



Notebooking!

Yes! You CAN Be A
Binder Queen!

Workshop Syllabus On CD!

By Cindy Rushton



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Notebooking! Sure To Addict You Too!



By Cindy Rushton

Excerpted From *Homeschooling Today Magazine*

My earliest memories of childhood go back to our little country church. I would sit every Sunday snuggled up close to my mother. In order to keep me quiet (no comments please!), she would write out names or words for me to copy. As the years went on, writing was an important part of my education. However, my ideas of my "life career" went along the lines of Dental Hygiene (Don't ask me why! I guess I was not a mom yet! The idea of mouths now makes me sick!)

Well, until years later. My husband's grandmother served as my mentor. She and I spent countless hours together. She stepped up to her calling as a Titus Two mentor, who influenced me toward my life calling as a wife, mother, and spiritual mentor. She taught me how to love my husband (Could you get a better teacher than a grandmother who thought of him as her favorite grandchild—we all thought we were!) ...how to love my children (Sure couldn't be a greater person to teach this! They were her favorite great-grandchildren—starting to sound repetitive?)...and how to be a godly homemaker. We canned together, farmed together, cooked together, ministered together, and, our favorite pastime, sewed together. Although she was never a writer, she was my single greatest influence in writing.

Every time I would visit Mamaw, I would HAVE to carry a notebook along just to take notes of all she would teach me along the way. As the years went by, I stored away many wonderful ideas and tips. She was an incredible mentor. She had sewed professionally for years. It did not take very long before I began to sew for my family and professionally as well. My addiction to sewing and embroidery soon led me to our local Smocking Guild. They sent out a monthly newsletter that I was soon nominated to write and publish. Of course, I could not just send out the newsletter without tips and tidbits about sewing. Yes, you have guessed. I shared hundreds of the ideas that Mamaw had passed down to me. She loved to see her ideas coming through the newsletter. In fact, she loved it so much that she would pass her issues around to her friends.

One day we were visiting and she shared that she was getting tired of sharing her

copies and was afraid that she would not get them back for her "notebook." Of course, at the time that went over my head, probably because of her idea that she continued to share with me in this conversation—she wanted my tips and tidbits printed in the local paper! After informing her that "I" was NOT a writer, I have no idea what happened to my sanity, but I was convinced by this little woman to approach the paper about doing a sewing column. The rest is all history...or Language Arts for ME too!

Of course, you need this background to know that Mamaw Alma Lee Rushton was the very first Binder Queen (Now, my loving title since she has passed away!). The little blurb about getting the newsletters "back for her notebook" did not even alert me to the fact that she had collected ALL of my writing—my newsletters, my personal letters to her, my handwritten recipes, and, later, ALL of my newspaper articles. The thought that someone loved me so much to keep all of my writing in a notebook, using expensive sheet protectors to protect them as if they were precious to her, still sends chills up and down my whole body. She was not just someone. She was very, very special to me. Plus, she was one of the greatest women I have ever known. I knew her. I am so touched that she loved me and what I wrote so much that she kept it all and kept it all dear to her.

As I think of Notebooking, I have to tell you that if you are not using this approach in your homeschool, you are in for a big treat! There is something precious that can transform any writer into an "addicted writer," especially when they see that their work is precious to those they love the most. This one idea can revolutionize your homeschool. It has ours! This one idea can take your most reluctant writer and turn him into a researcher, who loves to write! Want to know more? Let's take a closer look...

Who Can Notebook?

Who? What ages? Well, this is perhaps the most exciting part about Notebooking! All ages can develop a notebook. High Schoolers can use the researching and recording skills developed through Notebooking for their daily lessons and then for the rest of their lives. Elementary age struggling writers will LOVE Notebooking. Even your toddlers will be thrilled to keep their pictures and "copywork" in their very own special notebook. Oh, even YOU will treasure keeping your own notebooks.

Oh, that is not all! It does not matter if your young writer is a whiz, your writer will be challenged daily by the skills that must be used with Notebooking. If you are a bit reluctant because your child already seems already a bit allergic to their pencil, your child is sure to love this one! In fact, I can almost promise that if you will just give

Notebooking a try (What can you lose if the other ideas are not working?), you will find a different child within a year! Yes, this is one other thing that I love about Notebooking—it meets all of us right where we are. All abilities can be challenged through Notebooking. All interests can be developed completely. All learning styles are drawn to Notebooking. Notebooking is for anyone, well actually it is for everyone!

Why Notebook???

I have always been a "why" person. Convince me of "WHY" I am to do something and you have got me for life! Well, I want for you to know just a few of the perks that we have found along the way as we have used Notebooking for all subjects of study within our home. I will list and briefly explain a few...

- ♥ **A place for everything and everything in its place!** There is something deep within me that **MUST** have a place for everything **AND** must have everything in its place. In the busy Homeschool, this has been my greatest struggle. I like to **KNOW** where things are and that I can be sure to find them when I need them. I also like for things to stay nice, especially if my children have worked so hard to finish their work with excellence. Hands-down, Notebooking is the best and easiest way to **KEEP** your child's work nicely in a place that it can not only be found, but can also be viewed at any time by any one. A simple 3-ring binder can be used, by the child, to keep records naturally (and easily)...to help them see their progress... to teach them to be neat and orderly...and to encourage and teach the disciplines that are crucial for them all of their life (record-keeping, researching, thinking and discerning, organizing, categorizing, outlining, in-depth studies, writing). What amazes me the most is how effective this simple discipline is in training and developing the gifts of all children regardless of which age you begin using Notebooking or what level their current writing abilities may be.
 - ♥ **Perfect for each child and each family...**I don't know if you are as particular about the material that your children study, but this was one of the greatest concerns that we had as we began to Homeschool. The problem with this is that **EVEN** in the Homeschool market, there are materials that are in opposition to what we believe on a wide variety of topics and subjects. If this does not make things tough enough, materials are often written for specific ages and grades instead of to people of all ages and grades, making the material either "dumbed-down" or completely boring. Then, to top-it-off, we have run across great materials with completely inaccurate information. What to do, what to do???
- Oh! Notebook!

In order to teach our children our beliefs AND what others believe (and why we DON'T believe the same way), we have to search for material from a wide variety of sources. Notebooking is the perfect place to compile all of the information so our children can form their own beliefs and convictions based on a very thorough foundation. We don't have to worry about age or grade segregated materials either. We can take out the great information (pictures, charts, terms, quotes, and stories), compile it in our notebooks, so all is used most effectively regardless of age. We even use the materials that have great pictures yet, have very little or sometimes NO truth in them. All can be used to build a notebook...well, all under our direction, which is yet another of the benefits of Notebooking!

Wherever your child is...whatever may concern you...Notebooking gives the flexibility to teach to the child, not the book. Notebooking is so versatile. It goes the pace of the child. It can easily be added to any curriculum, especially those that could use a breath of life. Even those hard to document subjects or unit studies can be recorded in notebooks. Not to mention, LIFE can also be recorded in notebooks! Since education really consists of life, Notebooking documents the true education that takes place in the home.

- ♥ **Notebooking is FUN!!!** One of my struggles as we began Homeschooling was the guilt I felt when we REALLY had fun Homeschooling. Where on earth would my children learn the "fact of life" that life is not always fun??? (The answer to this question is CHORES!) Where would they learn to continue working even when it was tough...especially if they never had a hard time with their lessons? (The answer to this question is CHORES!) How could they learn from a wide variety of subjects unless those lessons were dictated by a curriculum? (This answer is coming soon!) Can education be effective and challenging IF it is fun?? (This answer is YES! Glorious YES!)

Well, well...this brings us to another advantage to Notebooking: Notebooking is FUN! The notebooks are wrapped around areas of interests NOT subjects. In fact, subjects are not even the focus. Instead, subjects are blended into study, in context, so they make sense instead of being disjointed and artificial. Since subjects are taught as part of the topic, children begin to see that learning is part of life—real life! They see that life is FULL of learning! Learning becomes a lifestyle, instead of in a box or to just pass a test.

In our home, we have found that our children have certain individual interests.

If those interests are the means that we use to introduce new material, we can pretty much teach anything and be assured that they will develop a love for that new topic. Want a picture of what this looks like??? Our oldest son, Matthew (now fifteen) absolutely LOVES anything to do with History, the military, and the "why" behind anything (even Phonics!). We have found that this VERY "boy" boy loves poetry...if it is historical in nature. He loves art... well, IF it depicts historical events (His favorite artists are Mort Kunstler and Norman Rockwell...both known for capturing American Life on canvas!). He loves music...especially if it represents ideas (He has collected lots of different songs from the Civil War for his notebooks. He loves them for daily Copywork AND believes that they tell the REAL story behind History!! Cute huh??) Your child is wired the same way. Regardless of your child's interest, you can reach them through the discipline of Notebooking. ANY topic is game... even, well, ESPECIALLY if it is fun!

- ♥ **No Artificial Deadlines!!!** Remember writing assignments in high school and college? What is your stomach doing as you think about them? Probably churning as you remember those late nights living off of caffeine just to "buy" enough hours in the day to make the deadlines. Even now, I am not a "deadline" writer. My best work has to be mulled around...thought upon...lived...loved...and made a part of ME. Deadlines take away the heart of topics, and eventually the heart of education as well. In fact, they teach us that the product, even if it is shallow and undeveloped, is more important than the process or the relationships with the areas of study. Want true success? Want to develop a writer who loves writing?? Try the discipline of Notebooking!

Notebooking follows the pace of your child. Whether your child comes to a skill that is challenging him to his limits or your child needs to find a real challenge in his education, Notebooking meets them where they are and gently challenges them onward without frustrating them! Notebooking, also, allows for growth.

An example of this comes from our family. We have many notebooks that have developed over the years. There are some that have had seasons of intense focus...followed by YEARS of dormancy...only to come back with such a passion that they have developed into workshops, magazine articles, books, and even several series' of books! There are also many that have developed during a study that is now complete. Those are no less special. It is just that they are not "life" studies as others seem to be. In fact, some have been just for personal edification and for personal study. We keep them ALL! They are all

beloved! They grow with us...and sometimes they even let us outgrow them. They are still beloved friends along our journey! Each has helped us to be more and more creative. Each has nurtured our delights and interests and in turn, continued our self-education.

- ♥ **Encourages In-depth Studies...** When I began Notebooking, it had nothing to do with Homeschooling. It was as a practical discipline for my own studies. I began as a young wife to study in depth what the Bible said about being a godly wife, mother, mentor, and woman. I just naturally began to compile information along the way. Where did I keep it? In a three-ring binder of course! If I had not had a place to put little goodies that came along my way, I would probably have never continued the study for the last 15 years. I am also pretty certain that I would not write as much as I do had I not been able to find the information in "its spot" after I collected it. I probably would have grown very discouraged to not have a good system for keeping all of my dear information.

Our children are wired the same way. Notebooking is a discipline you will find in common with many of the greatest writers of all time. I love that in Scripture we see God commanding that the kings be trained by copying His Law in a book of their own so that it could be with them all of their lives (Deuteronomy 17: 18-20). Oh, it is not just for training...it is also a practice kept by God Himself (see Malachi 3: 16). Can't you just see heaven? Full of shelves and shelves of binders???? Hoot! Hoot!

My dear friend, Notebooking is not just a technique that has been thought up over the last few years. It is eternal. It can continue as long as they would like to continue with a notebook or a topic. It is not limited to certain ages or grades, and of course, not to just one project or just in accompaniment to projects that come along the way. Notebooking can be a life discipline. No scope-and-sequences...focus on subjects...or hurt feelings from grading their hard work with red pens and abundant criticism. Instead, your children can develop a discipline of collecting gems and great information. They can dig deeper in areas of interest. And imagine...this covers all of those subjects naturally and EASILY!

- ♥ **A Unique, Individual, Personalized Education!** As I think of all of the benefits of Notebooking, I have to say that of all of them, I think this one is the most precious to me. Notebooking encourages a completely unique, individual, personalized education. There are NO topics off limits. ANYTHING can be a topic. If it can be a topic for a career or a book, it is

game.

Think of those topics most mothers find their most reluctant writers "into"... baseball, dogs, history, sewing, racing, cooking, travel, games, on and on!! All of these can be used for notebooks (Did I leave out your child's topic?? Trust me, I probably listed it in my book!). There are no limits! Notebooks can adapt to your child's personality, creativity, and talents. There is NO right way to create a notebook NOR any wrong way to make a notebook. This is not to be vague, rather it is to encourage independence, creativity, and originality!

So...Ready, Want to Know How To Get Started???

All right...fired up yet? Ready? Chomping at the bit to get busy building those notebooks???

Here are some easy how-to's...

1. **Gather Your Supplies...** Your supplies can be as simple as a 3-ring binder per child, plastic sheet protectors, and a pencil per child. The great thing about Notebooking is that you can make this whatever you would like! Over the years, Notebooking has worked so wonderfully in our home that we are constantly on the lookout for different and fun supplies. Since I am a Scrapbooking nut, we love trying out all of the new Scrapbooking supplies during our daily Notebooking time. Of course, you do not have to go this wild...but, I am sure you will want to! If you have no idea where to begin, see our shopping list for quick ideas of our favorite supplies!
2. **Make Them Accessible...** Set aside a place for your materials and a place for your children to work. There is something wonderful about having a place for everything and everything RELIABLY in its place. The work in the beginning is well worth the time during the school year. When we begin a new study, I go through my books copying all pages that would make great coloring pages to go along with our Copywork and Narrations. I also reduce many pictures or copy all thumbnails that would be great for our History Timelines. We have a shelf that contains books that I find along the way with great Copywork that I would like for my children to add to their notebooks on those "no ideas are flowing" days. Just having everything there, ready to go, is such a blessing on those busy mornings. Plus, I have learned over the years that this is the best way to really utilize the resources that I have on my shelves.

Just file away any pages or pictures in either Manila envelopes or file folders. If the children know where they are, they are more than likely to use them on their own. Also, you will want to use anything else that you have in your home. I keep our paints, papers (plain and colored cardstock and 20lb paper; writing paper; etc.), glues, templates, cutting utensils, rulers, markers, pens, pencils, etc. on a shelf and in plastic bins by our dining table (where we do our daily lessons). They are in their spot and that spot is close by. If we want to encourage our young writers, we must give them free access to the best materials. The benefits are unbelievable!

- 3. Turn Your Children Loose!** Yep! This is all that is left! Inevitably, when I teach workshops on Notebooking, I can almost see the brains of mothers clicking away with one tough reality, "IF ONLY I HAD MORE TIME TO DO THIS!" Oh, beloved! Notebooking is not another thing for you to do! The hard part is almost over. The hard part is learning what this is all about and how to get everything together so we can turn our children loose!

When we began Notebooking, I copied a Bible Verse a day as a model for my son to copy. As he copied his verse, he would place his page for the day in a plastic sheet protector and add it to his notebook. The next day, his page for that day would slide in behind that page. The next day, he would add another page in another page protector. We built the entire notebook; not specific divisions or subjects. We chose not to divide by subjects because we wanted a nice full "product" built over time. As we added to the notebook each day, I could see the delight building in my young writers. They would sit and just flip through the pages. They loved seeing success. They loved seeing the notebook build up.

As time went on, my son began to find and copy poems that he liked, songs from church hymnal or from his history lessons. He began a collection of art prints. He added maps that highlighted journeys. At the end of the first year, we had a bulging notebook and a young writer that had gone from reluctant to really excited! The notebook quickly became "his own" notebook. At the end of the year, we divided our notebooks (there was no room to add anything else) into obvious divisions. We had a Bible Notebook, a History Notebook, a Poetry Notebook, and another Copybook. All of these have continued and

several have divided into other notebooks through the years. As your children dig into their interests, they may have other Notebooks that develop. Let them go! You will learn more about your children as they learn more about topics AND writing!

So, What Do You Think?

Easy as A, B, C? Want to give it a try? If I could ask every homeschooling family to do just one thing, it would be to just give Notebooking a try. I am sure that if you try just a bit, you will be addicted too! So, think about it. Pray about it. Then, get those supplies. Set aside a spot for your supplies. Then, turn those budding young writers loose! Want to know what will happen? They will be addicted too!



About Cindy Rushton...

Cindy Rushton is the wife of Harold Rushton and the mother of Matthew (15) and Elisabeth (12) who have always been homeschooled. Cindy lives in the beautiful mountains of North Alabama in her dream cedar cabin. Cindy is the author of over 33 books, Bible studies and homeschool resources. She edits and publishes two magazines, *Time for Tea* and *Homeschooling The Easy Way*. She has become a beloved and favored speaker for homeschool conventions and retreats across our country. You may contact her through email: time4tea@hiwaay.net; her website: www.cindyrushton.com; or by calling the Rushton Family Ministries order line: 1-888-832-6906.

Notebooking! Yes! You Can Be A
Binder Queen Too!
Featuring Cindy Rushton

Testing! Testing! Testing!

Hey! CAN *I* Do This Notebooking Thing???

Why On Earth Notebooking???

Down To The Nitty-Gritty...

Featuring Cindy Rushton

What Do I Need???

A Quick Shopping List...

How Do I DO This???

Step-By-Step Through Creating Your Own Notebooks...

Hey! What's Legal? What ALL Goes Into a Notebook???

Help for Snags Along The Way...

My Shopping List...



By Cindy Rushton

Excerpted From *Homeschooling Today Magazine*

- ♥ **ONE Notebook Per Child...** Our favorite notebooks are the 3-ring vinyl notebooks that have the clear pockets on the outside so the children can design their own covers. We usually choose the white notebooks (Either 1 or 1 ½ inches thick, although some of the more beloved studies have required larger notebooks.) and fill it full of plastic sheet protectors. Then, all our children have to do is add their work each day.
- ♥ **Plastic Sheet Protectors...** Plastic Sheet Protectors are absolute MUSTS! They work great at protecting your child's work from spills, rips, and smudges. They work great if you are using 3-ring binders. Especially for preserving pressed specimens. We use the 8 ½ by 11-inch sheet protectors. We buy them by the box at Sam's (the best price at the writing of this book). I choose the NON-GLARE type, because they are more durable. They do not scratch easily and they are not as *brittle as the shiny ones*.
- ♥ **Paper!!!** You can find bright colored, often acid-free cardstock paper at your local office supply store for VERY reasonable. We choose a wide variety of paper depending on what we need...
 - o **110 pound white...**for art (great for watercolors and markers and glue projects) and timeline notebooks.
 - o **110 pound colored...**for notebook covers... for sturdy pages... for mounting specimens... for mounting pictures.
 - o **Any pound...any color!** Great for adding a touch of color to any page!
 - o **Plain lined paper...**use paper for their level of handwriting.
 - o **Printer paper...**for printing off of the computer and Internet.

- ♥ **Staplers...** We keep the regular staplers AND the heavy-duty booklet staplers. These are especially great for making booklets!

- ♥ **Camera...** Yes, you can use those disposable cameras if that is your only option. However, this year I found something that is simply priceless...digital cameras! Not only do you save money on film processing, but you can also paste-and-clip all of your pictures into documents that your children are writing. Printing is as easy as the click of a button. NOW...if you have a nice camera, you can still have your film processed in most locations so that you can request a disc with the pictures on it. Those pictures can be used as clip-and-paste into your documents as well. This unleashes those children who are hands-on into a whole new world of writing. If they are your children who are constantly building, cooking, creating, or tinkering; they can document what they are learning through Scrapbooking the process. Yes, Scrapbooking in a BINDER!! Get those cameras out! Turn those little ones loose!

- ♥ **Other "Essentials"...** You are sure to already have lots of these. Just round them up and keep them accessible for your children. What "essentials" am I talking about? Different kinds of scissors, hole punchers, highlighters, pens, pencils, markers, watercolor pencils, sketch pencils, mounting tapes, mounting corners, glue stick, stickers, rubber stamps, paper cutters, colors, paints, and of course, Scrapbooking books and magazines!

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Taking Your Writer From Reluctant To Researching!

Featuring Cindy Rushton

The Process of Learning...

Hey! Is This Child Normal???

How We Really Learn...

The Importance of Delight-Directed Learning...

What IS Delight-Directed Learning??

Getting To Know Your Child...AND Their Delights!

Using Delight-Directed Studies to Encourage Your Young Writers....AND They Don't Even
Know They Are Learning Language Arts!!!

Taking Delights and Turning Them Into Notebooks...

Ideas, Ideas, Ideas! There's Gotta Be ONE For You!

Quotes You Will Love..

"He was not more than twelve or thirteen years of age, when he read with pen in hand, and note-book in which he jotted down references to particular facts and statements, and thoughts inspired by the book read. He continued this practice through life. In his mature life, he wrote to a young lady as follows:--'I would advise you to read with pen in your hand, and enter in a little book short hints of what you find that is curious, or that may be useful; for this will be the best method of imprinting such particular on your memory, where they will be ready, either for practice on some future occasion, if they are matters of utility, or, at least, to adorn and improve your conversation, if they are rather points of curiosity; and, as many of the terms of science are such as you cannot have met with in your common reading, and may, therefore, be unacquainted with, I think it would be well for you to have a good dictionary at hand, to consult immediately when you meet with a word you do not comprehend the precise meaning of.' The foregoing advice was given one hundred and fifty years ago (NOW 250!), but it is just as good counsel for readers to-day as it was then. Indeed, change of circumstances, which we have partially considered, adds force and value to the advice. It is the only way of reading to the best advantage, for it fixes the attention, assists method, strengthens purpose, and charges memory with its sacred trust."

William Thayer, **Gaining Favor With God and Man**

"I have learned to rely on the margins of the books that I read as being themselves my best note-books. Of course, I am speaking now only of the volumes which are my own property. These I am, perhaps, scandalously free in marking, and so every ordinary volume that I have in my library becomes a note-book. Let young men—and, we would add, young ladies, too—be taught to keep commonplace books, and especially to converse concerning what they read."

Reverend Joseph Cook

William Thayer, **Gaining Favor With God and Man** describes Rev. Cook, "This counsel of Mr. Cook should have some great weight, coming, as it does, from one of the most remarkable men of our age, or any age...He was a great reader...He read science, literature, history, biography, and even metaphysics, in his boyhood. In academy and college, he kept up his habit of systematic reading. The thorough manner which he read made him master of every subject. Even now, reading is scarcely second to what is called study in his method of public instruction. He is a lecturer, known the world over. But for reading, he would not have dreamed his present field of labor, and, but for it, he would not continue now to be a public instructor."

William Thayer, *Gaining Favor With God and Man*, "The advantage of note-books over marginal references is so great that the latter can scarcely be recommended to young people who own few of the books they read. But the excellent habit of reading critically, with pen, or pencil and note-book in hand, should be insisted upon everywhere; for it is good for both young and old, male and female, learned and unlearned—all classes who read."

Language Arts... The Easy Way!

Featuring Cindy Rushton

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest, [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For my yoke is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne."

Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified Bible)

Easy? Oh, Yes!

Old Paths...

Inspiring Our Children Toward Greatness Using Great Literature...

Narration...

Copywork and Dictation...

Creating Your Own Books...

Letter Writing...

Email...

Journaling...

Scrapbooking...

Newsletters...

Essays...

Fiction Stories...

Biographies...

Non-Fiction...

Articles...

Speeches...

Play-Writing...

Poetry...

Music Composition/Hymn Writing...

Research Papers...

Bible Study...

Note-Taking...

What Do You Think??? EASY? YES!

Language Arts... The Easy Way!



By Cindy Rushton

Excerpted from *Homeschooling The Easy Way Magazine*

Well, it has now been 9 years since we took the most frightening step ever in the education of our children. It all began over a period of a few months...

I began Homeschooling probably like many of you. I brought into our Homeschool all of my education. (Scary! I know, but I have to tell you that I absolutely LOVED school! Yep! Even Grammar!) By that, I mean that *all* of those ideas that were tried out on me during my school years I brought into my Homeschool without any questions about "why" we would do it that way or if it "could" even work. I had loved school and my children were destined to have the best SCHOOL ever in my home!

You can imagine my dismay on the day that I sat my darling Second Grade genius down at his desk to write a letter to his grandparents, only to find myself in a full scale war. We had just moved to another state. He HAD to write a great letter to them. After all, WE Homeschool...they were not too fond of the idea...and this brilliant child could fill in the blanks of his workbook perfectly! I looked at my ever so precious child and realized that instantly something had happened to his fingers (and his brain!). He seemed to have an allergic reaction that instantly spread from his fingers to his head, leaving him staring into space and only seconds away from bursting into tears (with me!).

If that were not enough, it was as if all of the sudden blinders came off of my eyes. I realized that he really hated writing of any kind. The poor little thing would rather do any chore than sit down and write. I knew that something had to be done.

In the meantime, you have to know that God had already begun a total revival in my own life. For the first time ever, I had realized the awesome call of being a godly wife and mother. As a result, it seemed that on a daily basis, God was showing me more and more areas of my life that He wanted for me to bring to Him for His way. You probably know what was next. Yep! Homeschooling! God wanted for me to come to Him for His way of teaching my children. As I cried out to Him, He began to beckon to me...

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest, [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief and ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For my yoke is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and My burden is light and easy to be borne." Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified Bible)

I was certainly "laboring." The burden to make this child write was getting heavy quick. The last thing I could do, especially with Grandparents wanting a great letter from this little darling, was rest. The child was sending me off the deep-end quick! Let's suffice to say that the words "harsh, hard, sharp, and pressing" were perfect descriptions of my teaching techniques and ideas for dealing with the little critter! As you can probably guess by now, the very first area of Homeschooling that He began to show me a better way, His way, was in the area of teaching Language Arts.

Since then, I have to tell you that everything has changed! That same son has shelves full of bulging notebooks on topics as varied as Sailing, Navigation, Civil War battles, the Great Men and Women of the Civil War, Russian vocabulary, Latin and Greek Roots, Poetry, on and on. He now has several of his own books in print (more on that in a minute!). He has written articles for publication (by the request of other magazines!). He is even writing articles and books with me at this time. Yes, it is almost like a dream come true. All because God's ways DO still work!

Does God have something to say about Language Arts? Yes, beloved, God has much to say about teaching Language Arts. In fact, of all of the subjects that we teach to our children, you would not believe how much the Bible addresses Language Arts. Of all the books in print on teaching Language, the Bible is the best and easiest to implement in our homes, even today. Want to see some of the ideas from long ago? Let's dig in. You are sure to find that teaching Language Arts can be easy too!

Read Alouds...

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Philippians 4:8

Probably the simplest, yet most effective technique for teaching our children is the

most obvious—great literature. Literature has power. Literature is effective. So powerful and so effective that it is the means that God used to reveal the truth of His love and grace to mankind and the medium He chose to transform lives and the way of thinking of people throughout history! Yes, books have a special power. Power to transform lives. Power to turn our children's heart away from the Lord...or power to inspire them toward greatness.

Just as our Heavenly Father gives us the very best in literature, the Bible; so, we can give our children the best that literature has to offer. We can give them the books that teach them what is true... honest... just... pure... lovely... good report... virtuous... and praiseworthy. We can introduce them to "friends" that will forever encourage them on their life journey. We can give them access to the thinkers that know, really KNOW, their topics so well that only a book could hold all of their thoughts on that topic. Yes, we can give our children the very best literature, introducing them to topics in a way that can not be beat all while we inspire our children toward greatness with great literature.

I am very thankful that early into our Homeschooling adventure, God wooed me toward the use of great literature as the core of our Language Arts studies AND as the foundation of our entire Homeschooling curriculum. Even now that our children are in junior and senior high, the core of our curriculum for all subjects that we teach our children comes from the library and from our own growing collection of great books.

As we have included more and more great literature as the foundation of all of our studies, we have found many, many simply wonderful benefits. One of the most distinct is that our children learn much faster and remember what they have learned much longer as we read real books on the subject. This does not mean that we have to read EVERY book on a topic being studied. Just a few well-chosen books are usually ample for any great study. As time has gone on, our children help us more and more choose books for themselves. Another great perk for basing education on great literature. Not only is it great for our children to help us plan and implement studies now, but the as they learn how to research and study topics of interest, they are more likely to be prepared and trained to continue learning for the rest of their life.

We begin our new studies by introducing our children to a biography on a person, a book about a time period, books written by a certain author, or even a non-fiction book on the topic. If there is enough interest, we turn the children loose and they can pursue the topic deeper. Many of our greatest studies began with just one simple book, developed into HUGE notebooks on the topic, and now have become part of who we are as a family. This is where we find education really happening...when our children

dig deep for themselves on various topics that come along.

Through the years, my children have found topics that we studied for only a week, sometimes two. Other topics begged for us to "dig in" for a month or a semester. Still other topics have become part of "who" we are with our children continuing them for years (Matthew's Civil War study has continued since 2nd grade and now he is in the 10th grade!!). As the children are cut loose to dig deeper, real learning takes place. Soon there is no need for textbooks. In fact, so much more is learned through great literature that you will want more time to dig into other great books rather than dry, dull textbooks.

You may say, "How do you choose what they read?" I have to tell you that it has gotten so much easier as time has gone by. At first I had no idea which books were great and which ones were going to disappoint us, or even downright offend us. I made many bad choices, but the good news is that God is a Redeemer and He can redeem all of our blunders! In fact, as I look back, there are many books that we read in the early years that were just plain silly. They almost seem like a waste of time as I look back. However, God has shown me that more is learned as we read aloud than just "ideas" and "worldviews" on a topic. When a precious mother sits down to read a great book with her little ones, she is teaching them that she really cares about them...that she values the time she has with them...and that families tie strings through the memories that they make, even the silly ones.

You may have no idea where to begin choosing great literature, but you can rest knowing that you are not going to mess up. Not too sure? Need a little help? Well, one of the things I recommend is to read for yourself. Dig through articles, catalogs, books. Get online and ask your email discussion list for some of their favorites. There is great value in mom-to-mom mentoring, especially since so many of us come into Homeschooling with no idea of what we should and should not include in their education.

Another recommendation that has helped me along the way is that I use many helpful resources with great lists of recommended books. I usually buy at least one resource each year that lists books for each age of my children. Some of my favorites are *Who Should We Then Read*, *Books Children Love*, *All Through the Ages*, *Hand That Rocks the Cradle*, *Let the Author's Speak*, *Honey for the Child's Heart*, *A Family Program For Reading Aloud*, and *Great Books of the Christian Tradition*. I have found great recommendations for wonderful books in magazines and newsletters. I just jot down the suggestions so that I have ideas when I go to the library. As a matter of fact, my personal reading list has been printed and is available through our

company. Just look for *The Never-Ending Rushton Reading List*. It is a simple list that can help you find real books for teaching all of the subjects to your children. If you need more help with books that inspire your children toward greatness, I finished a book last year (*Inspiring Our Children Toward Greatness Using Great Literature*, see our specials in this issue for more information) that will help you to not only find great books, but also how to use literature across the curriculum. There are many, many other great resources out there. Just find one, use it fully, and enjoy the blessing of great books.

Perhaps your budget is extremely tight and books seem a bit out of reach. Try some of my favorite resources, which happen to be free! Check out home school catalogs! Most of the home school family-run curriculum companies carry only the books that they would read themselves to their own children. You can find great ideas intermingled throughout their catalogs that will help you teach your children with ease! I have found many catalogs through the years that have helped me choose better books for our family than even those listed in book lists. Since this has been such a help to me, one of our "musts" for our catalog is that each catalog or issue of our magazines "must" include detailed descriptions and reviews that can help others to find the books that will be perfect for their family. Other catalogs are the same way. Check those out and you are sure to find some great book suggestions!

Another way to find great books is through your local librarians. I have found some of my most favorite treasures from recommendations of my librarians. Through the years they have seen us so often that they know what we are looking for! They have been an incredible resource for ideas of great books. They have recommended many wonderful books on the topics of study, many that I would have never normally come across. As I have told them what we were studying, they have even bought the books that I was drooling over, great for our tight budget! What I love about them is that it really saves me money as well as my valuable time not to mention having another point of view to help me along the way!

One other thought...Don't forget about the incredible resource you have in your friends and relatives! My mother gave me the entire set of *Little House Books* that we had read as children! What a treasure! Don't forget the resource of your memory. Chances are that you do not remember that 5th grade textbook, but you probably remember that wonderful book your mother read for Christmas that year...that was a real, living book. Great books are all around for you to discover so do not waste your time with substitutes!