

timberdoodle

Eighth Grade Handbook



Curriculum Handbook | 2025-2026
CLASSIC EDITION

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Get Started

Meet Your Handbook

Simple Is Better

1. Planning Your Year

Begin with essential tools like the annual planner and sample weekly checklists, which are the foundation of Timberdoodle's curriculum kits.

2. Kit Introductions

Explore brief overviews of each kit item, including its purpose, learning goals, and teaching tips to simplify your school year.

3. Further Resources

You'll find your weekly assignments for *Mosdos Gold* in this section.

4. Reading Challenge

Track your child's reading with a log that encourages variety, featuring hundreds of book suggestions for inspiration.

Curriculum Levels Explained

Timberdoodle kits come in Basic, Complete, and Elite options, allowing you to choose based on your child's needs, schedule, and budget. This guide offers overviews and teaching tips for every item in the Elite kit. If you have a Basic, Complete, or customized kit, just focus on the items in your selection.



Photo: The Liwanag Family in Chester, New York

Tips & Tricks

Your First Week, State Laws, and More

Find Your Flow

The first week might feel bumpy, but that's normal! Most families using the Timberdoodle Eighth-Grade Kit settle into a rhythm within a few weeks, spending 3-5 hours daily, depending on the schedule.

Plan Your Day

Some kids prefer to finish bookwork first and save the fun activities for later, while others thrive by mixing in STEM, art, and thinking games. Find what works best—there's no right or wrong approach!

Set a Schedule

Focus on practicing core subjects like math, phonics, and spelling daily. Tackle history and science in a single session each to simplify your life. For courses you don't need as often, plan for them weekly or monthly, or save them for summer fun!

Check State Requirements

Visit hslsda.org/laws for your state's homeschool rules. Weekly checklists and work samples usually meet most requirements, but some states may require subjects like P.E. or state history.

Include P.E. and Health

Make P.E. fun with activities your child enjoys—like swimming, soccer, or dance. Many science programs also cover health topics.

Use Your Checklist

The weekly checklist helps keep things organized. Check off tasks as you complete them, and cross out anything you don't need to do that week.

Balance Hard and Easy Days

If your child struggles, start with something fun, like art or reading. Teach him how to work through challenges but also allow breaks when needed.

Sample Schedules

Use the sample annual and weekly planners (page 10) as a starting point, then adjust them to fit your family's needs. You've got this!

Should
I Join a
Homeschool
Group?



Why Use a Weekly Checklist?

Flexibility and Structure Unite

Starting homeschooling can feel overwhelming. How do you know you're doing enough? Your Timberdoodle kit gives structure, but here's how to simplify it.

Without a plan, it's easy to start randomly, quit when things get hard, and feel lost. But overscheduling your day with rigid time slots can be just as stressful—life happens, and interruptions can derail everything.

The solution is a flexible structure. Instead of strict schedules, use Timberdoodle's checklist system and time blocks. Plan key activities like lessons, independent work, reading, outdoor time, and chores. Let your routine adapt to your family's natural flow.

Track tasks with checklists. Your child can check progress as he goes, whether on paper or online. Finding your groove will take a few weeks, so be patient.

Every week will be different. Focus on core subjects—language arts, math, and thinking skills—while adjusting others as needed. Real-life experiences like outdoor play or helping siblings also count as learning. The goal is not perfection but finding a rhythm that works for your family. Celebrate the wins, adjust as needed, and enjoy the journey!

Why
Timberdoodle
Encourages
Independent
Learning





Meet Your Online Schedule Customizer

Getting the Most Out of Your Planner

Use the Schedule Customizer

Launch your homeschooling plan using the online Schedule Customizer included with your kit. It allows you to adjust school days, customize your schedule, print personalized checklists, and even log your progress!

First Time? Activate Your Account

- Log in to schedule.timberdoodle.com to easily access your kit if you ordered it from our website.
- If you ordered elsewhere or need to activate a different email, use the activation code inside the front cover of this handbook, plus your order number, to activate your account.

Things to Decide Before You Start

- How many weeks will you do school? Thirty-six school weeks plus 4 weeks of breaks is standard. You can shorten this or extend it year-round to accommodate sports, activities, or preferences.
- When will you start? Any day works—you don't need to match the local school calendar.
- What breaks do you want? Thanksgiving, Christmas, spring break, or custom breaks for travel or family visits.

Calendar Tips

- Single-day breaks: Most families don't log these but fit the work into the rest of the week.
- School days: Set your schedule to match your needs, like using a 4-day week or doing school on Saturday.

Customize Your Schedule

- Add: You can include Timberdoodle items, books you already have, or custom courses.
- Habits: You can add any habits you want to incorporate into your schedule, such as reading, music practice, or taking a walk.
- Edit schedules: You can fine-tune your schedule to reflect your preferences and plans. See a few options on the following page.

Celebrated Feature

One of the most appreciated features on our Schedule Customizer is the ability to easily see what you skipped in previous weeks. This celebrated tool has made catching up simpler and more efficient for countless users, helping you stay on track with ease!

Want to make your checklist even more customized to your plans and schedule? Read on!

Exclude Items

You can skip specific items during certain weeks. For example:

- Save an art kit for a May trip.
- Pause science to prepare for a local fair.

Front-Load vs. Back-Load

Decide how to handle extra lessons (e.g., 40 lessons in 36 weeks):

- Front-Load: Finish extra lessons early, which is ideal for easier items like games.
- Back-Load: Save them for later if they build on other skills.
- Default: Lessons are spread evenly throughout the schedule.

Weekly vs. Daily Schedules

Weekly Schedule: Offers flexibility for unexpected events like dentist appointments or robotics camp. This option teaches time management.

Daily Schedule: Great for beginners. Divides work evenly, with extra tasks at the start of the week to avoid end-of-week burnout.

For daily schedules, you can fine-tune by selecting which days a course appears. For example:

- Schedule history on co-op day (Wednesday).
- Alternate science and STEM to avoid overlap.

Finalize Your Schedule

- Review your schedule summary.
- Click "Save & Continue" to complete.

- Access Your Dashboard: Click "Checklist" to log progress or print.

Printed Checklists

- Print weekly or daily checklists.
- Choose whether to include unit range reminders (e.g., "pages 50–56").
- Use the large-font version for easier reading.
- Try it for a few weeks before printing an entire year to ensure it works for you.

Track Progress Online

Alternatively, log completed work in the "Progress" section of the Schedule Customizer. Watch progress bars fill up for a visual representation of your achievements throughout the year.

With these tools, you can easily tailor and manage your homeschool schedule!

Access Your
Custom
Schedule
Builder



Your Annual Planner

Curriculum	Lesson or Pages	= Per Week
Language Arts		
Mosdos Press Literature Gold	36 weeks	1 week’s work
Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind	36 weeks	1 week’s work
Creative Writing	31 chapters	1 chapter
Graphic Shakespeare	191 pages	5-6 pages
Word Roots, Level 2	48 lessons/reviews	1-2 lessons/reviews
Math		
Thinking Skills		
History & Social Studies		
Science		

Sample Weekly Checklist

Elite

Curriculum	This Week	Check It Off!
Language Arts		
Mosdos Press Literature Gold	1 week's work	
Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind	1 week's work	
Creative Writing	1 chapter	
Graphic Shakespeare	5-6 pages	
Word Roots, Level 2	1-2 lessons/reviews	
Math		
Thinking Skills		
History & Social Studies		
Science		

Introducing the Reading Challenge

Eighth Grade: Middle Ages & More

With 18 weekly themes, the Reading Challenge encourages your child to explore a wide variety of books while covering key topics.

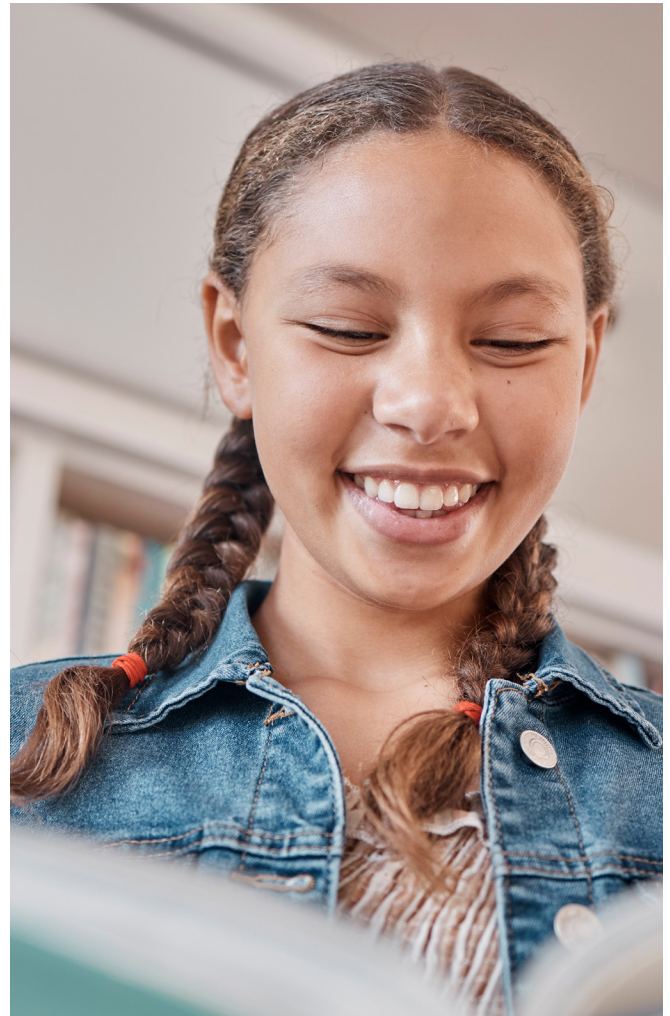
Why Read Together?

Reading to children isn't just enjoyable; it's incredibly valuable. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) highlights 3 key benefits:

1. **Strengthen language skills:** Reading introduces your child to new words, ideas, and emotions. As books become more complex, he'll learn grammar, pronunciation, rhyming, and more.
2. **Build literacy development and interest in reading:** When you read together, your child sees that books are fun and valuable, building a lifelong appreciation for reading.
3. **Create nurturing parent-child relationships:** Reading creates meaningful moments in a busy life. By stepping into stories together, you'll share experiences and build a connection through discussion, wonder, or even shared grief.

Emotional Intelligence

Reading expands your child's understanding of emotions and fosters empathy. It's a simple way to teach emotional fluency and compassion for others' perspectives.



How the Reading Challenge Works

Each challenge page (starting on page 62) includes:

- Book Suggestions
- Space to Track What You Read Together
- On page 60, you'll find a progress chart to track your overall challenge.

Set Your Pace

Choose a goal based on your schedule and family dynamics. Each challenge lasts 2 weeks:

- Light Reader: 1 book every 2 weeks (18 books)
- Interested Reader: 1 book per week (36 books)
- Avid Reader: 3 books every 2 weeks (54 books)
- Committed Reader: 2 books per week (72 books)
- Enthralled Reader: 5 books every 2 weeks (90 books)

Pick a pace that feels realistic and enjoyable!

No Idea What to Read?

We've got you covered! On page 62, you'll find hundreds of book suggestions for the year or browse more online.

Access Online
Reading
Challenge
Booklist



Need More Ideas?

Ask your local librarian, listen to the Read-Aloud Revival podcast, or explore Timberdoodle's Facebook groups. Don't forget to look at the extra reading suggestions in your history or science textbooks—especially if a recent topic piqued your child's interest.

Reading Levels and Variety

This year's list includes a range of titles perfect for most eighth-graders. Choose books that fit your child's interests, but also try adding a few outside his usual preferences. For instance, if your child loves graphic novels, include more complex read-aloud books. Exposing your child to diverse literature helps him discover new favorites!

Keeping It Affordable

Reading doesn't have to break the bank. Use library books or free e-books, borrow from friends, or buy used ones. Many libraries also offer free e-books; services like Kindle Unlimited or Everand may have the needed titles.

Flexible Challenges

You don't need to follow the challenges in order! Match seasonal topics with holidays, or let your child dive into his current passion (e.g., reptiles). Feel free to skip or substitute topics to make the experience more relevant or enjoyable for your child.

Let's Get Started!

Pick a plan, select some books with your child, and begin your reading adventure.

Your Kit's Components

Language Arts

Practice Makes Perfect

Rich in meaningful literature, *Mosdos Press Literature* is a strong anchor for your child’s language arts this year. Your student will read compelling selections and complete workbook pages that reinforce vocabulary and literary concepts.

In eighth grade, your student will also strengthen grammar skills, practice creative expression, dive into excerpts from Shakespeare’s plays, and build vocabulary by studying word roots—laying a solid foundation for high school and beyond.



Mosdos Press Literature: Gold

Basic | **Complete** | **Elite**

Mosdos Press Literature is a refreshing alternative to sensational readers, focusing on universal values like courage, honesty, loyalty, and compassion.

Student Reader

The beautifully illustrated Student Reader introduces each story with a literary focus, covering concepts such as character, theme, conflict, and climax. The text highlights vocabulary words, and review questions assess comprehension and analytical thinking after each story. Units conclude with optional creative activities, such as writing skits or memorizing poems.

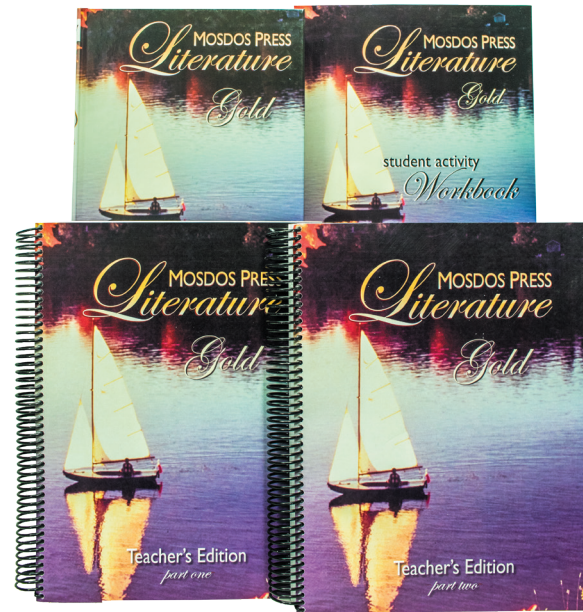
Student Activity Workbook

This workbook extends the lessons from the Student Reader, reinforcing vocabulary, comprehension, and literary elements through engaging exercises. These assignments help track your child's progress and pinpoint areas needing more practice.

Teacher's Edition

The Teacher's Edition offers in-depth commentary, discussion prompts, and answers to workbook questions. Each page from the Student Reader is reproduced at a reduced size with helpful notes surrounding it.

- Oral Responses: Our family preferred answering "Studying the Selection" questions orally.
- Optional Activities: The "Creating and Writing" tasks are optional.



- Poetry Unit: Since the poetry section doesn't have workbook pages, this is a perfect opportunity to try a creative activity!

Scheduling

Mosdos Gold includes 65 selections (stories, poems, etc.).

- We recommend using our detailed 36-week schedule starting on page 52 of this handbook. This schedule balances reading assignments and workbook activities to prevent overload.
- Alternative Weekly Plan: Complete 2 story or poem units each week, including the introductory "Blueprint for Reading" and "Studying the Selection."

Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind: Purple

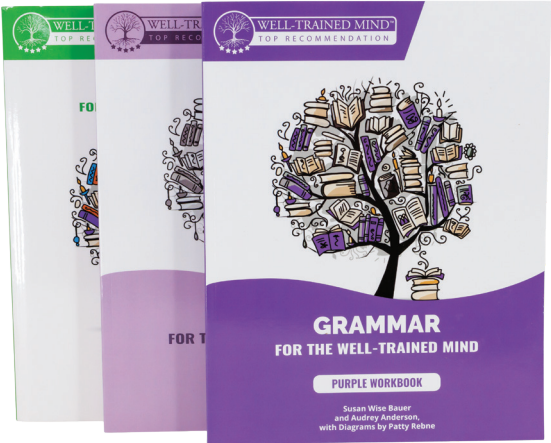
Basic | Complete | Elite

Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind takes your student from basic grammar concepts to complex sentence analysis. It builds essential writing and speaking skills through clear rule definitions, step-by-step instructions, and regular practice.

This 4-year program consists of multiple workbooks with the same rules but different exercises, reinforcing concepts through repetition. Scripted lessons make teaching simple for parents.

Scheduling

The instructor text provides a 36-week schedule to help you stay on track and complete the course within the school year.



The Creative Writing Book

Basic | Complete | Elite

Creative writing often takes a backseat to fact-based essays, but it plays a crucial role in developing self-expression, communication, critical thinking, empathy, and perspective.

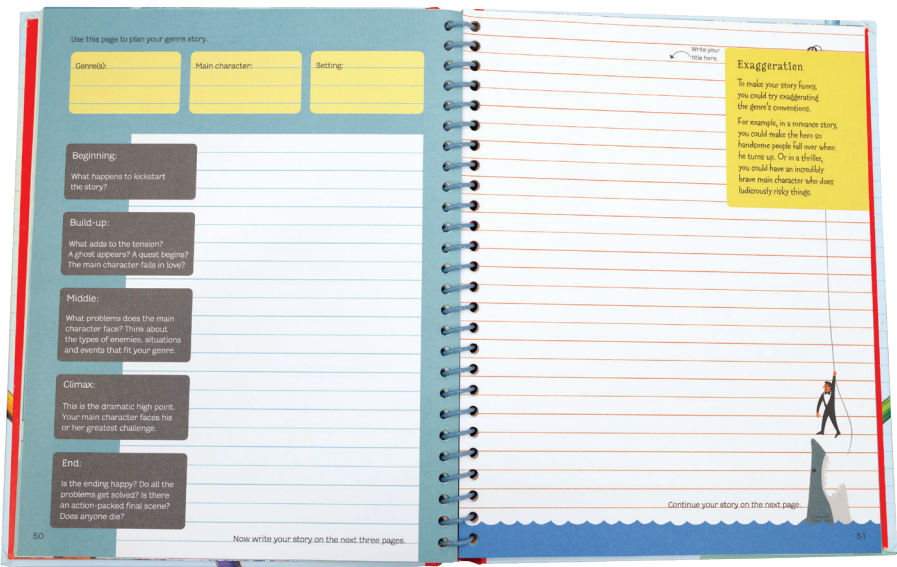
The Creative Writing Book helps your student explore personal narratives, reviews, fiction, poetry, and more. Filled with prompts, activities, and tips, it guides students to create engaging stories with character development, dialogue, and obstacles. Lively illustrations keep assignments approachable and fun.

Don't let your teen graduate knowing only how to write essays—creative writing is key to understanding and sharing the complexities of life.

Note: The book occasionally references themes like ghosts and horror, which may not suit all families. It also recommends a Usborne Quicklinks website for students. Parents may wish to review these sections.

Scheduling

Complete 1 of the 31 short chapters per week to stay on track.



Graphic Shakespeare

Basic | Complete | Elite

Graphic Shakespeare offers a simplified way to introduce your student to 5 of Shakespeare's plays: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Full-color illustrations bring the scenes to life, with speech bubbles presenting key excerpts from the original dialogue. Modern English captions and a glossary on each page make the stories easier to follow. If your child dreads reading Shakespeare, these graphic adaptations may change his mind. Though condensed, the plays retain essential quotes and phrases, ensuring your student gains a solid understanding of each work.

Scheduling

With 191 pages total, aim for 5–6 pages per week to finish within the school year. Some students may prefer to read an entire play in one go—do what works best for your child.



Word Roots, Level 2

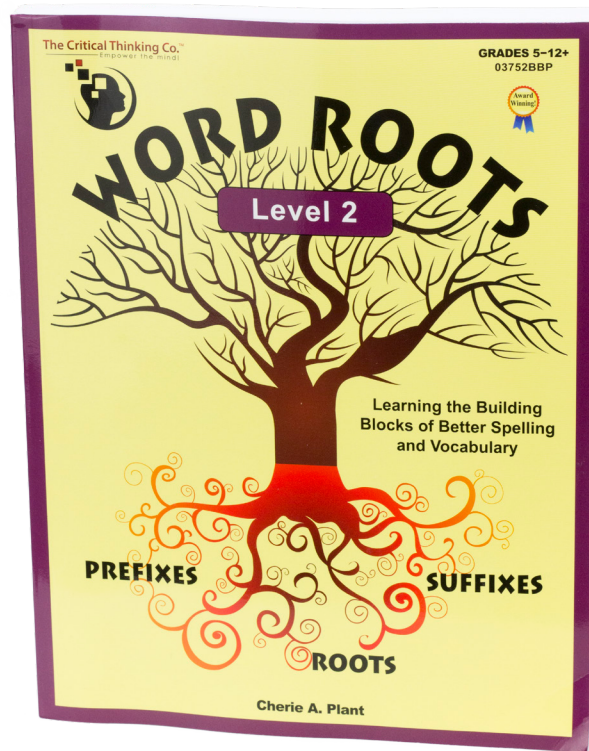
Basic | Complete | **Elite**

A strong understanding of word roots helps children improve reading comprehension by giving them the tools to decode complex words.

National standards require students in grades 4-12 to analyze words using Greek and Latin roots. *Word Roots, Level 2* teaches your child the meanings of these prefixes, roots, and suffixes, expanding his vocabulary and enhancing his thinking and writing skills.

Scheduling

With 32 lessons and 16 reviews, aim for 1-2 lessons or reviews per week to stay on track.



The Reading Challenge

Reading Challenge Questions & Answers

Practical Details to Set Up a Productive Routine

Are you excited about the reading challenge but need a jumpstart? You're in the right place!

These book suggestions are just a starting point—feel free to customize and find what works best for your family. There are hundreds of great options, so use this as inspiration, not a rulebook!

Will the Same Books Repeat?

Some books may appear more than once, but not often. Each grade has its own book list, and about 25% of titles appear in multiple grades when they align with different challenges. Many books could fit multiple categories within a grade, but we list each book only once to keep things simple. If you want to read more from a challenge, check the list—you'll likely find another category where it fits!

A Mix of Reading Levels

While most of these books are selected for your child to read independently, don't forget that reading aloud together builds literacy, strengthens language skills, and fosters a love for stories—often sparking a lifelong desire to read.

Access Online
Reading
Challenge
Booklist



Photo: The Dale Family in Idaho

Late Roman Empire

Challenge 1

Against the World: The Odyssey of Athanasius by Henry Coray

Athanasius by Simonetta Carr (Christian Biographies for Young Readers)

Beyond the Desert Gate by Mary Ray

Boudicca: Britain's Queen of the Iceni by Laurel A.

Rockefeller (The Legendary Women of World History)

The Buried City of Pompeii by Kris Hirschmann (Historic Disasters and Mysteries)

Colossus: Stone and Steel by David Blixt

Curses and Smoke: A Novel of Pompeii by Vicky Alvear Shecter

The Eagle of the Ninth by Rosemary Sutcliff

Early Christianity: A Captivating Guide to Early Christian History, Starting with the Ministry of Jesus through the Apostolic Age to the First Council of Nicaea (Captivating History)

Escape from Pompeii by Terry Collins (Graphic Library)

Frontier Wolf by Rosemary Sutcliff

Galen and the Gateway to Medicine by Jeanne Bendick

Ignatius of Antioch: The Man Who Faced Lions by Sinclair B. Ferguson (Heroes of the Faith)

Irenaeus of Lyons: The Man Who Wrote Books by Sinclair B. Ferguson (Heroes of the Faith)

The Last Girls of Pompeii by Kathryn Lasky

The Life and Times of Constantine by Kathleen Tracy

The Mark of the Horse Lord by Rosemary Sutcliff

The Martyr of the Catacombs: A Tale of Ancient Rome by James De Mille

Nero by Jacob Abbott (Makers of History)

Nero by Zoe Lowery and Julian Morgan (Leaders of the Ancient World)

Petra: City in Stone by Tracy Higley (The Lost Cities)

Polycarp of Smyrna: The Man Whose Faith Lasted by Sinclair B. Ferguson (Heroes of the Faith)

Polycarp: The Crown of Fire by William Chad Newsom (Torchbearers)

Pompeii 79 by Wendy Conklin (You Are There)

Pompeii: City on Fire by Tracy Higley (The Lost Cities)

The Purple Mantle by Alikì Kafetzopoulou

Queen of Darkness: Boudica's Army Will Rise by Tony Bradman (Flashbacks)

Saint Nicholas by Joe L. Wheeler (Christian Encounters)

The Silver Branch by Rosemary Sutcliff

Song for a Dark Queen by Rosemary Sutcliff

Sword and Serpent trilogy by Taylor Marshall

A Trace in the Sand: A Tale of the Early Martyrs by Lawrence Damian Robinson

What Was Pompeii? by Jim O'Connor (Who HQ)

When Nero Commands... by Alikì Kafetzopoulou

The Book You Chose		Date Completed
1.1 <i>Light Reader</i>		
1.2 <i>Interested Reader</i>		
1.3 <i>Avid Reader</i>		
1.4 <i>Committed Reader</i>		
1.5 <i>Enthralled Reader</i>		

**When You're
Done**

Have an Amazing School Year!

You're Going to Make Some Epic Memories

At Timberdoodle, our goal is to make your homeschooling experience both effective and enjoyable.

If you have any questions about your curriculum kit or about homeschooling, please reach out—we'd love to help!

Email: mail@timberdoodle.com
Call: 800-478-0672
Live Chat: Visit timberdoodle.com

Ready to share your experience with a review? Your insight can help other homeschooling families find the right fit.

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Need help getting started? Our team is standing by and eager to assist!



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