

Reading Guide for *The Curious Historian Level 1A*

This recommended reading list has been compiled by the series authors; Leslie Rayner, curator of [The Classical Reader](#); and Patty Kobzowicz, former grammar school teacher.

A Note from Dr. Christopher Perrin

One way to regard history is as a record of the past. There are various kinds of “records” that we can turn to: inscriptions, monuments, buildings, statues, written documents, and other preserved artifacts. Literature is certainly a kind of document that we can add to this list and is itself a large category that can include historical accounts, biography, myths, legends, poetry, novels, political philosophy, and so on.

Literature from many historical periods can be a very rich source of information for the historian. To understand both Greece and Rome well, for example, one should know at least some of the great literature of these civilizations. Homer’s *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are critical to understanding the Greek mind, just as Virgil’s *The Aeneid* is to understanding the Roman mind. We could say the same about other civilizations for which we have extant literature.

The historian will not only be a reader of the great, enduring literature of any given civilization that he or she studies but will also want to be a reader of the history and context of a given literary work. History and literature are thus interrelated disciplines that shed light upon each other while also preserving their differences. This is why, in our *The Curious Historian Level 1A (TCH1A)* text, we have, where appropriate, referenced great literary works such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Code of Hammurabi and noted their contributions to our historical understanding. We want students to see the valuable and complementary role that literature plays in the study of history.

We also want to encourage students’ inquisitive natures. Therefore, we have compiled this collection of reading recommendations, sorted by genre and subject, for students (and teachers) who would like to dive deeper into the topics covered in the *TCH1A* text. We encourage you to look for additional opportunities to integrate literature into your course and to help students learn to appreciate the interdisciplinary benefit of both their historical and literary studies.

Ancient History and Archaeology

Nonfiction Books for Students

[Archaeology](#) (Kingfisher Knowledge) by Trevor Barnes. This visual guide covers what archaeology is; key archaeological sites around the world, such as Pompeii, the Acropolis, Angkor Wat, and the great Aztec temples; major discoveries such as the *Mary Rose* warship; and even features several pages on battlefield archaeology.

[Questions & Answers: Ancient History](#), edited by Ella Fern, Fiona Tulloch, and Alex Woolf. This guide explores important elements of human life—culture, religion, architecture, and art—and key people across ancient civilizations, from early times to the medieval period. Chapters cover Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, Japan, Greece, Rome, the Incas, the Aztecs, Native Americans, and medieval Europe.

[The Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient Civilizations](#) by John Haywood, edited by Simon Hall. This collection of full-color maps, photographs, and recreations of ancient art covers the history of the earliest civilizations around the world, from Mesopotamia and Egypt to the Far East, as well as America and Europe, following the various empires, societies, and technological innovations.

Biblical Connections in *The Curious Historian Level 1A* compiled by Daniel E. James

This optional, supplemental PDF for *The Curious Historian Level 1A (TCH1A)* draws connections between the historical context presented in the chapters and corresponding biblical settings and scriptures, theological concepts, or moral virtues. These connections can be used to aid you in incorporating biblical history into your study of ancient history and to facilitate further discussion with your student(s). Icons in the teacher's edition indicate when to reference this PDF.

This resource is intended for teacher use. To help initiate student interaction with the content, consider having students read the Bible passages aloud to you/the class.

Unit I: Ancient Mesopotamia

Chapter 1: The Ancient Sumerians

There are mentions of Sumer and other ancient city-states throughout the Old Testament, though searching the Scriptures for these names may leave you empty-handed, since different Bible translations use varying names and spellings for these places. For example, one of the names the Old Testament uses instead of Sumer is Shinar. The King James, English Standard, and New Revised Standard Version translations also use the name Erech instead of Uruk and spell Sargon's city of Akkad (see chapter 4) as Accad.

The land of Sumer/Shinar is first mentioned in [Genesis 10:10](#): “The first centers of his [Nimrod's] kingdom were Babel, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in Shinar.” Again in [Genesis 11:1-9](#), we are taken to a plain in the land of Shinar where the people built the infamous Tower of Babel. Sumer is also called “Babylonia” and referenced by three Old Testament prophets—Isaiah ([Isaiah 11:11](#)), Daniel ([Daniel 1:1-2](#)), and Zechariah ([Zechariah 5:11](#))—as a place to which Israel would be exiled and from which a remnant of Israel would be gathered.¹

Chapter 2: The Ancient Sumerian City-States

[Genesis 14:1-16](#) offers us a glimpse of the relationships between city-states in the ancient world. Each of the kings named in this passage would have been ruler over his own city-state. Kedorlaomer, the king of Elam (home of the Elamites; see chapter 6) also ruled over a number of smaller city-states that regularly paid him tribute. After twelve years of service to him, the kings of the smaller city-states—Bera of Sodom, Birsha of Gomorrah, Shinab of Admah, Shemeber of Zeboyim, and Zoar of Bela—stopped paying tribute and rose up in rebellion. Kedorlaomer called on kings Amraphel (ruler of Sumer/Shinar), Arioch, and Tidal to help him subdue the rebelling city-states. When Kedorlaomer overcame the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah with his army, he did not merely collect the tribute he was owed but also easily defeated their armies and chased some of their men into tar pits. Then, he took all of their goods and their provisions—presumably a lot more than the unpaid tribute would have amounted to—and left.

In these verses, the ancient world certainly sounds like a brutal and merciless place. It seems the strong did whatever they wanted while the weak had little choice but to endure whatever was done to them. If your city and king were stronger than those around you, then you might have been relatively safe . . . at least until someone stronger came along.

1. D.J. Wiseman, “Shinar,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., ed. D.R.W. Wood, I. Howard Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I. Packer, and D.J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1095.