

SONLIGHT

# A FAMILY TRAVEL GUIDE TO MONTICELLO

Navigating Thomas Jefferson's  
Historic Home and Plantation.

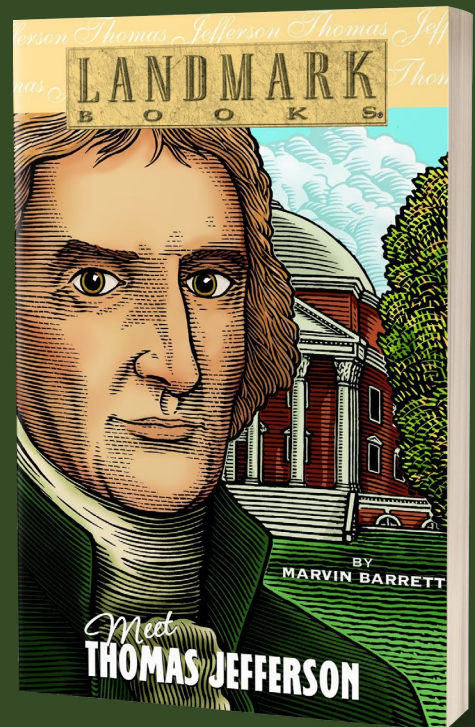


# MEET THOMAS JEFFERSON

Enrich your visit to Monticello by adding this easy-to-read brief history of Thomas Jefferson's life from boyhood to death. *Meet Thomas Jefferson* explores how the third president of the United States studied hard to become a lawyer in order to make better laws in the colonies. From writing the Declaration of Independence to expanding the country, this book offers a glimpse into his life.

Included with the purchase of this book is an Instructor's Guide to help you and your child navigate the book and it's content.

[Visit sonlight.com/jefferson](https://sonlight.com/jefferson)





# Table of Contents

**Introduction..... 4**

**About Monticello ..... 5**

**Navigating Monticello ..... 6**

- Best Time to Visit ..... 6
- What Tickets to Purchase ..... 6
- Tour Tips ..... 7

**What To Do at Monticello..... 8**

- Monticello’s Day Pass ..... 8
- Monticello First-Floor Guided House Tour..... 8
- Gardens and Grounds Guided Tour..... 9
- Slavery at Monticello Guided Tour..... 10
- Unguided Exhibits and Activities ..... 11
- Jefferson’s Grave ..... 11
- The Griffin Discovery Room..... 12
- Saunders-Monticello Trail ..... 12
- The Life of Sally Hemings Exhibit ..... 13
- Thomas Jefferson’s World Film ..... 13

**Local Area Excursions ..... 14**

**Appendix A: Books to Help You Prepare for Your Trip..... 17**

# INTRODUCTION

Thomas Jefferson was America's third president and the author of the Declaration of Independence. His estate, Monticello, is a history museum, research institute and World Heritage Site. Nestled in the hills outside Charlottesville in Central Virginia, and pictured on the back of the U.S. nickel, Monticello holds some of the country's most breathtaking vistas. This is a gorgeous destination where families can learn about the dawn of the United States of America.

Bring history studies to life with a visit to Jefferson's Monticello. Accelerate and extend learning by exploring the house and grounds of this well-known historical figure. Then seek out other historical locations in the area.

This guide is designed to help you plan and get the most out of a family trip to historic Monticello and the surrounding area.



*Jefferson Statue*



## About Monticello

Thomas Jefferson was one of the most influential men in American history. He penned the Declaration of Independence, served as the first secretary of state, the second vice president, and the third president. He also negotiated the Louisiana Purchase and sent out explorers Lewis and Clark. As you might expect, visiting the estate of such a man is a trip to savor. Jefferson was one of the world's greatest polymaths and a man of amazing accomplishments.

Jefferson, though, was also a man of contradictions. He claimed to loathe slavery, yet was master to 604 enslaved persons in his lifetime. The interpreters at Monticello speak to this contradiction extensively, offering a thought-provoking opportunity to consider the issues that continue to divide our nation.

Monticello sits on 5,000 acres, with beautiful rolling views and groomed gardens. Jefferson had a lifelong interest in agriculture and botany. He created Monticello's gardens as a showpiece, a source of food and an experimental laboratory for plants from around the world. As a result of Jefferson's meticulous record-keeping, and more than 50 years of recent scholarly research, you now have the opportunity to visit one of the best-documented, best-preserved and best-studied plantations in North America.

A quick three-hour drive from Washington D.C., Monticello is a great day trip if you are visiting America's capital. If you have more time than a day, you can certainly extend this to a weekend trip, as there are many historical sites in Charlottesville.

*Thomas Jefferson's visionary mind has impressed many people throughout history. "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent and of human knowledge that has ever been gathered together at the White House—with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone." —John F. Kennedy, as he welcomed 49 Nobel Laureates to the White House in 1962*



# Navigating Monticello

Here are some tips to make the most of your visit, avoid the crowds and have a great time, without breaking the bank.



## Best Time to Visit

Fall or Spring are the best times of the year to spend a day at Monticello. Virginia summers are hot and humid, with the heat index getting as high as 105°F. There is shade in many places, and the guides encourage hydration, but if you are not coming from a hot and humid climate, you might find yourself wilting. Although the exact dates change a bit from year to year, April and October are both glorious months, filled with either the blossoms of spring or the changing leaves of fall.



## What Tickets to Purchase

*The Monticello Day Pass* is arguably the best value, getting you several hours of excellent historical immersion for a reasonable price. For most visitors, the Monticello Day Pass is the way to go.

If, however, you enjoy more exclusive tickets, and your children are older, here are some additional ticketing options that include an additional tour, plus all that is included in the Monticello Day Pass:

- 1.) *Behind-the-Scenes Pass*: A one-hour, 45-minute guided house tour takes you upstairs and provides a full picture of what life would have been like at Monticello. This tour is recommended for children 7 and older. This tour is strictly hands-off (no touching allowed), so gauge whether your children are old enough to handle almost two hours of extreme self-control. It's not easy for adults, either! A unique and enjoyable tour, if your family is up for the challenge.
- 2.) *Hamilton Tour Takeover*: If you are fans of *Hamilton: An American Musical*, Monticello offers a special 90-minute participatory tour. Learn about Jefferson and Hamilton's clashing ideas for the United States as you tour Monticello.
- 3.) *Heming's Family Tour*: If your children are all older than 12, and you are willing to get into some of the unfortunate darker historical aspects of Colonial America, Monticello offers a one hour and 45-minute tour that invites audience participation in discussing the history of race and slavery through the lens of the Hemings Family, the best documented enslaved family in the United States. Very informational exposé of the harsh realities that people of African descent faced during this time in America.



## Tour Tips

Because Monticello sees a half million visitors a year, house tours run as often as every five minutes. Order tickets in advance online to reserve your ideal tour time at [monticello.org](http://monticello.org). You will need to arrive at Monticello at least a half-hour before your tour time. Before you begin your tour, you will have to get through lines to pick up your will call tickets, and another line for a bag check. There's a short wait for the shuttle bus to get to the house itself, then another ten minute presentation of the tour guidelines. It will take at least 30 minutes to navigate the distance and lines between your car and the house tour.

You can buy tickets on-site, too. The ticket agents will fit you into a tour as soon as they can, which might not be immediately.

Arrive earlier in the day in order to enjoy all the attractions Monticello has to offer.

The 21st-century gateway to Jefferson's historic Monticello is the David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center. This covered entrance to Monticello's timeless grounds is just down the hill from the historic mountaintop home, and leads the way to various museums to help prepare guests to journey around Monticello. Next to the (free) parking lot, you will find ticketing, the gift shop, the cafe, the children's museum, and exhibits inside the visitor center.



“*I cannot live without books, but fewer will suffice.*” —Thomas Jefferson, after selling his personal collection to begin the Library of Congress when the original collection burned

# WHAT TO DO AT MONTICELLO

## *Monticello's Day Pass*

The following tours and exhibits are included in the purchase of a Day Pass. It's recommended you allow at least three hours to visit Monticello.

- First-Floor House Tour
- Guided Slavery at Monticello Tour
- Guided Gardens and Grounds Tour
- Exhibits at the David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center, including *Thomas Jefferson's World Film*
- Exhibits Around the House, including *The Life of Sally Hemings*
- Griffin Discovery Room for Kids
- Seasonal Mountaintop Activity Center for Kids
- African American Graveyard



## *Monticello First-Floor Guided House Tour*

If you only have a short time to visit Monticello, this is the thing to do. The guided tour itself takes about 45 minutes, but getting to and from the tour takes time.

In Jefferson's day, any uninvited visitors would stay in the main hall, admiring the mastodon jaw and artifacts sent back by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Jefferson wanted visitors to expand their minds. From there your tour winds through Jefferson's private quarters, where you'll see several of his clever inventions, admire some of his remaining book collection and enjoy the amazing views.

The tour ends on a terrace where the groundskeepers manage the herculean job of keeping clear the view to the University of Virginia. This public school was, in Jefferson's mind, one of his greatest earthly contributions.

Every house tour is slightly different, but they are never anything less than excellent.



## Gardens and Grounds Tour



### ***Gardens and Grounds Guided Tour***

*(mid-March through October)*

Throughout his life, Thomas Jefferson sought plants that would help American farmers be more profitable and self-sufficient. While you can stroll the grounds on your own, this 45-minute guided tour celebrates Jefferson the horticulturist, and provides insight to the great amount of plants he amassed in his day.

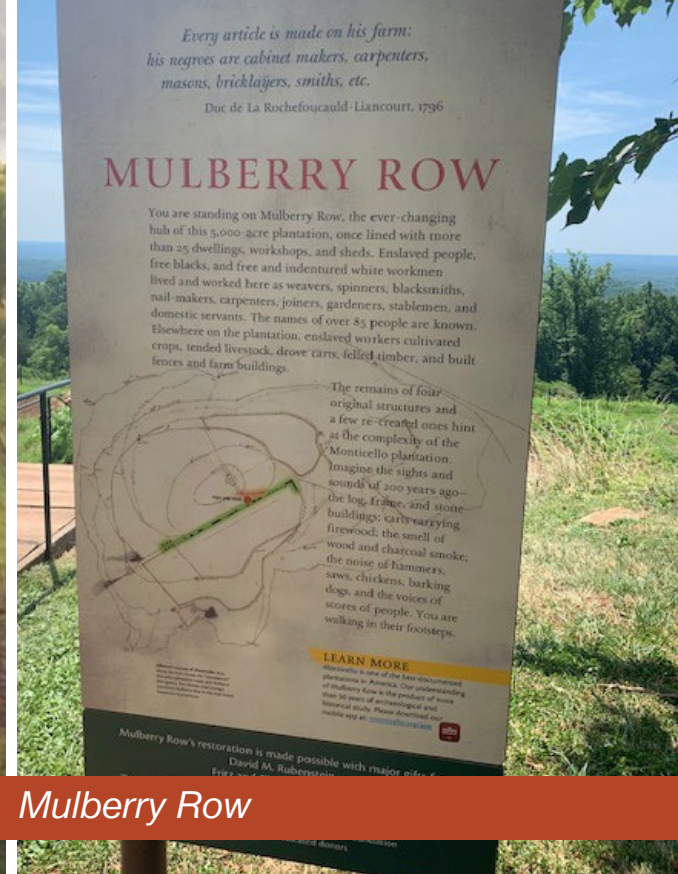
He had his enslaved men create an astonishing two-acre kitchen garden, and he laid it out as a scientific laboratory. He grew a wide variety of crops, and recorded the details meticulously.

In an era before modern shipping and annual seed catalogs, he planted an astonishing array of fruit trees, and acquired seeds gathered from his correspondents around the world. He once even risked his life to smuggle some upland rice that grew without water-intensive paddies.

The gardens were carefully documented throughout the grounds. Today you can find plants that began with the seeds sent from the Lewis and Clark expedition. Just look for the plant stakes with the initials “LC.”

If you’re a gardener, you can pick up samples of the seeds at Monticello for your own gardens, and enjoy a bit of history.

Tours start on the hour, and you are welcome to join them and leave them at any time. The tour guide offers marvelous details and a wealth of information. Highly enjoyable, even for those without much gardening experience.



Mulberry Row



## Slavery at Monticello Guided Tour

The guided slavery tour takes place on Mulberry Row, named for the mulberry trees planted along it, and includes over 25 dwellings, workshops and sheds. Enslaved people, free blacks, and free and indentured white families lived and worked along Mulberry Row.

The 45-minute Slavery at Monticello Tour presents an honest and inclusive look at one of the most difficult topics in American history. This tour focuses on the experiences of the enslaved people who lived and labored on the Monticello Plantation.

This tour, while addressing sober and difficult topics, is one that we strongly recommend for families with older children. What better place to make this painful period in our history come alive for our children with an opportunity to talk through their reactions and help them come away with a better understanding of how slavery has impacted generations to follow.

### **JOBS OF ENSLAVED, FREE AND INDENTURED WORKERS:**

- Cultivating crops
- Tending livestock
- Driving carts
- Felling timber
- Building fences and farm buildings
- Weavers
- Spinners
- Blacksmiths
- Nail-makers
- Carpenters
- Joiners
- Gardeners
- Stablemen
- Domestic servants



## *Unguided Exhibits and Activities*

Included in your Day Pass are many additional unguided options and exhibits throughout Monticello's grounds, in the lower level of the Main House, and in the David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center.

You can learn more about the life of Sally Hemings, explore the All-Weather Passages, and visit both the South and North Wings in the Main House.

The David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center has the Thomas Jefferson's World film. You can also find an interactive exhibition that traces Jefferson's ongoing influences on liberty in America, and detailed showcases of how Monticello has influenced architectural origins and construction.



## *Jefferson's Gardens and Grave*

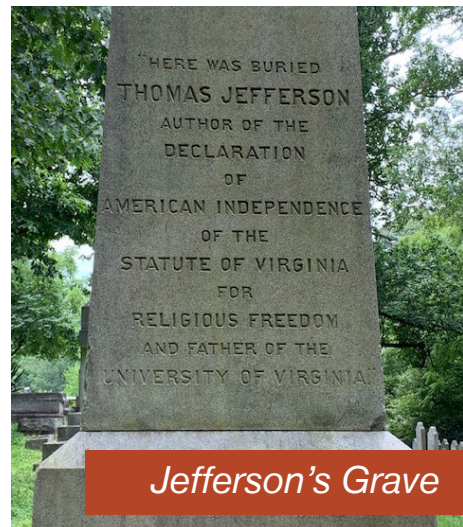
Walking down Mulberry Row, stroll the grounds, through the gardens and peek down at the vineyard. Part of the pleasure of being at Monticello is taking in the landscaping.

You can walk down Mulberry Row to reach Jefferson's grave, along with the graves of many of his family members. Continue on through a nice woodland stroll to reach the David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center.

While the walk to the cemetery is about half a mile, it's beautiful. As an alternative, you can take the shuttle bus and exit at the graveyard.



*The Grounds*



*Jefferson's Grave*



## ***Griffin Discovery Room for Kids***

A hands-on discovery center for kids, located on the lower level of the David M. Rubenstein Visitor Center, is a wonderful stop for children. Try using Jefferson's polygraph copy machine, operating a large-scale model of Jefferson's wheel cipher, rest in his alcove bed, and much more. Touch, play and explore items from the Jefferson-era.

The Griffin Discovery Room is geared for children 6-12 and offers many opportunities to touch reproduced elements of American history.



*Griffin Discovery Room*



*Monticello Trail*



## ***Saunders-Monticello Trail***

Part of Central Virginia's most popular park, the Saunders-Monticello Trail, is made up of 370 acres of Central Virginia's natural beauty.

If you like hiking, the Saunders-Monticello Trail starts at the base of the Carter Mountain (the location of Monticello) and ends at Monticello's ticketing office and visitor center. It's in the shade most of the way, and though it has an incline grade of 5%, it's a lovely route and popular way to get some energy out. Explore the native forest and magnificent scenery of the Blue Ridge Mountain along this 2-mile groomed and accessible trail.



## ***The Life of Sally Hemings Exhibit***

Recommended for children over 12. This short 5-minute immersive exhibit is dedicated to one of the most famous and least known African American women in U.S. history.

Sally Hemings was an enslaved child and half-sister to Martha Jefferson. After Martha's death, Hemings became Thomas Jefferson's concubine and fathered at least six of his children.

The exhibit is small and projects silhouettes on a screen. It is artistic and well done. You can find additional details and articles on Sally Hemings at this link:

[monticello.org/sallyhemings](http://monticello.org/sallyhemings)



## ***Thomas Jefferson's World Film***

This 15-minute film explores Jefferson's vision for America and his role in the development of the young country. The film uses the stories of Monticello's people, both enslaved and free, to illustrate life on the plantation. It runs every twenty minutes in a well air-conditioned theater in the visitor center. The film has some beautiful images and is very general in content.

FILM

Check the event calendar on [monticello.org](http://monticello.org) for Home Educators' Day, Toddler Tours, and other special events at Monticello.

# LOCAL AREA EXCURSIONS

While you can explore Monticello in a day, there are additional activities that would make this area a great long-weekend trip. Here are some additional sites to explore.



## James Monroe's Highland

About three minutes from Monticello (what would have been right next door in Jefferson's day), you'll come to Highland, the estate of Jefferson's good friend and the fifth president of the United States, James Monroe.

Although the original house burned down, there is a marvelous tour of the grounds and the remaining outbuildings. You'll learn about recent archaeology, and how dendrochronology (dating by tree rings) cleared up a long-time mystery, among many other things. Monroe himself is a fascinating man—so popular he ran for his second term of office unopposed. He and Washington are the only two presidents to do so.

Exploring Highland can take up to four hours but could be condensed. If you have a few extra hours, this is the thing to do—really a lovely trip. To learn more visit: [highland.org](http://highland.org)



## James Madison's Montpelier

James Madison, fourth president of the United States and father of the Constitution, lived at Montpelier, about a 45-minute drive from Monticello through rolling farmlands. In Jefferson's day, this trip took all day. The two were friends and would spend a few weeks together when they visited.

The house has undergone extensive reconstruction to help preserve the property. A visit to Montpelier will take your family on a deep dive into the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights as you learn about Madison's ideas of liberty and democracy. Expect an hour and a half for your visit. To learn more visit: [montpelier.org](http://montpelier.org)



*Madison's Montpelier*



*Monroe's Highland*





Frontier Culture Museum



## University of Virginia Campus

Thomas Jefferson considered founding the University of Virginia one of his three accomplishments for which he wished to be remembered. He conceived, founded and designed the University. If you want to complete your Thomas Jefferson deep dive, walk around the University of Virginia campus. Jefferson designed buildings that are still in use today. Visit his carefully designed and purposeful Academical Village, which includes dormitories that are still in use, and the Rotunda, originally a library and center of classical learning. To learn more visit: [uvaguides.org](http://uvaguides.org)



## Frontier Culture Museum

The Frontier Culture Museum is about 40 minutes from Monticello, in Staunton, Virginia. The drive crosses over the Blue Ridge Mountains, with some amazing views (especially heading east, going from Staunton to Charlottesville). It's very clear why the Blue Ridge Mountains have the word "blue" in their name!

The museum itself is most excellent: a collection of ten historic sites, each demonstrating a different aspect of American history, specifically as it relates to the Shenandoah Valley. Exhibits include a West African farm, a gorgeous 1600s English farm, an Irish blacksmith shop, and more. You'll see various heritage breeds of animals, and interact with several interpreters. To learn more visit: [frontiermuseum.org](http://frontiermuseum.org)



## Carter Mountain Orchard

Carter Mountain Orchard is just down the road from Monticello. They offer pick-your-own apples, and other farmstead treats (including cider donuts!). The line to get up the extensive driveway can back up at least a mile during fall weekends. To learn more visit: [chilesfamilyorchards.com](http://chilesfamilyorchards.com)



## The Lewis and Clark Exploratory Center

The Lewis and Clark Exploratory Center offers interactive exhibits and activities that teach the skills of exploration and a love of outdoors. If you're a fan of the Corps of Discovery, you can explore the full-sized replicas of the boats those explorers used. Located in the heart of Darden Towe Park in Charlottesville, the center has limited times each week when it's open to the public, but you can request reservations at other times. To learn more visit: [lewisandclarkvirginia.org](http://lewisandclarkvirginia.org)



## Historical Favorite—Michie Tavern

Michie Tavern (pronounced “Mickey” Tavern) is a fun family spot to enjoy a complete 18th century experience. Michie Tavern offers delicious southern midday fare offered by servers in period attire.

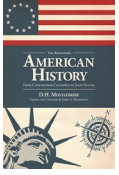
The Tavern is just a short distance from the entrance to Monticello and a unique dining experience not to be missed. After lunch, explore the General Store, Armory & Artifacts Shop and Metal Smith Shop located on the same property. Wander through the rooms of the tavern and pub, see some of the colonial games and period furniture, or sit on the front porch to take advantage of the amazing views of the Blue Ridge Mountains.



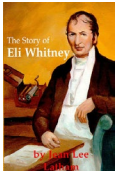
*Michie Tavern*



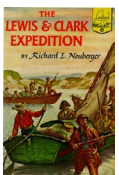
## Additional books to help you prepare for your trip:



**THE BEGINNER'S AMERICAN HISTORY**, by D. H. Montgomery. This book highlights stories of significant explorers, influential colonists, war heroes, leaders of frontier settlements, and inventions. A walk through history, this book details the birth of America, including a chapter on Thomas Jefferson.



**THE STORY OF ELI WHITNEY**, by Jean Lee Latham. The incredible story of the man who invented both the cotton gin and muskets with interchangeable parts. Learn the heartbreaking story about how his patent went awry during Jefferson's tenure as Secretary of State. But another interaction they had, later in life, will bring tears to your eyes. A wonderful story about the inventor, with significant cameo appearances by the statesman.



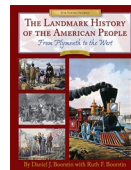
**THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION**, by Richard L. Neuberger. The amazing story of Lewis and Clark and their Corps of Discovery. Lewis was Jefferson's personal secretary. An amazing true story of adventure. Today, the seeds Lewis and Clark brought back continue to grow at Monticello.



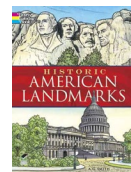
**SACAJAWEA**, by Joseph Bruchac. The Lewis and Clark story, told in the voices of Clark and Sacajawea, recreates the adventure and inter-cultural nuance of this legendary expedition. Recommended for 12 and older.



**THE GREAT LITTLE MADISON**, by Jean Fritz. The guest room at Monticello was called "Madison's room" by Jefferson's children, because the two men were such friends. Learn more about the Father of the Constitution and his friendship with Jefferson.



**THE LANDMARK HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE: FROM PLYMOUTH TO THE WEST**, by Daniel J. Boorstin. Lovely history book, covering parts of American history in unique and exciting ways. An excellent chapter on Jefferson in "Americans Declare Their Independence."



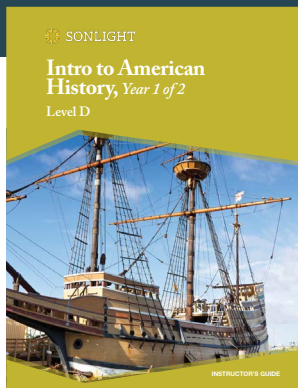
**HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDMARKS COLORING BOOK**. Color Monticello and 29 other famous historical sites.

These books and more can be found at  
[sonlight.com/american-history-books](https://www.sonlight.com/american-history-books)

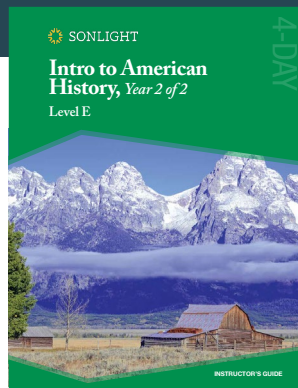


# AMERICAN HISTORY HOMESCHOOL CURRICULUM

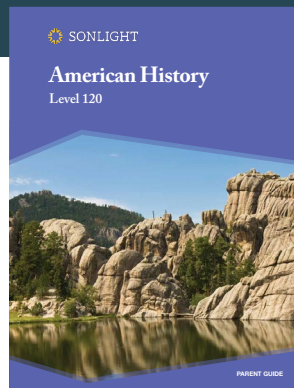
Learn about U.S. History through Sonlight's fascinating stories about the social forces and cultural influences that have made America unique. Biographies, historical fiction, and absorbing readers add depth to your studies as your family explores what makes the American culture so different from other parts of the world.



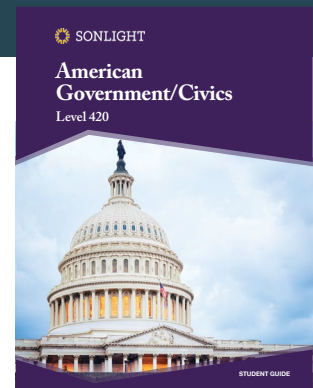
**Intro to American  
History, Year 1 of 2**



**Intro to American  
History, Year 2 of 2**



**American History**



**American Government**

Explore U.S. History Homeschool Programs  
from Sonlight at [sonlight.com/us-history](https://sonlight.com/us-history)

# THINKING ABOUT HOMESCHOOLING BUT NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

*Let Sonlight's fully planned, flexible curriculum guide the way.*



SONLIGHT

## TRY SONLIGHT FREE

Take Sonlight for a test-drive. You'll get a glimpse into a Sonlight education so you can decide if this exceptional, literature-rich education is right for your family.

[SONLIGHT.COM/FREE](https://www.sonlight.com/free)

100% money-back guarantee! LOVE TO LEARN LOVE TO TEACH™