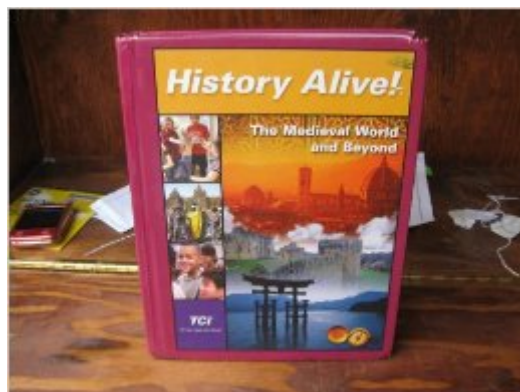


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# The Medieval World And Beyond, Student Edition (History Alive!)



## Synopsis

This interesting book discusses the medieval world and beyond which is a great addition to a history class.

## Book Information

Series: History Alive!

Hardcover: 469 pages

Publisher: Teachers Curriculum Institute; 1st edition (January 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 158371376X

ISBN-13: 978-1583713761

Product Dimensions: 10.9 x 8.4 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (33 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #20,662 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Medieval #3695 inÂ Books > Textbooks

## Customer Reviews

I teach 7th and 8th grade social studies in California and I use these books (I have a copy of the 6th grade one as well). I have a credential in history, a BA and an MA in history and a minor in religious studies. A couple of points about the religious aspects of these books: the books address

\*California's\* state standards. You can find those standards here: [...]. People should read the state standards before they comment on the content of the books, because the content of the books is informed by the state standards. For example, sixth grade state standards require children learn about the religions that arose before 70 CE - specifically, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and some of the other Asian faiths. The sixth grade book contains many chapters on those religions. The seventh grade state standards require students continue to develop their understanding of Christianity (introduced in 6th grade) and then learn about Islam and Protestantism. Islam is covered as part of a unit on the Middle East and the role of Islam in shaping African cultures is covered in the African unit. Chapter 3 of the 7th grade textbook discusses Catholic Christianity in Europe. Chapter six of the 7th grade textbook introduces the Eastern Orthodox Church. Chapters 31 and 32 cover the Reformation and Protestantism. Combined together, the 6th and 7th grade textbooks give a pretty good and unbiased account of major world religions \*as per the California State Social Studies Standards.\* If people are really upset about

"those liberal teachers taking X teaching into the classroom," the first place they ought to look is the state standards, and then if they're upset, they should talk to the state department of education because we are \*required by law\* to teach the standards, which are what is covered in the Social Studies textbooks. Talking to me about how I cover Islam isn't going to get you anywhere, because I'd rather piss off a parent and keep my job than fail to teach to state standards and lose my job. Now onto these books, themselves. Most of my kids have great difficulty with these books because most of my kids can't read at grade level and the textbook authors assume that students at a 7th grade level are familiar with things like, oh, monasteries and convents. These kinds of words are introduced without glossary support, and they form serious stumbling blocks for English Language Learners and low readers. I could wish TCI would put out textbooks for both proficient readers and struggling readers so that my kids aren't daunted by the vocabulary. Factually, the books aren't actually that bad. I rarely catch them in an egregious mistake. They \*are\* somewhat biased, especially the 8th grade textbook, which at times goes way overboard celebrating some of our nation's bigger historical figures. For example, there's absolutely no need to refer to Captain John Smith as a "natural leader." The book also includes myths like "if he doesn't work, he shouldn't eat" and says that those words encouraged men to work, so they got to eat - this isn't true. Even after working, the men continued to starve for 10 years until tobacco was successfully grown and shipped to England. There's definitely some sort of corruption of history in the name of promoting civic pride going on, but this gives my students and myself a springboard for discussing the foibles of textbooks so I get by. I \*do\* like the fact that the textbook authors have attempted to inject women into history (mostly in the 8th grade textbook) and that there are sections in the back for maps and primary sources (here again, mostly in the 8th grade books). My biggest problem with the series is the workbook, which stinks on ice. The workbook is, in places, designed to be used to complement the TCI curriculum, which involves a lot of experiential exercises that for many teachers (including myself) are impossible to manage. I did succeed in turning my classroom into a fort for the feudalism exercise, but it took a very long time to put the exercise together and to clean up afterward. This means that, unless I'm willing to commit to a lot of extra work, the workbook pages are largely useless. They're also hard to grade because they're double-sided. Either I rip them out of the workbook and the kids don't do the off side, or I have to carry 180 workbooks around and grade them. Too heavy! The other major problem I have is a lack of Spanish support. A lot of my kids speak Spanish. Most also speak English, but their parents only speak Spanish. It's very hard for my parents to help their kids with their homework if there's no Spanish language textbook. I actually came to today to try to buy one, but none are available. Instead, I've been typing the textbook into

Google Translate, but there's only so much of that I am willing to do. TCI - if you read these things, give us textbooks in Spanish, Arabic, Tagalog, and Chinese, please. Folks can argue as much as they like about education in English only as a moral point, but from down here in the trenches, we'd appreciate development of a lingually diverse curriculum. Idle hands do the devil's work and their hands would be a lot less idle if we could fill them with textbooks they could actually read (and therefore have no more excuses for not reading them).

I still can't get past this line of the book: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal..." Regardless of what we may want the Declaration of Independence to say, the fact is that this is NOT what it says. It says "men", not "people". If the authors of this book stoop so low to blatantly revise a document so central to the formation of this country, why should I assume they should be trusted with properly teaching the finer points of human history? They could have at least done something to indicate where they revised it. "History Alive", indeed. Alive and changing right before our very eyes. No thanks.

This is a terrible choice for a public school. It reads like Sunday school for Moslems - requires 7th grade children to memorize all sorts of myths and dogma- Mohammed's supposed interactions with the angel Gabriel and memorizing the five pillars of Islam- sanitized of course. Religion certainly is important to study as part of medieval and modern history- but not dogmas and laws. Unless of course we study the real meaning of jihad, since jihad is the underpinning for all the terrorism and middle east wars around the world and at home. This book is written by a known Muslim apologist and hater of Israel and the west. He is a proponent of worldwide sharia law and this book is part of an attempt to do this from within. For example- Christian crusaders were called "enemies" in this book yet he omits that Muslims had been trying to invade France and Spain for hundreds of years prior to the crusades. Both were bloody and wrong but he left out what muslims did. And what they do to this day.

I love the approach that this curriculum takes. I first encountered it over 10 years ago when I was student teaching, and it really does get students fired up about history. As a history lover myself, I am always excited to see this subject getting the attention it so richly deserves. Americans as a whole do not know their history very well, because it is too often taught as a dry list of dates and events to be memorized. As much as I love this approach, the text itself is filled with historical inaccuracies and errors, and as other reviewers have mentioned there is not enough attention given

to Christianity. I am not saying we need to evangelize in our schools, but the amount of information given about the other religions, such as Islam, should equal the amount of information given about all of the other world religions, especially those that have had major impacts on world events. I am not going to list the errors I discovered, other reviewers have mentioned a few. Anyone can examine the text and the historical record and come to the same conclusion I did. The errors may seem slight and not important to many, but as an amateur "historian" I feel it is vital to get the facts right, even if they do not go along with the culture of today and may even be offensive. We need to look at history for what it was based on the historical record, not what we think it ought to have been. Rewriting any historical document, even if it is only one word, in order to make it more pc to the modern reader is simply unethical from an academic point of view, and it makes one wonder what the agenda of the textbook company truly is: passing along factual information for the reader to make their own informed assessments, or promoting a particular world view of their own. Even if you think that the world view they are promoting is good and correct, the history classroom of a public school should no longer be an instrument for propaganda, that era should be left in the past.

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