

A Book of the Centuries in the Living Books Curriculum

Charlotte Mason recommended using a Book of the Centuries throughout the elementary years. At Living Books Curriculum we recommend beginning this in Grade Three.

Included is an article from the Parent's Review below. As you will read, the author recommends a 96-page book with pages at the back for maps. Since the goal is to make a lasting document, we recommend the use of poster board cut to 11x14 sheets.

The Book of Centuries

By G. M. Bernau.

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Though "The Book of Centuries" as such has only been part of the P.U.S. [Parents' Union School] programme since 1915, its earlier form of a "Museum Note Book" dates back to 1906. The late Mrs. Epps advocated in her "British Museum for Children" the keeping of a note-book, each page representing a century, in which one could draw sketches of objects in the Museums, and write notes of the principal events.

The present *Book of Centuries* as sold by the P. N. E. U. [Parents' National Education Union] has 48 blank leaves for drawings, i.e., 96 pages. Of these pages the last 10 should be kept for small maps of countries mentioned in the main part of the book, such as the N.W. coast of Europe in the Paleolithic Age; Egypt; Babylonia and Assyria, including Syria and Persia; Greece and Asia Minor with the north coast of Africa, a plan of Athens; the Roman Empire, a plan of Rome; Roman Britain, plan of Roman London; a map illustrating the English Conquest of Britain; Anglo-Saxon England; and so on, ending with maps of Europe before and after the Great War. On the lined pages opposite the maps could be written a small description of history as illustrated by the maps, or a mention of the centuries in which reference to these countries can be found. The choice of what maps should be included rests with the owner of each separate book. These are only suggestions.

Having set apart these 10 pages for maps, we must turn to the beginning of the book and head the first lined page "Prehistoric Periods." On this it is as well to write a list of the four periods—Palaeolithic or Old Stone, Neolithic or New Stone, Bronze, and Early Iron, explaining what is meant by each. As the time of the Prehistoric Periods varies in each country, it was thought better to group them all together at the beginning of the book, although there are peoples such as some in the Pacific Islands who are still in the Stone Age.

On the other side of the lined page write "Palaeolithic Age," and there enter any suitable notes describing this period, which can be gleaned from the *Guide to the Stone Age* published by the British Museum. On the drawing page opposite this put the words "River Drift," on this can be drawn a copy of the handsome specimen of a flint implement found with some elephants' bones in Gray's Inn Lane, London, at the end of the 17th century, which find was the cause of the study of Prehistoric remains. On the next drawing page write "The Caves" and here put illustrations of the harpoons, tools, needles, etc. On the next page "Kitchen Middens" and here we shall put the oyster shells, Knives, etc., found in the huge refuse heaps accumulated on the sites of early settlements. On the next page "Flint Workings," with the chalk lamps, miners' picks, and sections of a chalk mine. On the next page "Palaeolithic Art," illustrations for which are plentiful, e.g., the pebble engraved with a stag, a dagger with a carved handle in the shape of a mammoth. On the next page "Neolithic Age," showing the more elaborate and highly polished implements of the Later Stone Age. Then on the next page "Bronze Age," with illustrations of bronze implements, etc., and a section of a "Round Barrow."

Having prepared these pages for the Prehistoric Periods, we must turn again to the twelfth lined page from the end. Between the two top lines write a large "20th Century A.D.," from here work backwards, writing at the top of each lined page respectively "19th Century A.D. ", "18th Century A.D.", etc., till the "1st, Century A.D ." Continue then from "1st Century B.C." till the "54th Century B.C." We have now only five pages left and as there are so few known dates so far back in the history of the world there is no harm in grouping ten centuries together on each page, i.e., the one after the 54th would be the "64th to 55th Centuries B.C.", then 74th to 65th, 84th to 75th, 94th to 85th, 104th to 95th. I understand that there have been discoveries of objects made as far back as the 100th century B.C. so this will cover that period and leave a margin for discoveries perhaps still to be made of a yet further back period. We have now—except in the last few pages mentioned—for each century a lined page on which the facts are to be put according to date and a blank page for the illustrations of that century. As there are 23 lines on each page and two have been taken up by the heading, another line can either be left under the heading or a line can be drawn across the middle of the page to divide the upper half from the lower half, so that there are only 20 lines left for the dates. This will mean that each line stands for 5 years, and so an event which happened in the 3rd year of the century would be put on the middle of the first line, one which happened in the 42nd year will be put on the ninth line down, the second place in.

It must be remembered that while in the centuries A.D. the earlier numbers in the century are at the top of the page, in those of B.C. it is the reverse, and the earlier numbers are at the bottom of the page, i.e., in the first century A.D. the two top lines represent years 1 to 10 A.D.; in that of B.C., the two bottom lines represent years 1 to 10 B.C. Care must be taken, to, too place the dates, aright, e.g., the Magna Carta would be placed at the end of the third line of the 13th century A.D. Unless this is pointed out, children often make the mistake of putting it in the 12th.

It may be a help to take each chapter in the "British Museum for Children" and tell you what books have been found useful for illustrations, though I am sure you will find many others on your bookshelves which will have suitable illustrations in them. All drawings should be either from copies of objects in museums, from the originals, or from photographs.

The Chapter I of the "British Museum for Children" on Prehistoric Times. Illustrations from the Official Guides of the British Museum on the Stone and, Bronze Ages, the early parts of Wells' "Outlines of History" Piers Plowman Histories, junior Book IV.

Chapter II "Britain, A Roman Province," "The Birth of History," and the "Dawn of History," (published by Geo. Harrap), as well as the British Museum Guide to Greek and Roman Antiquities, also set 17 of "Picture and Illustrations for the Teacher," (published by the National Society's Depository, 19, Great Peter Street, Westminster).

Chapter III. "How Britain became England." "History from Original Sources" (Book I), "Cassell's History of England" (Vol. I), The "Suggestions" Historical Illustrations, Set A, published by Charles & Son, Paternoster Square. Also Series 17, as above.

Chapters IV, V and VI "Hellas and the Hellenes." The British Museum Guide Book to the Greek and Roman Antiquities, also that to the Sculptures of the Parthenon. Illustrations for school classics by G. F. Hill, M.A. (Macmillan).

Chapters VII, VIII and IX. "Egypt." Guide to the Egyptian Collection. "Dwellers on the Nile." "Illustrated Helps to the Study of the Bible."

Chapters X, XI and XII. "Babylonia and Assyria." British Museum Guide and the "Illustrated Helps." The book used in Form IV Breasted's "History of the Early World," also Webster's "Early European History," Book I, (published by Harrap), are very useful for the last nine chapters.

In illustrating the English periods after the Norman Conquest, the sets B, C and D of the "Suggestions" drawing cards and "Pictorial History" (Charles and Son) are very good. One can get the last mentioned either as a book, or as a set of cards without the letterpress. They are very easy, simple outlines. Indian ink should always be used and there should be occasional coloured illustrations. It is permissible to paste in good engravings, or photographs, where the subject is too difficult to be drawn, but this should be done only occasionally, as it is apt to make the book too bulky. As a book should be a life-long interest, children had better leave the more difficult subjects till they are old enough to do them justice. Naturally one page is a very small space in which to illustrate the whole of a century, and yet it is a mistake to leave two pages for some centuries, as I have seen done in some books, as it does away with the idea of the book; therefore each should choose what she considers the most characteristic events, planning out

the arrangement of the page, as far as possible, before drawing. In this way no two books will be alike, and there is great interest in comparing them. It has been found a good plan for each to carry out one idea of illustration throughout the book, e.g., one will illustrate ships; another weapons, another musical instruments; another ornaments of the various periods; these over and above the usual illustrations of the different events in each century.

To give a sample page, that of the 9th Century A.D., there are illustrations of a Danish battleaxe, byrnie, ship, helmet and ring-money, and a Saxon harp and ship, also King Alfred's jewel and silver penny.

As few boys are able to continue a Book of Centuries after leaving the home schoolroom, I would suggest that they should keep a Book of Periods only, giving a page to the Egyptian, Assyrian, Ancient Briton, Anglo-Saxon, Norman, etc.

I often wonder whether it would answer to keep a Family Book of Centuries where most of the children are away at boarding school, letting each add his or her contribution while they are at home for the holidays, initialing and dating it.

The Book of Centuries is a great joy to the owner, and even in these busy days, it is possible to find some time, however short, to add an illustration from time to time. Children always take a keen delight [to fill] their books. There is no need to be an artist in order to have quite an interesting book—neatness and accuracy are essential though. Museums will be clothed with fresh interest to keepers of these books, who will be able to recognize objects, which have already become familiar old friends through their Books of Centuries.