

Program Approach of Middle & High Heritage Studies (Directly from BJU Press)

The BJU Press middle & high school heritage studies program helps students to develop a historical, cultural, political, economic, and geographic context for how they live. Students will come to view their culture, their history, and their world from a biblical perspective. Biblically informed citizens and leaders are well equipped to engage with their culture and propose ethical solutions to real-world problems. To that end, we offer resources for teachers to take their classes beyond their immediate context to actively engage their culture. The study of our world and how we have come to be here should require students to engage with the material and consider how they might respond in a similar situation. Teachers can use discussions, activities, and visuals to immerse their students in the material and help them to think about the past, not as a series of things that happened, but as the choices people have made that God has used to shape our history, our government, our economy, and our culture. As students better understand how the past has impacted our world today, they will have a better perspective as they make decisions for the future.

Improving Social Studies Skills

As students advance to middle & high school heritage studies, they are ready to apply their social studies skills to a more detailed and complex exploration of history, civics, government, and economics. Each textbook uses guiding questions and regular section reviews to remind students to read for information by directing their attention to key details. They will need to use visual analysis skills as they interact with maps, graphs, timelines, pictures, and more. Teachers may choose from a variety of optional activities in the teacher editions that require students to apply their skills by researching a topic or interacting with primary and secondary sources to learn more about it. Additionally, textboxes and selections in the student activities also encourage students to interact with primary and secondary sources. These activities focus on analysis, and students will need to read carefully as they look for evidence of opinion, bias, and other cues that will help them evaluate assumptions within historical documents. Students will have opportunities to practice using and reading maps. They will also learn to analyze and create timelines, using chronology to understand cause-effect relationships and to

represent information in a broader context. As they build on the foundations of their social studies skills, we want to encourage them to go beyond being just history, economics, or geography students. We want them to learn to be student historians, student economists, and student geographers.

Understanding the Interrelationship of Disciplines

The social studies fields are not individual, unrelated islands. To truly understand the events of history, the cultural shape of our world, the structure of governments, and the economic system we live under, we must also study the people that made decisions. We must learn about their culture, the religious beliefs that guided them, the economy they depended on, and the geography that constrained them. In the BJU Press secondary heritage studies program, teachers have opportunities to highlight the interrelationship of social studies disciplines and to encourage their students to explore the implications of different fields. Students will study economic data when it gives insight into a culture's development, and they'll study religious history when it helps them understand the shape of a government. We strive to eliminate the boundaries between disciplines when it's natural, logical, and appropriate to do so. As students develop a deeper understanding of each field, they will be able to recognize cause-effect relationships and note how solutions to problems may not be as effective over time.

Evaluating Themes in Events, Structures, and Cultures

The events of history, the structures that form society, and the cultures of our world should all reveal God's providence in shaping our world as it is today. How we understand God's intentions for our world guides our response to the situations we will face. To help students recognize God's hand at work, each course focuses on a series of worldview themes, including justice, aesthetics, power, and the four American core values—freedom, individualism, equality, and growth. Each theme helps students to develop new perspectives on concepts many take for granted. As they explore a biblical worldview approach to these themes, they will be able to evaluate the intentions behind many of the political movements of the past as well as current and even future movements.

In particular, the four American core values help promote ethical citizenship in America. These values have left an enduring mark on American history, but without a biblical understanding of each one, students can easily believe what society says, rather than what God says. Freedom becomes a belief that people can do whatever they want.

Individualism becomes a selfish pursuit of success and personal identity without concern for others. Equality encourages people to abandon authority. And growth leads to unjust wars, slavery, and other kinds of expansion at the expense of others. By helping students to recognize God's intentions for each value, we can place the foundations of our nation in a clearer context and help students to respond ethically to issues that may compromise these values. As citizens, they can make decisions that support their freedom to love God and love others and that support their ability to bear individual responsibility, to act as image bearers of God, and to develop and grow in such a way that pleases God.

Equipping Students to Create Biblical Solutions

The ultimate goal of any heritage studies course should be to help students make informed decisions in the future based on their knowledge of the past and their understanding of the present. As Winston Churchill said, "Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it." Students will need to learn how to apply biblical principles to decision making. Equipped with a thorough understanding of cause-effect relationships, knowledge of the past, and the ability to evaluate assumptions and draw reasonable inferences, students will be ready to apply what they have learned from worldview shaping themes to current events, and they will be able to prepare biblical solutions to real-world problems. Options for holding mock trials or mock debates will give students opportunities to practice developing and applying solutions to real-world problems in a useful and memorable way.

Many of the real-world problems that students will focus on will relate to world religions, missions, and the relationship between church and government. As Christian citizens, students will need to consider how freedom of religion should extend to other world religions. How should they respond when other religions begin to influence new laws that affect them? What are reasonable boundaries that governments can draw that protect the rights of churches? Our materials will encourage students to consider these and other issues from a biblical worldview.