

Introduction & How to Use

America the Beautiful

by Charlene Notgrass

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Introduction

When God created the land we call America, He sculpted and painted a masterpiece. America is a land of prairies and mountains, lakes and rivers, deserts and bayous. People created in God's image have lived here for many centuries. Using the intelligence God placed in their hearts and minds and the strength He gave their bodies, these people have found many ways to use the plants, animals, rocks, and minerals He has provided in abundance.

America the Beautiful is first a book of history, but it is also a book of geography. All human history happens in a place. American history has happened along America's coastlines, on its prairies, between its mountains, beside its lakes, upon its rivers, and within its forests.

Thirty Units in Chronological Order

Each unit in *America the Beautiful* is about a certain time period in American history. In Unit 1, we learn about America before 1492. In Unit 30, we learn about things happening in the 21st century. The units in between are in chronological order.

Five Types of Lessons

To give children a comprehensive understanding of America, lessons in this course are divided into five types:

Our American Story — A lesson about major events in the time period of the unit.

God's Wonders — A lesson describing an amazing creation God placed in America.

An American Landmark — A lesson about an important site in American history.

An American Biography — A lesson focusing on a person who lived at the time being studied.

Daily Life — A lesson telling how certain people lived and worked during the period.

The Purpose of *America the Beautiful*

My heart's desire is that the children and parents who study *America the Beautiful* will be in constant awe of what God has created in America, both the physical place and the people whom God in His wisdom caused to live here. By learning about what God made, we learn about Him:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes,
His eternal power and His divine nature,
have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made
Romans 1:20

The Native Americans who lived in America when Europeans first arrived were here because God wanted them to be here. We live in America today because God wants us to be here.

He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth,
having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,
that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him,
though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist . . .
Acts 17:26-28

As people created in the image of God, we are living history every day in a place God made. Our responsibility is to conduct ourselves according to the will of the One who made us. Americans are a richly blessed people. Like every person who has ever lived (except Jesus), we Americans are sinners in need of grace. Our history has many beautiful stories and some stories that are not so beautiful. We have done many things right, but not everything. *America the Beautiful* emphasizes the wonderful things that God has done and the positive things that we Americans have done, while being honest about some of our biggest shortcomings, including treatment of Native Americans and African Americans.

When your student comes to the conclusion of the study, I hope that he or she will look back on America's story with:

- ◆ gratitude for what God has created here,
- ◆ awe at what people made in His image have done with the gifts He gave us, and
- ◆ a realization of their personal responsibility to do God's will while living in this amazing place we know as *America the Beautiful*.

Charlene Notgrass



How to Use *America the Beautiful*

Notgrass Company provides you as a parent with tools that help your children learn from a Biblical worldview. We create curriculum that is as easy to use as a textbook but with the richness of a unit study. When we wrote *America the Beautiful*, we created a variety of tools for you and your children to use. You can use any or all of these resources as you see fit.

Basic *America the Beautiful* Curriculum Package

The basic curriculum package for *America the Beautiful* includes:

America the Beautiful, Part 1 — A book with seventy-five lessons, designed to be completed in a semester. It begins with the way life was in America before Europeans discovered it and continues through the first years after the Civil War.

America the Beautiful, Part 2 — A book with seventy-five lessons, designed to be completed in one semester. It begins with America's expansion into the lands west of the Mississippi River after the Civil War and continues to modern times.

We the People — A collection of original letters, poems, songs, stories, and other writings from American history.

Maps of America the Beautiful — A book with maps drawn especially to accompany the curriculum. Students will often look at a map while reading a lesson in *America the Beautiful*. They will also do activities on the maps.

Timeline of America the Beautiful — A timeline of American history designed specifically to include facts learned in *America the Beautiful*. As they go through the lessons, students will add events to their *Timeline of America the Beautiful*.

America the Beautiful Answer Key — Answers to the timeline and vocabulary assignments included at the end of some lessons, plus answers for the activities in the optional *Student Workbook* and the questions and quizzes in the *Lesson Review*.

Additional Products

To make this curriculum a rich experience and to make it usable with children from grade five through grade eight, we offer three additional products:

America the Beautiful Student Workbook — A book of puzzles and other handwork activities which review information learned in the daily lessons. These are designed for younger students and for students whose learning style fits these types of activities.

America the Beautiful Lesson Review — A book of daily questions, literature review questions, and weekly quizzes, designed for older students. We expect that students will use either the *Student Workbook* or the *Lesson Review*, but your student can complete both if you prefer.

America the Beautiful Literature Package

- ◆ *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth George Speare (Units 4-5)
- ◆ *Amos Fortune, Free Man* by Elizabeth Yates (Units 6-7)
- ◆ *Brady* by Jean Fritz (Units 9-10)
- ◆ *Bound for Oregon* by Jean Van Leeuwen (Units 12-13)
- ◆ *Across Five Aprils* by Irene Hunt (Units 14-15)
- ◆ *Little Town on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder (Units 16-17)
- ◆ *All-of-a-Kind Family* by Sydney Taylor (Units 19-20)
- ◆ *Blue Willow* by Doris Gates (Units 21-22)
- ◆ *Homer Price* by Robert McCloskey (Units 25)
- ◆ *Katy* by Mary Evelyn Notgrass (Units 29-30)

Note: These literature titles can be purchased from Notgrass Company as a package or individually. You can also obtain them from some other source, such as the library. You can use any unabridged edition of the books.

How to Use *America the Beautiful, Part 1 and Part 2*

These two volumes are the core of the curriculum. They give you and your child all of the information you need in order to use *America the Beautiful* on a daily basis.

These two volumes are divided into fifteen units each for a total of thirty units. Your child can study Part 1 during one half of the school year and Part 2 during the other half. Each unit has five lessons. If a student reads one lesson a day, he or she will cover five lessons in a week.

At the beginning of each unit, an introductory page gives an overview of the unit, a list of the lessons, and a list of what additional books the student will be using while studying that particular unit. Students should always read the unit introductions.

Following the unit introduction are five daily lessons, one to be read each day. Students can read these on their own or you can read the lessons aloud. The lessons are richly

illustrated. The student's learning experience will be greatly enhanced if he or she is encouraged to examine the illustrations closely. Many are historical photographs and historical illustrations. Many are from the Library of Congress and from the National Park Service. They have been carefully selected to be an integral part of the learning experience.

At the beginning of each lesson is a lesson heading with the title of the lesson, the lesson number, and the lesson category (i.e., Our American Story, God's Wonders, An American Landmark, An American Biography, or Daily Life). In many lessons there is a map number (or numbers) beside the lesson number. The student should get in the habit of looking for this number each day. When a map is indicated in the heading, the student should open *Maps of America the Beautiful* so he or she can find places on the map while reading through the lesson.

At the end of each lesson is a list of four to six activities. Students are not necessarily expected to complete all of these activities. You may choose which activities you wish to assign. Subjects of the activities vary from day to day, but they include:

- ◆ Thinking Biblically assignments
- ◆ Creative writing assignments
- ◆ Vocabulary assignments
- ◆ Family activities (one per week)
- ◆ Literature assignments from *We the People* and the ten books in the literature package
- ◆ Assignments in *Timeline of America the Beautiful*
- ◆ Assignments in *Maps of America the Beautiful*
- ◆ Assignments in the *America the Beautiful Student Workbook* or the *America the Beautiful Lesson Review*

How to Use *We the People*

At the end of many daily lessons, students will be given a short assignment to read in *We the People*.

How to Use *Maps of America the Beautiful*

Students will look at a particular map while reading many of the lessons and will write or color in the book when assigned.

How to Use *Timeline of America the Beautiful*

The student will write one entry in *Timeline of America the Beautiful* after most lessons. To enhance learning, the student can read a few events already printed in the timeline before and after filling in the new entry each day.

How to Use the *America the Beautiful* Literature Package

We have carefully chosen the literature to go along with the lessons. Each book is broken into daily reading assignments, which are included in the end-of-lesson activities

for the appropriate unit. *Across Five Aprils* is a good book for a parent to read aloud, since it deals with harsh realities of the Civil War.

How to Use the *America the Beautiful Student Workbook*

Students using the *Student Workbook* will complete Activity 1 after reading Lesson 1 and continue completing each daily activity through Lesson 150.

How to Use the *America the Beautiful Lesson Review*

Students using the *Lesson Review* will complete the questions for Lesson 1 after reading Lesson 1 and continue this way through Lesson 150. After finishing a book in the literature package, the student will answer questions on the book. At the end of each unit, the student will take a quiz.

Using a Three-Ring Binder Notebook for End-of-Lesson Activities

We recommend that each student have a three-ring binder notebook to use only for *America the Beautiful*. He or she will keep in this notebook the Bible study, creative writing, and vocabulary written work completed from the end-of-lesson activities.

Enjoying the Weekly Family Activities

One day per week a family activity is included in the list of activities at the end of one lesson. Projects include art, crafts, recipes, games, and parties. The instructions for the family activities are found in the back of *America the Beautiful Parts 1 and 2*. We recommend reading the instructions and gathering the supplies early each week and then completing the activity either on the day it is assigned or on another day that is convenient for your family. Our family has long enjoyed a family night once each week. You could do your family activity on a family night so that more family members could take part in the fun and learning.

Like all components of the *America the Beautiful* curriculum, the family activities 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. Your supervision is required for your child's safety. See box at right.

Parental Supervision Required

The *America the Beautiful* family activities are designed for parental involvement. Please review the activity and discuss with your child what he or she may do alone and what he or she needs your supervision to do. The family activities in this book include the use of sharp objects, the oven and stove, and a few Internet research suggestions. Notgrass Company cannot accept responsibility for the safety of your child in completing these activities. You are responsible for your child's safety.

Please Note: Be careful. Some children may be allergic to recipe ingredients or craft supplies.

How Much Time Does It Take to Complete Each Lesson?

This curriculum has one hundred and fifty lessons and is designed to be completed in one school year. Since a typical school year has about one hundred and eighty days, the student completes one lesson on most school days. However, some families may choose to spread the curriculum out over a longer period of time.

Depending on how many activities you assign, most students will need forty-five minutes to an hour and a half to complete one lesson. More time will be needed on the day you do the family activity.

What Supplies Will My Student Need?

Students will need a pencil, colored pencils, notebook paper, and a three-ring binder, plus the materials needed to complete the family activities. These materials are listed on the individual family activity instruction pages.

What Ages Can Use This Curriculum?

The curriculum is designed for students in grades five through eight. With parental help and supervision, younger children can participate in many activities and can benefit from hearing the lessons read aloud.

How Can I Use *America the Beautiful* with Different Ages?

Parents know best what their children are capable of accomplishing. *America the Beautiful* is designed to be flexible. A variety of activities is included in each lesson. A parent may require an eighth grader who is academically gifted to read the daily lessons, read every book in the literature package on his own, complete worksheets in both the student workbook and the lesson review book, and complete every assignment at the end of each lesson. On the other hand, a parent with an academically-challenged fifth grader may decide simply to read aloud each lesson from *America the Beautiful*, talk about the map that goes with it, copy the timeline entry into *Timeline of America the Beautiful* with the student watching, and read aloud the selections from *We the People* and the books in the literature package.

If you have more than one child in grades five through eight, you may enjoy reading the lessons aloud as a group. Afterwards, you can give each child different assignments, depending on his or her age and skill level. If you have carefully observed your child and prayed about the direction to take, then you can look back at the end of the school year and know that the goal of completing *America the Beautiful* has been accomplished.

Suggested Activities Per Grade

On the next page is a suggested guide for choosing activities by grade. However, please keep in mind what other curricula you are trying to complete this year and adjust these suggestions accordingly. Feel free to adjust your goals after you have used the curriculum for a few weeks.

Suggested Activities Per Grade			
Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Parent reads lessons aloud from <i>America the Beautiful</i> .	Parent reads lessons aloud from <i>America the Beautiful</i> .	Student reads lessons from <i>America the Beautiful</i> .	Student reads lessons from <i>America the Beautiful</i> .
Parent reads assignments aloud from <i>We the People</i> .	Parent reads assignments aloud from <i>We the People</i> .	Student reads assignments in <i>We the People</i> .	Student reads assignments in <i>We the People</i> .
Student completes activities in <i>America the Beautiful Student Workbook</i> .	Student completes activities in <i>America the Beautiful Student Workbook</i> .	Student completes questions in <i>America the Beautiful Lesson Review</i> and takes quizzes.	Student completes questions in <i>America the Beautiful Lesson Review</i> and takes quizzes.
Student completes assignments in <i>Maps of America the Beautiful</i> .	Student completes assignments in <i>Maps of America the Beautiful</i> .	Student completes assignments in <i>Maps of America the Beautiful</i> .	Student completes assignments in <i>Maps of America the Beautiful</i> .
Student writes daily entries in <i>Timeline of America the Beautiful</i> .	Student writes daily entries in <i>Timeline of America the Beautiful</i> .	Student writes daily entries in <i>Timeline of America the Beautiful</i> .	Student writes daily entries in <i>Timeline of America the Beautiful</i> .
Parent or student reads books from literature package.*	Parent or student reads books from literature package.*	Student reads books from literature package.*	Student reads books from literature package.*
Parent chooses two activities per week from Bible Study, Vocabulary, and Creative Writing activities.	Parent chooses three activities per week from Bible Study, Vocabulary, and Creative Writing activities.	Parent chooses four activities per week from Bible Study, Vocabulary, and Creative Writing activities.	Student completes all Bible Study, Vocabulary, and Creative Writing activities at the end of each lesson.
Family completes weekly Family Activity.	Family completes weekly Family Activity.	Family completes weekly Family Activity.	Family completes weekly Family Activity.

* We recommend *Across Five Aprils* as a family read-aloud.

Some Reminders So You Will Not Feel Overwhelmed

Remember that God gave you your children and your daily responsibilities. A homeschooling mother who has one child can complete more *America the Beautiful* activities 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. Remember that out of all the parents in the world to whom He could have given your children, He chose you. He is the one who put your family together. He knows what He is doing. Relax and trust in His choice. God created our beautiful country. 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!

We are here to help you. When you need encouragement, send us an email (books@notgrass.com) or give us a call (1-800-211-8793).



Acknowledgements and Dedication

I am grateful to my husband Ray who has served as the editor-in-chief of *America the Beautiful*. For thirty-six years I have been blessed with my own personal human encyclopedia, concordance, and dictionary; his name is Ray Notgrass. Ray has shared with me his own vast personal knowledge of American history, along with his research skills. He was a servant leader during this project, taking on many responsibilities to give me time to complete a project he believed in as much as I did. He and I worked together to create the *Timeline of America the Beautiful*. Together we have explored America for all these years, beginning with our honeymoon trip to the Chattanooga Choo Choo and the Lookout Mountain battlefield.

I am grateful to our son John. A few years ago the two of us were driving home from a homeschool convention in Virginia. We talked excitedly about a concept for a new American history for children in grades five through eight. We had the idea for a study that emphasized a different aspect of America on each day of the week. That idea has now grown into *America the Beautiful*. I also appreciate the work he has done researching, proofreading, and correcting. He has guided this project through the printing process. John is a wonderful detail guy and he has put those talents to work. He also oversaw compilation of the index. I am grateful for John's wife Audra. She has helped research photographs, proofread, and tested activities. She has been a wise sounding board. I am also grateful to Audra for giving birth to our first grandson Avery John on January 26, 2011!

I am grateful to our daughter Bethany who has lovingly and excitedly selected the books students read as they study *America the Beautiful*. She also chose the selections students read in *We the People*, wrote the introductions to each of them, and did the book's graphic design. Bethany wrote *Maps of America the Beautiful* and drew each map. She created the Thinking Biblically, Creative Writing, and Vocabulary assignments. Bethany designed and wrote the Family Activity for each unit. She has been such an encourager. I am grateful for her husband Gregory Poore, too. Even with his many responsibilities as a full-time graduate student, he was a good sport and willing guinea pig who helped test many of her great family activities.

I am grateful to our daughter Mary Evelyn who used her creative abilities to design each of the *America the Beautiful* covers. She wrote and designed the *America the Beautiful Student Workbook* and *America the Beautiful Lesson Review*. Her presence in our office cheers me each time she is here. I am grateful, too, for Nate McCurdy, Mary Evelyn's husband and our newest Notgrass Company partner. Nate did a great job helping with his first

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I am grateful to God who created this wonderful place, *America the Beautiful*. He gave me much to write about. He has guided me in this project, while taking care of these precious people and of me.

I dedicate *America the Beautiful* to God
and to these precious loved ones.