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*"The California Story" poem, Around California with  
Children's Books Answer Key, Nature Drawings,  
California Timeline Images, Contributors*

# WELCOME TO AROUND CALIFORNIA WITH CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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**T**his study is designed to be a literature approach to the fascinating history of California for the intermediate student fulfilling the fourth or fifth-grade requirement. While *Around California with Children's Books* is a history course, it also includes nature study, art, poetry, geography, music, a culinary connection, and gentle Socratic questions to prompt discussion and discovery. Beautiful drawings of plants and animals familiarize students with the unique gifts of nature indigenous to this state, cultivating respect and wonder for the natural world.

## THE LITERATURE

All of the books chosen for this study are either classic works, award-winning books, or newer selections with stories integral to California's history. As an intermediate-level course, chapter books make up the core of the study, enhanced with picture books featuring the earliest Californians, the explorers, settlers, and the many colorful and inspiring characters of the Golden State. The chapter book notes feature questions to prompt discussion and cultivate comprehension. Answers are in the back of the guide. Remember that these questions are designed to create an atmosphere of engagement with the story on a deeper level, not to provide correction. Everyone responds to literature in a unique way, so allow those expressions to emerge naturally. Comprehension questions for the picturebooks are also included, but the answers to these questions are in the notes themselves. All of the books are intended to be read aloud. If you have purchased the book pack that accompanies this guide, everything essential to the study is provided. For those wanting to expand the study, Library and Biographical Connections will enrich the course as the student expresses interest. Plan to visit your library a week or so before starting a new section to ensure that additional books are available. Use Interlibrary Loan whenever possible. Suggestions for vocabulary words are included in some lessons. If desired, set aside a number of pages at the back of the student notebook as a Glossary. Here the student can record vocabulary definitions.






# Using This Guide

This guide contains approximately 80 lessons and should be completed over a full school year. A year-long study will require two or three lessons per week. This guide is modeled after the Charlotte Mason methodology of four steps: read, reason, relate, and record. This method is designed to cultivate the student's ability to read, reason out what they have heard through discussion, relate that to other things they know, and finally to record key aspects of their discoveries. At the intermediate level, this is done gently through questions designed to help the student engage with what they have just heard.

A sample day using *Around California with Children's Books* might look like this: open the guide and read pages 1-4 with your student. Then look over the "Books Used in the Study" section to become familiar with what is ahead. Turn to the fly-leaf of the book *The Story of California* by May McNeer. Spend time observing, discussing, and exploring the elements of this California map. Gather the supplies listed on page three of the guide and select a place where they can be kept together with the books for the study. Beginning with Lesson One, read the literature selection. Use the question prompts to generate discussion. Then turn to the Nature Connection and select an animal to study. After learning some basic facts about the animal, have the student cut out, color, or paint the picture with watercolors. Paste it in the notebook. Record a stanza from "The California Story" poem in the notebook. Select a book from the Library Connection in the guide and read and discuss.

This guide also contains ideas for field trips around the state of California. Visiting any of the California Missions near you will enhance this part of the study. Many of the missions also have exhibits devoted to the California Indian tribes of that region. There are historic places connected with some of California's early explorers like the Jedediah Smith State Redwoods in Northern California. You can visit John Muir's home in Martinez or Sutter's Fort in Sacramento. Columbia State Park near Sonora has an original gold-mining town with gold panning, carriage rides, and blacksmithing exhibits. There are countless ways to bring the study of California alive for you and your student. Allow the joy of exploration to lead where it will.

Each day following the guide will be a little different. Be flexible, allow for spontaneity, and remember that this guide is just that—a guide, and is not meant to be sacrosanct, or followed rigidly. Feel free to ramble off the trail at times as you are inspired to explore, discover, and enjoy the journey of *Around California with Children's Books*.

A photograph of a person standing in a forest of tall redwood trees. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants, and is holding a long stick or staff. The trees are very tall and have thick trunks. The forest floor is covered in green foliage and ferns. The lighting is dappled, with sunlight filtering through the canopy.

Jedediah Smith  
Redwood State Park



# Notebooking

*Around California with Children's Books* incorporates Charlotte Mason's emphasis on journaling as a key to effective learning. The journal allows the student to record what they are learning and a place to paste artwork, maps, historical figures, nature drawings, and poetry. The notebook is designed to feature the student's best work, with rough drafts completed beforehand.

The notebooks that are included in the *Around California with Children's Books* Pack have been specially designed for the quality they will bring to your student's journaling experience. The notebooks are made from acid-free paper that is beautifully smooth to the touch, does not bleed through, and is lined for either beginning writers or students learning cursive. With a sewn binding, this notebook lays flat when opened, significantly facilitating all the writing and pasting work in the course. Students who are practicing beginning cursive should skip lines between text to keep writing neat.

The artwork, maps, and nature drawings should be pasted into the notebook with a very light film of rubber cement. This adhesive will ensure the pictures lie flat and don't peel up later. Make sure to have newspaper or scrap paper laid down to apply the cement. Demonstrate using rubber cement with your student and always supervise the process.

Finally, make the journaling part of the study a gratifying experience. Print out unusual items for the student to embellish and decorate his notebook. Keep the actual writing to a minimum and use oral reports as a vital part of the Charlotte Mason paradigm of relating—a skill as valuable as visual evidence of written work.







## I. THE ICE AGE

Thousands of years before man arrived in California, Columbian mammoths, saber-toothed cats, giant ground sloths, Merriam's teratorns with massive wingspans, dire wolves, and many other fascinating creatures, occupied stretches of the region. In Los Angeles, due to the rich oil deposits in Rancho La Brea, these extraordinary beasts were trapped in large tar pits that preserved their bones for thousands of years. From these fossilized animal remains, we can see into the prehistoric past with remarkable clarity. To explore this period, read some titles from the Library Connection. If possible, consider a field trip to the George C. Page Museum of the La Brea Tar Pits. For those living in Northern California, PBS Learning Media has an informative video on the Pleistocene era titled *Ice Age Bay Area*. Fossils from the period found in California can be viewed at the UC Berkeley Museum of Paleontology. Student tours can be arranged by calling the museum and scheduling a docent tour. And a 10-minute video on the Pleistocene era is available by searching: *The Earth 10,000 Years Ago / 10,000 Subscribers Special*. A documentary that may hold a child's attention is *Ice Age Death Trap* by NOVA. It is available on YouTube.

### LESSON 1

Read pages 1-13 of *The Discovery of the Americas* by Betsy and Giulio Maestro. Study the map on pages 6-7. Discuss how changing climate caused the migration of people from Asia to North America. What were the various tribes seeking? (mainly large game) If you own a globe, have your student locate this region independently and then discuss. When large game animals died out, how did the people's lives change? (The people became less nomadic and started to live in more settled villages.) Once the people began to settle in tribes, what significant change began? (Some tribes began to cultivate food. This was not common among most California tribes, who largely remained hunter-gatherers.)

### LESSON 2

Read *Once Upon a Mastodon* by Bonnie Worth. This book makes a perfect introduction to many of the Pleistocene animals studied in the section. When you finish, begin working on the Nature Connection. Have the student cut out, color, and paste each animal in the notebook. Read aloud Part I of the poem, "The California Story" (pg. 77) by Rea Berg, included in this guide. If desired, have the student copy one 4-line stanza of the poem into their notebook each day.



## Nature Connection

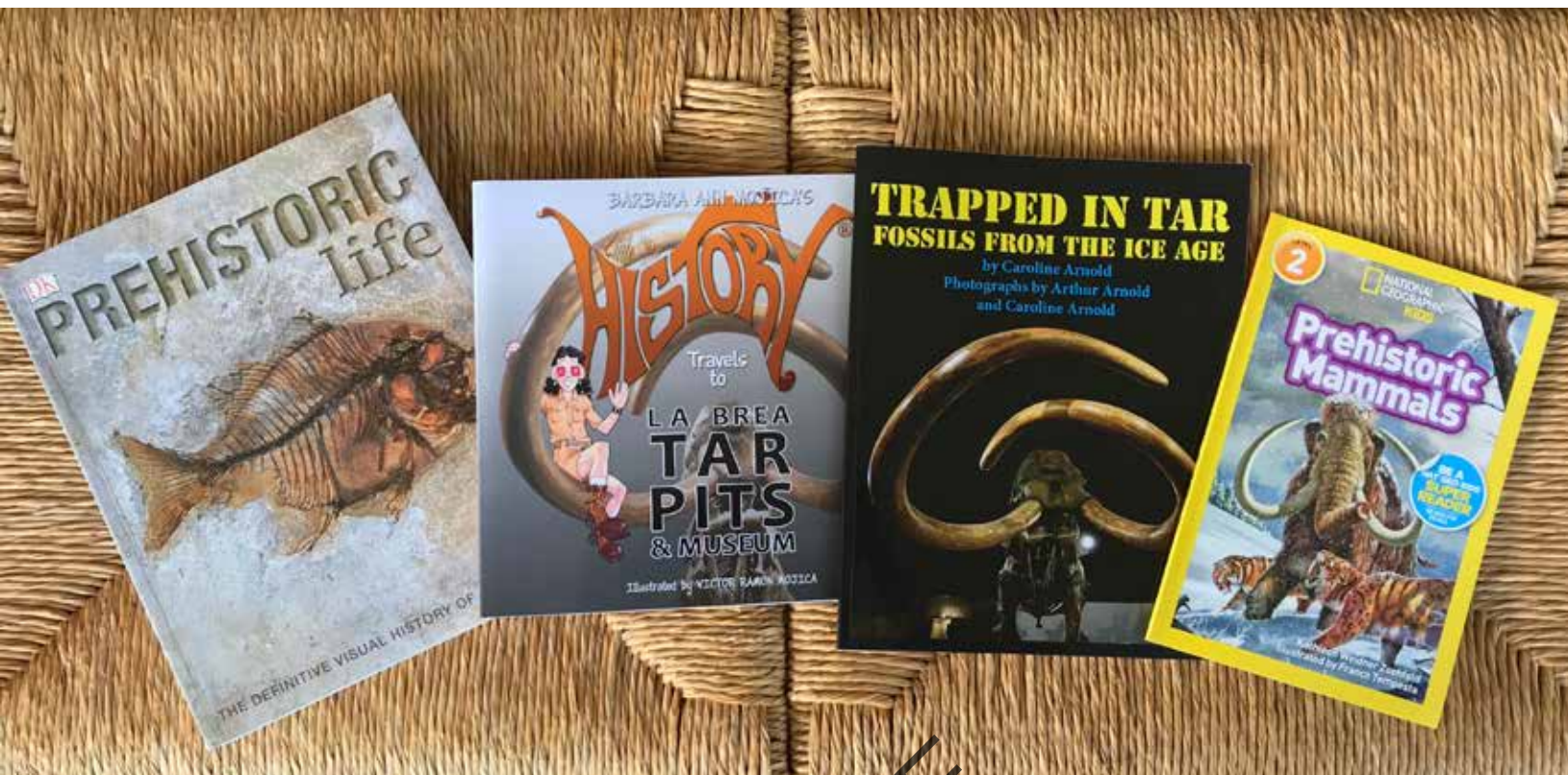
The **Columbian mammoth**—*Mammuthus columbi* roamed California tens of thousands of years ago when vast grasslands covered this area. Standing 13-feet high at the shoulders and weighing 10 tons, the Columbian mammoth was the largest of its species. The BBC's *Columbian Mammoth, Death by Tar—Ice Age Death Trap*, shows characteristics of this majestic beast. The Pygmy Mammoth was unique to California and may have adapted from its larger cousin. The Channel Islands National Park website has a brief but informative video titled *Pygmy Mammoth: Life and Times*. When completed, cutout, color, and paste in the student notebook, the picture of the Columbian mammoth from the Nature Studies section, recording a few facts about this prehistoric animal.

**Sabertooth cat**—*Smilodon californicus* is the official state fossil of California. Living tens of thousands of years ago, we know definitively that these animals roamed all over the Golden State because numerous fossils have been found in the tar at Rancho La Brea and elsewhere. The video *Extinction: Smilodon, The Saber-Toothed Tiger Nature & Animal Documentary* is available on YouTube. This video also features information about Rancho La Brea. The saber-toothed cat's impressive weight (up to 600 pounds) stocky, muscular structure, and 8-inch sabers, allowed it to be a fearsome predator to animals even more massive than itself, such as bison and camels. When completed, cut out, color, and paste in the student notebook, the picture of the Sabertooth cat from the Nature Studies section, recording a few facts about this prehistoric animal.

**Jefferson's ground sloth**—*Megalonyx jeffersonii* is one of two ground sloths recovered from Ice Age sites. This sloth is named for Thomas Jefferson, who recorded fossil bones from this animal found in a West Virginia cave in the late 18th century. As herbivores, ground sloths specialized in eating leaves and twigs from trees such as the willow and other trees of moist habitats. These sloths weighed nearly a ton, about the size of a bison. Ground sloths were able to stand up on their hind legs to reach the leaves and twigs they wanted to eat. But standing up on two limbs required some extra stability. Whenever a ground sloth did this, its muscular tail would act like another leg, helping to support its considerable body weight. They also could have squatted on their haunches to pull down higher branches off trees if needed. Some scientists believe the sloth's large claws were perfect tools for digging roots and tubers, adding some variety to their diet. When completed, cut out, color, and paste in the student notebook, the picture of Jefferson's ground sloth from the Nature Studies section, recording a few facts about this prehistoric animal.

The **Western camel**—*Camelops hesternus* is an extinct genus of camels that lived in Western North America from the middle to the end of the Ice Age. It was similar in size and appearance to today's camels, with a long mobile neck, long legs, and hooves with two toes each. Camelops lived late enough to have been encountered by the first humans to enter the Americas, and there is direct evidence of hunting and butchering by humans. *When Camels Roamed North America*, is a 10-minute video available on YouTube from PBS Eons. When completed, cut out, color, and paste in the student notebook, the picture of the Western camel from the Nature Studies section, recording a few facts about this prehistoric animal.





## Library Connection

*Trapped in Tar: Fossils from the Ice Age*

by Caroline Arnold

This book provides a good introduction to Ice Age mammals, especially those that lived in the Southern California region and were trapped in tar pits. The oldest fossils found in the tar pits are about 40,000 years old, and with thousands of fossils collected and identified, these provide amazing insight into what life was like in the Pleistocene Age and after. If at all possible, a trip to the George C. Page Museum in Los Angeles would allow students an opportunity to see these actual fossils, learn what kind of sticky power tar has, and learn how it provided such a remarkable record of fossilized remains for archaeologists and paleontologists to study.

*History Travels to La Brea Tar Pits & Museum*

by Barbara Ann Mojica

Rancho La Brea has a remarkable history, from the time the first Ice Age mammals were trapped and preserved, to the late nineteenth century, when William Denton, a geologist and paleontologist, first recognized that the animal remains discovered at an asphalt mine were fossils. Then in 1905, W. W. Orcutt found the skulls of a saber-toothed cat, a dire wolf, and a ground sloth. Shortly after, the first scientific expeditions were organized. The rest is history, and today, people come from all over the world to visit these remarkable fossils. Mr. William Orcutt, whose discoveries in 1905 led to broad

scientific interest of the La Brea Tar Pits, founded the town of Orcutt, California in 1904. His 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival home in the San Fernando Valley is now a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, open to visitors. For hours and details search for the Orcutt Ranch Historical Center. The center offers seasonal citrus picking for visitors.

*National Geographic Kids: Prehistoric Mammals*

by Kathleen Zoehfeld

For more information on some prehistoric animals that lived outside of California, this book is designed as an early reader for young scientists. It encourages students to visit the National Geographic website for further study and access to videos and interesting facts about other animals.

*Prehistoric Life: The Definitive Visual History of Life on Earth*  
published by Dorling Kindersley

If you have a student that is fascinated by fossils, Dorling Kindersley has published several informative books filled with beautiful photographs of every known type of fossil on earth, from the earliest protozoa to the age of dinosaurs and eventually to the dawn of mankind. Students will find a visual feast in this definitive guide, but at about 500 pages, it may be preferable to start with one of the editions that are pared down for younger students. Some of these titles are published in the *Eyewitness Books* series.





## II. THE CALIFORNIA INDIANS

The era when California was inhabited solely by Native Americans was a fascinating period when hundreds of diverse tribes lived in relative harmony with one another and with nature. Because the food sources here were so abundant with a long coastline, numerous rivers, lakes, and fertile valleys, most tribes were hunter-gatherers, which means they were able to derive all their food sources from gathering what was readily available and developing effective hunting strategies. For an overview of some facts about the various California tribes read *California Indians* by Liz Sonneborn. Over the next few weeks, read a few pages of this book daily as you explore various aspects of Native Californian life and culture.

### LESSON 1

In the novel, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, the author combines the flavor and adventure of a coming-of-age story with a *Robinson Crusoe*-style novel. But unlike *Robinson Crusoe*, which is fiction, the protagonist in *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, really lived by herself for 18 years on an isolated island off the coast of California. Karana's story is dramatic not only because of those elements, but also because of what O'Dell brings to the story in his knowledge of the native peoples of the region, and his respect for the rich and varied wildlife that make up key elements of Karana's story. While the historical event of Karana's abandonment on the Island of San Nicholas took place in 1835, it is presented here since it features native Indian life as it existed for centuries before the arrival of the Spanish explorers and missionaries.

1. Literary Connections: As you read *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, consider the literary elements that the author has crafted so well. The following notes will help identify: **voice**, **setting**, **characterization**, **plot**, **metaphor**, **foreshadowing**, **conflict**, and **resolution**. These literary elements should be considered with every text, and *Island of the Blue Dolphins* is particularly well-suited to this as an acknowledged work of literary excellence. *Island of the Blue Dolphins* won the Newbery Medal for the best work of children's fiction in the year of its publication, 1960.

2. Read the Author's Note from pages 195-197. On a map of California, locate the island of San Nicolas. Which Spanish explorer discovered this island, and who was it named after? Locate the islands of San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, the Anacapa Islands, Santa Catalina, San Clemente, and Santa Barbara. What is this group of islands called? Then locate the Aleutian Islands of southwestern Alaska. If desired, define the following vocabulary words from the text: crevice, intruders, ravine, toyon bush, cormorant, mesa, league (unit of measure), pelt,



shirkers, abalone, tuna—the cactus). On the student map of California, label the main Channel Islands and the Pacific Ocean.

3. Read Chapters 1–5 of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*.

4. In Chapter 1, note how the author introduces the **setting** and the “**voice**” of the novel utilizing words that an indigenous girl might use. How does the author identify the voice and what descriptive words help to establish the setting? How does the narrator refer to the passage of time? Note the types of descriptive **metaphors** the narrator uses to describe her brother, the sailing ship, and the scene. All of Karana’s figures of speech reflect her knowledge of what? As the first five chapters unfold, notice how the author is building the **characterization** of Karana by developing her relationship with her little brother. How might you describe their relationship?

5. The arrival of the Aleuts and Russians signals the first introduction of **conflict** into the narrative. What information does the author provide so that the readers know the outcome may not be good? When Karana’s father, the chief of the Ghalas-at tribe, introduces himself, he gives his secret name to the Russian. Why does this frighten Karana and how is this an element of **rising conflict**?

6. What good fortune in Chapter 2 becomes the cause of division between the Aleuts and Karana’s people?

## LESSON 2

1. Vocabulary words to define: awl, bull kelp, vain, yucca, gorged, lair, switch, nettles, sinew, cholla bush. If desired, record the definitions in the student notebook.

2. Read Chapters 6–10 of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*.

3. In Chapter 6, the tribe is worried that when the Aleuts return, they will attack them. What do they plan to do? Describe how Ramo gets left on the island. What is Karana’s response? Since Ramo is the only male left on the island, he is by rights the chief. What tribal ritual must he endure to attain manhood? How does Karana gently spare her brother this trial while protecting his manhood? How has the author contributed to Karana’s characterization by this scene?

4. After Ramo’s death, the author reveals Karana’s grief by two of her responses to this tragedy. What are they?

5. In Chapter 9, Karana desperately needs weapons. Why is she hesitant to make them? What does the author reveal about Karana’s character by the incident with the bracelets and beads?

6. At the end of Chapter 9, the tone of the novel changes. What change do you perceive is happening to Karana?

7. In Chapter 10, Karana faces a new challenge. What is it? Why is this rising conflict in the novel of key importance?

