



Benjamin Franklin's father, a tradesman, had a small library in their home that Ben used to develop his famous curiosity. General George Patton's father read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with young George before he was 10, not only instilling a love for reading, but also an understanding of the human condition. The Wright Brothers' father gave them a "flying toy" and their mother taught them how to use tools when they were kids, which sparked their interest in flying and mechanics.

As parents, we have the ability to influence and shape the passions of our children. Personally, we want our children to grow up with a love of reading and an appreciation of history. These two practices will keep them grounded and informed in a world of ever-

increasing white noise.

To help foster these passions in my children, we make a deliberate attempt to educate them about and expose them to history whenever we get the chance, and there are three main ways we do this:

Visit History

My son has stood on the bridge where the first shots were fired during the American Revolution. He has pretended to be a knight in a real European castle and played on the banks of the Rhine. He has watched a baseball game from the Big Green Monster and stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Being in the military, we've been provided with unique opportunities to expose our kids to not only US history, but world history. But regardless of whether you are in the military, you can find historical landmarks to visit with your kids. They can be sites of local history that's unique to your town, state history, like your state's capital, or national history. This is a chance to show them that what they will learn about in school isn't just a story in a book, but is something real. If they can see that the capital where the laws are made is a real place with real people, they might feel more connected to the lessons they learn in school. Seeing a Civil War battlefield and the houses that were set-up as hospitals will make that long-ago war much easier to understand.

Play with History

When we visit these sights or when I travel, I always try to bring back something of historic significance. For instance, we grabbed a wooden long rifle from the gift shop in Concord, Massachusetts. I've grabbed a copy of the Declaration of Independence from the gift shop in the US Capitol. And we bought a wooden shield and sword from a gift shop in Germany.

Each time we do this, we take the opportunity to turn our playtime into a short history lesson.

By getting to interact with history not only at the site, but again when we get home, my son has had a chance to feel those old stories come alive and feel like he's part of them. Making history something that isn't perfect and untouchable makes it easier for kids to understand it, and to feel like it matters. Playing Revolutionary soldiers or Knights of the Round Table makes my son want to engage with history more, because he sees it doesn't have to be a boring old lesson or lecture. If kids can see history as something that's entertaining, they'll be more receptive to learning more about it in the future.

Read History

Since our kids were babies, we've made it a habit to read together each night. We've read the classics, like *Good Night Moon* and Dr. Seuss books, and we've also introduced some history as well. Our son is in second grade, and he now has developed his own taste in books, which is mostly history. Below are four different series we've tried out and that our son now enjoys:

[Who Was? A Series of Non-fiction Books for Kids](#)

My son found this series on his own, and it covers important people and events in history, with each book introducing its subject in a fun way. We started with [Walt Disney](#), and since then he's learned about the [Founding Fathers](#), [D-Day](#), the [San Francisco Earthquake](#), [Stan Lee](#), and the [Super Bowl](#). He told us he likes this series because he gets to learn about a topic he did not know much about. Each book is about 100 pages long, and we finish one every two weeks.

[The I Survived Series](#)

This series is historical fiction and introduces kids to a lot of the biggest headlines of history. The author has written books about the World Wars, the American Revolution, the sinking of the Titanic, and many other big moments in history. The story line of the books brings history to life, and he's able to comprehend what is going on by experiencing the events through the characters' eyes. This isn't one of his favorites, but many of his friends love these books, and their parents do too.

[Classic Starts Series](#)

When our son was 5, we read this series' versions of the [Iliad](#) and the [Odyssey](#). They did a great job of making these books approachable and engaging for children, and my son picked up on the storyline quickly. We also read [The Story of King Arthur and His Knights](#), and a few others. The series has versions of all the great literary classics, and they're available for less than \$10 each.

[Founders Force Series](#)

This is a series written by an [Army officer and his wife](#). They mix history with a comic book style to produce a great message for kids. For instance, in [Winged Warrior and the Flag](#), George Washington has superhero-style wings, but kids learn about respect for the American flag and what its colors represent. These books are appropriate for children as young as 3 years old, and my son recently read two books in the same night because he enjoyed them so much.

A Gift They Can Take With Them

By teaching our children to love reading and history, we're giving them a great gift: They're learning to be curious about their world and to explore the stories they hear to learn about the truth. In a world full of constant conflicting reports on what matters, we are teaching our kids to engage their curiosity, look to history as a guide, and take their development

into their own hands. And by making sure they have fun doing it now, we're teaching them that learning and education are not just necessary, but entertaining. Finally, if they not only understand the need to learn, but can enjoy it, they'll be set for life.

Do you have an experience or book that helped introduce your children to history? If so, please share in the comments section below!

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