

Heritage History

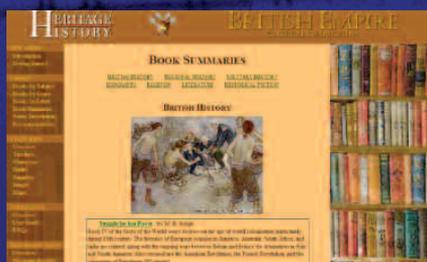
Spotlight Review

by Anne Wegener



Grades 3–12. Heritage Classical Curricula, \$24.99 each (Young Readers, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, British Middle Ages, British Empire.) World History Collection (all five curricula), \$99.99. Heritage Classical Libraries, \$19.99 each. Color Print Study Guides, \$16.99. *Heritage History, WA.* www.heritage-history.com.

If you want to build a library full of trusted, vibrant history books from past generations, you could spend years haunting used bookstores and websites searching out the best titles plus hundreds or even thousands of dollars to buy them . . .



or you could invest as little as \$20 to acquire a set of excellent books, thematical-

ly arranged, in digital form from the **Heritage History Library**.

The owners of Heritage History, Mr. and Mrs. David Roth, former Silicon Valley geeks with computer science and electrical engineering backgrounds, developed a zeal for history and fabulous old books while homeschooling their five children, and wanted to share their finds with others.

Marrying vintage history books and 21st century technology, the Roths have done the work of collecting, cataloging, annotating, and creating files of public domain books which “put the *story* back into History.” Students can now access these treasures on e-readers, tablet and ordinary computers, or in print format.

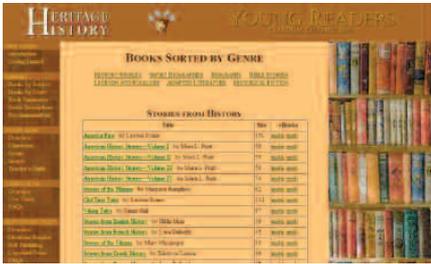
Heritage History currently offers four “Classical Libraries” and five “Classical Curricula.” All are phenomenal values, with each CD containing between 45–80+ books by venerable authors of history and literature such as H.E. Marshall, Howard Pyle, M.B. Synge, Jacob Abbott, James Baldwin, and Andrew Lang. Every book comes in three formats: PDF (to print or

read directly on a computer), MOBI (for Kindles), and EPUB (Nook, iPad, etc.). They also offer individual titles for \$1.99 per book.

Now maybe you’re thinking, “But aren’t those books already available free from sites like Gutenberg or Googlebooks?” Yes, some are, but many of the titles included on the Heritage CDs cannot be found as free files, and the CDs come with more than just book files.

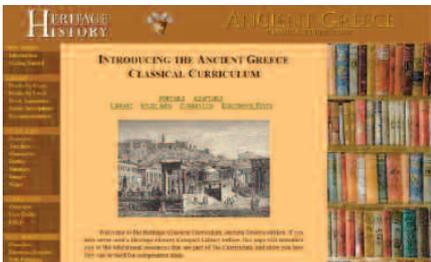
Here’s a quick look at what each provides:

- **Classical Libraries:** *Early America* and *Christian Empire* currently are available. *Spanish Empire* and *Modern Europe* (Enlightenment to WWI) are coming soon. These civilization-specific libraries are organized with links which you navigate like a website, but the information is completely on the disc and does not require an online connection. Books are listed by reading level (Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced), genre, subject, and size, and include summaries of



each book. Eventually these libraries will be upgraded into complete curricula.

- **Classical Curricula:** Available in this series are collections titled *Young Readers*, *Ancient Greece*, *Ancient Rome*, *British Middle Ages*, and *British Empire*. In addition to the contents of the libraries themselves, these discs also include numerous study aids to allow you to use these books as the basis of a history reading program. You can find well-done summaries of the eras covered in each library, timelines, charts detailing information about the historical figures and the significant battles in each era, geography



terms, absolutely lovely color images from the books, and blank outline plus detailed color maps. All of this Study Guide material is available on each disc, but you may also purchase Color Print versions.

Each Heritage History disc comes with a 26-page printable *Curriculum User Guide* and an *Electronic Text User Guide*, both of which you can also find on the Heritage website. The *Curriculum User Guide* provides an introduction to the philosophy and methodology of learning used in these programs. The *Electronic Text User Guide* gives information on how to choose an e-reader, how to download files to your tablet or reading device, and how to print and bind complete books in the most economical fashion.

Heritage History takes a narrative rather than an analytical approach to history, with a focus on Western Civilization. Rather than having children read smatterings of facts in dull textbooks, Heritage takes the “living books” method by giving children several core books to read and then allowing them to choose other books to augment those core selections. Since the Heritage libraries include biographies, regional histories, military books, literature and legends, and some historical fiction, students and parents can work together



to find books that will best supplement the primary readings.

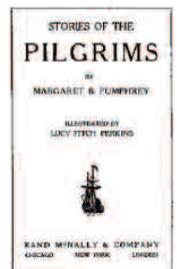
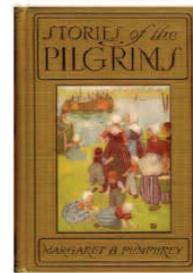
If you are studying Ancient Greece, for example, your elementary children might read *Famous Men of Greece*, Helene Guerber’s *Story of the Greeks*, Milo Winter’s *Aesop’s Fables*, and *Stories from the Iliad* and *Stories from the Odyssey* as core selections. Then one child might choose to read military history, such as Alfred Church’s *Story of the Persian War*, while another child might focus on mythology or historical fiction, such as Lucy Perkin’s *The Spartan Twins*. Reading broadly along lines of personal interest will help children gain a deep love for history, while also giving them a sturdy background for future studies.

As a stand-alone history program, the Heritage Curriculum is easy to implement and use with a wide variety of ages and reading abilities. It differs from many other programs in that it approaches history primarily through stories, not thematically. It also does not come with tests or evaluations, so you will likely want to devise writing prompts and allow time for narration or discussion with your children to help them process and consolidate what they are reading.

Rather than focusing on a set of fundamentals to be memorized, Heritage History students will gain wisdom from reading broadly about the dreams and failures of people of the past. Students are encouraged to read for about three hours each week and create a history notebook from the study guide materials.

Heritage History CDs can also be used as a supplement to other curricula. On the Heritage website you can find a list of their books which are used by other curricula such as Tapestry of Grace, Ambleside, Old Fashioned Education, and Living Books Curriculum.

Perhaps you’re not sold on the e-reader format. Granted, bibliophiles who frequent antiquarian bookstores with floor to ceiling shelves with ladders typically cringe at the thought of reading paperless books. I, too, love the feel, look, and yes, the smell of books published and loved in a bygone era, and my house is full of them. Never would I have imagined becoming an e-reader proponent until my parents gave me one this past year. Though I have not stopped buying the old treasures, I thoroughly delight in the ease of access to obscure titles, the portability, and the economy of reading digital books on my Kindle. (Not to mention the fact that I can read aloud to my children and knit at the same time without having to worry about holding a book open!)



The Heritage History libraries take full advantage of new technology to retain and make the most of titles that might otherwise fall into obscurity. I have been blown away by the amount of outstanding material on each of the inexpensive Heritage History CDs and highly recommend them, whether you use them as the basis of your entire history program or as a supplement for another curriculum.