

Options for Form 1

Sometimes, you just need someone to choose all the books and tell you exactly what to do. That is what our main curriculum is for. In other seasons of life, you want to tweak and have options, and be able to make choices for your own circumstances.

Here we give you alternate suggestions and information on how to make this curriculum your own while still following Charlotte Mason's guidelines.

Writing

Previously we had recommended [American Cursive Handwriting](#). We still think this is an excellent program, but in the past few months the owner has become less and less responsive, and customer service has significantly dropped. While the product is excellent, the company appears to be having issues.

(I ordered through PayPal/email and the owner said he would ship the following day, Monday. Two weeks later I sent a PM through Facebook asking for a tracking number and was told the order would ship out the following Monday. I finally received it three weeks after I'd ordered. I have since sent two emails asking for information on the "Primary Scale Drill Sheets" that are recommended in the program for Grades 2 & 3 and have received no response. Inquiries through Facebook were answered by the creator's wife, saying, 'please ask via email.' — Marjorie)

Without being able to get the Primary Scale Sheets (for Grades 2-3), it is more appropriate for ages 10+. Order at your own risk.

Tales

For **1B**, choose three fairy tales per term of your choice. We chose Andrew Lang's Blue Fairy Book because it is readily available and contains many of the fairy tales that are well-known in our culture. In the PNEU programmes, Grimm's or Andersen's is specified. Andrew Lang has many other books of fairy tales, and there are several well-illustrated fairy tale books available. Use any book of fairy tales that appeals to you.

Classic Fairy Tales by Scott Gustafson is a lavishly illustrated collection of ten

tales. It is an excellent choice if your children have had no exposure to fairy tales in the earlier years. The stories are toned down but not Disney-fied.

Also, read three Aesop's fables per term. We know this doesn't seem like much, but this is actually what was scheduled in the PNEU programmes. We considered adding more, but decided to stay with the original guidelines. We recommend the Dover Children's Thrift Classics edition of Aesop's Fables because it's inexpensive, and with only reading nine fables over the year, an expensive copy is not necessary. However, *The Aesop for Children* with illustrations by Milo Winter is also an excellent choice, and nicely illustrated. If you get a different version, try to get one that hasn't been 'updated with modern language'.

Hero Tales in **1A** can be replaced with biographies of people who will inspire your children. When we looked at the list of hero biographies in the original programmes, one of us saw naturalists, another saw explorers, and another political figures. If you choose to use others than what we suggest, consider choosing one of each. Biographies should be of people your children can look up to, and preferably be adventurous. We encourage you to choose heroes that reflect your family. Some suggestions, by no means exhaustive:

- Bessie Coleman (African American aviator)
- Pocohontas
- Sundiata: Lion King of Mali (disabled man who became leader)
- *The Story of Nelson: A Ladybird Adventure from History* by L. Du Garde Peach (British)
- *The Boy Who Drew Birds: The Story of John James Audubon* by Jacqueline Davies
- Henry David Thoreau
- Abigail Adams
- John Hancock
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

World folk tales may be replaced with any cultures you wish, or with an

anthology. Select a different region every term in 1A, and read these in the evenings or on weekends. You don't need to limit yourself to 6 per term, but don't read so many it becomes a burden. Yesterday's Classics and Dover Children's Thrift Classics both have inexpensive options, while Project Gutenberg has free versions of others. If you need a break from folk or fairy tales in 1A, read Alice in Wonderland for a term.

- African Myths and Folk Tales
- Jataka Tales
- More Jataka Tales
- West African Folk Tales
- Chinese Fairy Tales
- Favorite Celtic Fairy Tales
- Stories from My Childhood (Mikhail Baryshnikov)
- Indian Fairy Tales
- Jewish Fairy Tales
- etc.

If you need to replace Beatrix Potter, additional ideas that still keep with the same theme are:

- Winnie the Pooh
- Uncle Remus: The Complete Tales, adapted by Julius Lester
- Brambly Hedge by Jill Barklem
- James Harriot's Treasury for Children
- any of the animal or bird books by Thornton Burgess
- Arthur Scott Bailey's Tuck-me-in Tales
- Clara Gillingham Pierson's Among the _____ People series

Or you could simply use any good literature that appeals to you and your children.

Tales of Troy and Greece could be replaced by

- Tales of the Odyssey by Mary Pope Osborne (easier read and less intense)
- The Children's Homer by Padraic Colum
- Tanglewood Tales by Nathaniel Hawthorne

King Arthur replaces Pilgrim's Progress from the original PNEU programmes, a

book that is foundational for subsequent literature but is too Christian for most of our families to be comfortable using with their young children.

We looked long and hard for what could replace Pilgrim's Progress — something that was similar difficulty level, that was foundational for English literature, that was epic in scope, that is widely available, and that would be interesting to children. We settled on King Arthur because it met all these requirements.

While we recommend Knowles' version, there are others. Howard Pyle we felt was not only longer than could be easily read in 2 years, but also uses stilted language that many of our children struggle with. Knowles is easily available and easier for children. Roger Lancelyn Green also has a version. Elizabeth Lodor Merchant has a lovely edition that is high level language without being overly difficult and most children love it, but there are not many used copies available and it is out of print.

If you decide to pass on King Arthur, try to replace it with something that is similarly foundational to future literature. If you think of something, please let us know! You could try a children's version of the Mabinogion, or a children's version of Canterbury Tales, or stories selected from 1001 Arabian Nights. These all have adult content, so you will want to find one that is edited for children.

History

Because we assume 90% of our users are American, we begin with American history. If you live in a different country, you will most likely want to begin with the history of your own country. Please see [Users from Other Countries](#).

We struggled with history as much as any other subject. In the end, we went back to Charlotte's own thoughts - that Form 1 students want to get at the people of history, and care nothing for strings of reigns, battles, and political movements. She warned against using 'outlines' of history. She also felt that in Form 1, the children should be shown the good of their country, and there is plenty of time in Forms 2 and beyond to teach the unsavory history that all countries have. We know that some will want to teach their children mostly about the Presidents and traditional history of our country, while others will want to downplay those men in favor of women and minorities. To that end, we gave a choice of biographies in most terms of Form 1A. Please make decisions based on your own family's desires and cultural background. These are merely suggestions.

In **1B**, we begin with American Tall Tales, in keeping with Charlotte Mason's own theme of teaching Age of Myths to this age group. Other options for books of tall tales:

- *American Tall Tales* by Adrien Stoutenberg
- *Cut from the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend, and Tall Tale* by Robert D. San Souci
- Individual titles by Steven Kellogg : Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind Crockett, Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, etc.
- *Paul Bunyan Swings His Axe* by Dell McCormick. Seventeen Paul Bunyan stories, written in 1936, and 111 pages. You might pair this with the John Henry book by Lester Pinkney and use this pair exclusively for 1B history, picking up America First in 1A.

We use America First because we feel that it exemplifies what Charlotte Mason recommended in a history book for children under nine. If your child is not ready for this book in 1B, consider reading more tall tales and adding *Boys and Girls of Colonial Days*, available from both Project Gutenberg and Yesterday's Classics. Due to stereotypes of the time, particularly of Native Americans, about half the stories in *Boys and Girls of Colonial Days* not be appropriate to read to your children. Please pre-read and choose the stories that are appropriate. Those that are, are a wonderful, gentle introduction to life in colonial times.

There are several possibilities as alternates for America First (all of **Form 1**), though none we liked quite as well:

- Betsy Maestro series — *The Discovery of the Americas*, *Exploration and Conquest*, *The New Americans: Colonial Times*, *Struggle for a Continent: The French and Indian Wars*, and *Liberty or Death: The American Revolution* These are well illustrated, but tend to focus on the broad political movements, rather than stories of people. Some are difficult to get (try the publisher), and they only go to the early 1800s.
- *America is Born* by Gerald Johnson (excellent, but out of print)
- *America Begins* by Alice Dalgliesh
 - *The American Story* by Jennifer Armstrong (well

illustrated, but at a lower level than *America First*.

Perhaps only appropriate for 6-8 yos)

- *Our Country's Story* by Frances Cavanah

A few specific events in American history:

- *The Story of the Statue of Liberty* by Betsy Maestro
- *The Boston Tea Party* by Russell Freedman
- *Let it Begin Here! Lexington and Concord* by Dennis Fradin
- *Liberty: How the Revolutionary War Began* by Lucille Recht Penner (Landmark Book)
 - *Shi-shi-etko* by Nicola I. Campbell (Age appropriate book on forced boarding school for Native American children. The book concentrates on the main character being connected to family before she has to leave. It has an author's note on the actual forced boarding school but does not mention it in the text, so the parent can choose exactly how much to share with students.)
- *The Unbreakable Code* by Sara Hoagland Hunter (Navajo Code Talkers, WW2)

There is an excellent book called *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans*. It is beautifully illustrated and as the title says, is the story of African Americans. Since it follows the history of America in 40 pages of text, it didn't quite fit in this Form. African American families, as well as those who want more of a minority focus, will want to use this book in either late Form 1A or Form 2. Use it in place of, not in addition to, the scheduled history reading.

In *America First*, we skip the story of Osceola. We have scheduled a Native American biography in one term, and in another as an option. You may want to replace some of the biographies in other history terms with Native American/First Nations biographies.

Other ideas for biographies:

- *Louis Braille: The Boy Who Invented Books for the Blind* by Margaret

Davidson

-OR- *Out of Darkness: The Story of Louis Braille* by Russell Freedman

- *Dear Benjamin Banneker* by Andrea Davis Pinkney
- *Molly Bannaky* by Chris Soentpiet
- *Buffalo Bill and the Pony Express* (I Can Read It Level 3)
- *The Amazing Age of John Roy Lynch* by Chris Barton
- *Secret Soldier: The Story of Deborah Sampson* by Ann McGovern

We had to cut several stories from *America First* to keep the page counts within Charlotte Mason's recommended range. We skipped stories we felt were too violent for our little ones, as well as several others.

However, every family and every child has a different tolerance level. It is our expectation, as it was Charlotte Mason's, that the parent will edit on the fly for suitability. Many children will find the stories in *America First* to be thrilling and exciting. Some who are more sensitive will be upset by the deaths of many characters. If your child is the latter, you may be happier using one of the other options we suggest.

Geography

1B Replace Elementary Geography with *Home Geography for Primary Grades* by C. C. Long, if desired. Or, view Elementary Geography on archive.org and simply teach the appropriate concepts.

In the PNEU programmes for Form **1A**, Charlotte used both *Ambleside Geography Book 1* and *Ambleside Geography Book 2*. Book 2 is physical geography of the world, with a heavy emphasis on Britain in Year 2. A similar book is the *Guyot Geographical Reader and Primer: A Series of Journeys Around the World* by Mary Pratt, which starts with North America. Neither of these are currently available in either print or well-formatted ebooks, but are on archive.org. If you decide to use Guyot, use it in place of *Paddle to the Sea and the explorers* in Form **1A**, and use only Part 1. It should last 2 years. As always with books of this age, the parent will want to read judiciously and edit where necessary. Overall, this is an excellent book, however. We've also listed a few other books that could be used, but are also unfortunately not in print.

Pacing distance and making plans was done for all years of Form 1A, regardless of how long the student was in that Form. Charlotte Mason apparently felt it was

an important skill, and should be repeated.

Are We There Yet? by Alison Lester is a great book for Australian geography, and we had this in the main curriculum. It is not currently available from either The Book Depository or Amazon, so we have moved it to the Options page.

Other options for explorers:

- Helen Thayer (one possible book: *Helen Thayer's Arctic Adventure* by Sally Isaacs. This is brand new and has not been vetted yet)
- Dr. Livingstone (since he was a missionary, biographies may contain more Christian content than desirable)

Other options for physical geography (use in place of Paddle to the Sea and/or explorers):

- *A Child's Geography of the World* by V M Hillyer (out of print)
- *Guyot Geographical Reader and Primer, Standard 1* by Mary Pratt (be sure to use Standard 1. archive.org only Begins "What We Learn in Geography")
- *Ambleside Geography Book 2* (archive.org)
- *The World at Home, or Pictures and Scenes from Far Off Lands* by Mary Kirby *note: this is a bit heavy on the Christianity in the beginning, and here and there throughout the book, but for the most part is a delightful book that mixes nature observations with geographical. The descriptions of cultures is dated, as is to be expected in a book written more than 100 years ago. The parent should read aloud and edit on the fly as necessary.
- *Home Geography* by Ralph Tarr (archive.org)
- *Seabird*, Holling C Holling

You may want to use books that reflect culture rather than physical features.

Options for cultural geography:

- *Children of Many Lands* by Dana Bruce and *Elizabeth McCrady* (out of print) A previous edition is *Children of Foreign Lands*. This is a wonderful book and our first choice for **1B**, but it is of limited used availability. If you are able to find it, use it in place of *Children of the Northlights* and *Jenny Goes to Sea*. - world
- *Children of Noisy Village* by Astrid Lindgren (sub for *Jenny Goes to Sea*)

OR Children of the Northlights in 1B) - N Europe

- *Sticks Across the Chimney* by Nora Burglon (Denmark)
- *Waiting for the Owl's Call* by Gloria Whelan - Middle East
- *Megan's Year: An Irish Traveler's Story* by Gloria Whelan - N Europe
- *Orani My Father's Village* by Claire A. Nivola - Europe (Sardinia)
- *The Gullywasher* by Joyce Rossi - Southwest N America/Central America
- *Jingle Dancer* by Cynthia Leitich Smith - Nat American
- *The Raft* by Jim LaMarche - N America
- *The Desert is Theirs* by Byrd Baylor - Southwest N America
- *Little Pear* by Eleanor Francis Lattimore - Asia
- *I Live in Tokyo* by Mari Takabayashi - Asia
- *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by John Steptoe - Africa
- *King for a Day* by Rukhsana Khan - Pakistan
- *The Children of China: an Artist's Journey* by Song Nan Zhang

Natural History

The PNEU programmes use Arabella Buckley's Eyes and No Eyes series, and several Tommy Smith books by Edmund Selous. We have been unable to find anything modern that compares to these books. We have scheduled the first 6 Eyes and No Eyes books, written by Arabella Buckley, throughout Form 1.

The Wonders of the Jungle Book 1, which we used to use in **1B**, has a few Christian references, but isn't overbearing. If you like this, www.gutenberg.org also has Book 2. Another option is *African Critters* by Robert Haas. This book is beautifully photographed but the text isn't as instructive as either *Tommy Smith* or *Wonders of the Jungle*. However, for a physical book it is a solid option. Parents will want to edit for sensitive children, as it does mention harsh realities of nature.

Another option for **1B** is the Smithsonian's Backyard Books series. They appear to be out of print, but may be available from your library. Try to spread a book out over 2-3 weeks, if you can. Since these are cute picture books, more realistically this will mean reading one in a single sitting, then re-reading over the next few weeks.

If you enjoy *The Look About You Nature Study Books* in **1A**, Project Gutenberg also has Book 4.

Other options for Form 1:

- *The Burgess Bird Book for Children* by Thornton Burgess
- *The Burgess Animal Book for Children* by Thornton Burgess
- *The Burgess Seashore Book for Children* by Thornton Burgess
(and others by this author)

- *Seed-Babies* by Margaret Morley
- *Animal Heroes* by Ernest Thompson Seton
- *School of the Woods* by William J. Long
- *Among the _____ People* series by Clara Dillingham Pierson
- *Talking to Fireflies, Shrinking the Moon* by Edward Duensing (for older 1A students, or use as a parent resource)
- *Shenlaya's Quest* by Thomas J. Elpel (also an optional book in Form II)
- *Creep and Flutter* by Jim Arnosky
- *Pagoo* by Holling C. Holling
- *Minn of the Mississippi* by Holling C. Holling

If you want to do object lessons with your children, or you have several students in the elementary years, the Keepers series by Joseph Bruchac and Michael Caduto is excellent. These are resources for the parents and are not meant to be read by children as school books.

- Keepers of the Earth
- Keepers of the Night
- Keepers of Life
- Keepers of the Animals

Recitations

If you have not used Mother Goose previously, start with that in 1B. We like both Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose and The Real Mother Goose by Blanche Fisher Wright. Both are excellent, but they differ in illustrations. Tomie dePaola's uses more of a cartoon style of drawing, but also has a few multi-cultural drawings. Blanche Fisher Wright's book was published in the early 1980s and has only white children pictured. If this is an issue for you, choose Tomie dePaola's book.

For 1A, we love the poetry books by Joyce Sidman. We didn't use them in the main curriculum due only to cost. For example, *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems* has only 11 poems and is \$12 new on Amazon. If cost is not a factor, or if you can get these from your library, these are excellent choices for 1A and 2B.

Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems

Dark Emperor and Other Poems of the Night

Winter Bees and Other Poems of the Cold

Other beautiful anthologies are

- *Classic Poetry* edited by Michael Rosen with pictures by Paul Howard
- *National Geographic Book of Nature Poetry* edited by J. Patrick Lewis

Picture Study

If you don't want to jump into the picture study rotation with your little one, use the *Come Look with Me* books by Gladys S. Blizzard.

Handwork

Every term students were expected to do handiwork, in addition to their regular studies. For Form 1, this was mainly knitting, sewing, and gardening. One term per year clay modelling was added. The children were also expected to make Christmas gifts, and gardening books were suggested but there were no actual assignments for any of them in Form 1. Because we know that coming up with ideas is sometimes difficult, we have assigned projects for knitting, crochet and sewing, as well as one family project per year. Feel free to choose your own instead.

If you know how to knit, sew, and garden, you don't need these books. However, they can be helpful just for suggestions on how to teach or projects to make.

Sewing School is one of the best hand-sewing books on the market today, but we recommend it with some caveats.

1. The projects pictured often have sloppy stitching. While this can be normal for a child just learning, do strive for straight, even stitches.

2. Buttons are sewn on without shanks. This is a typical beginner error, and it will save future aggravation if you teach your children how to make a shank from the start. [Here](#) is an excellent tutorial.
3. The projects in sewing school often have unfinished seams and are not ironed, to make them “easier for children”. While the project will still get done, it will look messier than it needs to. Rather than throwing the book out, teach your children to “press as you sew”, and finish interior seams. A handmade article should look as nice on the inside as on the outside. Most of the items in Sewing School can be finished inside with a simple whipstitch. [Here](#) is a nice explanation of how to use whipstitching to finish a seam.

Other simple sewing projects:

[Sewing Projects for Kids](#) from Red Ted Art

[Felt gnomes](#) (very easy)

[good tutorial for buttonholes](#) for 1A

[Easy Sewing Projects](#) from Martha Stewart. This is a list of 28, of which several are appropriate for our Form 1 students to do.

We have multiple resources for handiwork on the [Resources](#) page.

Other ideas for knitting:

[Teaching Kids to Knit](#) has great tips for teaching the very young ones

[Simple Spring Chick](#)

The Mary Francis collection is a particularly enchanting series written directly to the child. We did not recommend it in the main curriculum simply because it will be more appealing to girls than to boys.

The Mary Frances Knitting and Crocheting Book Jane Eayre Fryer

The Mary Francis Sewing Book by Jane Eayre Fryer

The Mary Francis Garden Book by Jane Eayre Fryer

Paper modeling or folding was assigned every term. This was most likely paper sloyd, and differed from origami in that the projects start out easier, but are more precise. It is a good way to work with fractions and measuring. We found [Paper Sloyd](#) on archive.org, which has projects for three years. We have not used it

ourselves, but if you do we would love feedback on it.

In its place, we have suggested folding paper books and origami. Use whatever you can find at your library or local bookstore, or use web resources. Origami books go in and out of print quickly, so we have not specified particular ones. Resources for making paper books are on the [Resources](#) page.

Another handicraft that shows up regularly in the PNEU programs is clay modelling. Unfortunately, we were unable to find the sort of instructional book that we would like in print. The ones currently available tend to be how to make pottery or polymer clay products, neither of which are what Charlotte Mason suggested. Here is one from Google Books: [A Manual of Clay-Modelling for Teachers and Scholars](#) by Mary Unwin.

Another option is beeswax modelling. An excellent manual for modelling with beeswax is [Learning about the World through Modeling](#) by Arthur Auer (currently free as an ebook - this is a Waldorf resource). We have also linked to these from the main curriculum pages.

If your child has motor skills delays, move at his or her pace, but don't stop handwork. Simply do more of the easier projects before moving on to more difficult ones. You might also consider using a knitting loom for quick satisfaction.

Volunteer or service work was expected every year, and later every term. This usually involved helping the "Save the Children Fund" in some way. We encourage you to do some sort of service every year. While some families are involved in service projects through their church, synagogue, or Scouts, many of us aren't involved in those organizations. For those that aren't, here are some suggestions:

[Mother Bear Project](#)

[Feed My Starving Children](#)

collect for Unicef

volunteer at a food pantry

[Project Linus](#) (the No Sew Fleece Blanket on the project page is perfect for Form 1)

[Hats for the Homeless](#)