

Waldorf Essentials
Grade Seven
Blocks & Notes

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SAMPLE

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime,

Therefore, we are saved by hope.

*Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in
any immediate context of history;*

Therefore, we are saved by faith.

*Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished
alone.*

Therefore, we are saved by love.

*No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of
our friend or foe as from our own;*

*Therefore, we are saved by the final form of love which is
forgiveness.*

– Reinhold Niebuhr

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You will want to continue to study geography through your lesson blocks. The geography of Europe is a major theme this year and that should prove to easily integrate into your studies since you are studying the Renaissance. Reviewing the geography of Africa would also be in order. Geography need not be a dry subject –tackle one area at a time. I really like the books by Millie Miller, she has one for the United States and one for world geography, *Our World a Country-by-Country Guide*. The pictures are hand drawn and each country has a bit of history with them, tidbits about the area – this helps it to be livelier and allows you to do a bit of review of the places you may have already studied. I like this book too because it takes some of the pressure off to make “perfect” chalk board maps! It becomes very manageable.

History blocks are based on Steiner’s recommendations AND my personal experience teaching these grades. There are some wonderful documentaries and movies that I will list where appropriate, due to differences in each family, please view the material BEFORE your child does. Please keep in mind that this is by no means a full list.

Steiner recommends *The Works of Frederick Schiller* for teacher preparation. It is available free on the Internet.

If you have a child that has perhaps not studied the history content of grades 5+, consider a book like *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik Willem Van Loon. I like the edition that is updated by John Merriman.

When it comes to the Renaissance, we often only think of art from the time period or the religious movements. In an effort to really see it as a *whole* movement, rather than pieces, I tend to teach it closely linking one element to another. While I have them all lumped together here, please be sure to break it up a little in your planning to avoid information overload.

The Renaissance (12 weeks, plus a research paper)

Books for school reading and lessons:

Joan of Arc: Heavenly Warrior by Tabatha Yeatts,

The Story of Joan of Arc by Andrew Lang,

Utopia by Thomas More,

Michelangelo by Richard McLanathan,

Who Was Leonardo da Vinci? by Roberta Edwards,

The New Way Things Work by David Macaulay,

Copernicus by Heinz,

The Night Sky by Michael Driscoll Sponsel (save the more intellectual aspects for after you have done your observations.)

Geology and Astronomy by Charles Kovacs,

Age of Discovery by Charles Kovacs,

The World Made New by Marc Aronson and John W. Glenn,

Christopher Columbus by Emma Carlson Berne

Land Ho! by Nancy Winslow Parker (I like this one for the illustrations.)

*Please pre-read the texts so you can catch any misleading language, especially in the older texts.

Documentaries: *Engineering an Empire: The Aztecs*, *Engineering an Empire: The Maya*
Historical movies: *The Other Boleyn Girl* (NOT the entire movie! There is some sex in it and the topic is heavy, it does do a good job of showing them how people may have lived during the time and it might also give you a little historical background.)

Topics & Concepts:

- Joan of Arc
- Religious movements
- Artists
- Astronomy
- Physics
- European exploration of the world
- Colonialism and the affect on indigenous people
- Inventions

Week 1

I like to begin the school year with a review of the history from last year. Spend a day reviewing last year and then dive into Joan of Arc. She's a wonderful historical figure and while separate from our other studies this year, her story is a great one for this age group and can bring about some wonderful questions to ponder. Joan also nicely begins the study of this time period as she begins the quest lost after the time of Christ – the quest for a one on one relationship with the Divine.

One Waldorf teacher (JØrgen Borgen) suggests that children will have some of the same questions that Joan's executioners did.

“Who was she? Was she, as her judges proclaimed, a lying seducer of the people and the royalty, a pagan, a false prophet, a witch? Was she a devil or instrument of the forces of evil? Or was she what she always professed? Was she indeed guided by higher, godlike powers that gave her the abilities and courage to act in ways that defied human reason?”

Weeks 2 & 3

This week take time to discuss the religious movements of the time.

- Thomas More
- Martin Luther
- John Calvin

The study of these three figures is key to understanding how Christianity became what it is today. Most of the Christian denominations practicing today, come from one source – the Roman Catholic Church. The church of the Renaissance era was not as the church is today – there were many that believed in Christ as a savior but didn't buy the Catholic flavor of Christ and didn't agree with the things the church at the time was promoting. This brought about change in two

main forms, the rise of humanism and the Protestant Reformation. There were many other figures during this time period that brought about change, we have included these three, but please feel free to seek out others.

Thomas More was born in 1478. He later would become Sir Thomas More and later still, after his beheading would become Saint Thomas More. He was an author, a lawyer, scholar, statesman and all-around disturber! His book *Utopia* is often referred to as a socialist text and lays the foundations for some more modern movements. He was called a *humanist* and did much to support the English government and the Catholic Church during his time. His study will overlap with Martin Luther as they were often pitted against one another in religious discussions. Martin Luther wanted reform and Thomas More defended the Church. More's support of the Church wasn't always that he agreed with each teaching, but because he saw moral decay and society decline with heresy – the unity that had kept them together would fall apart. More's attack on Luther came from this support – he was doing what he felt he had to in order to keep the Church where it should be, at the same time, he also wanted clergy reform. He understood the need to have the reform come from within the Church and didn't agree with Luther's tactics. More supported the king until later when Henry VIII began to ignore the authority of the Pope through some of his personal actions, including divorcing the Queen (Catherine) which was very taboo at the time. At this point, More became vocal about the King's choices and refused to openly declare that Henry VIII was the head of the church. More was charged with high treason and later beheaded. There will be more cross over about this when we study Elizabeth later in this block, but this will give you some background. Be careful not to give too much – this is a skimming and your child will study this much deeper in their high school years. Do spend time discussing More – I like to use his work *Utopia* as an example of wonderful writing to get children excited about a society of their own – what would it be like? This follows the theme of writing for this year of *wish, wonder and surprise* – we will cover those papers more in depth later. More believed that church and state had to agree in order for there to be unity – how has that changed? Also, for your own background you will want an understanding of humanism. There was a great divide between the humanists of the time and the Protestant Reformation that we will discuss next.

Project thoughts for Thomas More: There is a wonderful book by David Macaulay called *City* – while this is about building a Roman city, it is a nice transition into discussions about *Utopia*. While *Utopia* was written sort of as a lark by More, it gives great fuel for imaginations this year. Be certain to give parameters so you can both be on the same page for expectations. Perhaps something simple like questions to be answered throughout the project. What will be the center of your city? What will your city produce? How many people will live there? Where is it located? This project could easily take a week or more if you have time.

Martin Luther was born in 1483. He was a priest and a theologian and if you aren't Lutheran then you might only remember that he broke off from the Catholic Church. Luther was concerned with reform – he was deeply disturbed by the practice of the church to sell indulgences. Indulgences were sort of an intangible forgiveness given by the Church for sins committed. People would pay a fee for the sin committed and then the Church would declare them forgiven. As you can imagine, this could potentially cause all sorts of problems for men doing the work of God. Luther felt that forgiveness was given by God and that it was secured

through Jesus Christ – that the Church could not put a price on God’s work. He began to stir up many people that would participate in what would later be called the *Protestant Reformation*. This movement would call for reform in the Church and in turn the Lutheran church was born. In Martin Luther’s church, priests could marry and the Bible was translated allowing more of the public to have access to it. When Luther began to be vocal about his disagreements with the Church, it was often Thomas More who countered his writings. Luther’s famous *95 Theses* that he nailed to the door of the All Saints’ Church in Wittenberg, Germany, were replied to by More. The theses would set Luther down a road of excommunication from the Church and start the first real reform movement outside the Church. As you spend some time discussing Luther, it might be interesting to pose the question of indulgences with your child. What do they think of the idea? Who should have power over forgiveness of sins? Man, or the Divine? If your child were the decision maker, what would sins be worth? Could murder be bought? Would lies be worth less than stealing? Great questions for children of this age group!

John Calvin was born in 1509. He was raised a strict Catholic; his family urged him to consider the priesthood – instead he went to college and became a lawyer! At college, he became familiar with the reformers of the era and began to doubt the Church he grew up with. After college he had a strong, fast conversion and from there forward began to join other reformers. Calvin took the work of Luther’s and other reformers a step further and developed a system of beliefs that is used in many reformist churches today.

Some thoughts on writing – for Calvinism and religious reformation in general – at this point in your child’s life, they are likely very vocal about things that do not seem fair – they are transitioning into a time when they will be ready to act, but many are still stuck with feeling things are not fair. This begins to change over the next two years. One writing idea that struck me as we have been working on this project, listening to our own seventh grader carry on about some things not being fair is to give them a chance to discuss and write about reform. What would they reform and why? There are some days when I am sure that our son will nail his own *95 Theses* to our bedroom door! Putting that passion into writing will be a fun task!

Do you belong to a reformed church? If so, these discussions could be furthered by discussing how it affects your faith today.

Remember this age group isn’t ready for the kinds of discussions you would have with a high school-aged child, but they are very much wanting to voice what they believe and understand. In our case, I found my children to be very opinionated when we discussed this time period, he became very thankful for the due process that exists in most countries today!

Weeks 4 & 5

- Botticelli
- Michelangelo
- Raphael
- The Art of Leonardo

If you have the opportunity during these couple of weeks to visit a museum with some of the

art of the time period then I highly recommend it. Many smaller museums have reprints, also there are many large art books widely available at the library that could serve as a back drop for this section. Apart from the more scientific work of Leonardo daVinci, it would be useful to look at the styles of several Renaissance artists and compare them – for many children this may be the first introduction into artistic eras but it can help them to see a pattern in art and then also look for that in other historical periods as well. A lot can be said about a society by studying their art. The art of the Renaissance was very beautiful with a strong focus on form in both painting and in sculpture. Try to find ways to really enjoy this with your child. In a Waldorf school setting, students may be working on parts of the body for modeling, while the head isn't usually covered until class eight, the hands and feet and other bones could be done now.

Botticelli was born in 1445 in Italy. He became famous as a painter in the early Renaissance. He became an apprentice at 14 and had learned enough by 15 to have his own studio. He employed many apprentices that assisted him in his work so that he could be commissioned for many works. Much of his work followed a trend during the Renaissance known as Neo-Platonism where he combined Christian aspects with Pagan ones. He was known for the attention he took to the human form and for the melancholic feel of much of his work. His work became so well known that he was asked to do frescos for the Sistine Chapel with other well-known Renaissance painters. The Medici family (a prominent Renaissance family) paid large sums of money for Botticelli's work and introduced him to many influential people of the time.

Later in his adult life he became a follower of a very conservative Renaissance priest, Girolamo Savonarola. Botticelli took his faith so seriously that he burned many of his early paintings because of their Pagan nature as part of the event known as *Bonfire of the Vanities* where many books, paintings and other Renaissance artifacts were burned under the direction of Savonarola.

Michelangelo was born in 1475 and is one of the most famous artists of the Renaissance and known for so many works. Much is known about this artistic genius – from his birth to his death, most of his life was very well documented and his artwork is pretty accessible through art books and of course, the Internet. To really understand this artist, it is important to look at his youth. His father wrote about the sickly nature of his mother and how Michelangelo was sent to a wet nurse for suckling. The wet nurse was the wife of a stonemason. Michelangelo joked in his later days that it was probably the time spent with this family that gave him a love for hammer and chisel. His talents did not stop at marble sculpting – he was a master fresco painter (evident when looking at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel) – a poet – an architect. He is famous for such works as the David (finished in his 20's) and many other sculptures that were commissioned both by private and government groups as well as the Papacy. The art of the period was almost a contradiction – the beauty of the naked form contrasting with the modesty of the prevailing Church at the time. Michelangelo writes in his journal:

"Already at 16, my mind was a battlefield: my love of pagan beauty, the male nude, at war with my religious faith."

This would carry him through life as he offended some and pleased others, both in the Church

and in society. I encourage you to take time to understand this man, he was very complex and had so much depth.

Two optional activities to explore this week – 1. sculpting in clay or clay like substance – focus on form of bones, hands, feet, etc. 2. observe the human form – if you (your child) were an artist such as Michelangelo, what might some of your notebook drawings look like? Take some time to look at his drawings – keep in mind he was able to study corpses (very taboo at the time!) and since this is likely not a reality to you, can you provide a hand or foot model to work with?

For writing activity – thinking about the climate at the time, we've already talked about how religion was a key force and factor of the time – not just in Italy but also in France and throughout Europe – how would the sculpture of the human form conflict with what the Church was bringing forth at the time? Why do you think the Church commissioned so many works that were nudes? Look at the David – he is Biblical David – not at all what we often think of when it comes to David and Goliath!

Michelangelo writes this about David:

"When I returned to Florence, I found myself famous. The City Council asked me to carve a colossal David from a nineteen-foot block of marble -- and damaged to boot! I locked myself away in a workshop behind the cathedral, hammered and chiseled at the towering block for three long years. In spite of the opposition of a committee of fellow artists, I insisted that the figure should stand before the Palazzo Vecchio, as a symbol of our Republic. I had my way. Archways were torn down, narrow streets widened...it took forty men five days to move it. Once in place, all Florence was astounded. A civic hero, he was a warning...whoever governed Florence should govern justly and defend it bravely. Eyes watchful...the neck of a bull...hands of a killer...the body, a reservoir of energy. He stands poised to strike."

Perhaps study the David, the form – how does it differ from your thoughts of the Biblical story?

Raphael was born in 1483 and is another accomplished artist of this time period. Although he died young (age 37) his work was highly sought after during his time and still today. He was among other great Renaissance artists in lending his hand to the Sistine Chapel projects, personal portraits of the Pope and many others. He was very impressed by the work of other artists of the time and while he seemed to be friends with da Vinci, both were enemies of Michelangelo! So much drama in such a small space. Raphael came from an artistic background as his father was a court painter and likely placed Raphael as an apprentice at a young age.

Project idea: The art work of this era looks alike in so many ways and with so many of these prominent Renaissance artists working on the same project, the Sistine Chapel, it may be fun to bring some of their work side by side and see if your child can tell the difference between them. Wikipedia.org is a great resource as well as many art books dedicated to this time period.

Project idea: A great simple craft that originated during this time period was the art of paper

quilling. It was often used by the monks of the time to decorate books and undertaken by ladies of leisure at the time. This is a very easy art to come by today and can be found in most crafting stores.

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