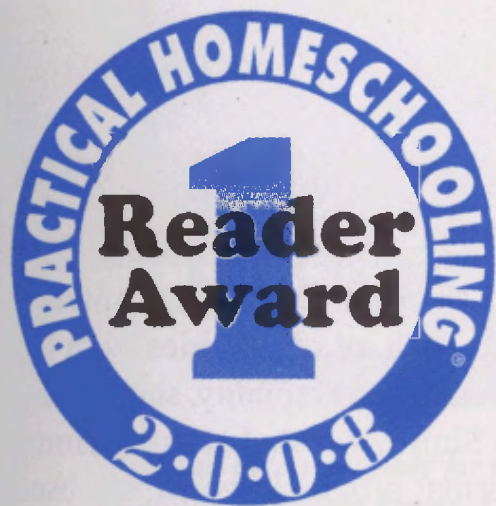




FEATURE

2008

Practical Homeschooling Reader Awards

It's time once again to discover which products your fellow homeschoolers have chosen as the very best. But first, let's thank those of you who cast the thousands of votes—whether online or using our printed ballot—which made this all possible.

As promised, we picked a ballot at random to win a copy of Master Books' splendid edition of Ussher's *The Annals of the World*. The prize winner is Chalee Giles of Jerome, ID. Congratulations, Chalee!

As always, readers rated all the products they voted for from one to ten on the basis of product quality. So you'll be learning which products have the highest user satisfaction ratings, not just which products happen to have the most users.

We also thought you'd enjoy a peek "behind the scenes" at some of the award-winning companies, so we've included interviews with the folks behind four of them. Enjoy!

And now . . . the winners of the 2008 Practical Homeschooling Reader Awards, by category:

Grade Level Curriculum

KINDERGARTEN/ READINESS/PRESCHOOL

First Place Ruth Beechick books (Mott Media)

Second Place My Father's World Preschool/Kindergarten (My Father's World)

Third Place TIE! Sonlight Kindergarten (Sonlight Curriculum, Ltd.), Five in a Row & Before Five in a Row (Five in a Row)

Honorable Mention Get Ready, Get Set, Go for the Code (Educators Publishing Service), Rod & Staff Preschool/Kindergarten (Rod & Staff), Sing, Spell, Read, & Write (Pearson Learning), KONOS Curriculum (KONOS, Inc.)

ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

First Place *The Three Rs* by Ruth Beechick (Mott Media)

Second Place TIE! My Father's World, Sonlight Curriculum

Third Place TIE! Five in a Row & Beyond Five in a Row (Five in a Row), KONOS Curriculum (KONOS, Inc.)

Honorable Mention World of Adventure (Learning Adventures), Rod & Staff elementary curriculum (Rod & Staff), BJU elementary curriculum (BJU Press)

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

First Place Robinson Curriculum (Oregon Institute of Science & Medicine)

Second Place Sonlight Curriculum

Third Place Veritas Press

Honorable Mention BJU middle school curriculum (BJU Press)

HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

First Place Robinson Curriculum (Oregon Institute of Science & Medicine)

Second Place Sonlight Curriculum

Third Place BJU high school curriculum (BJU Press)

Honorable Mention Heart of Wisdom, KONOS History of the World (KONOS, Inc.), Tapestry of Grace (Lampstand Press)

Bible

BIBLE CURRICULUM

First Place Beginnings/Questions (Answers in Genesis)

Second Place TIE! AWANA (Awana Clubs International), Bible Study Fellowship

Third Place TIE! Doorposts materials, BJU Bible courses (BJU Press), Chronological Bible Cards (Veritas Press)

Honorable Mention The Young Peacemaker (Peacemaker Ministries), Little Hearts for His Glory (Heart of Dakota), Discover 4 Yourself Inductive Bible Studies (Harvest House)

Language Arts

GRAMMAR LANGUAGE ARTS

First Place TIE! Professor Klugimkopf's Old-Fashioned English Grammar (Oregon Institute of Science & Medicine), Daily Grams (Easy Grammar Systems), Easy Grammar (Easy Grammar Systems)

Second Place Winston Grammar (Hewitt Homeschooling Resources)

Third Place Rod & Staff Grammar (Rod & Staff)

Honorable Mention Editor in Chief (Critical Thinking Company)

HANDWRITING

First Place TIE! Getty-Dubay Portland Italic (Continuing Education Press), Reason for Writing (Concerned Communications), Handwriting Without Tears (Handwriting Without Tears)

Second Place TIE! Draw•Write•Now (Barker Creek Publications), StartWrite (IdeaMaker)

Third Place TIE! BJU handwriting courses (BJU Press), Classically Cursive (Veritas Press)

Honorable Mention A Beka handwriting courses (A Beka Book), D'Nealian curriculum (Scott-Foresman & Company)

LITERATURE

First Place Robinson Curriculum (Oregon Institute of Science & Medicine)

Second Place TIE! Beautiful Feet Books, Sonlight Curriculum

Third Place Vision Forum

Honorable Mention Teaching the Classics (Center for Literary Education), Mantle Ministries, Five in a Row series (Five in a Row), Progeny Press study guides

PHONICS PROGRAM

First Place Explode the Code (Educators Publishing Service)

Second Place *The Three Rs* by Ruth Beechick (Mott Media)

FEATURE

2008 Practical Homeschooling Reader Awards

Third Place A Beka reading curriculum (A Beka Book)

Honorable Mention Alpha-Phonics (Paradigm Company), Phonics Pathways (Jossey-Bass Publishers)

PRIMERS & READERS

First Place Sonlight Readers

Second Place Pathway Readers (Pathway Publishers)

Third Place Bob Books (Scholastic)

Honorable Mention McGuffey Readers (Mott Media), Christian Liberty Academy Readers (Christian Liberty Academy)

my), Rod & Staff Readers (Rod & Staff Publishers), Dr. Seuss books (Random House), I Can Read series (HarperTrophy)

SPELLING

First Place Professor Klugimkopf's Spelling Method (Oregon Institute of Science & Medicine)

Second Place Spelling Power (Castlemoyle Books)

Third Place TIE! BJU spelling curriculum (BJU Press), Phonetic Zoo (Institute for Excellence in Writing)

Honorable Mention Rod & Staff spelling curriculum (Rod & Staff), A Reason for Spelling (Concerned Communications)

VOCABULARY

First Place Robinson Curriculum Vocabulary Exercises (Oregon Institute of Science & Medicine)

Second Place Vocabulary from Classical Roots (Educators Publishing Service)

Third Place Wordly Wise (Educators Publishing Service)

Honorable Mention Word Roots (Critical Thinking Company)

WRITING COMPOSITION

First Place Andrew Pudewa Writing Seminars (Institute for Excellence in Writing)

Second Place Learn to Write the Novel Way (KONOS Connection)

Third Place TIE! WriteShop (writeshop.com), Wordsmith (Common Sense Press) Writing Strands (National Writing Institute)

Honorable Mention Write Source 2000 (Great Source Education Group)

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Oregon Institute of Science & Medicine

Winning the most awards by far this year is the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine (OISM). OISM has been on our Reader Awards list since 2005. Their CD-ROM-based curriculum has also been on our Software Awards (now i-Learn Awards) list since 2000.

Those of you who have been PHS readers for a long time are already familiar with the founder of OISM, Dr. Art Robinson.

Famed among homeschoolers for his "Robinson Method," which involves teaching children to learn independently as early as possible, Art was a PHS columnist some years ago.

Art's background is that of someone naturally drawn to academic excellence. After earning the Ph.D. in Chemistry from U.C. San Diego, he was immediately invited to join their faculty and taught there for a number of years while also working at Stanford. Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling and Art founded a biomedical research institute, later named the Linus Pauling Institute. After falling out with Pauling (when Art's attempts to verify some of Pauling's wilder theories about the proper dose of Vitamin C for humans actually ended up disproving them), Art moved with his wife, Laurelee, to a farm in Oregon, to provide a better life for their children. In 1980 they founded their own small research institute, the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine. In 1988 Laurelee died suddenly of a rare disease, acute hemorrhagic pancreatitis, leaving behind a commitment to homeschool their children but no full-time teacher to do so. At that time, the Robinson children were 1½, 6, 6, 8, 10, and 12.

The story has been often told of how, 11 years ago, Art's children "decided to clone their study system" by scanning their books and study materials onto 22 CD-ROMs. This became the famous Robinson Curriculum, which has now been used by more than 70,000 students,



From left to right: Dr. Arthur Robinson, Matthew (20), Noah (29), Bethany (26), Zachary (31), Arynne (28), and Joshua (26) with his wife, Fama

"an estimated 3 percent of all homeschooled students in the United States." (They also have since added CD-ROMs of out-of-print Henty books and newer products for teaching spelling and vocabulary.) What you might not know is that Art launched the first serious blow to the "deadly man-made global warming" crowd. In 1998, covering the first Kyoto meeting, the *Wall Street Journal* asked Art to write an editorial, which he did with the help of his son, Zachary. The response from those with a vested interest in the global warming scenario was vicious. "We realized their program had only three elements," Art says. "First, all scientists agreed with them. Second, they were trying to save the planet. Third, anyone who disagreed was just trying to make money. So we decided to show there wasn't a scientific consensus." First, Zach, two astrophysics students from Harvard, and the famous physicist Frederick Seitz wrote an article



reviewing all the relevant atmospheric literature. Then the Robinsons started sending out petition requests, asking those in the scientific community who were *not* convinced of the man-made global warming scenario to stand up and be counted. (At www.oism.org/project you can see the review article, petition, and list of over 30,000 signers.)

In spite of the furor it has created, the petition project was only a sideline for Robinson. His major inter-

est is research into the biochemical "clocks" that are built into proteins, attempting to find the cause of aging. "In the last 7 or 8 years with Noah, Zachary, and the other children working on it, we've made a lot more progress," Art says. His proudest moment: co-authoring a scientific paper with all six children that was published in the *Journal of Peptide Research*.

Art also is the moving spirit behind *Access to Energy*, a newsletter founded by the late Czech refugee (and electrical engineering professor) Petr Beckmann. Originally intended for a scientific readership, in later years it also adopted an "explaining science to the layman" focus. Now about 75% of the readership is scientists and 25% is laymen. Donations from a yearly appeal to the subscriber list allow OISM's work to continue without government or "big business" support.

Now, the big question. How have the Robinson children turned out?

"I'm not trying to suggest we're perfect," says Art, "but so far the six Robinson children have managed to remain solid Christian young people who are academically successful." That is a *really* big understatement. Consider this list of academic achievement:

- Zachary, age 31, holds a B.S. in Chemistry from Oregon State University and a M.S. in Chemistry and D.V.M. (doctorate in veterinary medicine) from Iowa State

University (ISU). He currently works part-time on OISM research as well as in veterinarian practice.

- Noah, age 29, holds a BS in Chemistry from Southern Oregon University (SOU) and a Ph.D. in Chemistry from Caltech. He is employed full-time by OISM.
- Arynne, age 28, has a BS in Chemistry from Bethel College and is now in her third year of work towards a DVM at ISU.
- Joshua, age 26, and the only married Robinson so far, has a BS in Mathematics from SOU and is now in his second year of study toward a Ph.D. in nuclear engineering at OSU. His wife, Fama, is a homeschool graduate.
- Bethany, age 26, holds a BS in Chemistry from SOU and is now in her second year of study toward a Ph.D. in nuclear engineering at OSU.
- Matthew, age 20, is now completing his second (and last) year of study at SOU toward a BS in Chemistry. He is currently considering his graduate school options.
- Zachary, Noah, and Matthew all skipped two years of college, entering as juniors and requiring only

two years to complete their Bachelors degrees. Noah completed his PhD at Caltech in three years (it normally takes five years or more).

Over the years, I've spoken to just about every Robinson kid on the phone. They all speak fondly of their life on the farm, with all its chores, animals, and outdoors adventures. The 250-acre spread was a great place to grow up, with its sheep, cattle, horses, and dogs, not to mention the wild animals and birds. Inspired by the books of the late Jeff Cooper, when they got old enough the Robinson children all learned to "ride, shoot straight, and tell the truth"—from Cooper himself. Theirs was a genuine old-fashioned American childhood, with the "old" classic books you'll find in the Robinson curriculum, the old-fashioned farm life, and the "can do" American spirit of innovation always handy in their very own on-site research center.

Art Robinson on College Education

"In a homeschool, one can obtain a better education. The dilemma: how to handle college. First, the dangers are not in most math and science courses. Physics, chemistry, math, and engineer-

ing just teach truths about the physical world. America is desperately short of people who are graduating in those subjects. Biology, however, has a lot more propaganda.

"Second: spend as little time in college as possible. Two of my boys got their Chemistry degrees in two years. This can be done through taking Advanced Placement exams. Prepare well, as if they are SATs. With good scores on AP exams, an ordinary student should be able to skip at least one year of college and possibly two.

"Third: do not live in the dorms and dunk yourself in the environment more than necessary. Even Caltech, still one of the best places in the country, has degraded greatly. When I took Matthew to the dorms, I was repelled by the noisy, animalistic atmosphere. My children have either lived at home or rented a house near the campus. Having a good study environment is vital. Students should not always be in the midst of the craziness that will drag them down.

"I think what my children accomplished illustrates a point: stay away from the subjects that mostly consist of brain-washing, don't stay in college longer than necessary, and stay in a place where you can control the environment. You're there primarily to study."

MUSIC CURRICULUM

First Place Simply Music

Second Place Music Ace Deluxe (Harmonic Vision)

Third Place Kindermusik (Kindermusik International, Inc.)

Honorable Mention Bastien Piano series (Neil Kjos Music Company), Homespun Videos (Homespun Tapes)

Audio and Video

EDUCATIONAL AUDIO/CD SERIES

First Place TIE! "Little Bear" Wheeler history cassettes (Mantle Ministries), Adventures in Odyssey (Focus on the Family)

Second Place TIE! Your Story Hour, Jim Weiss tapes (Greathall Productions)

Third Place Jonathan Park Audio Adventures (Vision Forum)

Honorable Mention Patch the Pirate

series (Majesty Music), Audio Memory kits (Audio Memory)

EDUCATIONAL VIDEO/DVD SERIES

First Place Answers in Genesis videos

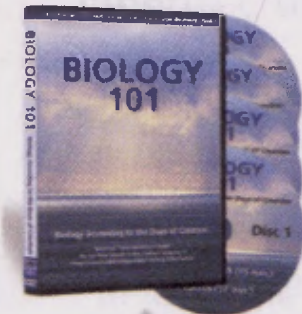
Second Place TIE! Moody Science videos (Moody Institute of Science),

Creation Science seminar (Creation Science Evangelism)

Third Place TIE! Animated Stories from the Bible & American Hero Classics (Nest Family), Leap Frog Factory series (Leap Frog)

Honorable Mention DIVE Into Math and Science series (DIVE Into Math)

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