



The Relaxed Home Schooler® Newsletter

September/October, 2015



Coming Up:

Sept 19, Mary Hood & Chris Davis are speaking at Bryan College, Dayton, TN. For info pwesolows4639@bryan.edu

Mary is teaching classes for teens this school year in the Hickory Flats area of Cherokee County, GA. For info email her mary.e.hood@gmail.com.

Set aside Jan 23 for an all day event at Red Top Mt State Park in Georgia. More details coming soon!

Mary is available to do Relaxed Home

Schooling Workshops, talks on

Common Core, SAT prep workshops

for teens, or workshops or keynote

addresses at homeschool conven-

tions. For info, go to our website

URL:

<http://www.archersforthe lord.org> and

click on the the "speaker's page" or

contact her directly at

mary.e.hood@gmail.com

Welcome! Hope we help you to relax and enjoy life at home with your kids!

From Mary:

Hello again!

Welcome to our e-newsletter. This issue is focusing on geography and related subjects, including the teaching of foreign languages and learning about missionaries.

As many of you newbies know, people love to accuse homeschoolers of being isolationists, who will never be properly socialized.

I have found, instead, that homeschoolers who instill a love of the greater world in their kids, through learning about other places, other cultures, and other languages, will often wind up living a much larger life than those who had more traditional educations. I know that has been the case for my own children, who have all turned into world travelers.

My youngest daughter wound up marrying a British citizen, and I have been traveling to England every two years or so since she moved there, I just returned from a trip to Germany, with a stopover in Paris, and another week enjoying the British countryside with our relatives there.

Everyone assured me that all the Germans would be able to speak English, but once I left Munich, in four days I only encountered one other person who did speak English! It was a good thing I had been practicing German for the past six months. I found it very exhilarating to be able to speak in another language and have someone else understand me. Of course, they then started speaking a mile a minute and I only caught a few words.

Anyway, I am really enjoying my new status as a world traveler. This coming year I'll be focusing on re-learning French while teaching it to some students in our new program for teenagers in Cherokee County. (This, hopefully, is the beginning of a new model resource center.)

In another two years, I hope to spend some time in the French countryside. My brief stopover in Paris reminded me I'm not really a city girl, but it also stimulated me to get out there among the country people and get to know that culture first hand.

Note that the special promotion we are doing on our website is continuing. Make a \$25 donation and receive the full RHS workshop series on MP3, PLUS the fall retreat with Chris Davis and my common core talk. You will also be entered into the drawing to win the free handmade quilt. We can really use your help right now as we try to raise money to buy land for a new resource center/small private school that can serve as a model for other areas!

Spotlight On: Resources for Geography & Missions

There are many resources out there these days for teaching geography. In this short piece I'd like to remind people of some of the standards that have been around for a long time.

Two of the mainstays of geography teaching for many years have been the ministries of the Hogan family and the Wiggers family. Maggie Hogan is the author of "Hands-on Geography", which taught geography in a fun, hands-on way. Her current organization is Bright Eyes Press, and her son is heading up the business end these days. She has also co-authored the "Ultimate Geography and Time Line Guide", with Cindy Wiggers.

Maggie's current website is www.brightideaspress.com

The Wiggers family has operated "Geography Matters for years. The Wiggers are also the force behind "Uncle Josh" Outline Maps", which can be purchased either in book form or on Cd-Rom. These are blank outline maps, and we used to use them in our classes at the resource center. They also publish the Trail Guides to Geography, for U.S. , World, and Bible geography.

Their website is www.geomatters.com or www.home-school-curriculum.com.

For reviews of these or other products, I also recommend that you familiarize yourself with Cathy Duffy's work. She has reviewed homeschool products for years. Check out cathyduffyreviews.com to learn more about these or other resources.

When it comes to teaching about world missions, there are two organizations that have provided us with interesting materials.

The first is the Voice of the Martyrs. The book that we made the most use of was "Window on the World: When We Pray, God Works", by Daphne Spraggett with Jill Johnstone. This book examines most of the world's religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Animism, from the perspective of a Christian worldview. There is interesting information about many countries, both the well-known countries like Russia, Greece, and Egypt, and the lesser known areas, such as Djibouti, Oman, and Qatar.

The book contains colorful pictures, and is a fantastic read aloud to elementary aged children. There are fun facts, maps, profiles of children who live in the areas, an overview of cultural and religious beliefs, and a chart that tells you some of the prayer needs in each region.

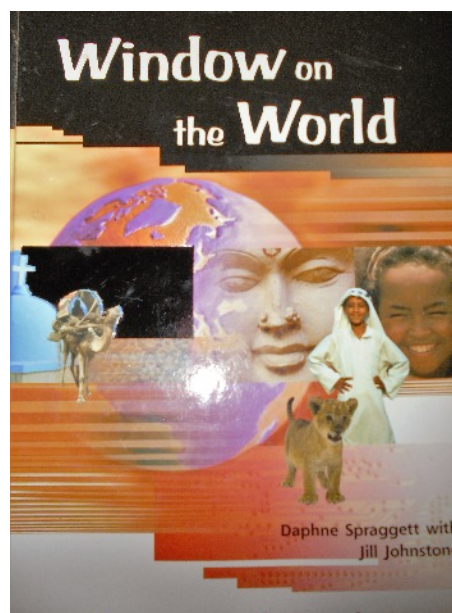
Be forewarned that not all of Voice of the Martyr's resources are necessarily appropriate for small children, even the ones that are marked as children's videos. Some of them may be way too intense for sensitive little children, such as the video about North Korea. If using anything other than the Window on the World book from their organization, I highly recommend previewing it yourself first.

Another great resource for teaching about world missions is the Youth With a Mission (YWAM) series of biographies. I credit their biographies, especially the one of Amy Carmichael, for igniting my own daughter's interest in traveling and ministering in foreign lands.

YWAM also has a series of biographies of historical figures. These biographies have one very important characteristic that is missing in many similar series: They are actually well written! I have already picked up one of these biographies for my own reading, and rarely am able to put it down before I have finished the entire book!

All of the above, of course, are recommendations on top of the "basics" for the teaching of geography and missions: a current globe and or globe beach ball; a set of current maps and relevant atlases, and geography puzzles.

When my son went to college, he found that he knew more geography than all the other students, and says he credits it to all the time he spent as a young child putting together map puzzles!



What I Did this Summer

By Mary Hood, Ph.D.

This summer I went on a trip that I once would have considered impossible! Several years ago my daughter, Laura, was married to an Englishman, and lives just east of London. I went there for her wedding three years ago. My older daughter and I arrived a week beforehand and helped with the setup of the wedding. It was very special, with the ceremony performed in a building that dated back many hundreds of years, and the reception held in a large tent in the English gardens behind her in-laws place. Afterwards, my middle son and I toured England together, going up as far north as Hadrian's Wall, and as far south as Wales, to visit the ruins of the oldest abbey in Great Britain.

But that was in England, where people speak English! And it was my son who was driving the car on the wrong side of the road! I was met at the airport by relatives, and never spent a single moment all by myself.

This past summer, I did something far more scary. I went, by myself, to England, for several days, and then flew to Germany all alone, to spend a week navigating a foreign country on my own. It was scary and memorable and marvelous!

After flying to London and spending the first weekend with my daughter and her husband, I took a bus to Stansted Airport and flew to Munich, Germany. As the plane was landing, I became unexpectedly choked up, thinking about my ancestors that left there in the 1870s. As far as I know, other than one cousin who was stationed there in the 1950s, I was the first person from my family to go back. During all that time, there were so many wars. My grandma couldn't have visited because it was WW 1. My mom couldn't have gone back because it was WW 2. I felt honored and privileged to be the one that got to finally return.

The first thing I saw in Munich was an Elvis impersonator in the airport! The second thing I saw was someone crooning Frank Sinatra songs. Munich was definitely a tourist town. People had predicted that most people would speak English, and in Munich it proved to be true. Every hotel and restaurant had at least one English speaker.

The second day in Munich, I finally got to show off all the German I had been studying for six months. An elderly German grandfather sat down on the bench next to me in the English Gardens (their version of Central Park), and he spoke no English at all. We had a conversation, entirely in German, for about a half hour. If that was the only thing I did all week it would have made it all worthwhile!

Also in the English Gardens, I got to watch surfers riding the artificial waves created in the river. The German teens reminded me how much teenagers have in common, regardless of nationality. They were absolutely fearless!

The picture on this page is of a sight I saw at Marienplatz in Munich. "Platz" means square. I went there to see the famous Glockenspiel figures (on the two balconies in the tower)... What I didn't count on was getting caught up in a demonstration!

At first, I thought it was a fair, because of the brightly colored flags and banners. Gradually, I started to be aware of the "Polizei" (police) and realized it was a demonstration. I believe it concerned the immigration crisis, and the crowd seemed to be supporting the right of the immigrants to come in.

I also visited the Viktualienmarkt, a large outdoor farmer's market. I sure wished I could buy some things, but all I had with me was my backpack. Later that day I took the train to Stuttgart. The European rail system is so much better than any mass transit here in the United States!

Stuttgart is an industrial city, which was heavily bombed in the war, and has very few old buildings. It was also much less touristy, and in four days, after I left Munich, I only found one person who spoke English! It was a good thing I did all that studying! My German was more than adequate to get around, and it taught me that I will never go to another country without spending a little time to learn the basics of the language first.

In Stuttgart, I rented a car, which was the scariest part of the whole trip! At least they drive on the same side of the road as we do in the states. I went down to the Black Forest, where I hoped to go for a ten mile hike. However, once I got there, my common sense prevailed and I turned around after the first ascent, because it turned out to be very remote, and I was, after all, totally alone! I did see a cute little German fawn up on the hillside! If it hadn't started thundering, I might have kept on going, but I think I made the right choice.

Leaving Germany, I took the train to Paris, where I spent four hours, eating in an open air cafe, and walking up the hill to Montmartre, the highest point in Paris. Then it was back to London, on the Eurostar train, through the chunnel, a mile underneath the English channel. My small taste of France made me want to re-learn French and go back. However, next year, an even greater adventure begins and I probably will stay in England the whole time. If all goes well, by next summer I will have a little British grandbaby!



From the Archives:
Geography, World Missions, & Comparative Religion
Excerpted from March, 2012 article by Mary Hood
In The Old Schoolhouse Magazine

When teaching geography, my goals have little to do with memorizing the names of countries and what they import and export. For me, it all begins with helping children develop a sense of adventure.

When my youngest son, Steve, was about 13, we traveled from Georgia to California by car. It was just the two of us, camping all the way. Between Atlanta and Fort worth, I was on familiar ground. However, heading out to cross the desert for the first time, I fully expected Apaches to come swarming out of the hills, due to a penchant for cowboy movies during my childhood. I was scared, but I went anyway, and was I glad I did!

One night we camped beside a stream in Mississippi. It didn't rain a drop but it was so humid that all of our bedding was soaked when we woke up. Two nights later, up in the high country of New Mexico, it rained hard in the middle of the night and never even made it through the screened top of my tent! That was a lesson in physical geography we will never forget.

In Arizona, I marveled at the way you could see three entire trains in one vista. Passing through the Sierra Madre, we thought of the story, "The Incredible Journey". On reaching the Pacific Coast, coming down through Topanga Canyon towards the beach at Malibu, we discussed Lewis and Clark and how they must have felt when they saw the Pacific Ocean for the first time. (On another trip, I was able to cruise the Columbia River gorge in Oregon with my daughter and her husband, and get an even better feel for that!)

Even in your own little area of the world, there are plenty of places to go. The best study of geography and history always comes from firsthand experiences. The second best, of course, is through vicarious experiences, such as travel videos, good books, and biographies of people from other times and other lands.

I've always believed in incorporating a study of comparative religions and cultures while studying geography during the middle years. By this age, children are not only capable of abstract reasoning, but they love to learn about other ways of thinking, to examine the logic behind other systems of beliefs, and to begin to deepen their understanding of their own faith.

For example, as we learned about India, we studied Hinduism and learned about the work of Amy Carmichael. We studied the basic beliefs of both the Hebrew faith and the Islamic religion when we learned about the Middle East and tried to understand the roots of the conflict there, which can be traced all the way back to the story of Sarah and Hagar.

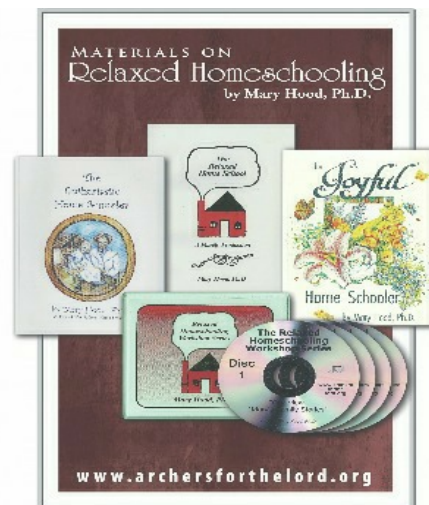
We studied Shintoism as we learned about Japan, and we discovered how the belief systems of the young Japanese Kamikaze pilots in World War II were rooted in their ideas of the afterlife. We studied Buddhism when learning about southeast Asia and tied it into a study of the architecture of their beautiful temples.

For years, our organization ran a resource center in the Atlanta area. All of the social studies classes were thinly disguised speech classes. In seventh grade, we began with group projects. As we studied an area in our World Missions and Geography class, we would also study the indigenous religions and cultures and the lives of any missionaries who worked in that part of the world.

As the students reached ninth grade, they began giving individual talks, choosing their own topics so that would be interested in the material, which helped ease their fear of public speaking.

Those classes prepared them for college life, stimulating their thinking, encouraging the development of a desire to reach the world for Jesus, and teaching them valuable speaking skills.

But be forewarned! My kids have now been to many other countries. I miss them but they are forcing me to become a world traveler myself. So hop in the car and start your own journey. That is the beauty of homeschooling. You can take your studies with you wherever you go!



All of Mary's talks are now also available as MP3s!