

The Best Way to Teach Kids to Hate History? Rely Only on Textbooks

Whenever I hear that [only 12 percent](#) of American students are proficient in history, I have to shake my head in amazement. How in the world can so few students be proficient in a subject that's so fascinating?

Historian [David McCullough](#) may have an answer to that question. Several years ago he noted that contemporary history textbooks are:

"[S]o badly written. They're boring! Historians are never required to write for people other than historians. Most of them are doing excellent work. I draw on their excellent work. I admire some of them more than anybody I know. But, by and large, they haven't learned to write very well."

Such may have been one of the reasons why my mother hated history as a child in school.

Fortunately, her hatred of history was not passed down to me because she followed a simple piece of advice. Beginning in kindergarten, we read historical fiction books together. The more we read, the more we both grew to love history. By the time I was actually old enough to hit the history textbooks, I was able to happily endure their "boring" nature because my appetite had already been whet.

As was recently noted, [Americans are embracing bad government because they don't know history](#). If we want our children to avoid this fate, then perhaps we should start following the advice given to my mom years ago. Here are a few authors and titles to set your child on a history-loving path:

Ingri and Edgar D'Aulaire

The D'Aulaire's colorfully illustrated biographies read like a storybook and introduce children to diverse historical figures such as [Leif Erikson](#), [Pocahontas](#), and [Abraham Lincoln](#).

Genevieve Foster

A Newbury Honor winner, Genevieve Foster's gift of incorporating historical characters and events into novel-like books perfect for grade school children spans the range from [Augustus Caesar](#) to [Columbus](#) and on to [George Washington](#).

Robert Lawson

What kid doesn't enjoy a story told from the perspective of an animal? Robert Lawson's use of anthropomorphism presents the stories of [Benjamin Franklin](#) and [Paul Revere](#) with a hilarity captivating to children and adults alike.

William O'Steele

O'Steele's vivid imagery captures the blood, sweat, and tears of the [American Frontier](#) and the [Civil War](#) in exciting stories particularly fascinating to boys.

G. A. Henty

G. A. Henty's books appeal to boys and girls alike, and cover almost every major time period in history from [ancient Egypt](#) to the [Crusades](#) and on to the [French Revolution](#). Henty's novels are so knowledgeable that they have been known to fill in the historical gaps that adults have left over from their own school days!