The story of the world volume 1

by Susan wide Bauer · Language: EN

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Overview

The Story of the World Volume 1: Ancient Times is a history curriculum for elementary-aged children, written by Susan Wise Bauer. The book covers the earliest human history from the first nomads and the invention of farming through the fall of the Roman Empire, ending with the rise of the early medieval world. It presents history as a narrative, telling the stories of ancient Egypt, the Jews, Babylon, the Greeks, the Persians, the Romans, and the early Christians, among others. The book is designed to be read aloud to younger children or read independently by older ones, and it is the first in a four-volume series that spans from ancient times to the modern era.

The main argument of the book is that history is a connected story, not a collection of isolated facts. Bauer weaves together the rise and fall of empires, the development of writing, the spread of religions, and the lives of key figures like Abraham, Moses, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar, showing how each civilization influenced the next. The book emphasizes cause and effect, the role of geography, and the human desire for power, freedom, and knowledge. It also includes myths and legends from various cultures, explaining that these are stories people told to understand their world, but it clearly distinguishes between myth and historical fact.

The book matters because it introduces children to the sweep of history in an engaging, accessible way, fostering a love of learning and a sense of connection to the past. It is widely used in homeschooling and classroom settings, and its narrative approach has made it a beloved resource for parents and teachers. By making history feel like a story, Bauer helps young readers understand that the past is not a list of dates but a rich tapestry of human experience.

Key Takeaways

- History is a connected narrative, not a list of isolated facts; each civilization builds on the achievements of those before it.
- The invention of writing was a turning point that allowed people to record their laws, stories, and trade, leading to the rise of complex societies.
- Geography shapes history: rivers like the Nile and the Tigris-Euphrates made farming possible, which led to the first cities and empires.
- The ancient Greeks valued democracy, philosophy, and the arts, but their city-states often fought each other, weakening them for later conquest.

• The Roman Empire grew powerful through military strength and good roads, but it eventually fell due to corruption, economic problems, and invasions.

• Religions and belief systems, from Egyptian polytheism to Judaism and Christianity, have profoundly influenced laws, culture, and daily life throughout history.

• Myths and legends from ancient cultures are not historical facts but reveal what people valued and feared.

• The fall of the Roman Empire did not end history; it led to the rise of new kingdoms and the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Chapter Summaries

The Earliest People

This chapter introduces the first humans, who were nomads, moving from place to place to find food. It explains how they discovered fire, made tools, and eventually learned to farm and domesticate animals. The shift from hunting and gathering to farming is presented as a major turning point, leading to the first villages and the beginning of civilization. The chapter also describes the invention of writing, which allowed people to keep records and pass on knowledge.

The Egyptians

The chapter covers the rise of ancient Egypt along the Nile River. It describes the pharaohs, the building of the pyramids, and the daily life of Egyptians. It also explains the Egyptian belief in the afterlife, the mummification process, and the importance of the gods. The story of the Exodus, when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, is included as part of the narrative, showing the connection between Egypt and the Hebrew people.

The First Cities

This chapter focuses on the Sumerians, who built the first cities in Mesopotamia, such as Ur and Babylon. It discusses the invention of cuneiform writing, the Code of Hammurabi, and the ziggurats. The chapter also introduces the Akkadian Empire and the Babylonian Empire, highlighting the rise of Sargon and the later rule of Hammurabi. It emphasizes the importance of law and order in early urban societies.

The Jews

The chapter tells the story of the Jewish people, beginning with Abraham and the covenant with God. It covers the journey to Egypt, the Exodus, the giving of the Ten Commandments, and the conquest of Canaan. It also describes the reigns of King David and King Solomon, the building of the Temple in Jerusalem, and the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah. The chapter ends with the Babylonian exile and the return to Jerusalem.

The Greeks

This chapter introduces the ancient Greeks, starting with the Minoans and Mycenaeans, then moving to the city-states of Athens and Sparta. It covers the Persian Wars, the Golden Age of Athens, and the Peloponnesian War. It also discusses Greek philosophy, with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and the conquests of Alexander the Great, which spread Greek culture across the known world.

The Romans

The chapter traces the rise of Rome from a small village to a mighty republic and then an empire. It covers the Punic Wars, the rise of Julius Caesar, and the transition to imperial rule under Augustus. It also describes Roman engineering, law, and the spread of Christianity. The chapter ends with the decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire, due to invasions and internal decay.

The Early Middle Ages

This final chapter looks at the period after the fall of Rome, when Europe was divided into many small kingdoms. It introduces the Franks, the Anglo-Saxons, and the Vikings. It also discusses the rise of the Byzantine Empire in the East, the spread of Islam, and the role of the Christian church in preserving learning. The chapter sets the stage for the next volume in the series.

Themes

- Rise and fall of empires
- Invention of writing
- Role of religion
- Geography shapes history
- Human ambition and power
- Cultural exchange

Notable Quotes

- "History is the story of people who lived long ago." — Opening line of the book, introducing the narrative approach to history.
- "The first people did not have houses or farms. They moved from place to place, looking for food." — Describing the nomadic lifestyle of early humans in the first chapter.
- "The Egyptians believed that when a person died, he went to a land of the dead." — Explaining the Egyptian belief in the afterlife in the chapter on Egypt.
- "Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, made a set of laws for his people." — Introducing the Code of Hammurabi in the chapter on the first cities.
- "The Greeks loved to think about the world around them." — Describing the Greek passion for philosophy and learning in the chapter on Greece.

• "Rome was not built in a day." — A proverb used in the chapter on Rome to illustrate the slow growth of the city.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is The story of the world volume 1 about?

It is a history book for children that covers ancient times, from the earliest nomads to the fall of Rome. It tells the story of ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and other civilizations in a narrative style, making history engaging and accessible for young readers.

Is The story of the world volume 1 worth reading?

Yes, if you want a lively, narrative introduction to ancient history for children. It is well-written, engaging, and widely used in homeschooling. It presents history as a story, which helps kids remember and enjoy it. Some parents find it too simplified for older students, but it is excellent for elementary ages.

How does The story of the world volume 1 end?

Spoiler: The book ends with the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the beginning of the Middle Ages. It describes how Europe was divided into small kingdoms, the rise of the Byzantine Empire, and the spread of Christianity and Islam, setting the stage for the next volume.

Who should read The story of the world volume 1?

It is designed for children aged 6-10, but it is also suitable for older kids who are new to history. Parents and teachers can read it aloud to younger children, while older children can read it independently. It is a great resource for homeschooling families and anyone wanting a gentle introduction to ancient history.

How long does it take to read The story of the world volume 1?

At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it takes about 8 hours to read the full book. However, for a child reading aloud or with a parent, it might take several weeks of daily reading sessions. The book is often used as a year-long curriculum.