

Exploring Economics

Exploring Economics is a one-semester high school course that helps students understand economic terms and issues that have an impact on the United States and its citizens. This course introduces both microeconomics and macroeconomics. In states where a year-long course is considered one high school credit, the economics and English components count as one-half credit each. In states where a year-long course is considered two high school credits, each course is counted as one credit.

To earn credit for both economics and English, the student should:

- Read the lessons in the text.
- Read the assigned documents in *Making Choices*.
- Complete a project for each unit (see explanation below).
- Read the four assigned books.
- Read the literary analysis for each book in the *Student Review*.
- Complete the assignments found at the end of the literary analysis for each book.
- Optional: Complete daily review questions, quizzes, and exams in the Student Review Pack.

If you do not wish to use *Exploring Economics* for English credit, you can omit half of the projects and the four assigned books, but we encourage you to include them because they greatly enhance your student's understanding of economics.

Unit Projects. Our design for students earning one-semester credits in both economics and English is for the student to complete one project per week as suggested in the unit introductions. The student can choose to do *either* a writing assignment or a hands-on project. For students completing the one-semester English credit, we recommend that the student choose the writing assignment at least six times during the semester.

Time Required. A student should complete each day's assignments, listed at the end of each lesson, on that day. The actual time a student spends on a given day might vary, but you should allow your student about one hour each day for economics and one hour for English. If you are using the *Student Review* material, the work for the last day of each unit includes the unit quiz, which will require a few more minutes that day. Three days in the semester will include taking an exam over the previous five units, so you should allow some more time for this activity.

We Believe in You. We believe that you are in charge of your child's education and that you know how best to use this material to educate your child. We provide you with tools and instructions, but we encourage you to tailor them to fit your child's interests and abilities and your family's situation and philosophy. Being able to do this is one of the benefits of homeschooling!

Course Descriptions

You can use the following course descriptions as you develop your school records, produce a high school transcript, or report grades.

Economics. The student will receive an introduction to Biblical teaching related to economics, economics in church history, and the economic history of the United States. The student will then explore the basics of macroeconomics and microeconomics, learning about markets, money, trade, business organization, and labor. The student will also learn how government is involved in the economy and look at modern economic challenges. The student will read a significant number of original source documents and essays about economics while studying the lessons.

English (Economics in Fiction and Non-Fiction). The student will read two novels, one book about the global economy, and one autobiography. The student will read literary analysis of the books and discuss them in writing. The student will also complete a project each week, either an essay or another creative project related to the study of economics.

Student Review Pack

The *Student Review Pack* has material that you might find helpful for increasing your student's understanding of the course and for giving you a way to know and grade your student's grasp of the content. It is an optional supplement that contains the following three components.

The *Student Review* includes review questions on each lesson, literary analysis of the books assigned in the curriculum, and essay questions on the books. The literary analysis is also available at notgrass.com/ee.

The *Quiz and Exam Book* has a quiz to be taken at the end of each unit that is based on the lesson review questions. In addition, after every five units, it has an exam that is based on the quizzes from those five units. This makes a total of fifteen quizzes and three exams over the course of the semester. The lesson review questions can serve as a study guide for the quizzes, and the quizzes can serve as a study guide for the exams.

The questions at the end of the literary analysis for the four books provide the material needed for grading English.

The *Answer Key* contains answers for the lesson review questions, literary analysis questions, and the quizzes and exams.

Suggestions for Grading

To earn credit in both economics and English, the student should complete the assignments listed on the second page of each unit introduction and at the end of each lesson (completing the *Student Review* and *Quiz and Exam Book* assignments is up to your discretion as parent/teacher). A weekly assignment checklist is available on our website.

You can give equal weight to each assignment, or you might choose to give different weight to each component. Grades are usually assigned on a percentage basis for an individual assignment and as letter grades for a semester on the basis of the cumulative assignment grades. We recommend giving an A if the average weighted grade is 90% or above, a B for 80-89%, a C for 70-79%, and a D for 60-69%.

If your child consistently gets grades lower than 60%, you might need to evaluate his readiness to study a course with this level of difficulty. On the other hand, you might need to adjust your expectations. You might consider

an additional grading element based on your perception of your child's overall grasp of the material. This is another advantage of homeschooling: you can judge how well your child understands the material and how he or she is growing from the study in ways that test and assignment scores do not reflect.

We designed this curriculum to cover our best understanding of what a high school student should learn about economics. Helping a student pass a CLEP or AP test was not our primary goal. However, this course provides a good foundation for preparing for those tests, when combined with one of the test preparation books that are available.

Teaching Writing

The three most important activities to help a student write well are reading good writing, writing as frequently as possible, and having his or her writing critiqued.

You can find many aids to help you in teaching writing. The Online Writing Lab from Purdue University is an excellent resource. We have found *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White to be concise and helpful. This book is available from Notgrass Company and many other sources.

Other resources that people have recommended to us include *The Elegant Essay* by Lesha Myers, *Format Writing* by Frode Jensen, *Writing Skills* by Diana Hanbury King, and *Teaching the Essay* and *Teaching the Research Paper* by Robin Finley. The Institute for Excellence in Writing offers comprehensive instructional courses, and Reconciliation Press offers writing instruction services. We offer these as suggestions which you can investigate. We do not endorse one program or publication over another.

Grading Writing Assignments

Teaching writing skills can sometimes feel more like an art than a science. We know good writing when we read it, but trying to explain why we like it is like trying to explain why we like a particular flavor of ice cream. Good writing engages the reader and makes him or her want to keep reading. It covers the subject well and uses proper mechanics

(spelling, grammar, and punctuation). Good writing informs, inspires, and sometimes challenges the reader. Above all, good writing says something of significance.

Because defining good writing is difficult, giving a grade to a writing assignment can be somewhat subjective. What is the difference, for example, between an A paper and a B paper? One student might write the best that he or she can, and it still might not be as good as what another student produces with less effort. What grade should you assign to each student's work? In addition, how can the grades you give reflect a student's improvement over the course of a semester? After all, we hope that the student will be writing better at the end of the semester than at the beginning.

A grade for a writing assignment usually has two elements: one is mechanics, and the other is coverage of the subject matter. Noting errors in spelling and punctuation is relatively easy. Misused words and awkward sentences might be more difficult to detect. The most difficult part of grading is determining whether or not the paper is organized well and covers the topic adequately.

Beginning with the highest possible grade of 100, you might want to take a point off for every misspelled word, punctuation error, or grammatical error. An awkward sentence might count two or three points off. A paragraph that does not flow well or have a clear purpose might cost five to eight points. You can also consider whether the paper is well-expressed but has mechanical errors as opposed to its being poorly expressed but mechanically good.

We suggest not giving a grade on the writing assignment until the student submits the final version of the assignment. Use the rough draft as a teaching opportunity. It is fair to have higher expectations later in the course. Also, if a student has numerous mechanical or grammatical errors in a paper, covering the paper with red ink might do more harm than good. Instead, focus on what appear to be the three most serious or common mistakes and don't worry about the rest at that point. When the student has corrected these problems, move on to other problems to correct in later papers.

The website of the College Board, which administers the SAT and CLEP examinations, has an Essay Scoring Guide that its graders use. On their website, you can read this guide and also read sample essays and see why those essays received the scores they did. In addition, the National

Assessment of Educational Progress program of the U.S. Department of Education has information available online about its writing assessment.

You may find it helpful to have someone outside your family read one or more of your student's essays and give constructive feedback at some point during the school year.

Notes About the Literature

We scoured many possible titles to suggest literature that is quality and uplifting and that won't assault your faith or sense of decency. Some of the books we included have words or ideas with which you will be uncomfortable, as we are. We want to let you know about them in case you want to do some editing before your child reads the books or in case you want to substitute another book. You might want a parent to read a book aloud to the student and skip over inappropriate words. However you decide to use them, we believe that the overall impact of these books for good outweighs their use of inappropriate words. The editions listed below are the ones that are available from Notgrass Company.

These are the four books we chose for the English component of *Exploring Economics*:

Silas Marner by George Eliot (Dover)

Mary Ann Evans was born in Warwickshire, England, in 1819. She chose the male pen name George Eliot to help give her novels credibility at a time when female authors were associated with lightweight romantic literature.

Eliot's first novel, *Adam Bede*, published in 1859, was a success. Other acclaimed novels followed: *The Mill on the Floss* in 1860, *Silas Marner* in 1861, *Romola* in 1863, *Middlemarch* in 1872 and *Daniel Deronda* in 1876. Her realism and insights into the human mind set her work apart.

Silas Marner, set in an out-of-the-way English village, has a gentle pace and a somber mood. The main characters guard secrets which isolate them from healthy relationships. The unexpected arrival of a small child teaches the title character and his community the power of giving and receiving love.

George Eliot was one of the leading novelists of the 19th century, a rich period in English literature. She died in 1880.

There are a few elements in *Silas Marner* that we want you to know about before your child begins reading:

- Various characters drink alcohol at points in the story.
- There is a passing reference to “mother earth” (page 10).
- There is a wry description of the lifestyle of aging wealthy men, including, “. . . and then what was left to them . . . but to drink and be merry, or to drink and get angry . . .” (page 23).
- Squire Cass refers to his tenant as “that d----- Fowler” (page 68).
- Mr. Macey, in one of the many instances of theological misunderstandings, shares some odd ideas about “Old Harry,” a historical euphemism for Satan (page 64).
- The phrase “making love” had a completely different meaning at the time. It meant to behave in a romantic way or to express one’s feelings of romantic love (page 74).
- Dolly Winthrop expresses her confused beliefs regarding christening infants (page 104).
- The author uses the phrase “gods of the hearth” to mean our connections and love for the familiar things of home (page 117).
- Silas takes up pipe-smoking on the advice of men in the village, confirmed by the doctor, that it would help prevent his epileptic fits (page 118).

The Rise of Silas Lapham

by William Dean Howells (Signet/Penguin)

William Dean Howells was born in 1837, the son of a printer and publisher in Ohio. When he was older, Howells himself went into printing and publishing and became a writer. President Lincoln named Howells U.S. consul to Venice as a reward for supporting him in the 1860 election.

Upon his return, Howells returned to publishing. From 1871 to 1881, he was the editor of the influential *Atlantic Monthly* magazine. He wrote

several novels, the best-known of which was *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885). The book was one of the first to explore the topic of the American businessman. Set in Boston during the Victorian era, the story follows the financial and romantic upheavals of the Lapham family, with a focus on the personal development of the title character as his rise unfolds.

Howells became known as the dean of American letters. He died in 1920.

There are a few elements in *The Rise of Silas Lapham* that we want you to know about before your child begins reading:

- Silas Lapham refers to an African-American who works for him as a “darky” (page 34).
- Bromfield Corey said, “I should feel like an a--.” He is using the old meaning of the word: like a donkey, or like a fool (page 93).
- Bromfield Corey makes condescending comments comparing the Lapham family to “uncivilized” Sioux (page 113).
- Mrs. Lapham comments, “. . . I don’t know as I believe in [God’s] interfering a great deal, but I believe he’s interferred this time . . .” (page 127).
- The phrase “making love” had a completely different meaning at the time. It meant to behave in a romantic way or to express one’s feelings of romantic love (page 157).
- In Chapter 14, Silas Lapham gets drunk and makes a fool of himself at a dinner party.
- Mrs. Lapham muses over the reasons for suffering, and comes to a vague conclusion, “Well, the witch is in it” (page 225).
- Irene Lapham, in emotional distress, requests that her father buy her a pharmaceutical to help her sleep, which he does (page 240).
- Mrs. Lapham expresses a fatalistic, graceless view of how a person can change: “. . . [Mrs. Lapham] knew that [Zerilla] was only a blossomed weed, of the same worthless root as her mother, and saved, if saved, from the same evil destiny, by the good of her father in her . . .” (page 333).

The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy
by Pietra Rivoli (Wiley)

Pietra Rivoli, born in 1957, is a professor of finance and international business at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where she has served since 1983. Her special interests are social justice issues in international business and China, where she regularly leads graduate students for special study.

Her book *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* has garnered both popular and scholarly acclaim. Rivoli creatively and effectively uses the life-story of a single common product, the T-shirt, to explore the many facets of globalization. She keeps the story on a personal level, interacting with people as diverse as Texas cotton farmers, Chinese factory workers, Washington lobbyists, and African used clothing merchants.

It is a story in which practically every person in the world is involved. She effectively conveys the complexity of the issues at stake, requiring the reader to grapple with many compelling questions. *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy* has been published in three editions (2005, 2009, 2014) and is available in fourteen languages.

There are a few elements in Rivoli's book that we want you to know about before your child begins reading:

- The author quotes an interview with an African-American sharecropper who uses the phrase “colored people” (page 21).
- A man remembers working in the trailer of a cotton picker and “being splattered with bloody rabbit pieces, from the ones that didn't jump quickly enough” (page 38).
- The author refers to “plant evolution,” meaning plants that grow resistant to herbicides, not referring to Darwinian evolution (page 42).
- In an explanation of research involving boll weevils, the author refers to the “sexual partners of worms” (page 44).
- The author briefly relates a period of cotton farming disaster in India during which thousands of farmers committed suicide (page 73).

- Comparing Lubbock, Texas, (a cotton production hub) with Shanghai, China, (a textile production hub) the author notes, “Within a two-week period in October 2004, both Shanghai and Lubbock got their first Hooters Restaurants” (pages 78-79).
- Describing the way the textile industry transformed Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s, the author mentions that the city, “reportedly had more prostitutes per capita than any city in the world.” She includes an excerpt from a firsthand account of one of the city’s many “pleasure palaces” established during this period. The description of the many forms of “entertainment” offered includes girls with “high collared gowns slit to reveal their hips,” “girls with dresses slit to the armpits,” and “peep shows” (pages 79-80).
- The author expresses her belief, “accidents of birth have always shaped destiny . . .” (page 106).
- The author describes the attitude of female textile workers, “This beats the h--- out of life on the farm” (page 110).
- A Chinese factory worker is described as having a “lecherous boss” (page 115).
- In a description of Manchester, England, “The young and raging underclass shoots up and sniffs and smokes in the boarded up cotton mills” (page 116).
- The author quotes an 1843 newspaper article listing several fatal accidents in cotton mills (page 123).
- The author notes that phthalates (used in ink for screenprinting T-shirts) has a detrimental effect on male sexual organs (page 132).
- The author makes a passing mention of “Darwinian survival” (page 255).
- The author makes a passing mention of “Mother Nature” (page 267).

Mover of Men and Mountains
by R. G. LeTourneau (Moody)

R. G. LeTourneau was born in 1888 into a Christian family then living in Vermont. He moved around a great deal in his boyhood and adult life, spending significant time in California. Though strong-willed and rebellious in his youth, he came to Christ in his teens and spent his life serving Him.

Mover of Men and Mountains is LeTourneau's autobiography, published in 1959, and since translated into multiple languages. LeTourneau's purpose for the book is to glorify God through the testimony of His faithfulness.

LeTourneau was a businessman and inventor. His passion was large earth-moving and material-handling machines. He helped to transform the industry in his lifetime, and his impact continues to this day. He channeled his wealth into many causes for the Gospel, supporting mission work and many charities, distribution of a Christian newsletter, and the founding of LeTourneau Technical Institute, now LeTourneau University, still in operation in Longview, Texas.

R. G. LeTourneau died in 1969. There are a few elements in his autobiography that we want you to know about before your child begins reading:

- LeTourneau expresses his belief that God rewards faithfulness with prosperity and other blessings. He also felt that he was sometimes punished after straying (see pages 85 and 108). This is a complex topic that we suggest you discuss with your child. We include a discussion of this topic with Scripture references in the literary analysis of the book, available in the *Student Review* and on our website at this link: notgrass.com/ee
- LeTourneau expresses a somewhat condescending attitude toward the people of Liberia and Peru, where he built missions (pages 247-248 and 260).
- LeTourneau briefly expresses an idea that we have a part in earning salvation: "All too often we are so busy scrambling around to make our worldly future secure that we fight for minutes when we should be preparing ourselves to earn eternity" (page 267).

Alternative Literature

If you choose not to use one or more of the books that we suggest for this curriculum, here are some other titles for you to consider:

- *Economics Through Everyday Life* by Anthony Clark
- *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens
- *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry Hazlitt
- *Applied Economics: Thinking Beyond Stage One*
Economic Facts and Fallacies
The Housing Boom and Bust
Wealth, Poverty and Politics: An International Perspective
all by Thomas Sowell

**For links to other resources,
a unit assignment checklist, and
ideas for using this curriculum in a co-op
or other group setting, visit:**

notgrass.com/ee