

Epinions.com review for *Story of the World Volume 1*

World History Read-Aloud K-5th

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Author's Product Rating



Pros

Engaging, well written, lots of details.

Cons

Historically inaccurate at times. Not to be used exclusively.

The Bottom Line

This is a wonderful introduction to World History at the primary to intermediate level.

FULL REVIEW

Susan Wise Bauer is a novelist and teaches Literature at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. She comes from a background of home-education and co-authored *The Well-Trained Mind*. To learn more about her you can visit her website at:

<http://www.susanwisebauer.com>

This book is a narrative of history from the earliest nomads to the last Roman empire. The target audience is seems to be primary to intermediate (kindergarten - 5th grade). It works best as a read-aloud book because interaction is necessary for full understanding of the content.

I especially like the first chapter which goes over the definition of history. It makes clear understandable distinctions between different ways of gathering and sharing history. We learn about Archeology, and how artifacts help us to understand what life may have been like even without the written word. We can piece together the daily activity from the things left behind. We learn about Historians and how they gather writings to make sense of what went on in the past. We reflect on the fact that what is happening here and now will some day be history. We look at current events in a new light. History can be dull for children. Bauer has really made it exciting in this book. Bauer has taken time to speak to the minds of children to engage them in the adventure of World History.

Each chapter which is on average about 10 to 15 pages long covers a specific time period. In chapter 1 for example we are taken through the history of the earliest people, the first nomads and how they became farmers. We learn why people moved from place to place. We discuss the pros and cons of living this way. What was the impact on the natural resources? Why did the nomads begin farming? How did this impact the development of civilizations? People now had to live together. What difficulties come from this new way of life? We now have a basis for the study of World History.

At the beginning of each chapter, the reader is asked to answer questions that bring them into the story. For example: Where do you live? Where do you sleep? Do you sleep in the same bed every night, or do you move into a new house every week? These questions set the reader to thinking about his own situation and gives a basis for comparison. Since this is a work of historical fiction, some liberties have been taken with the content. Characters are added to illustrate what life may have been like during the era being discussed. Real history is intertwined with the fictional storytelling.

This should not be used exclusively as a history text since detailed historical accuracy is not the focus. As stated, liberties have been taken to allow the stories to lend themselves to this format. This book can be best used as an overview for the history of the world for young learners. The book is well written and interesting to listen to. Many of the things mentioned such as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, have inspired my students to learn more about the region and era in which these things came to be.

In regard to the liberties taken in this book...

These pertain mainly to the invention of characters and events to tell the story. These individuals did not exist in real history. Also, I've read some people say that they disliked the "intertwining" of real with fiction or myth. They feel it might be confusing to the young listener. However, this is a framework on which to build. And, if you are reading it aloud, you can help your listener make those distinctions yourself.

I believe some readers misinterpret the intent of this book and the rest in the series (which is still in the process of being completed). The activity book that goes with this book clears up much of the confusion for those readers. They (this book and the corresponding activity book) were meant to be used together. The activity book leads you to other books and resources that will broaden the understanding of the time periods being discussed.

No one book can be all things to all people. This book is no different in that regard. Although I do believe the book can stand on it's own as a decent introduction to world history for youngsters even without the activity book. Frankly, I personally can't stand activity books no matter how good they are. Give me a good book (like this one), the internet, a library, and I'm set.

Illustrations in the book:

The book uses blackline maps that were adapted from originals drawn by Terri Johnson. There are blackline maps and illustrations by Patty Martirosian, Sharon Wilson, Sheila Graves, and Matthew Moore. These wonderful yet simple illustrations help to tell the stories and clarify understanding throughout the book.

Recommended:

Yes