

Excellent American History Books for Kids

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Exploring the New World

[Christopher Columbus: Adventurer of Faith](#) This is one of the books in the wonderful Sower Series (see the end of this list). These are based on the writings and journals of important people in history, and do not leave out their relationship with God. Great for all ages as a reader or read-aloud. Veritas Press also sells [First Voyage to America](#), which is the actual ship's log retold. I haven't read it but I trust VP book lists. Older students can read the actual [Log Books](#) of Columbus.

[Christopher Columbus: His Story and His Journals](#). Part one is the biography of Columbus as told by ... and Part Two is the actual journals of Columbus and his men. Get the free study guide download to go with it! Both are available in my bookstore.

[Hudson by Janice Weaver](#) tells of the life and explorations of the man who explored the area now known as New York City.

1600s - American Colonies

[Pilgrim Stories by Margaret Pumphrey](#) is a faithful retelling of the actual events of our Pilgrim forefathers as written down by them. It is a perfect children's book for kids too young to read [Of Plymouth Plantation by William Bradford](#), which I highly recommend for high school and adult readers.

[Miles Standish: Puritan Captain](#) is one of the Knowledge Keepers books about the Pilgrims, and it includes a free study guide download, perfect for homeschooling all ages.

While the above books tell about Plymouth, Massachusetts, [Three Ships Come Sailing](#) is a beautiful picture book that teaches about the very important history of the Jamestown settlement.

[Pocahontas by the D'aulaires](#) is a beautifully illustrated book in a series of wonderful children's books by Edgar and Ingri D'Aulaire. I highly recommend all of their books!

1700s - Becoming the United States of America

[Prelude to Independence: The Life of George Washington, Volume 1](#) by John Marshall. Here's another one of the fascinating books in my history reprints series! The five-volume biography of George Washington was written by John Marshall, the Supreme Court Justice who served under Washington in the Revolutionary war and in Washington's cabinet after the war. He knew him personally, and was a faithful biographer. Volume 1 of this series actually tells very little of

Washington himself; but what is so fascinating about it is that it's a chronological history of the colonial settlements (with amazing details about the settlers, the changing boundary lines, the names, and so much more).

[War in the Colonies: The Life of George Washington, Volume 2](#) is where the actual story of George himself begins. This volume covers his life from birth through the battle of ... as General Washington in the Revolution. (Volumes 3-5 are coming soon!)

[George Washington: Man of Faith and Courage by Norma Cournow Camp](#) The biography of Washington written for children, explores his childhood and growing up and how he became the leader of the new United States of America. (Part of the Sower Series that I highly recommend, and great for all ages.)

[Alone Yet Not Alone](#) – This book is based on a true story of two young girls in colonial America who are kidnapped by Indians. It is an exciting story of history and God's protection and faithfulness.

[Sign of the Beaver](#) -

[Mary Rowlandson](#) – This is a difficult but true story of an American woman's capture by Indians in colonial America, and her testimony to God. Definitely for older readers.

[The Matchlock Gun by Walter D. Edmonds](#) is an exciting tale of bravery and responsibility set during the French and Indian War.

[The Iroquois Handbook](#) is another Knowledge Keepers book, and is a fascinating encyclopedia of the Indians of the Northeast. This is a great book for studying the French and Indian War (and goes well with *The Leatherstocking Tales* by James Fennimore Cooper, one of which is *Last of the Mohicans*). You'll be fascinated by the amazing content in the Iroquois Handbook. It was written in 1818 by a missionary who lived with the Iroquois for 30 years! ([Check out my free study guide on the French and Indian War here.](#))

[Able and Mighty Men: Biographies of the Men Who Signed the Declaration of Independence](#) is one of the most popular Knowledge Keepers books! With short chapters about each signer, you'll be taken back to a time when the character and upbringing of these men was known to many still alive. The author of this book met almost every man who signed the Declaration! This one is a must-have for every American home. See my free study guide on the Declaration of Independence [here](#)

[Johnny Tremain](#) by Esther Forbes (A) Johnny has a front-row seat in the events of the American Revolution with Paul Revere and John Hancock! A very popular story that was made into an excellent Disney film.

[Patriots, Redcoats, and Spies by Robert Skead](#) is a wonderful children's adventure series based on the real story of Washington's Culper spy ring during the war of the Revolution. There are

three total books in this exciting series! You can get some fun ideas for teaching about the Culper Ring in this blog post.

[Yankee Doodle Boy by Joseph Plumb Martin](#) The true story of a boy who enlisted in the Continental Army at the age of 15. This firsthand account is the most valuable kind of history book!

[The Bulletproof George Washington by David Barton](#) Washington lived an extraordinary life! Some of his most miraculous, true stories are told in this short book that will remind you of the hand of God in our nation's founding.

[Amos Fortune, Free Man](#) is a moving story of a man captured from his home in Africa and sold as a slave in America during the 18th century. He never gives up on gaining his freedom.

[Abigail Adams: First Lady of Faith and Courage by Evelyn Whittier](#) – I grew up reading the books in the Sower Series books, and this one was very influential to me as a girl and a history lover. She was the wife (and best friend) of President John Adams and the mother of another President, John Quincy Adams. She was a Christian and a great example of biblical femininity.

[Annie Henry: Adventures in the American Revolution](#): (historical fiction) The series follows the life of Annie Henry, daughter of the famous patriot Patrick Henry. In the midst of Annie's adventures and frustrations, her faith is growing—and Annie is learning more about her need for God as she faces the challenges of growing up.

1800s

[The Captain's Dog: My Journey With the Lewis and Clark Tribe by Roland Smith](#). Based on (and including snippets of) the actual [Journals of Lewis and Clark](#), this book is a fun version of the exploration journey through the eyes of Meriweather Lewis' dog. I recommend the true Journals for high school.

[Diary of an Early American Boy](#) by Eric Sloane (A) This book is an incredible and rare find in that it is truly the diary of a real American teen boy in 1805. He describes life on his farm for an entire year. Highly recommended!

[Francis Scott Key by David R. Collins](#). Key is the author of the Star-Spangled Banner, and was a famed lawyer in his day. Reading this book as a child gave me a lifelong reverence for our national anthem.

[Ride the River](#) by Louis L'Amour. Though most of Louis L'Amour's books are westerns, he created a fictional family, the Sacketts, that span several centuries. Ride the River is about a teenage girl, Echo Sackett, who is tasked with traveling to the city to claim an inheritance. Set in the early 19th century, it involves travel by steamboat on the Ohio River as well as the mountains.

Related post: [Using Louis L'Amour to teach history](#).

[The Boy in the Alamo by Margaret Cousins](#) is highly recommended by educators as the best retelling of the story of Freedom in Texas. For Texas students, [I would like to recommend Discover Texas homeschool curriculum](#). It is fun, appropriate for all ages, and was written by a Texas homeschool mom.

[Diary of a New York Girl](#). This diary was begun in 1842 by a little girl and continued for twenty years. It includes basic, everyday life in small-town New York, her view of the Civil War, and a few encounters with some famous names! It is a wonderful snapshot in time. Part of the Knowledge Keepers series.

[By the Great Horn Spoon! by Sid Fleischman](#) We loved this book so much! It is full of humor, history, and geography. This story follows a young boy on a ship around the Americas bound for San Francisco and focuses on the California Gold Rush.

[True Stories of Nebraska Pioneers](#) - another book in the Knowledge Keepers series! Each chapter in this book is a stand-alone story written by the pioneers themselves. They were interviewed in the early 1900s by the Daughters of the American Revolution in Nebraska, and their amazing accounts are compiled in this book. Besides the brave and determined average citizens presented here, you'll also read about Buffalo Bill Cody and ... the founder of the Audubon Society.

[Freedom Train: The Story of Harriet Tubman](#) We read this book alongside [Abraham Lincoln: God's Leader for a Nation](#) and it was a really interesting comparison of two incredible historical figures of the 19th century in America. Freedom Train is a gripping story of the Underground Railroad, and I believe, a necessary part of every American's education.

[The Boy's War by Jim Murphy](#) A wrenching look at the American Civil War through the eyes of its youngest soldiers. Thousands of Confederate and Union soldiers were merely boys of 12 to 16 when they went to war. They fought and struggled alongside men three times their age. In this work, their photographs and firsthand accounts bring to life the realities, hopes and devastation of war. (Sonlight)

[General Lee, Southern Commander](#) - This biography of Robert E. Lee is actually two books in one: a biography of General Lee (written by a man who served under him and received his permission to write the story) and a collection of letters between the General and his friends and family (which are carefully inserted throughout the biography). This is a BIG Knowledge Keepers book, and a great one for your Civil War study!

[Rifles for Watie by Harold Keith](#) - This is a great read, telling about the western portion of the Civil War from the perspective of a teenage boy. It takes place in and around Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Teens also might appreciate **True Grit**, which occurs in the same part of the country after the war. (This is one of the rare instances where a movie adaptation is nearly perfect!)

[Up From Slavery](#) by Booker T. Washington is a classic that every American should read!

[Autobiography of a Mississippi Slave](#) by Knowledge Keepers is another story of slavery-to-freedom that you can't miss! Louis Hughes spent the first 30+ years of his life in slavery, and then gained his freedom on his fifth attempt. He later wrote down his life's story, giving readers an inside look at life on slave plantations in the south, his view of the war, and how he created a new life in freedom.

[The Story of My Life \(Helen Keller\)](#) – Autobiographies are my favorite way to teach history, and the story of Helen Keller is history AND character. This young girl did everything she could to beat the odds, and her story is remarkable!

[Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder](#) – There is almost nothing as Americana or classic for children as the Little House books. If you're only familiar with the TV show, please do yourself a favor and read these right away. There is very little similarity between the TV series and the actual books. As usual, the books are so much better. These are classics worth reading at any age, and read repeatedly. And did you know that the original version was turned down by publishers? It was considered "too realistic" for enjoyment, so Laura's daughter Rose encouraged Laura to rewrite it in story form. But now the original, [Pioneer Girl](#), is in print and it is a wonderful way to get the history behind the stories!

[Ol' Yeller](#) by Fred Gipson. A young boy in the Texas hill country is tasked with “being the man” of the house while his father is away, and gains plenty of maturity and strength while doing so. (Disney adapted this book for a movie in the 1960s.)

[Down the Long Hills](#) by Louis L'Amour is another great work of his which appeals to kids. The central characters are a young boy and an even younger girl who are separated from the boy's father after an Indian attack on their wagon train. It's an amazing adventure!

1900s

[Rascal](#) by Sterling North. Boys will love this true story about a young boy who adopts a baby racoon, lives with his widowed father, and is allowed to live the life of a free spirit — hunting, fishing, tracking, building, and just being a boy. Set during World War 1, it has historic references to the outside world, but the main focus is on young Sterling, his naturalist (and well-educated) father, and their love of nature and the adventures they have there.

[Bud and Me: The True Adventure of the Abernathy Boys by Alta Abernathy](#) This is a true and exciting tale of two young boys and their trips across the United States on horseback in the early part of the 20th century.

[The Wright Brothers: They Gave us Wings by Charles Ludwig](#) The story of the Wright brothers is a fascinating one of boys who were educated by their mother and were given plenty of opportunity to explore new ideas.

[Sargent York: His Own Life and War Diary by Alvin York](#) This is a wonderful book for boys! York was a reluctant soldier in WW1, but when he finally ended up in France, he applied his

backwoods shooting skills to the Germans and became a war hero. The way he writes and tells his own story is as entertaining as the story itself. Not to be missed!

[In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson](#) - Shirley Temple Wong sails from China to America with a heart full of dreams. Her new home is Brooklyn, New York. America is indeed a land full of wonders, but Shirley doesn't know any English, so it's hard to make friends. Then a miracle—baseball—happens. It is 1947, and Jackie Robinson, star of the Brooklyn Dodgers, is everyone's hero. Jackie Robinson is proving that a black man, the grandson of a slave, can make a difference in America. And for Shirley as well, on the ball field and off, America becomes the land of opportunity.

[Pearl Harbor Child : A Child's View of Pearl Harbor from Attack to Peace](#) - Offers a child's view of the war efforts in Hawaii, from her family's move to Pearl Harbor and the impact of the December 7, 1941, attack through the end of the war.

[Chester Nez and the Unbreakable Code: A Navajo Code Talker's Story](#) - As a young Navajo boy, Chester Nez had to leave the reservation and attend boarding school, where he was taught that his native language and culture were useless. But Chester refused to give up his heritage. Years later, during World War II, Chester—and other Navajo men like him—was recruited by the US Marines to use the Navajo language to create an unbreakable military code. Suddenly the language he had been told to forget was needed to fight a war. This powerful picture book biography contains backmatter including a timeline and a portion of the Navajo code, and also depicts the life of an original Navajo code talker while capturing the importance of heritage.

[Run Baby Run](#) by Nicky Cruz I first read this as a teen (girl) and loved it. It's the true story of a boy growing up in the dangerous streets of New York in the 1950's. He was the leader of a ruthless street gang before his miraculous conversion to Christianity. Good for teens.

