-cycle covering four eras of history. Each era is explored at a deeper level with different literature in a higher grade/year. If there is a period of history or a particular topic that is of special interest and you want to linger longer, that is not a problem. Every period of history has lists of books and resources for every age group from Preschool to Year 12. The four eras to be studied are: Ancient History to Fall of Rome; the Medieval and Renaissance Era; The Early Modern Era; The Later Modern Era (1900 to today). Within this there are twelve cultures in the study of the flow of ideas through history. Concurrent to this, each of the twelve cultures includes a character trait relevant to the major topics in that era. Each culture and its associated character trait are explored for one term (12 terms over the 3-year cycle).

**Procedure:**

Start with reading books from our suggested list of historical and cultural literature (relevant to the child’s age/year-level). Then after selecting the book to be read, do the following...

**Step 1:** For the first lesson, ask what the student knows about the topic. For subsequent lessons, ask the children to tell what they remember of the story from the last time.

**Step 2:** If possible, explain the meanings of any difficult words or phrases that the child will come across in the upcoming passage. Although not always possible for the parent to have read ahead, it is preferable to explain meanings of difficult words and phrases beforehand to help the story to flow without stopping and starting. (Don’t give a big lecture- just a brief heads-up)

**Step 3:** Depending on the child's age and ability, either you will read the section to the child (15 minutes for early Primary), or do shared reading (parent reads some, then child reads a paragraph for reading practice, then parent reads some more, etc.); or an older child reads by themselves (20-30 minutes). Tell the child beforehand that they must have fully focused attention because they (or you) will only read it once, and then they will retell everything they have read or heard. Here we are training the children in the habit of focussed attention.

**Step 4:** The child 'narrates' i.e. retells the story back with as many details as possible. At first when children are not used to this practice, you may need to prompt them with 'open ended questions' ie questions that don't just have a yes or no answer but invite deeper thinking. (Grades 1-3 = oral re telling; Grades 4-7 = firstly oral re-telling then after several chapters do some written overview of the story; Grades 8-12 same as grades 4-7 but talking more about the meanings and motives behind the actions of the characters.)

**Step 5:** The re-telling may lead to further discussion, but the emphasis is not for the parent or teacher to give a long lecture. We want to give the child direct access to the literature and allow them to think about the ideas themselves.

**Step 6:** Apart from 'narration' (re-telling) there are other ways in which the child will explore the topic and make a creative response. Here are some ideas:

**Exploring the content with Inquiry Questions (who, what when, where, how):**
**Discuss, think about, research, read about...**

Who are the people in the story? If it was a true historical story, then you could create and collect Biography Summary Cards (one for each major historical figure) to provide a ready reference for a quick overview of a period of history.
When did they live? Timeline activities: Create a 'Book of Centuries'. Guidelines for creating this are available from Homeward.com.au
Where did they live? Map-work: look at the geographical landscape of the setting of the story, think about the benefits or challenges of living in that terrain. Find the region on a map or globe.
What were their daily concerns? What did they wear? What types of food did they eat? What kind of houses did they live in? What kinds of tools and weapons did they make and use? Usborne or DK books are good for this.
How did they live and what was their life like? Did they have special customs and traditions; and how are these different from our way of doing things? How did these traditions come about? Was it from some great need, or from particular beliefs and ideas about the world, or about life and how it works?
Why did the characters in the story act the way they did? Were there any unintended consequences of their actions?
What life-lessons/wisdom can you glean from the story?

**Creative Projects and Presentations:**

Children should narrate or tell back as much as possible after every topic studied. However, there are other ways of presenting what they have learnt. 'Note-booking' is a popular way of organising and presenting information. It is a little like scrapbooking, except that there are a multitude of previously prepared Note-booking pages available that are ready for the children to record their findings. Wherever possible use of hands-on creative projects can also reinforce or extend the learning into a more practical knowledge.

**Geography and Mapwork:**

The great stories of history can become more meaningful when we look at the part of the world that is the setting for the story. Whenever a country, region, town, or the places on a journey are mentioned, make sure you either take a moment to find it on the globe or atlas, or 'Google Earth'; or take note of it to look up at a specific time in your schedule. You only need to allocate a 5-10 minute session on Geography/Mapwork a couple of times a week.

**Timeline Activities or 'Book of Centuries':**

Contact Homeward or refer to [www.amblesideonline.org](http://www.amblesideonline.org/) for information on Timelines or ‘Book of Centuries’

**Extra Ideas – Social Studies for Natural Learners or …**

**What to do if I don't have any curriculum resources yet:**

(i) Wherever possible, use ‘living books’ i.e. real-life stories (e.g. ‘National Geographics’, ‘Reader's Digest’ and books with true and fictional stories written as close as possible to the original time-period or about that time-period) to make history come alive, rather than only teaching through history textbooks with events and dates. (Borrow books from your local library)

(ii) Find biographies of famous scientists and other historical figures. Try to find biographies that are written at the child’s level if your child is little. The CM-Australia Booklist includes age-appropriate biographies and literature.

(iii) Compare & contrast these stories with what is written in encyclopedias and history textbooks, to gain further insight, and evaluate the potential biases in these texts.

(iv) Think about the key characters – discuss their actions, ideals, values & beliefs; and compare these with a Christian World View (as revealed in the Scriptures), and/or with your own family's background, culture & traditions.

**Research & Writing Skills:**

**Extra Ideas – Research & Writing Skills for Natural Learners or …**

**What to do if I don't have any curriculum resources yet:**

**(i)** **Gathering Information:** Teach children to research by looking up encyclopaedias, dictionaries and related topics, and especially gaining more insight on a topic through 'living books' (mentioned above). Practise summarising an article from a chosen publication: First, by oral recitation/recall (ie simply telling it back to you), and then writing down the major themes/topics/concepts in point form.
When gathering information about a topic, many children copy word for word. Although this is ok occasionally as a source of ‘copywork’, we are more concerned about what the child thinks about the topic with their own original thought. Unless the child thinks about what they have read, they will not learn or retain anything, and the endless copying and summarising notes becomes as pointless or lifeless as giving them sawdust to eat. Their minds need real ‘food for thought’.
This is one reason we want them to talk about what they have been reading, and then to further organise their own thoughts into a written narration or summary.

For unconfident/inexperienced writers who still copy word-for word, get them to tell you in their own words what is meant in the article (this is called a ‘comprehension’ exercise). You could write each of their comments on a piece of card and then they could reorganise into a logical order. Voila! Their first ‘essay’!

For the unconfident/inexperienced writer in the upper primary and secondary years, you can still use this strategy of requiring them to ‘tell you in their own words’, while you take down concise notes in ‘point form’ as a way of summarising information gathered. Then work alongside them to have them think about how to re-organise and present their research findings.

**(ii)** **Deeper Thinking:** During the secondary years, the child should learn to quickly ‘summarise’ by writing down the major points in brief note form and then later expanding on these in their own words. Train your secondary students to *think* more about what they are recording (analysing, comparing, contrasting, asking ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, and evaluating the truth or relevance or hidden biases of the information). You should gradually be requiring more original and creative thinking.