

TRAIL GUIDE TO LEARNING



DEBBIE STRAYER & LINDA FOWLER

The *Trail Guide to Learning* series is a complete curriculum that teaches every subject except for math, using an integrated approach to develop thinking skills.

Current Levels Available:

Paths of Exploration - Grades 3-5 (extension available for grades 6-7)

Paths of Settlement - Grades 4-6 (extension available for grades 7-8)

Paths of Progress - Grades 5-7 (extension available for grades 8-9)

The first level of the next series is now available with more levels to follow:

Journeys through the Ancient World - Grades 6-8

Our eventual goal is to take this series all the way through high school. *Trail Guide to Learning* provides clearly laid out lesson plans following a thirty-six week schedule and offers all the guidance and materials necessary to teach your children the way you've always wanted—effectively, efficiently, and enjoyably.

If a love of learning is your destination, let the *Trail Guide to Learning* series show you the way! Join us as we travel through history, science, language skills, geography, and art.

Why was the Learning Series created?

The main author, Debbie Strayer, began her journey into the world of teaching when she graduated from Florida State University with her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in education. She liked to say that her real education began when she entered the classroom and twenty little faces stared back at her waiting for instruction. She taught in many fields to varying age levels, special ed., regular ed., as a reading specialist, an evaluator and even an administrator at one point.

She always felt that her most important accomplishments were that she was the wife of Greg Strayer for 35 years, the mother to two wonderful children, and a homeschooling parent for 16 years. **Her educational background, coupled with the experience of homeschooling her own children, uniquely qualified Debbie.**

It was from her years of learning what worked for her students and her own children, and what didn't, that she was inspired to create the *Trail Guide to Learning* series. This curriculum is multi-level because it was Debbie's deepest desire that families would be brought together through its use. By asking questions and creating opportunities for students to think for themselves, Debbie's hope was to encourage children to become leaders instead of followers, and instill a love of learning in them that would produce lifelong learners.

What is our educational philosophy?

The *Trail Guide to Learning* series weaves together aspects from Charlotte Mason's methods of natural education, and incorporates the ideas of Dr. Benjamin Bloom's research on thinking skills, while fully utilizing the time-tested approach developed by noted author and educator, Dr. Ruth Beechick.

Dr. Beechick's educational philosophy is that developing thinking skills is paramount, learning different subjects (science, history, geography, etc.) is done best in a unified and focused manner, stories are great teaching tools, and that language skills need to be learned in the context of content, not as isolated subjects.

"Concept Learning is having insight and understanding beyond the facts, seeing relationships among them. Arriving at this level is the "aha" experience. It is the exhilarating experience of moving from knowledge of certain facts to an understanding of their relationships."

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *Heart and Mind*

"Dr. Beechick's principles are the basis for this curriculum. During its creation, I had the privilege of consulting with her. Teaching in a natural manner is important to her and we reflected her values by incorporating language skills and history as a unified part of the everyday routines. Thank you, Dr. Beechick."

—Author, Debbie Strayer

The Integrated Approach

We not only cover each subject, but every subject in the *Trail Guide* relates. It is a natural way of learning as topics flow from one to the other. Children learn best when subjects overlap and build upon a main concept.

For example, in *Paths of Exploration*, students learn how our country was discovered and explored, from Columbus to the Westward Expansion. While studying the life and explorations of Christopher Columbus, students learn about his travels, read about his life in their literature, map out his treks in their geography, learn how he used the stars for navigation in their science lessons, and tie in activities like making a model ship out of a milk carton. When your child is able to make all these connections, he will have better retention and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The more sensory involvement you have with one topic, the more likely you are to remember and use that information. As children learn, they will share their experiences through notebooking, presentations and hands-on activities. Art, cooking, music and games combine to give children a taste of the times and a personal connection with the content that is unmatched by reading alone.

Critical Thinking

The Steps for Thinking portion of the *Trail Guide* serves as a backbone to every lesson and helps tie in the overall theme of each unit. Steps for Thinking addresses main concepts and character qualities from week to week and encourages deeper thinking about those concepts. This section also provides a general framework of thought process and promotes an **active approach to learning**. It is recommended that you read and discuss each step together at the beginning of your lessons and look for opportunities throughout the week to relate back to those discussions. In doing so, your children will learn to be aware of the bigger picture.

“The single greatest gift that the *Trail Guide* series offers is not just well thought out, well planned lessons, but even more so the challenge from the onset of each lesson to approach learning with a critical mind. When using the *Trail Guide*, children are engaged continuously to think and experience the material they are learning, not just regurgitate information. They are encouraged to relate to and consider the people and the places rather than simply learn about them as facts. This approach has fostered lifetime learning and thinking in my children. It has blessed my relationship with my kids through the countless discussions and experiences we’ve had together. *Trail Guide* has even taught me how to think more critically and ask better questions to engage my children in learning. I am forever indebted to the writers of this series.”

—Elyce T.

Why start with American history?

Studying American history first lays the firm foundation of your family’s beliefs and shows what a good leader, government, and citizen look like. Also, while children are young and impressionable, learning about historical figures who display character and values is essential. When students are older, they are better able to understand the events of world history. More importantly, students will be mature enough to comprehend the worldviews and belief systems that led to those events.

The first three levels of the series give children a **model of nation building**: the explorers who opened the way for those who followed (*Paths of Exploration*), the builders and settlers who established communities and government (*Paths of Settlement*), and the scientists and inventors who solved problems and fostered growth (*Paths of Progress*).

When students understand the foundation of service, leadership, and the principles of freedom that this country was built upon, they have a **frame of reference** and can accurately compare our nation to others throughout history. Although each level has a main thread of American History, the first level looks at colonization and exploration, which includes studying where explorers came from and how their culture was passed on. World events also come into focus in *Paths of Progress* when students learn how world wars and the industrial revolution affected our country’s growth

“As a first time homeschooling family four years ago, we were swimming in the uncharted territory of choosing from a zillion history curriculum choices. A friend recommended we try *Paths of Exploration*, and once we did, there has been no looking back. We enjoy it for so many reasons, but mainly because it is so engaging, interesting, and takes a very minimal amount of preparation in order to get a great amount of benefit. It is also very easy to use for more than one child/level at the same time. The stories keep us on the edge of our seats as we identify with the characters and really make lasting connections to not only the history, but the science, art, nature, and geography, just to name a few. We look forward to the time we spend each week and the exciting new things we will learn. My girls especially love the hands-on approach and being able to create while learning.”

—Tracy S.

Language Skills

Language Skills are taught through a natural, whole-language approach drawing from the ideas and methods of Charlotte Mason and, primarily, Dr. Ruth Beechick.

“The [natural] method is not new or experimental. It is an old and proven method, probably as old as writing itself. Great writers have used it, and you have already used it with your child.”

How have you been using this natural approach with your child? You taught him or her to speak.

“What is the natural method of learning to write? Before defining it, let’s think back to the child’s learning of speech. How did he learn to speak? By listening and speaking. The baby at first listened to you, he imitated sounds and words, and from there he rapidly grew into a competent speaker. This is no secret known only in the ivy halls of teacher colleges. It is known in every house on the block. And if that sounds like a miracle, attribute it to the innate abilities God planted in the child. Speech is learned by listening and speaking.

Now, what is the parallel for written language? It is reading and writing. We might state the analogy this way: Listening and speaking are to spoken language what reading and writing are to written language. If people ask you how children learn to write, here is the short, short definition to give them: Children learn to write by writing.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *A Strong Start in Language*

Many components comprise what people consider Language Skills, but each component works in conjunction with the others. **This is what is meant by a whole-language approach. Vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and writing are taught as a whole.** And because the *Trail Guide to Learning* series teaches from a natural approach, these components are taught in the context of the literature as well as other lessons of the curriculum.

Copywork & Dictation

Through copywork and dictation, students learn how to see, hear, and write language correctly. Students begin with copywork, and as their skills progress, they transition to dictation.

In *Dr. Beechick’s Homeschool Answer Book*, she describes the different levels of the dictation method. Those levels include copywork, with the youngest of students beginning with copying letters, then words, then short sentences. As children develop these skills they move on to copying longer passages. After they are able to copy passages, then they can move on to the next two levels of dictation. In the first level of dictation, students study the model, or written passage, and then write it from dictation. In the next level of dictation, students write from dictation without studying the model beforehand.

“All these variations and levels are within the dictation method. One main advantage of this method is that your children will be studying language whole. There are no blanks to fill in with is or are, no list of sentences to choose to end with periods or question marks, and so on. If we constantly break language into little bits for teaching, the bits do not add up to the whole.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *Homeschool Answer Book*

Through copywork and dictation, students practice handwriting, absorb rules about grammar and punctuation, learn correct sentence structure, and develop spelling skills and strategies. And they do this by using the same books they are already hearing or reading, creating a natural connection between reading and writing.

“I love that *Trail Guide* uses real books, related to the current unit topic (a unit being a six-week section of the overall topic of study for the year), rather than a random book or a book of short, condensed stories. To me, this makes the whole act of reading more meaningful because the kids are learning more about the current topic, making more connections, and gaining reading fluency all at the same time. Their reading is more interesting because it’s purposeful, not just for the sake of checking off a box.”

—Kris B.

Readers

Reading assignments are from real books, or living books, making learning both interesting and informative for the students while increasing their fluency and comprehension skills.

The books selected for the *Trail Guide to Learning* series help students learn about historical time periods and people, exemplify admirable character traits through biographies, and open up the door to discussion of your

own values and beliefs. Through biographies, students see examples of sacrifice, courage and determination. This focus is intended to encourage and inspire children to follow the path laid out for them.

Read-Aloud, Discussion, Narration, & Reflective Writing

Besides reading real books on their own, students also listen to read-alouds allowing them to focus on the meaning of what they are hearing. Reading aloud gives the teacher and students the chance to share ideas and thoughtful conversation. Students also have the opportunity to read aloud themselves so they can practice the skills of reading with fluency and expression that have been modeled for them.

In the *Trail Guide to Learning* series, you won't stop with simply reading the books aloud to your children. Students will develop critical thinking skills by interacting with what has been read through discussion, narration, and reflective writing.

Reflective writing is a more complex skill, and also a more concrete one as students answer questions through their writing.

“When you read a book, you are in mind-to-mind encounter with its author, whether he lived 1000 years ago or lives today. This is the wonder of real books—all kinds of books, not only the serious and factual. Your mind grows through these encounters. And while you read or after you finish a book, if you have a personal response of some kind, and write, your mind grows even more. You clarify your thoughts. You develop new ways of thinking. This is education, ongoing. The read-write dialogue is of first importance. So keep your children reading and keep them writing.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *You CAN Teach Your Child Successfully*

Word Study—Vocabulary & Spelling

Word Study is another component of the language skills taught in the *Trail Guide to Learning* series. Students learn strategies that help them gain meaning from unknown and familiar words. The goal is for students to be able to make the connections between these skills and the written word for long term memory retention and the ability to incorporate the words into their own personal vocabulary.

Vocabulary and spelling words have context and meaning for the student because they come from the subjects students are currently studying. There aren't simply lists of words to memorize for the sake of learning them for a test and then, often, forgetting them shortly afterwards. Instead, each vocabulary or spelling word has immediate value by helping them understand and interact with the information they are studying in all subject areas. Learning is reinforced because students can see a reason for becoming familiar with the words. In regard to teaching spelling, Dr. Beechick says:

“Good spelling should mean to a child, getting the words right in her letter to a friend, in her essay contest entry, in her history research, and on her advertisement for babysitting services. It should not mean making A's on weekly tests of twenty words. To achieve this result, spelling must be integrated with every writing assignment in every subject. And only part of the time does spelling need emphasis as a separate subject.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *You CAN Teach Your Child Successfully*

Grammar

Does grammar knowledge help produce good writers and speakers?

“On the question of relationship of grammar knowledge to writing ability, the research is clear and overwhelming on one side of the issue. This is the finding: Knowledge of the definitions and rules of grammar does not, in itself, improve student writing.

Where then does grammar fit in? Not before writing. Not as a way to learn to write. Reverse this order; have your children write as a way to learn grammar. They learned a great deal of grammar as they learned to talk. Now as they write and read, they continue learning grammar.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *You CAN Teach Your Child Successfully*

In keeping with this philosophy based on research and time tested methods, grammar skills are taught in two primary ways. The first is through copywork and dictation. As students copy or write what has been written by others, they naturally absorb rules of grammar and mechanics. When they make mistakes, there is immediate feedback as they check their work against the model so that they can correct those mistakes.

The second way grammar is taught is by learning the parts of speech, mechanics rules, and sentence construction in specific lessons over those topics. Unlike a workbook approach, these lessons use examples and exercises from the books read in the curriculum. Review is built into the curriculum and includes games to reinforce learning.

“Our family has been using the *Trail Guide to Learning* series for several years with all three of our children. I first heard about this curriculum while talking to Debbie Strayer, who we were privileged to know as a neighbor, friend, mentor and evaluator for our children. I was interested in the unit study approach, but was having trouble finding a curriculum that was not “an inch deep and a mile wide.” At the time, Debbie was just finishing the first volume in the series, *Paths of Exploration*, and explained that she was writing this curriculum to address the very concerns I had expressed. The more she explained her philosophy of natural learning, the more interested I became to try it.

“We started with *Paths of Exploration* and as we continued on, I liked the approach of the curriculum very much. The subjects are integrated with each other rather than being presented as separate disciplines. I did, however, have some misgivings with how grammar was presented. It seemed to me at first to be rather arbitrary instead of the progressive, formal approach with lots of drills that I was used to. My own background is in English literature; **I hold a Master’s Degree in 19th century British literature so grammar was very high on my priority list to teach my own children.** In addition to the *Paths of Exploration*, we continued to use the same formal grammar textbooks we’d used before. Debbie often encouraged me to give up the formal grammar texts and trust the natural learning method. I resisted her advice at first; our oldest daughter seemed to understand grammar and wrote well, so I kept up with grammar lessons. It wasn’t until I began to see that although my son could do all the exercises in the grammar book correctly, when he wrote something on his own, the knowledge didn’t translate over to what he wrote. It was as if he hadn’t really learned it. In hindsight, I believe this was a result of teaching grammar and writing as an entity separate from our other subject areas: history, literature, science, etc. Frustrated by what I perceived as a lack of application on my son’s part, we hit the grammar text even harder. This only resulted in my son becoming more and more resistant to grammar instruction, as well as to writing anything, because my focus was on correcting the grammar in each piece of writing rather than on the content.

“Finally, I decided to listen to Debbie’s voice which I kept hearing in the back of my mind. We put away the grammar texts (much to my son’s relief!) and concentrated on the writing and word study assignments in the *Trail Guide*. I began to see that these assignments were helping my son learn thinking and reasoning skills through writing, as a natural response to the living books he was reading (and hearing read aloud). Each volume of the *Trail Guide* series reviews grammar concepts previously learned and then continues to build on that foundation. Because the grammar is connected to what he is reading and learning about, and not just as separate “drills,” it helps cement those concepts in his mind. We are able to focus on one or two issues of grammar within the context of each assignment until they are resolved. Because the writing assignments ask him to respond to what he reads, and the subject matter is interesting, writing is easier for my son. He is also demonstrating correct grammar usage much more often than he did before, and is more willing to tackle complex assignments. He has especially enjoyed the assignments that require him to research a topic of interest and write a presentation; I have been impressed with how well he organizes his thoughts in writing and the growing maturity of his expression. I especially like the gentle way writing paragraphs, and then essays, is handled; this has been a huge help for him easing into writing more formal and lengthy pieces.

“We have truly seen the benefits of the natural method of instruction and I am grateful to Debbie Strayer for encouraging me to trust it.”

—Sue F.

Writing

A student’s ability to communicate through the written word is developed in many different ways. Throughout the *Trail Guide to Learning* series, skills and topics build upon one another culminating with essay writing in *Paths of Progress*. We believe that writing is a reflection of thinking skills. This is why we focus on content and thinking most. It is our desire that writing be an integrated part of learning and an enjoyable activity that increases understanding.

“I cannot stress strongly enough that progress toward more mature writing happens within the child’s total thinking abilities. It does not happen in any easy manner by simply learning techniques, forms, or tricks of writing.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *You CAN Teach Your Child Successfully*

Throughout the entire series, students engage in multiple forms of writing to learn, communicate what they have learned, and organize their thinking on a subject.

“Writing is learning. This is an important principle to try to understand. To learn, one must process information in the mind, and writing is a powerful way to process information, in other words to think. Thinking and writing are intertwined all the way from the first information gathering and planning, through the writing and rewriting, to evaluating the work and polishing it. This does not happen in neat step sequence, although workbooks often pretend it does, as one professor phrased it.

The hard work of setting down thoughts clearly and orderly for an audience develops the writer’s thinking on the topic so that he gains ideas and insights that he did not have while planning for the writing.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *A Biblical Home Education*

Since reading and writing are skill subjects, they are used throughout all areas of the *Trail Guide to Learning* series. As students create lapbooks (optional) and complete student notebook pages, these skills become the cornerstone to learning other subjects such as science and history. Students don’t have to come up with something artificial to write about. Instead, writing is based on what they are learning. Discussion is encouraged before students write to help them organize their thoughts. Writing is a journey that you and your student embark on together.

Writing is about meaning, not perfection. Writing makes us vulnerable as we share our thoughts and ideas with others. As Dr. Beechick encourages:

“An important function of yours as teacher is to be audience for your children’s writing—not with a red pencil, but with genuine appreciation and encouragement, and with gentle guidance toward improvement.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *You CAN Teach Your Child Successfully*

Writing Concepts Taught by level:

Paths of Exploration: Sentences, Paragraphs, Narrative Writing, Expository, and Poetry (cinquain and acrostic)

Paths of Settlement: Summaries, Paraphrasing, Descriptive Writing, Persuasive Writing, Poetry and Interactive Writing

Paths of Progress: Interactive Writing, Expository Writing, Descriptive Writing, Narrative Writing, Essays, Reports and Play Writing

Science

Children generally love science when it’s presented as a relaxed extension of life, when it’s hands-on, and when it connects to other things they are studying. And that’s the beauty of science in the *Trail Guide to Learning* series. It’s not a separate, compartmentalized subject that stands alone, but rather a relevant piece of the puzzles inherent in exploration, settlement, and progress. These things didn’t happen in a vacuum, and they shouldn’t be presented as though they did. Which is why the unified approach to learning in the Trail Guide draws students into scientific discovery that is individualized, and strongly connected to each year’s theme.

For example, as your children study the explorers they’ll also look at nature, its links to various places and people, and its contribution to exploration. While they meet the settlers, students will investigate earth’s makeup, natural cycles and processes—and how these things influenced where people chose to live and work. And as they learn about our contributions to progress throughout the world, they’ll also discover the basics of physical science and human physiology, which are necessary building blocks for many areas of invention and creative thought.

Science Topics Studied by level:

Paths of Exploration: Observing, Recording, Solar System, Trade Winds, Pollution, and Life Science (Plant and Animal Life)

Paths of Settlement: Earth Science, Table of Elements, Atoms, Molecules, Energy, Rocks, Minerals, Weather, and Seasons

Paths of Progress: Physical Science, Scientific Process, Friction, Machines, Tools, and Anatomy (Body Systems)

“Some of my fondest memories from childhood are from walks in the woods, time in the garden, and hours spent in the barns of our family farm. During each walk, each growing season, each interaction with animals on the farm, I learned more and more about the natural world around us. My dad was always patient as he shared knowledge he gained while growing up the same way. He would point out various trees and tell us how to identify them by their leaves or bark. He would tell us why we planted lettuce and peas early in the spring and why we needed to add oyster shells to the chicken feed. We learned what I thought then was very practical knowledge. At the time, I didn’t realize that I was really learning about science. It just seemed like I was learning about life and how the natural world worked. Science, after all, was that subject in school we learned about in a textbook.

It didn’t take long for me to start to make connections between what I was learning from those lessons on the farm and in the woods to the lessons taught in the classroom. I found a lot of what I read in the school textbooks was just review of what I already learned with a few new scientific terms thrown in. These early experiences fueled my love of science. It was always my favorite subject in school, my major in college, and my profession after college. I owe it all to the natural way science was presented to me.

Fueling a Love of Science in My Own Children

From the time my kids were tiny, I have tried to give them natural science experiences even though we have not lived on a farm or in the woods. We planted gardens, played with bugs and snakes in the yard, looked at the moon and stars, and watched birds at the feeders.

When it came time to homeschool, I searched for hands-on curriculum that let kids experience science, not just read about it. I also found science lessons and experiment books that supported and explained what the kids and I had been observing in nature. I tried to find ways to let the kids see that science wasn’t something just found in a textbook, but something very practical and found all around them in their everyday lives. This was a fun way to learn and fun way to teach. The kids picked up and retained these types of lessons well.

Integrating Science Naturally into Your Homeschool

Last year, I was introduced with a new resource to integrate science naturally into our homeschool. We chose to use the *Trail Guide To Learning* curriculum from GeoMatters. This is a history/geography unit study curriculum for 3rd - 5th graders. The curriculum contains all subjects, except math. I have to admit that when we started I was skeptical that the science included in *Trail Guide To Learning* would be enough. Based on my experience with other unit studies, I had two concerns.

First, I was concerned the science would be too light and superficial. That would mean I would need to add an additional science curriculum to our studies. My second concern was that the science portion would seem disjointed from the rest of the study. My concerns turned out to be unfounded. *Trail Guide To Learning* is not like any other unit study.

The science in *Trail Guide To Learning* falls right in line with the study of history and geography. For instance, while studying the adventures of Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery, we learned about the plants and animals they discovered. We learned about the science of surveying, which they used to make new maps of the land they traveled. While learning about Christopher Columbus, we learned about astronomy and how he used his knowledge of the stars to navigate ships on the ocean.

The flow from history to geography to science to art to grammar is natural in *Trail Guide To Learning*. Just like my experiences growing up, it is learning, but without feeling like school work. Kids can connect the dots and integrate all they are learning into one big picture, instead of lots of random facts. There are three age levels to choose from in each of the *Trail Guide To Learning* guides which makes it easy to go deeper if your child is really interested in a subject. Since science is only officially taught in *Trail Guide To Learning* two days a week, there is plenty of time to dive deeper or go wider with a science topic on the off days. We like using the Friday review day as a day to do more experiments, projects or field trips.

I have found that teaching children to love science is not hard. They are natural born scientists. You just have to feed that love and not squash it with a textbook. Explore, experiment, and find ways to integrate it naturally into your lives and into your homeschool studies. There are so many wonderful resources, like *Trail Guide To Learning*, that will help you along your way.”

—Marci Goodwin, The Homeschool Scientist Blog

Art & Doing

The unified approach to learning is geared toward building memory markers, and memory markers are key to recalling and retaining information. As both Charlotte Mason and Dr. Beechick acknowledged, nothing accomplishes this task as simply and enjoyably as doing something related to what you hope to remember. Simply put, hands-on activities are powerful teachers, motivators, and connectors.

In *Paths of Exploration*, your children will play observation games, draw and sketch like an explorer, practice map skills, track animals and people, use Morse code and semaphore flags, make and write with a quill pen, and build a Prairie Schooner.

In *Paths of Settlement*, your family will cook regional foods, illustrate geography with watercolors, make colonial toys, weave bags and rope, design a relief map, dip candles, build a weather station, carve soap, and sing historical songs.

In *Paths of Progress*, students will reinforce science concepts with graphic organizers, track the progression of music, play a recorder, design and create with clay, “film” a Claymation video or flipbook, illustrate classical compositions, and write a play.

By responding to factual information with personal experiences that enhance understanding and make the themes relevant and memorable, students will not only enjoy, but also remember each lesson taught in the *Trail Guide to Learning*.

Learning Series F.A.Q.

Q: How do I know if my child is ready to begin the *Trail Guide* series?

A: Grade levels alone are not the best way to determine readiness. The curriculum should not be used by a third grader who might not be ready for its content. Likewise, content that is of interest to a second grade student shouldn't be delayed simply because of age. When a child is reading to learn instead of learning to read, then he is ready to start a curriculum like the *Trail Guide*. The quote below by Dr. Ruth Beechick explains what we mean by “reading to learn.”

“While children are learning to sound out words, we say they are in the decoding stage of reading. After they can use basic phonics, they need a year or two of easy reading which is called the fluency stage. After decoding and after fluency comes a period of reading development that can be called the information stage. In this stage children need not concentrate too heavily on phonics and on reading a sentence smoothly. The mechanics of reading have become so easy that they now concentrate more on the content of reading.”

—Dr. Ruth Beechick, *You CAN Teach Your Child Successfully*

Q: How do I know which level fits my family best?

A: It depends on what you've covered. Have you studied much American History yet? If not, starting at the beginning will give a full picture of our country's history. If you have already studied some of the explorers and/or colonies, but not in depth, consider the fact that even if this time period has been taught, studying it by connecting subjects together will be a new experience. That being said, if you feel that you do not need to learn about the topics in *Paths of Exploration* again, it is perfectly fine to begin the series with *Paths of Settlement*.

Your student's writing ability can also determine which level is appropriate. If he is a struggling writer, then you might need to start with the first level in our series. *Paths of Exploration* gives a firm foundation in writing and prepares students for the more advanced assignments in *Paths of Settlement*.

Q: Is it okay to begin with *Paths of Progress*?

A: Subjects and skills are built upon in each level. Therefore, we do not highly recommend beginning with *Paths of Progress*. However, if your children are older and have already covered the majority of American History in depth, you can begin with this level as it offers a unique perspective on the progress of our country. If you have not studied the Industrial Revolution and the economic principles that shaped our nation, don't miss out on *Paths of Progress*.

Q: How Long Does a *Trail Guide to Learning* Day Take?

A: Because the *Trail Guide to Learning* series is an all-inclusive curriculum, covering everything except math, families considering the curriculum often wonder how long they can expect to spend on it each day. The length of time can vary according to your

children, but most families can probably expect to spend 2-3 hours a day when in younger grade levels, and 3-4 hours a day for older students. During that time, you and your students will be covering:

- Copywork or Dictation
- Reading (both independent and read-aloud assignments)
- Word Study (spelling, vocabulary and grammar)
- History or Science (on alternating days)
- Geography
- Writing
- Art and/or music
- Related hands-on activities

The text is written to the student, but it is intended for regular parent interaction. Typically, my kids and I do the majority of the work together, as a family, which was the vision of the authors—for families to enjoy learning together.

Because each daily lesson is completely laid out for the parent to be able to just pick up and go, many families go through each daily lesson exactly as it is scheduled in the book, while others have found that it works better for their families to rearrange the lesson order. Many families with older children find that it works best to complete lessons in which the whole family participates in the morning hours. This allows older children to do their independent work in the afternoons while the teaching parent focuses on helping younger siblings. This always worked well for my family. We would save assignments such as independent reading, art, and music for the end of the day so that each child was able to finish those assignments—and math, which is not included—at his own pace. Other families like to reverse this order, with older children working independently in the morning and the family working together in the afternoon. One of the wonderful benefits of the series is that it was designed with homeschooling families in mind. It was written by homeschooling parents for homeschooling parents. It offers the ultimate ease-of-use by having all of the lesson planning done for you, but there is plenty of room to rearrange and tweak to suit your family's needs. —Kris Bales, *Weird Unsocialized Homeschoolers* Blog

Q: Is the *Trail Guide* easily adaptable?

A: The *Trail Guide* series was written with the intention that every family would see the curriculum as a servant, not a master. It is for this reason that we chose to use the words Lesson 1, Part 1, instead of Week 1, Day 1. We encourage you to schedule your schooling in a way that fits your family best.

Each lesson includes five parts. The fifth part is a lighter day that includes enrichment options and can be used for catching up, field trips or a day off. We are always interested in finding out how our *Trail Guide* families customize the curriculum to meet their needs. Many users have decided to begin *Paths of Exploration* (with some adaptations) at 2nd Grade and cover the level in two years instead of one. Another user told us that she completes five units each year and begins the following school year with Unit 6. She does this so that her children can use Unit 6, which incorporates a study of the previous five units, as a review before beginning the next level. **Whatever plan you choose, remember that progress is the goal, not perfection.**

“We do not always get an entire 'Part' in each day, but just pick up where we left off the day before. We might finish a science lesson in the morning and then start a new part in the afternoon. I may combine a couple day's worth of writing or science if possible. Occasionally, we complete an assignment through oral discussion instead of writing in the notebooks, if they are already familiar with the concept being taught. The fifth day being a lighter one is a lifesaver for catching up and we love to try to do a notebooking page on that day about something they read during independent reading time (from our library book basket) for the week. We try to do our fifth day/notebooking on Mondays, because we are tired after many church activities Sunday, and then start a new lesson on Tuesdays.

“We appreciate the seamless learning, flexibility, and enjoyable nature of *Paths of Exploration*. This has been our best homeschool year yet (out of six). After using other all-in-one curricula, I can fully appreciate and do not take for granted the time, effort, and thought that has gone into shaping such a unified, thorough, enjoyable, effective, and flexible learning experience. Amazing!”

—Sara B.

STEP ONE GRADES

3-5
EXTENDS K-7

PATHS OF EXPLORATION

PATHS OF EXPLORATION is the first step on the *Trail Guide to Learning*. Follow the steps of famous explorers and pioneers across America and let geography be your guide to science, history, language skills, and the arts. This journey will teach students **HOW** to think by asking, answering, and investigating questions about our great country's beginning and growth. The paths of the explorers are seen through multidisciplinary eyes, but always with the same goals: to make learning enjoyable, memorable, and motivating. A sampling of the activities and games are listed below. An Older Extension for families with additional students in grades 6-7 is available in digital format and uses six additional readers.



ACTIVITIES

Nature study	Model sailing ship
Mapping	Study of historical figures
Cooking	Categorizing
Art projects	Presentations
Charting and labeling	Art lessons & craft projects
Illustrating	Morse code
Writing letters	Semaphore code
Writing poetry	Tracking

GAMES

Charades
Bingos
Word Searches
Word Scrambles
Crossword puzzles
Ocean & Continent Concentration
Old World/New World Opposites
Animal I.D.

Observation games
States of Matter Concentration
Frontier or Settlement Matching
Story Element Matching
Historical Who Am I?

Paths of Exploration is available also in individual unit downloads.

UNIT RESOURCES

In addition to the Core Resources which are used throughout the year, these books are assigned in specific units.



Unit 1: Columbus

Meet Christopher Columbus
Christopher Columbus
RealEarth® GlobeMap™ or a globe (used in Units 1-3)



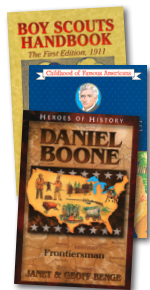
Unit 2: Jamestown

A Lion to Guard Us
Surviving Jamestown



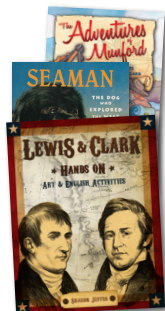
Unit 3: Pilgrims

Stories of the Pilgrims
Stories of the Pilgrims Answer Key
Squanto, Friend of the Pilgrims
Sarah Morton's Day
Samuel Eaton's Day



Unit 4: Daniel Boone

Daniel Boone, Frontiersman
Daniel Boone, Young Hunter & Tracker
1911 Boy Scout Handbook
United States History Atlas



Unit 5: Lewis & Clark

Munford Meets Lewis & Clark
Lewis & Clark Hands On
Seaman



Unit 6: Trails West

Trouble for Lucy
Johnny Appleseed
If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon

STUDENT NOTEBOOKS

Students use companion notebook pages extensively throughout each unit. Purchase them in the format that best meets your family needs.

- Digital download by unit includes all three grades
- Printed ready-to-use by unit and grade level

Buy all six units together and one is free.

CORE RESOURCES

These Core Resources form the foundation of reference material and nature study for lessons throughout the year. Students will also use a dictionary and the library or Internet.

Profiles from History - Volume 1
North American Wildlife Guide
Eat Your Way Around the World
Classroom Atlas
U.S. History Atlas
Large U.S. & World Outline Maps



STEP TWO GRADES

4-6
EXTENDS 1-8

PATHS OF SETTLEMENT

PATHS OF SETTLEMENT is the second step on the *Trail Guide to Learning*. Key events studied include the Colonial Period, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and Westward Expansion. Learn about the accomplishments of great Americans such as George Washington and Patrick Henry who built upon the trail blazed by brave explorers. Their actions teach us the principles of freedom and citizenship—founding and expanding our country, strengthening us in times of war and binding us together in times of struggle. A sampling of the activities and games are listed below. An Older Extension for families with additional students in grades 7-8 is available in digital format and uses six additional readers. A Junior Extension is in the works!



ACTIVITIES

Period Crafts
Cooking
Watercolor Painting
State Studies
Making a Wind Gauge

Making a Barometer
Making an Anemometer
Making a Weather Vane
Creating a Weather Station
Metal Punching

Candle Dipping
Making 3-D Maps
Identifying Rocks
Mapping
Weaving

GAMES

Period Games
Newcomer Game
Bingo
Word Searches
Word Scrambles

Corn Hole
Worldview Tic-Tac-Toe
Pick-Up Sticks

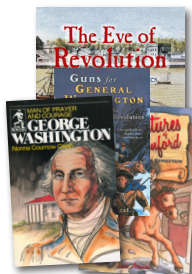
Paths of Settlement is available also in individual unit downloads.

UNIT RESOURCES

In addition to the Core Resources which are used throughout the year, these books are assigned in specific units.



Unit 1: Growing Pains
Courage of Sarah Noble
The Matchlock Gun
Ambush in the Wilderness
Abigail Adams



Unit 2: Freedom Decided
Munford: The American Revolution
The Eve of Revolution
Guns for General Washington
George Washington



Unit 3: Nation Building
The Cabin Faced West
Justin Morgan Had a Horse
Frances Scott Key



Unit 4: House Divided
Robert E. Lee
Abraham Lincoln
Clara Barton
Yankee Blue or Rebel Gray



Unit 5: Unity Restored
Klondike Gold Rush
Janie's Freedom
Samuel F. Smith
Good Ol' Cowboy Stories



Unit 6: Sea to Shining Sea
Theodore Roosevelt
Laura Ingalls Wilder, Young Pioneer

STUDENT NOTEBOOKS

Students use companion notebook pages extensively throughout each unit. Purchase them in the format that best meets your family needs.

- Digital download by unit includes all three grades
- Printed ready-to-use by unit and grade level

Buy all six units together and one is free.

CORE RESOURCES

These Core Resources form the foundation of reference material and state studies for lessons throughout the year. Students will also use a dictionary and the library or Internet.

Weather Pocket Guide
Rocks & Minerals Field Guide
Eat Your Way Through the USA
Profiles from History, Volume 2
U.S. History Atlas
Desk Atlas of the United States
Watercolor for Young Artists
Wee Sing CD and Songbook

Rock Study Kit
USA Activity CD
Presidents Flash Cards
U.S. PlaceMap
Large Outline Map of the U.S.
Mark-It Timeline of History
Discovering America's Founders
Drive Through History DVD



STEP THREE

GRADES

5-7

EXTENDS 5-9

PATHS OF PROGRESS

PATHS OF PROGRESS is the third step on the *Trail Guide to Learning*. To grow as a country, another group of leaders had to step forward during our history—scientists and inventors. Study those who used their talents and abilities to answer questions that provided better ways of living and working. The lives of these devoted individuals and their contributions will be examined throughout our history, into the Industrial Revolution and the beginning of the 20th century. Primary science focus involves Physical Science (such as energy, motion, and work) and the economic impact of each development. Some key figures studied include Ben Franklin, Samuel Morse, George Washington Carver, the Wright Brothers, and Thomas Edison. A sampling of the activities and games are listed below. An Older Extension for families with additional students in grades 8-9 is available in digital format and uses six additional readers.

ACTIVITIES

Learning to play a recorder
Clay sculpting
Illustrating
Classical music study
Identifying basic tools

Labs
Making a force meter
Making 3-D graphic organizers
Charting information
Mapping the human body

GAMES

Unit Bingo
Invention Bingo
Question Quest
Word Searches
Word Scrambles

Who or What Am I?
Supply and Demand Games
Word-Part Concentration
You Can Find Me

Paths of Progress is available also in individual unit downloads.



UNIT RESOURCES

In addition to the Core Resources which are used throughout the year, these books are assigned in specific units.

Unit 1: Great Leaps

Samuel F. B. Morse
Munford Meets Robert Fulton
Ben and Me
The World of Tools and Technology is used in units 1-3.

Unit 2: Making Connections

Michael Faraday
Caddie Woodlawn

Unit 3: Perseverance Pays Off

Thomas Edison

Unit 4: Cultivating Greatness

George Washington Carver
Strawberry Girl
Discovering the Human Body and Senses is used in units 4-6.

Unit 5: Success Takes Flight

The Wright Brothers
Homer Price

Unit 6: Reach For the Stars

Alan Shepard

CORE RESOURCES

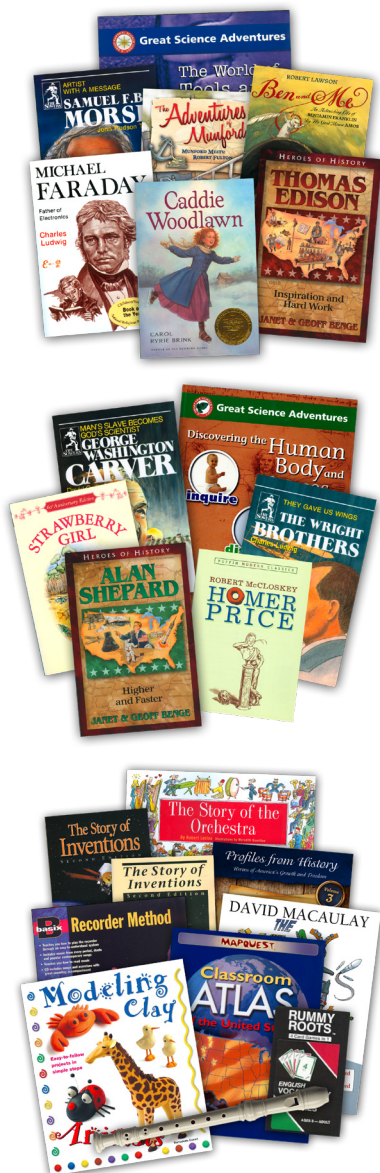
These Core Resources form the foundation of reference material and state studies for lessons throughout the year. Each item is utilized all year. Students will also use a dictionary and the library or Internet.

The Story of Inventions
The Story of Inventions Answer Key
The Story of the Orchestra with CD
Soprano Recorder
Basix Recorder book with CD

Create Anything With Clay Book
Classroom Atlas of US
Profiles from History Vol. 3
The New Way Things Work
Rummy Roots

STUDENT NOTEBOOKS

Students use companion notebook pages extensively throughout each unit. A digital copy of all grades and units is included with *Paths of Progress*. Printed, ready-to-use pages are also available. Select grade level and unit. Get one unit free when you buy all six together.



Extensions & Enrichment Resources

Middle School Supplements & High School Extension

The *Trail Guide to Learning* series' Middle School Supplements and High School Extension make it possible for you to include students up to two grade levels higher than the targeted grades. Each digital supplement is written in the same format as your main text so you can lay them side by side and teach older students together with your younger learners.

Content is similar, but at a more challenging level so older students can dig deeper. Dictation assignments and vocabulary are selected from grade level readers. In other subjects, students are expected to research additional related topics, complete extended writing activities, create personal spelling lists, and share what they are learning with other family members.

When students reach *Paths of Progress*, they take further responsibility for their education as they learn planning skills and choose three-week research projects from a variety of options known as "The Learning Menu".

Paths of Exploration **Older Extension**

Targets Grades 6 & 7

Additional readers include:

Carry on Mr. Bowditch
Pocahontas
Almost Home
Sign of the Beaver
The Captain's Dog
Bound for Oregon

Paths of Settlement **Older Extension**

Targets Grades 7 & 8

Additional readers include:

Calico Captive
Johnny Tremain
Once on This Island
Across Five Aprils
By the Great Horn Spoon
Bully for You, Teddy Roosevelt!

Paths of Progress **Older Extension**

Targets Grades 8 & 9

Additional readers include:

The Swiss Family Robinson
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
The Hound of the Baskervilles
Pure Gold
The Hiding Place
Animal Farm
Miracles on Maple Hill

Additional resources are also used for English, economics, music, and science.

High School Credits Covered:

1 English
1 Humanities (Music)
½ World History
½ Economics
½ Physical Science
½ Anatomy

"This curriculum has changed our homeschool experience because my children no longer have to just "memorize" information. While using *Paths of Exploration*, they felt like they were living in the time of each unit we learned about. They think of it as an adventure, and the readers, read-alouds and activities bring everything to life for them."

—Dawn A.

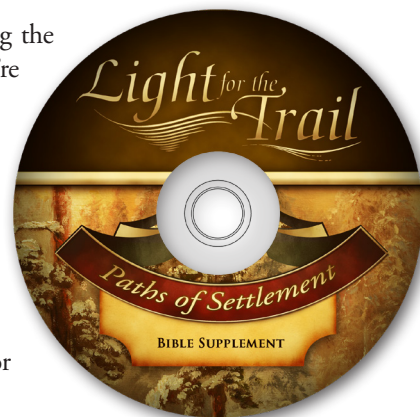
Light for the Trail Bible Study Supplement:

The *Light for the Trail* Bible study supplement is designed to provide students and families using the *Trail Guide to Learning* series with a Biblical connection to the people and historical events they're learning about. Our desire is to encourage discussion between parents and children, and help students make the most important connection of all—the one between their faith and their view of the world.

Lessons are organized in an easy-to-use, concise format that works alongside the *Trail Guide*. A character trait is highlighted each unit. There are also weekly memory verses and a longer passage that can be memorized over the course of a few weeks. The Scriptures were chosen to support a Bible-centered discussion on the characters and elements of history being taught in the curriculum. We encourage students to journal or notebook handy to take notes, copy a passage, list questions or vocabulary words, and draw or write down personal applications.

How It Works:

In lesson 1, for example, of Growing Pains (the first unit in *Paths of Settlement*) the character trait highlighted is "Boldness." The lesson begins with a Scripture that connects to the subject matter, and each day your students will interact with that passage in a



different way. For example, in Part 1 (the first day), they will read the passage and discuss it. Another day, they will incorporate a drawing activity. Then, they might act out the passage. Next, they will discuss how it can be personally applied. In addition, students will also work on a memory verse (sometimes a part of the main Scripture and sometimes not) or larger memory passage.

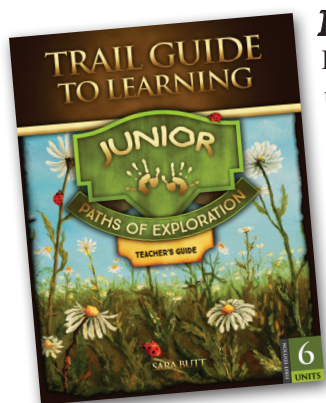
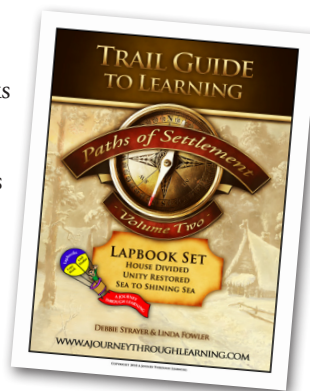
If you desire to instill a deeper understanding of God's Word in your children, then you will appreciate using the *Light for the Trail*.

Lapbooks

Each level of the *Trail Guide* has optional lapbooks that tie right into the main guide. There are six lapbooks per level, that match up with the six units in each of the Paths.

Lapbooks are a great tool for students who are kinesthetic (or hands-on) and visual learners. Activities are not always in addition to regular assignments, but will often replace a student notebook assignment. This enables a student who struggles with handwriting, or perhaps a younger student who desires to learn along with older siblings, to engage in a way that better fits their learning style.

Many families use the lapbook option as a way to visually summarize the lessons they've learned. Some even use completed lapbooks for the presentation projects given at the end of each unit in *Trail Guide to Learning*.



Paths of Exploration Younger Extension Targets Grades K-2

Incorporate younger students across multiple subject areas with quality literature, meaningful discussion, thoughtful notebooking and hands-on learning. This carefully constructed Junior Extension (K-2) is designed to coordinate with the main *Paths of Exploration* manual and provides a flexible and stress-free way to give your younger student a sense of ownership and inclusion in your family learning experience. Your student will learn about the early explorers and settlers of our nation, while being challenged by interaction with older siblings and gaining a strong foundation of developmentally appropriate skills. Unify your homeschool day and encourage a lifelong love of learning with *Paths of Exploration Junior*.

Phonics and math are the only subjects we haven't covered in *Paths of Exploration Junior*. However, the *Learning Language Arts through Literature* (LLATL) programs by Debbie Strayer and Susan Simpson have been integrated into the Word Study (Part D) and Guided Reading (Part G) portions of *Paths of Exploration Junior* each day. You may choose to use a different phonics/language program. We have

incorporated LLATL because it follows our philosophy of teaching language skills with a natural, whole-language approach. This will also make for a smooth transition to the *Trail Guide to Learning* series in the future.

Please note: When ordering a Younger Extension Package, the 1st and 2nd grade packages include LLATL. The kindergarten package is for students who are beginning to learn letters and sounds. If you have language arts covered already, select the Basic Package.

Additional readers and resources include:

The Usborne Children's Encyclopedia
Fun with Nature Take-Along Guide
Birds, Nests and Eggs
Maurice Pledger's Wildlife World Sticker Book
Junior Classroom Atlas
Geography from A to Z

Maps & Globes
I Can Draw Animals
Christopher Columbus
From the Good Mountain: Gutenberg
The True Story of Pocahontas
Leonardo and the Flying Boy
The First Thanksgiving

Rembrandt and the Boy Who Drew Dogs
The Raft
If You Lived in Colonial Times
Lewis & Clark, A Prairie Dog for the President
The Boy Who Drew Birds
Johnny Appleseed
Journey of a Pioneer

"Our family has loved being on *The Trail*" these past few years so very much. As a large family with multiple ages, this curriculum was the perfect fit for us. I love the way the lesson plans are done for you and everything you need is included in the set. All you have to do is hit "The Trail." We have loved all the literature and chose to read them out loud together, with different children taking turns reading each day to build their oral reading skills. This has created wonderful memories of all the adventures we have gone on together with *Trail Guide*. We have used the extensions with our older children and love the deeper thinking skills and creative assignments they include.

"**You will never be bored with *Trail Guide to Learning*.** If you are tired of the workbook/textbook approach to learning with different books for each child, I encourage you to try this wonderful curriculum. It will change your homeschool and ignite excitement for learning in your children and yourself. It has truly been our favorite curriculum!"

—Whitney H. (Homeschooling for 11 years with 5 children)

STEP FOUR GRADES

6-8

EXTENDS TBD

JOURNEYS THROUGH THE ANCIENT WORLD

JOURNEYS THROUGH THE ANCIENT WORLD is the much awaited continuation of Trail Guide to Learning. Paths, the first three levels of this curriculum, establishes a firm foundation of our American heritage at the elementary level. Now, Journeys leads students through the fascinating study of World History at the Middle School Level.

In embarking on their Journeys through the Ancient World, your students will be transported into four important early civilizations—Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome.

The Bible is an essential part of this study, as both an historical and a literary text. And this is completely understandable, since it is one of very few eyewitness accounts of history unfolding at a time before written records were common. As always, our goal is to engage families through real, interesting books, and to continue building thinking skills. We do this by linking concepts and examining various worldviews and assumptions. Discussion is a primary focus, along with illustrating ideas with words and sketches, and recognizing the differences between facts and opinions. All in all, it's a fascinating trip.

Available in your choice of unit package or as a complete set.



UNIT PACKAGES

Get the whole year in one package, or if you prefer, you can purchase resources unit by unit. Simply select the Core Package plus Unit 1 to get started. You will use the core resources throughout the other three units. Unit packages includes digital download of all three levels of the student notebook pages.

UNIT 1: PATRIARCHS & EGYPT

Tirzah

The Pillar of Fire (used in Units 1 & 2)

What You Aren't Being Told About Astronomy
DVD Vol. 1 (used in Units 1 & 2)

Holy Lands, Volume 1 – Egypt to Qumran
Drive-through History DVD (used in
Units 1 & 2)



UNIT 3: GREECE

Ben Hur (used in Units 3 & 4)

Theras and His Town

D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths

Aesop's Fables

What You Aren't Being Told About
Astronomy DVD Vol. 2 (used in
Units 3 & 4)



UNIT 2: ISRAEL

Hittite Warrior

God's Appointed Times

Holy Lands, Volume 2 – Jericho to Megiddo,
Drive-through History DVD



UNIT 4: ROME

The Bronze Bow

Augustus Caesar's World



CORE RESOURCES

These Core Resources form the foundation of reference material lessons throughout the year. Each required item is utilized throughout the course. Students will also use a dictionary and the library or Internet.

Assumptions that Affect Our Lives

Astronomy for Every Kid

Astronomy Lab Book

Backyard Guide to the Night Sky

Biblical Hebrew Homeschool Primer (Student Book)

Biblical Hebrew Annotations and Answers (Teacher Guide)

Biblical Hebrew Jonah Copybook

Traditional Hebrew Songs CD

Biblical Hebrew Show and Tell DVD

Write Source 2000

Bible Lands Activity Map Set

Biblical Timeline Figures CD-ROM

Trail Guide to Bible Geography (digital download
from GeoMatters.com)

Student Bible Atlas

Typing Instructor Platinum (by Individual Software)



www.TrailGuidetoLearning.com

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