

Introduction

When The Family Heritage Series first appeared in 1973, it was described as “a weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those ‘heirs of all the ages’ who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom.” The series was produced by the Movement To Restore Decency, a project of The John Birch Society. The lessons were available by subscription to parents anxious to achieve certain objectives, including:

- Teaching American history, which was, and still is, being seriously neglected in our nation’s government (“public”) schools.
- Giving parents an opportunity to impart to their children such positive attributes as patriotism, respect for family religious and cultural heritage, and basic values that distinguish civilization from barbarianism.
- Promoting family unity, loyalty, and respect.

Subscribers received four weekly lessons each month, printed on 8½” by 11” pages designed for looseleaf binders. The 104-lesson series was completed in 1975.

In recent years, with the increasing popularity of homeschooling as parents reassert their responsibility to educate their children, we have received numerous requests to reissue the lessons. We have done so in this single, user-friendly two-volume set.

Though the original lessons have been slightly revised to eliminate duplication and redundant instructions, update references, and enhance appearance and readability, the original themes remain the same.

We hope The Family Heritage Series will prove to be a valuable addition to your homeschooling or self-study libraries.

Suggestions For Parents

The first few lessons establish a foundation for the entire series. They are designed to introduce and explain the importance of freedom, the need for responsibility, and the right to choose one’s goals in life, as well as to stimulate further thought and discussion about such topics.

Through these lessons, your family will travel back in time to visit families and individuals from the Garden of Eden to Colonial America. Families

both mythical and real will help you discover how the great issues and struggles of the past apply to our lives today. Your family will share in the spirit and manifestations of liberty, and become more fully aware of the forces working to undermine our freedoms.

The weekly meetings can become an enjoyable, exciting, and unifying experience for each family. Here are a few suggestions that may help to maximize the value of each lesson:

Personalize The Program

Each Heritage Hour should be designed for the enjoyment and enrichment of your family. Plan each program to fit your family’s needs. The lessons are suggested outlines, not scripts that must be followed word-for-word. Feel free to incorporate additional or alternative illustrations, activities, and events whenever and wherever you may deem them to be appropriate.

Share The Leadership

We suggest that father preside during meetings, but either parent, or both together, may lead discussions. Indeed, the programs will be enhanced if each family member plays a part.

Most of the lessons have “breaks” so that family members may alternately read them. When youngsters do additional outside research about a topic, have them present what they have learned. Assigning an older child to lead part of the discussion is good training, and provides a constructive example for younger brothers and sisters.

Prepare In Advance

Advance planning by both parents is essential. Time devoted to such preparation will reap many worthwhile dividends in the entire family’s response to the program.

Assign aspects of the lesson in advance. Which family member will lead which part? What visual aids and other materials will be required? What additional areas of research will be appropriate? Which question will require the most discussion? What post-lesson recreation should be planned? What refreshments?

Set A Regular Time

It is crucial to establish a fixed day and time for your Heritage Hour discussions (such as, for example, 8:00–9:00 p.m. each Monday), so that other activities can be planned around them.

Except for emergencies, every effort should be made to keep the set schedule.

Also, discourage breaks or interruptions during the Heritage Hour. Outside intrusions can be disruptive and will break the flow of lessons, even if they only entail someone leaving for only a few minutes. An answering machine (or other system) that precludes phone interruptions, can be helpful.

Be Comfortable

Since the purpose of The Family Heritage Series is to encourage families to come together for an hour or two each week to learn more about our Americanist heritage, it is important to be as relaxed as possible during the lesson. Sit close together on comfortable furniture. If mom and dad are seated on a couch, have the children place their chairs so that the family is seated in an informal circle. This arrangement enhances conversations and stimulates person-to-person exchanges.

In The Beginning

You may wish to begin each session with a passage from Scripture, and a brief discussion of its most important point. A family prayer may also be appropriate. Other possibilities for enhancing your Heritage Hour at the beginning, end, or during the refreshment period, include a family sing-along of patriotic songs or favorite hymns; a "talent show" of vocal or instrumental musical numbers, dances, recitations, readings; other family aptitudes; and sharing a story.

Your Heritage Hour offers an ideal opportunity to have family members describe their major activities and accomplishments of the past week. It is also a good time to discuss future family projects, such as picnics, field trips, vacations, and humanitarian community projects.

During The Lesson

The use of visual aids, supplementary materials, and outside reading and research can create more interest in the subject. A globe of the world, newspaper clippings, photographs, poems, or anecdotes relating to the topic can be helpful. Many lessons will recommend one or more books about the topic. A family member could be assigned to read one and briefly review its message for the rest of the family.

Your family library should include a reliable and readable American history textbook. One

highly recommended work is *Quest Of A Hemisphere*, by Donzella Cross Boyle. Excerpts and summaries of events described in this outstanding text are sprinkled throughout the lessons. (See our "Recommended Book List" for other suggestions.)

Each lesson includes brief segments captioned "Concluding Thought" and "Looking Ahead." The former summarizes major points of the evening's discussion, and presents an opportunity to suggest outside reading, research projects, and other activities. The latter outlines the next major topic of discussion and raises questions to be answered during the following week's Heritage Hour.

Special Suggestions

Each lesson also includes recommendations for parents and additional material for children.

"For Younger Americans" suggests ways to make each lesson more relevant to, and easily understood by, grade-school children. It may occasionally be suggested that complicated segments of the printed lesson be omitted for such youngsters." For Serious Students" includes additional provocative and stimulating areas of inquiry relating to the lesson's theme. To stimulate the interest of high school students, encourage them to self-teach by researching answers to questions and doing outside reading about pertinent topics.

At The Conclusion

Each Heritage Hour should conclude on an informal note, with family fun, games, refreshments, and other positive "good time" activities that strengthen family ties and generate enthusiasm for the next meeting. If possible, include all family members in preparing refreshments, selecting games, and cleaning up afterwards.

A Final Thought

The family is society's major institution for instilling the principles of freedom and responsibility in future generations. It is, and always has been, the foundation of civilization and the natural channel for perpetuating values and wisdom.

It is within the family circle that the true meaning of freedom can and must be defined and understood, and the true essence of our Americanist heritage imparted. The fate of freedom depends on the parents of America and the children molded by their influence. It is with that thought in mind that The Family Heritage Series has been designed.