

Secular, Eclectic, Academic Homeschoolers

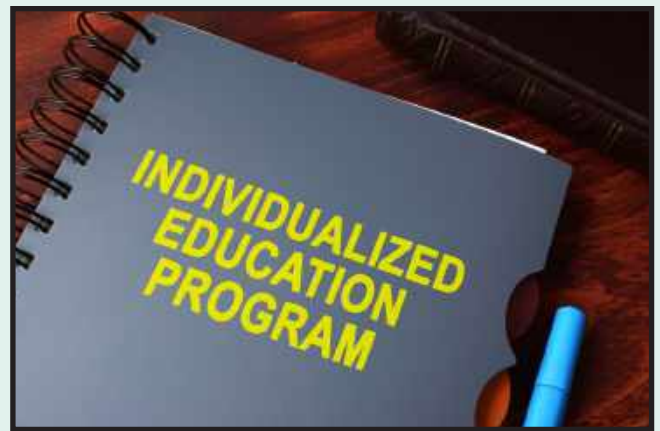
- **Going from Rigor to Relaxed**



- **How to get a Special Needs Assessment**
- **If Your Child Needs a Gap Year... Have Them Take It**
- **How to Create a Parent Led Co-op**

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Going from Rigor to Relaxed

By Farrar Williams



As kids get older, they're often ready for more rigor and they usually have goals for their future lives that require more rigor than when they're younger or you first begin homeschooling.



However, relaxed and rigorous are a continuum that most eclectic homeschool families swing between throughout their educational journey. Sometimes, you don't need to get more rigorous, you need to relax!

If your kids are young and you're struggling to shake a school mentality where workbooks and checking off boxes are more important than following rabbit trails or spontaneous field trips, then you may need to figure out how to relax. If you're stuck comparing your homeschool to others, whether it's public schools or seemingly perfect homeschool blogs, then you definitely need to figure out how to step back. If pushing schooling is making your relationship with your kids deteriorate or making them stressed and anxious, then it's time to rework your homeschool. Always put your long term relationship with your kids and their mental health before everything else.

Part of relaxing your school approach is recognizing that you can always go back to a more rigorous approach when the time is right. Backing off of your own vision of where your student should be doesn't have to be forever. You have to start by reminding yourself that if your student doesn't know their times tables, can't write an essay, or isn't able to do some other academic task that you think they "should" be able to do by their age, it doesn't mean that they won't ever get there. Sometimes the best way to achieve your goals is by focusing on non-academic areas of life first.

Another part of relaxing is recognizing that relaxed doesn't have to mean unstructured or not educational. A lot of relaxed homeschools are extremely rich in educational content. Activities like field trips and games can be very educational. If you have



younger kids or you're a household that needs structure, becoming more relaxed doesn't mean you have to have no rules, routines, or schedules. Instead of scheduling an hour for math, you can schedule an hour for math games. Instead of planning a detailed curriculum for Friday, you can plan to spend the day taking nature walks. Less stressful routines can still fill your need for structure.

Relaxed also doesn't have to mean you abandon all formal schooling. However, take yourself off the conveyor belt. Let yourselves finish a curriculum at a slower pace if you need to. Build in more down time for kids who need it, or give more time between finishing one thing and starting the next one. You can set aside time for formal schooling and even guard that time. However, if you do that, build in free time as well.

I think one of the most important things you can do in a quest to relax your homeschool is to force yourself to say yes. Can we take the morning off to finish this kid-driven project we're working on? Yes! Would you like to go to this free class about raising tadpoles? Yes! Can we watch a documentary instead of reading this book? Yes! Do you have time for this park day with friends? Yes! When kids ask questions make room for them. Prioritize saying yes to questions from your kids and opportunities for seeing the world over getting your curriculum finished.



Sometimes, we have to take time to be more formal and rigorous to help kids meet their goals. It does our kids a disservice if we don't prepare them to get into college, for example. However, one of the primary benefits of homeschooling is our ability to relax things when we need to, to protect our kids' sanity and encourage their sense of wonder and curiosity. Keep those goals in mind if you think you've swung too far into a rigor mindset.



Farrar Williams is a longtime educator with experience teaching in the classroom and at home. She's the author of [Tweens](#), [Tough Times](#), and [Triumphs: Homeschooling the Middle Grades](#) and currently an educational consultant and teaching online courses at [Simplify Homeschool](#).

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Throughout the Week Explore:

- Secular Homeschooling's Mission
- Money Matters
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- Methodologies of Homeschooling
- Motivation and Mindfulness
- Live Vendor Showcases



Blair Lee, MS



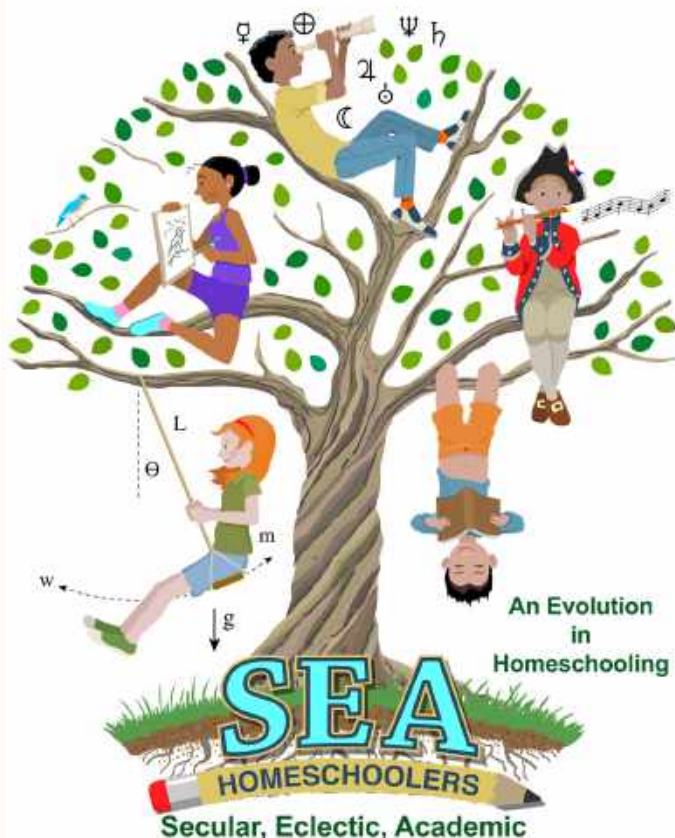
Dale McGowan



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Registration is open to SEA Homeschoolers members only. Three membership levels are available: free, standard and premium. Once you are a SEA Member, you may register for the Online Symposium. <https://seahomeschoolers.com/2019-sea-symposium>

2019 SEA Homeschoolers Online Symposium

5 Days Filled with 21 Talks, Live Q&A with Speakers, 10 Vendor Showcases, Lots of Give-Aways, Free Homeschool Planner.

- **Symposium Opening: SEA Homeschooling** by Blair Lee
- **Evidence of Evolution and How to Teach It** by Bertha Vazquez
- **Building Radically Inclusive Homeschool Spaces** by Alycia Wright, M.Ed
- **The Importance of Teaching History in a Modern Education** by Samantha Matalone Cook, MAT
- **Critical Thinking** by Dale McGowan, PhD
- **Creating Learner-Centered Education through Project-Based Learning** by Blair Lee, MS and Samantha Matalone Cook, MAT
- **Taking Learning Outdoors: Increasing Children's Motivation and Engagement** by Rachel Tidd
- **How to Be an Ally: Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students and Families** by Laurabeth Rapaz
- **Advice for the Non-Primary Homeschool Parent** by Amanda and Josh McClure
- **Mother Nature's Pedagogy: How Children's Natural Curiosity, Playfulness and Sociability Serve Their Education** by Dr. Peter Gray
- **Embracing a Literature-Based Approach to Learning** by Amy Sharony, Ph.D.
- **Playing School: Developmentally Appropriate Preschool & Kindergarten for Students with High Academic Needs** by Kat Hutcheson
- **Collaborating with Behaviorally Challenging Children** by Dr. Ross Greene, PhD
- **Testing 101: Why and How Assessments Can Play an Important and Positive Role in Your Homeschool** by Ellen Crain
- **From Homeschooling to College: Demystifying the Process** by Lessa Scherrer
- **Creating Transcripts from a Non-Traditional Education** by Wes Beach
- **Self- and Peer-Assessment for Enhancing Student Learning** by Michael Wride
- **Encouraging Entrepreneurship with PopUp Business School Techniques** by Alan Donegan
- **Scholarships and Aid For Homeschoolers** by Brett Kennedy
- **Teaching Financial Literacy in Your Homeschool** by Victoria Khaze
- **Homeschooling with Financial Independence In Mind** by Kate Eby

[View the Whole Symposium Schedule](#)

Join Live Speaker Sessions with Q&A
or Watch Recorded Talks For 1 Week After Air Date.

It is your child's rights under IDEA and Child Find which allows you to have your child assessed – even when you homeschool. This is true in all states, since Federal laws trump state laws. (Side note – states are allowed to implement special education laws – but they can only add rights, not remove them. The entire state of Texas got in trouble for this a while back and they are still recovering, losing millions of Federal education dollars.)



First Step – Request Your Child Gets a Full Assessment

To get an assessment it's simple – simply write to your home school district, and request a full evaluation for your child. If your child is in some kind of public school, even a charter -- then you should request the evaluation first from your public school. You should always keep this request to ensure they meet their timelines and do what you ask. Various states have laws that govern how long the district/school has to complete the assessments. (I cover those details in my group and trainings...) Here is what to include:

- Any specific assessments you believe your child needs (i.e. dyslexia, visual processing disorder, etc.)
- Fully describe the challenges you see with your child's education – this puts the district / school on full notice for Child Find.
- Anything else relevant to assessing your particular child



It is fine to send this request via email – just copy yourself, to prove it arrived to someone. Retain a copy of the email (in your email folder on your computer is fine—as long as it's not automatically deleted.) The worst way to do this is to deliver it in person, because you need some kind of proof it was received.

Child Find requires they assess your child in “All areas of suspected disability.” If the school does not assess all areas you requested, or address all the issues – your child has rights around that, too. A common issue with Dyslexia is districts using the wrong experts to do an incomplete assessment. (I don't have time to cover all those problems in this article... but this is addressed in my group all the time.)

You have various options as homeschool parents at this point. We can discuss what they may “offer” in the IEP meeting, and your options, in a future article. For now – you hopefully have a better idea of what is causing your child’s challenges – and what is available to help close those gaps.

Conclusion:

If your child is struggling, you can save literally years of them getting further and further behind, -- just by getting them the right assessments.

If you follow the approach here – and assuming your school does an appropriate job of assessing (which is not always the case.. but then you have rights in that, too.) -- you should now have a much better idea of how to help your child. You should also learn a lot more about why they may be “behind” and what is available to close those gaps.

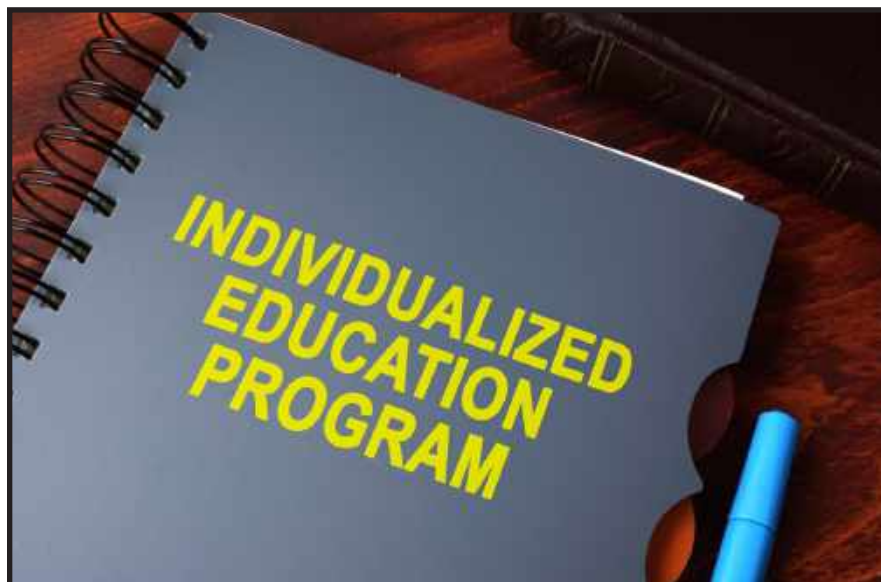


There is a lot more to know about this topic. I have a free Facebook group where we discuss these and other issues regarding homeschool IEP’s, 504’s and other questions around homeschooling special needs kids. I also have many files with free resources. This is a parents only (no school or vendor employee) group.

Feel free to join and tell your friends!!

<https://www.Facebook.com/groups/HomeschoolIEP>

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~SUMMER IDEAS~

- Homemade popcicles**
- Write letters to friends**
- Make a comic book**
- Paint Rocks or shells**
- Geocaching**
- Plant a fairy garden**
- Lego Challenges**
- Create a board game or make up a new game/rules with an existing game**
- Baking/cooking**
- Whittling**
- Scavenger Hunt**
- Sidewalk chalk art**
- FORTS! Blanket forts & box forts**
- Balloon animals**
- Learn to play the ukulele**
- Sewing with felt**
- Visit a nursing home & play games, puzzles, or read a loud**

If Your Child Needs a Gap Year...

Have Them Take it

By Blair Lee, MS

Life is full of predetermined timelines. The age you start kindergarten. How old you should be when you start reading. Your age when you can get a driver's license. How old you should be when you go to college. None of these take the individual into account.

People mature cognitively, emotionally, and developmentally at different rates. It is absurd to think that reaching a certain age confers the ability or readiness for an academic endeavor or to perform a certain task. And yet, there is a wholesale buy-in to the date stamping of life events for young people. Doing this is damaging to the psyche of those who are not ready. Worse, it sends the message that kindergarten, reading, driving, college, etc... are more important than the cognitive, emotional, and developmental vagaries of the individual.

We are all unique individuals. There is no normative timeline that fits everyone. And if your child does not fit nicely into the societally proscribed timeline, that doesn't mean there is something wrong with your child. Your child is just different.

This is something my family had to deal with last year. As my son approached 17, it looked like he might need to take a gap year before heading to college. He had met or surpassed the date stamp on the life events that had come before. He read at three, started kindergarten when he was five, and drove as soon as the law allowed him to. About halfway through his junior year of high school, I realized he was academically ready to graduate.



There were issues though, he seemed to be struggling with inner demons. He has three older brothers who went through the same thing. You know those crazy teen years. The ones where, as parents, we grab the rail, hold on tight, give lots of advice, and hope everyone survives. At first, it seemed he was going through a stage similar to what his brothers went through. They are all in their 30's now and doing great, so my husband and I were not worried. That might have been how it went, except my son was a victim of a violent crime, and that changed everything. The emotional fallout from this event took him to a dark place.

And then it was time to apply to college. Here was a kid who was a wreck psychologically and emotionally, who wanted to go to college with two parents and an entire family who wanted that for him. So, we helped him begin applying to colleges, because, you know, 18-year-old kids go to college after they graduate high school. No one ever extends that sentence to, "if they are psychologically and emotionally ready for it."



Luckily, I had an epiphany as we started filling out applications, at the same time we were dealing with his trauma. I put my foot down with my husband and son about sending Sean to college. I insisted he take a gap year.

Initially, they were both resistant. There was a lot of arguing. I didn't change my position, but I did acknowledge that if Sean wanted to go to college, he could. And, at the age of 18, he didn't need my permission anyway.

My husband agreed with me soon after, as it became clear that our son was really struggling, not academically, but psychologically. Together we convinced Sean to take a gap year. It wasn't for academic reasons, and when Sean said he didn't want to take classes during his gap year, we didn't push him to take them. Instead, we focused on the reason he was taking a gap year.

We insisted he meet with a counselor. We were very clear that he needed to recover from the PTSD that comes from being a victim of violence. We spent those first couple of months discussing what is most important in life, and even for an academic family like ours, it isn't academics.



It is a powerful thing to insist that your child works to be mentally healthy. Even if that means changing the timeline for a major life event like when they will start college. After all, if you are not mentally healthy, everything for the rest of your life can be a challenge, even if you get a great education.

And now? We feel like we got our son back. Next month, he is headed to college. I am so proud of him. He had to work hard this year, on big things, to recover from PTSD and emotional trauma so that he is ready to go. His date stamp for college is a year later than most people's, but he isn't those people.

He is ready for it in a way he wasn't a year ago. This gap year, that he was so resistant to taking, he is now happy he took. He knows he is in a better place, and ready for college. This year for him has been empowering, soul-searching, and life-affirming. I think it will be a year he looks back on and sees as a pivotal event in his life. One that wasn't planned using an arbitrary timeline.



There are many reasons besides trauma that a child might need a gap year. If you feel, for any reason, that your college-bound child is not ready for college, honor those feelings. Discuss them with your child and family. If your child approaches you about a gap year, find out why they want to take it, and really listen to them. College will still be there when the gap year is over. So, if your child needs a gap year, have them take it.





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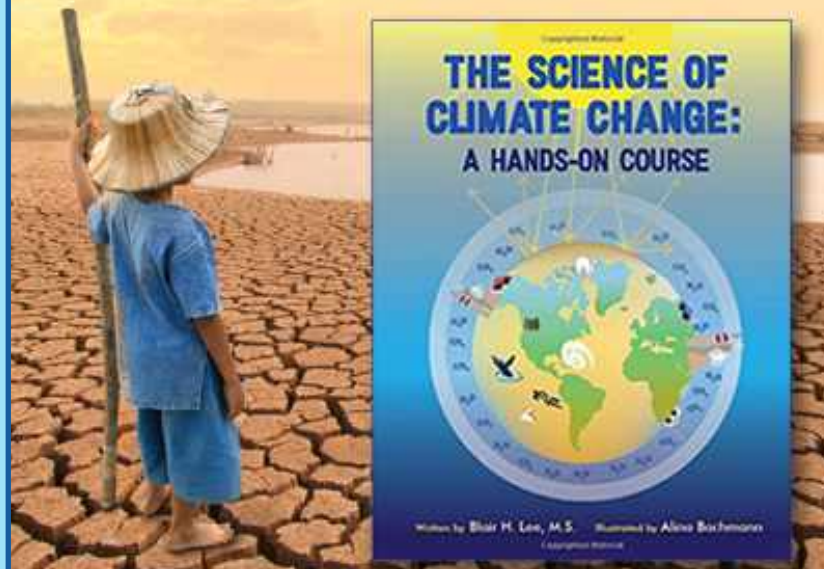
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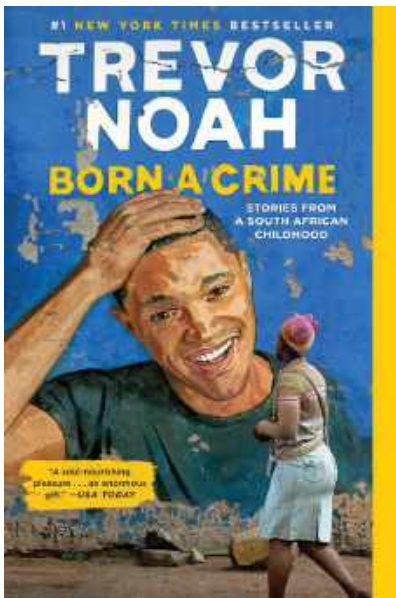
National Science Teachers Association



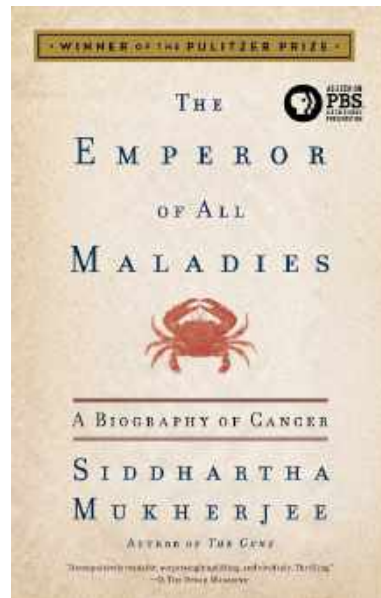
An Eclectic Summer Reading List

By Kat Hutcheson

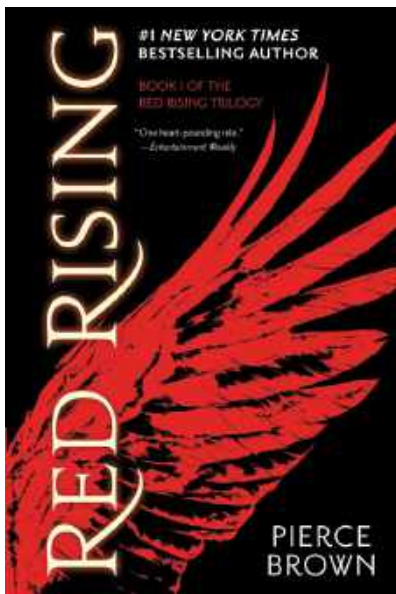
Nearly all of my favorite books from the last few years have been gifts. The same is true for my teenage son. All of these wonderful literary gifts were sent to us by the same person, SEA Founder Blair Lee. She has a gift for selecting bookish gifts. My son and I compiled the best of these into an eclectic summer reading list for the teens and adults in the SEA community. We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we did.



[Born a Crime](#)
By: Trevor Noah



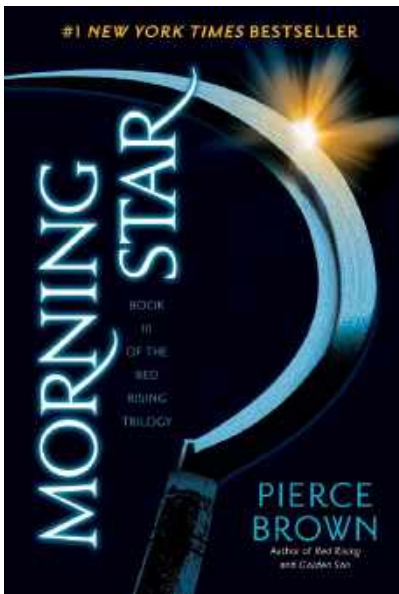
[The Emperor of all Maladies: A Biography of Cancer](#)
By: Siddhartha Mukherjee



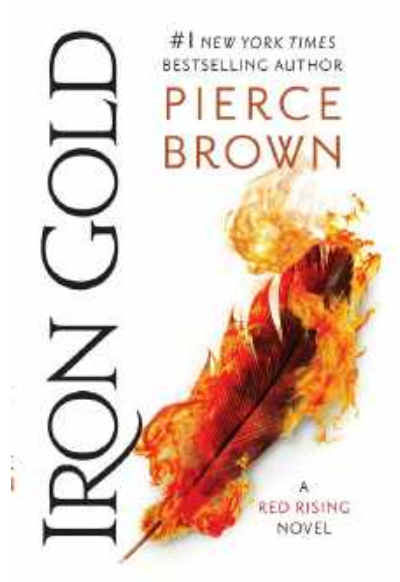
[Red Rising](#)
By: Pierce Brown



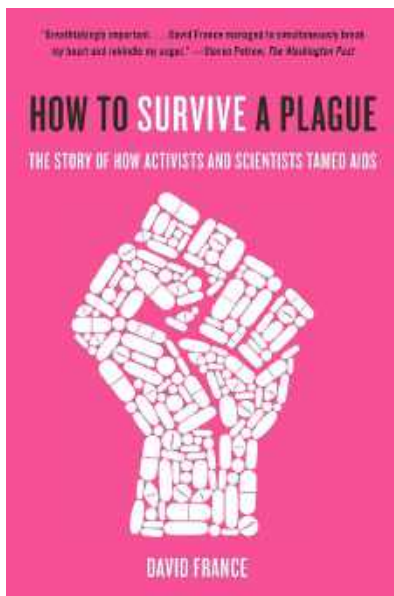
[Golden Son](#)
By: Pierce Brown



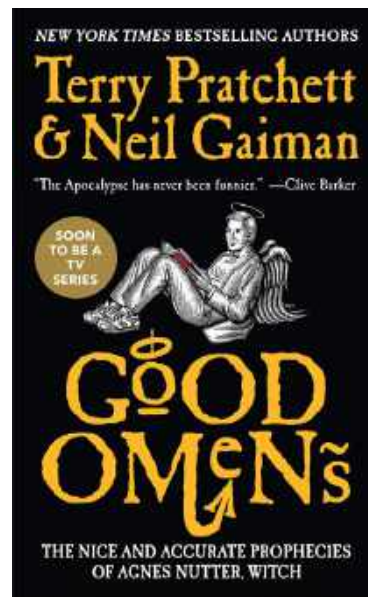
[Morning Star](#)
By: Pierce Brown



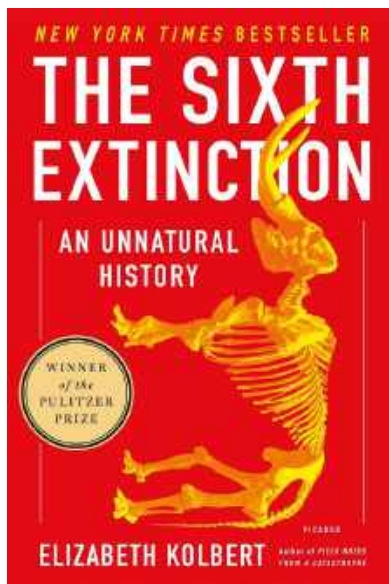
[Iron Gold](#)
By: Pierce Brown



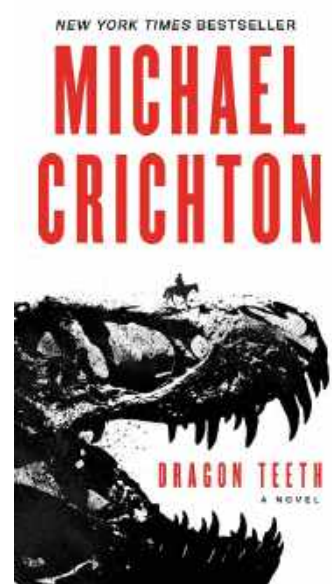
[How to Survive a Plague: The Story of How Activists and Scientists Tamed AIDS](#)
By: David France



[Good Omens](#)
By: Terry Pratchett & Neil Gaiman



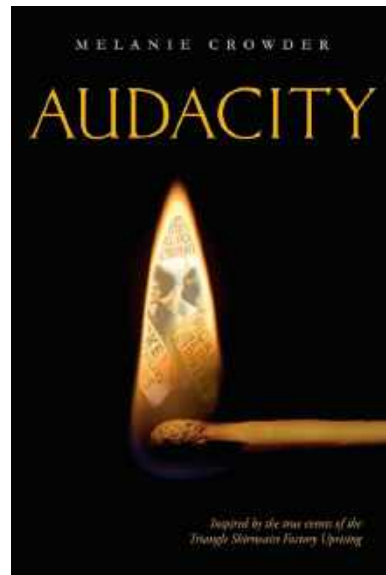
[The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History](#)
By: Elizabeth Kolbert



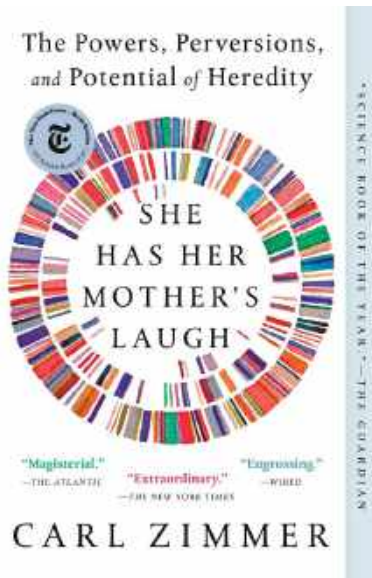
[Dragon Teeth](#)
By: Michael Crichton



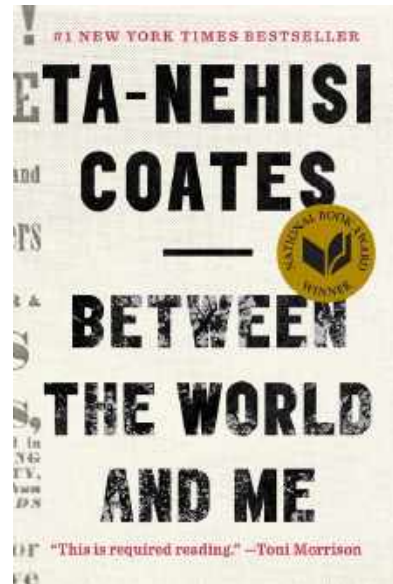
[Shades of Magic](#)
[Boxed Set](#)
 By: V. E. Schwab



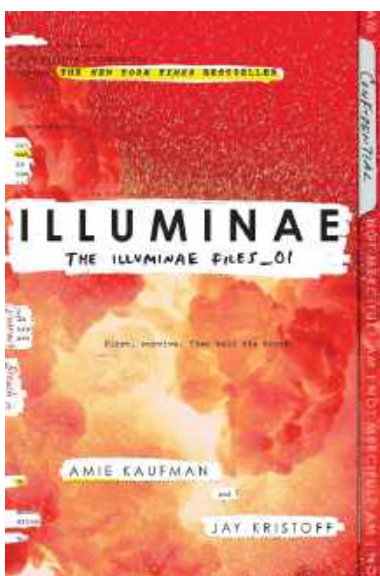
[Audacity](#)
 By: Melanie Crowder



[She Has Her Mother's Laugh: The Powers, Perversions, and Potential of Heredity](#)
 By: Carl Zimmer



[Between the World and Me](#)
 By: Ta-Nehisi Coates



[Illuminae](#)
 By: Amie Kaufman

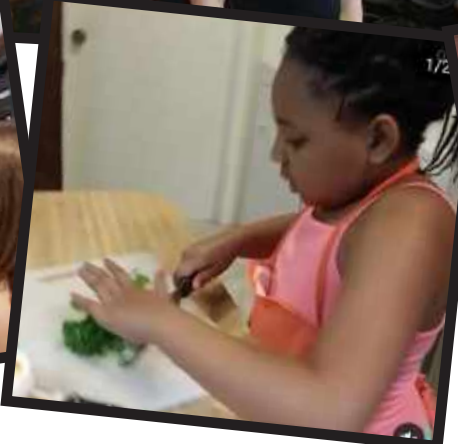
Note: Discussion questions to accompany *Illuminae* are available for free download in the members area of the [SEA Homeschoolers](#) website.



HOMESCHOOL PROJECTS!

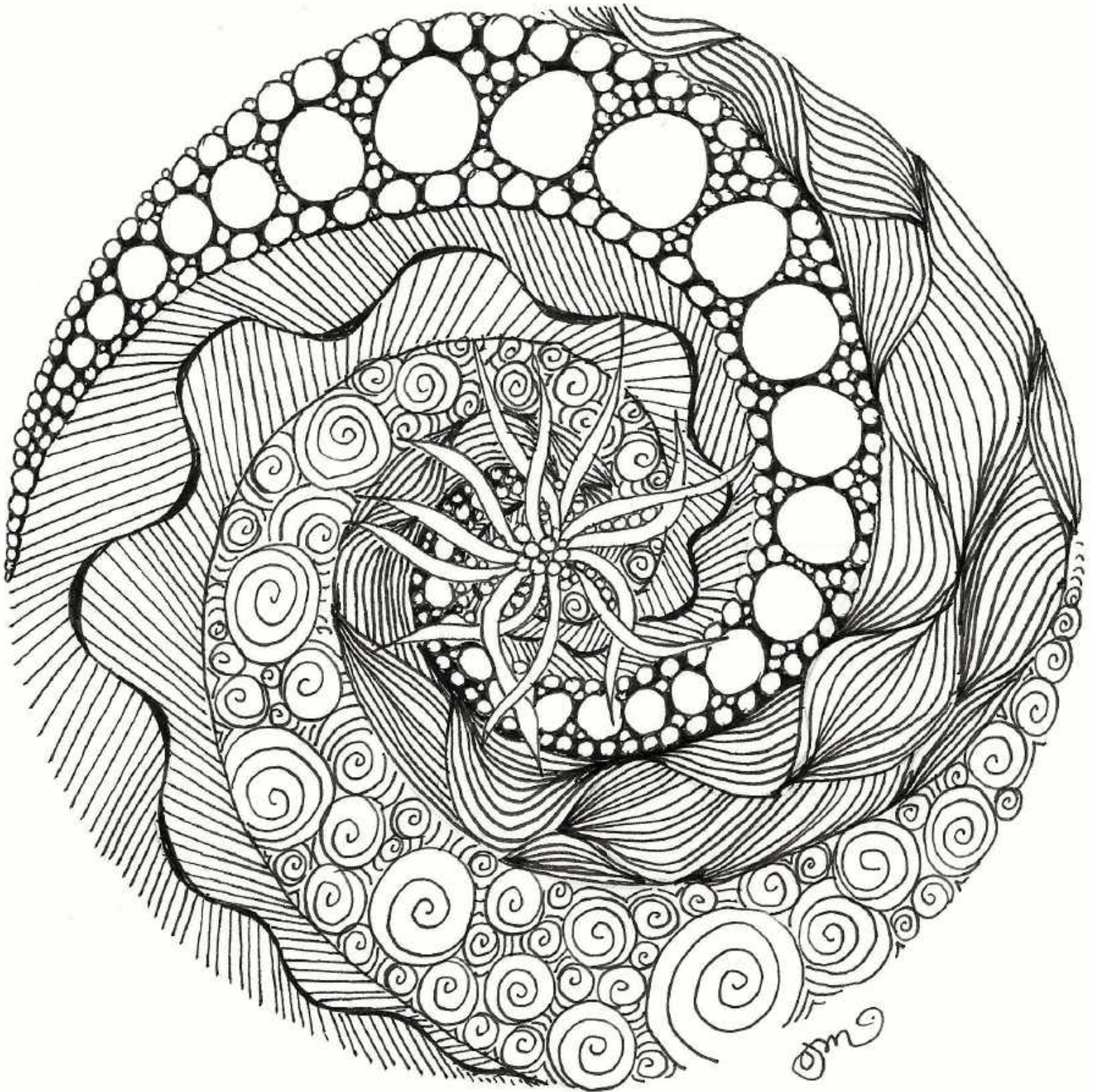
Show us what your homeschooler has been doing!

Send submissions to editor@seahomeschoolers.com



Signs of the Sea

A Printable Coloring Page by Judith Claudi-Magnussen



Ten Storytelling Podcasts for Summer Travel & Carschooling

By Lilly Vicens

Take storytime on the road this summer

As we hit the road all summer long for family trips and fun outings, car rides can become a taxing source of dread for everyone involved. What I have discovered works best for car rides, to fight boredom and carsickness while simultaneously getting our learn on, is a great story.



Podcasts are my go-to for audio stories in the car, and new podcasts are constantly being created for a variety of ages and interests. Apps like Kids Listen make it easier to navigate all the great stuff out there. Search by age and interest (anything from stories and science to music and cool people), and download each episode ahead of time for those long beach trips. Many podcasts compile fantastic, hour-long summer playlists or kids can marathon their favorite adventure series.

Perfect for carschooling, podcasts will keep kids engaged while stimulating listening and creative skills as they learn.

Produced in short, digestible segments, podcasts are just long enough to engage kids in meaningful content while sparking those "big, juicy conversations" that often happen spontaneously in the car. Work a storytelling podcast into your reading schedule for the week, and see what happens!

If you are in the middle of a unit study and find yourself stuck in the car, there's probably a podcast on that very topic. The "sweeps" on Kids Listen are a wonderfully diverse compilation of podcasts centered around a common theme, kinda like that unit study!

Here's my top ten list of storytelling podcasts that I know your kids will love:



1. [Circle Round](#)

I refer to this podcast in my main storytelling post because it is an amazing resource for storytelling at home. Produced by WBUR, the stories are rich, multicultural, and promote empathy. They are short enough to remember for oral retelling as needed. I enjoy listening with my daughter and discussing afterwards. They also have a great summer compilation.

2. [Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls](#)

If you haven't read the bestselling book this podcast originated from, you should. My daughter enjoyed stories from the book, but the

podcast brings the stories to life in a new way. The podcast stories seem longer, richer, and include more details from the lives of each amazing rebel girl. The stories are interesting, informative, and an enjoyable listen for the entire family. I love learning about amazing women right along with my daughter.

3. [What if World](#)

Stories that pose the wonderful question, "what if," to kids everywhere. "What if I had a carnival at my house?" "What if Fred the Dog didn't like sticks?" This imaginative podcast is full of wacky adventure and funny voices by Mr. Eric (Eric O'Keeffe). There's also an hour-long bonus summer episode, with clips and mini episodes from a variety of podcasters (featured on Kids Listen), that we plan on listening to on our next trip.

4. [Story Pirates](#)

This podcast, by Gimlet, is an adventure in storytelling, complete with sound effects, song, and imaginative fun. Even better, the stories are submitted by real kids! It's wilder than a traditional storytelling format (think sketch comedy), has a live show, and is thoroughly enjoyable for kids of all ages.

5. [The Alien Adventures of Finn Caspian](#)

A serialized science-fiction story by Gen-Z Kids that is truly unique. For ages five to ten and told in 15-20 minute episodes, Finn Caspian is great for marathoning while on the road. It's described as "a 'mystery gang' story, sort of like Scooby-Doo meets Buffy the Vampire Slayer in space" on their website.

6. [Sparkle Stories](#)

Huge library of original stories for any occasion, and they offer a free story each week on their podcast. These stories are gentle, slower paced, and great for sparking the imagination. They model kindness, morals, and wonderment for all ages.

7. [Journey with Story](#)

Sweet little fairy tales, folk tales, poems and animal stories by Scottish author Kathleen Pelley that average about five minutes. You'll feel as if you're sitting on a braided rug in a little cottage with the quintessential story lady. Best for ages three to ten.

8. [Time Storm](#)

A fiction series by Cocotazo Media about the time traveling Ventura twins from Puerto Rico with a mission to "preserve their cultures true history." In the midst of a natural disaster, an exciting adventure story develops with modern themes that seem to target children ages eight and above.

9. [Story Nory](#)

This London podcast offers educational and entertaining stories read by professional actors. Stories are about 15 to 20 minutes long. Mostly original stories, but some adapted classics and fairy tales are included.

10. [The Story Home](#)

Classic and original short stories told by Alan Scofield. A few original stories by Don Freeman, author of Corduroy. Calm, relaxing stories reminiscent of the Circle Round podcast.

This list is not exhaustive but makes a good start! There are so many story podcasts that we have yet to try, and new ones are being created all the time.

As we travel far and wide this summer, these words by J.K. Rowling are my mantra, "There's always room for a story that can transport people to another place."

Lilly Vicens is the homeschooling mom of one artsy, imaginative, story-loving girl. As a published writer with a science degree, she shares nature-inspired stories and homeschooling insight on her blog at <http://www.tuliptreehomeschool.com>. You can also follow her family's adventures on Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/tuliptree_homeschool/ or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/tuliptreehomeschool/>.

One Third Stories

By Ann Ryan, Host of the Learning Outside the Lines Podcast
www.learningoutsidethelines.com



One Third Stories is a fun, engaging Spanish language subscription box (also comes in French) perfect for the preschool/Kinder set. The program is targeted to ages 4-9 but I think it's best for the younger end. The centerpiece of the program are the stories that gradually introduce words in the target language in contexts that make their meaning immediately apparent. Words become phrases, phrases become sentences, sentences become whole pages. There is a glossary in the back of the book of the target language to English but the words are obvious.



I received a Spanish set titled “How the Dinosaur got his Shoes” and it was cute and fun. It introduced colors, numbers and basic phrases like please, thank you, my name is, and of course, the word for shoes. Engaging illustrations make the kids laugh and the counting of the shoes gets them actively involved. You also get a link for an audiobook version! This is great if you aren't sure how to pronounce a word and they are well read.

It also comes with flashcards with Spanish on one side and English on the other, a simple activity book, and a story board that can be colored (there are color by number instructions in the activity book if you “want” to follow that) and dino cut outs to use however your child wants. The dino cut out is heavy

duty laminate card stock which is nice and sturdy.

If you want a gentle way to introduce Spanish (or French) to your child while reading fun stories, this is a great way to do that.

You can order month to month, or sign up for 6 or 12 month subscriptions at a discounted rate.

Check out <https://onethirdstories.com> for more info.





iNaturalist Webinar



July 15th 2019 - 10am (PST)

Free for SEA Members

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Enjoy taking pictures of animals and plants?

iNaturalist is a mobile app and website that allows scientists and nature lovers to capture images of native flora and fauna in the local area and upload the pictures to an online database. Taxonomists will ID the images once they are uploaded to the site and will notify you once the organism has been identified!

With the help of citizens and scientists across the globe, iNaturalist maintains online records of the native plants and animals occupying the world's ecosystems. Knowing which species occur in various regions, as well as their abundance, helps scientists accurately understand the structure of local communities and how this structure may change in the face of changing climate. In this webinar we will guide you through setting up an iNaturalist account and adding your first observations.

We even have a SEA Homeschoolers iNaturalist account, <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/sea-homeschoolers>. If you join and use the iNaturalist account, you will get a certificate of achievement for being a citizen scientist.

How to Create a Parent Led Homeschool Co-op

By Sharon Anderson

Parent led homeschool co-ops can be one of the most effective methods of integrating project based learning into your routine and making learning exciting and fun for all involved. They can involve as little as 2 families, or a dozen or more. They are easy to set up and costs can be minimal. The great thing about parent led co-ops is that the parents involved all help, so the teaching workload is shared and the instructor knowledgebase is large and varied. They also provide a great opportunity to grow lasting friendships between both the children and the adults involved. To get started, find some time to sit down and think about the who, what, where and when of the co-op you'd like to create.

When thinking about who you'd like to have join your co-op, think about how large you'd like the group to be. Think about the age range of the children it would best serve. Decide if you'd like to announce the idea to your local homeschool group, or if you are just going to invite a few friends to join. There really is no right or wrong size co-op, it all depends on what works best for you and your children.

Deciding what your homeschool co-op will be about is really fun! Your options are basically limitless. Try and think a little outside the box. Choose something that isn't your favorite to teach, that you'd enjoy having help



with. Or choose something that you love, because you want to share that with the children. You can also choose something that you'd like to incorporate regularly, but just haven't had the time. Choose one subject, or combine a couple. It's entirely up to you. Here are a few ideas to get you thinking:



- Science - gardening, magnets, chemistry, entomology, astronomy... pick one topic, or have a new one each time you meet.
- Writing - poetry, creative writing, storytelling, persuasive, college and more!
- History - focus on time periods, go through a specific curriculum together or create your own utilizing local history and historical events.
- Field Trips - organize your group around local field trips, or camping or share your favorite hiking or fishing spots.
- Community Service - find opportunities in your community that allow children to serve alongside adults to teach children about service to others.
- Literature - pick a genre or even a fandom (Dinosaurs, Harry Potter, Little House, etc.). Read books and create meaningful activities that go with them.
- Gaming - learn chess, D&D, Minecraft and more with your group.
- PE - get together for some basketball, hockey, juggling, LARP (Live Action Role Play), skating, bicycling or whatever you and your kids enjoy.
- Life Skills - cooking, auto maintenance, first aid, personal finance - all those adulting things we need to teach our kids.

Where and when you decide to get together for your homeschool co-op will also be very personalized. Do you want it at your house? Is another parent willing to host? Is there a community center or library that would give you space to use? Holding it before or after a regularly scheduled event, like a park day, is a really great choice too. Co-ops can be held weekly, twice a month, monthly, or as they are able to be scheduled. It really is entirely up to you and the other parents that join.



Once you have decided these things, get together with the parents involved and decide how you'd like to teach the co-op.

- Does a different parent want to teach each meeting? Do parents want to work as partners to teach? Do parents want to teach based on their expertise?
- Will parents rotate who keeps younger siblings occupied, or will they be included?
- Do you want to charge a per session fee? Or will each family agree to cover the expenses of their meeting and keep the cost at a certain amount?
- Will you occasionally pay an expert to come discuss a specific topic with the children and is everyone willing to divide the cost of that expert?

After this meeting, you will have your co-op planned. Congratulations! A few tips to help your parent led co-op flourish.

- Pick a leader and a co-leader - it helps if a co-op has a point of contact, or main person in charge to see the vision through and make decisions. This is often the person starting the co-op and a friend or fellow visionary.
- Create a place to connect - a Facebook or Meet-up Group, a Discord Channel, a group email... whatever is most effective for your families to keep up with what is happening with your co-op.
- Be Committed - Do what you say you are going to do. Arrive on time. Be prepared for each meeting. This goes for the leaders and the members too.
- Ask for help when you need it. None of us has super powers and we all find ourselves overcommitted sometimes. Let the other members know you need help and let them help you when you are struggling.

Being part of parent led co-op can be a very rewarding part of your homeschooling journey. Both you and your children can learn deeply through hands-on activities shared with others, form deep and lasting friendships and have a lot of fun while doing so.

I encourage you to reach out to fellow homeschoolers and see what you can create!

If you'd like to have your co-op highlighted in the SEA Magazine in order to help others see what they can do, send an email to editor@seahomeschoolers.com.



Tardigrades

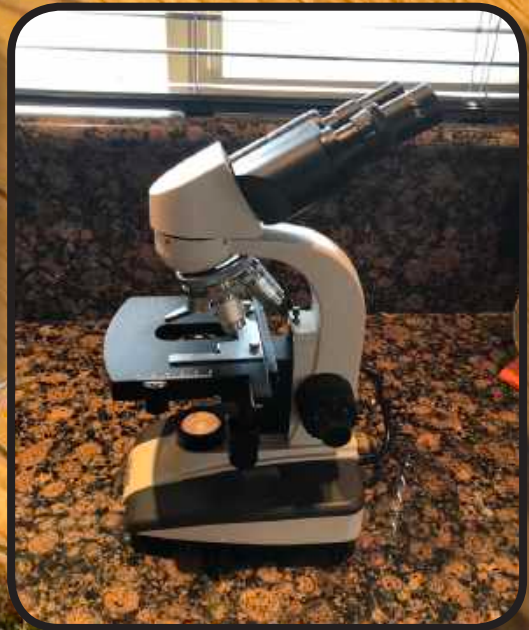
On The Road Again
With Blair Lee

I am in the Eastern Sierra this summer as write REAL Science Odyssey Biology 1 and hike to get ready for hiking Hadrian's Wall. As I did with REAL Science Odyssey Astronomy 1, I am having a narrator throughout Biology. While I was at the National Teaching Association Conference (the NSTA just changed their name from Teachers to Teaching), I saw a tardigrade when I was checking out the microscopes at the Celestron Booth. I had been going back and forth about what organism I should use as a narrator. When I saw that tardigrade I knew right away what it would be!



Since then I have learned so much about tardigrades. They are amazing animals! These photos are from a tardigrade hunt, LOL. Tardigrades love moss, and the area I am in has springs, both warm and cold, with moss around the lips. I collected moss from them, and oh my have I seen tardigrades! and amoebas... and shrimp-like organisms... and many, many other organisms, plants and animals. It is fascinating to look through the microscope at them.

The tardigrade photos are courtesy of Jessica Dion. I am planning on fixing it soon, but I do not have a way to hook my microscope to a computer. In case you are wondering, tardigrades are adorable, charming, and definitely aware of their surroundings (they do have a brain and nervous system.) When you watch them under the scope, you can see them peeking around things and avoiding things. They have two black eyes that look up at you too.



Celestron Cometron 7x50 and Skymaster 20x80 Binoculars

By Blair Lee, MS



I recommended using your binoculars in a book I wrote called [*The Stargazers Notebook*](#),” I said to John at the [Celestron](#) Vendor Booth at the National Science Teachers Convention this year. John held up a pair of [Celestron 71198 Cometron 7x50 Binoculars](#), and said, “You must be using these.” I was not. The binoculars I had at home, [Celestron Skymaster 20x80](#), were much larger, and I will admit to being a bit dismissive about the smaller pair John was showing me. John insisted, however, that the binoculars he was holding were more practical, all around better, and would get used more. No, he agreed with me, the smaller pair would not resolve the [Beehive Nebula](#) into its constituent stars. But the larger pair I had at home were too heavy to hold up for extended periods of time, and when trying to zoom into an object in space, a tripod is needed to stabilize the view. John insisted that I take home the pair of Cometron 7x50s from their booth at the end of the convention so I could try them.

REVIEW

[The Skymaster 20x80 Binoculars](#)

John is correct that these are heavy. Too heavy for most children to hold steady for even a short amount of time. They are also long, which makes them a bit unwieldy. Now that I got that out of the way, there are things to love about these binoculars. Unlike a telescope, they can easily be carried in a backpack with a tripod. That is great if, like my family, you like to hike to remote locations and look at the night sky. These are powerful binoculars. The Beehive Nebula is just one of my favorite things to use them to look at. We have also seen the moons of Saturn and gotten



a good view of the features on Earth's moon. The smaller binoculars were not able to resolve the Beehive Nebula, and we could not see the moons of Saturn using them. The [Skymaster 20x80 Binoculars](#) will not take the place of a telescope, but if you do not think you will get much use out of something even heavier and bulkier than these binoculars, they are a good secondary option.

[The Cometron 7x50 Binoculars](#)

Was John correct about these binoculars? Oh, yes! These binoculars will not take the place of a telescope or larger binoculars, but they are much more useful when stargazing. Because they are light and easy to use, we use them all the time when we are looking at stars. We have gotten in the habit of grabbing them when we head outside at night. They are light and easy to wield. My 3-year-old grandson can hold these up and look through them.



How many times have you looked at a constellation and not been able to see all the stars in the constellation? It happens to me all the time, where I have the App I use, Skyview, open and it shows stars I cannot see. When I use these binoculars, I can see those stars! The first time I looked through the [Cometron 7x50 Binoculars](#), I felt like I was having a [Hubble Telescope moment](#). You know the image from Hubble where it shows a crazy number of stars. There were so many more stars I could see with these binoculars that I could not with my eyes alone. The other great thing about these binoculars is that they are not just great for stargazing. Yes, John, they are all around better and more practical and useful! We have used them to see the nesting owl in the owl box in our yard, bats on a tree, and a beaver swimming near its dam.

In Conclusion

When purchasing binoculars, [Celestron](#) is a great choice because of their high-quality lenses coupled with low prices for what you get. Of the two binoculars I reviewed, because of the ease-of-use, portability, weight, and its usefulness to look at much more than the night sky, I recommend the [Cometron 7x50 Binoculars](#). If you want more powerful binoculars but do not want a telescope, the [Skymaster 20x80 Binoculars](#) are a great choice, but they will not take the place of the Cometron 7x50 Binoculars.



Kinsey's Climate Change Vegan Cupcakes with Melting Polar Ice Caps

Makes 18 Cupcakes

Ingredients

Cupcakes:

- 1 and 3/4 cups (220g) All-Purpose Flour
- 1 cup (200g) Sugar
- 1 tsp Baking Soda
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1 cup non-dairy milk
- 2 tsp (10ml) Vanilla Extract
- 1/3 cup (80ml) vegetable oil
- 2 Tbsp (15ml) White or Apple Cider Vinegar
- 36 Double-stuffed Oreo cookies (18 whole, 18 with cream centers removed)

Frosting:

- 3 and 3/4 cups (450g) Powdered Sugar
- 3 Tbsp Vegan Butter
- 4 Tbsp non-dairy milk - coconut milk is yummy
- 2 tsp Vanilla Extract
- Wilton Icing Dye in Royal Blue

Decorations:

- The cream centers from 18 Double-Stuffed Oreo cookies
- Wilton White Sparkle Gel
- Wilton White Sparkling Decorating Sugar
- Small arctic animal figurines (optional)

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 375°.
- Grease and flour cupcake pan.
- Place one whole Oreo in the bottom of each section of the cupcake pan.
- Carefully open 18 Oreos and use a knife to lift out the cream center. Set aside.
- Sift dry ingredients into a large bowl.
- Crumble chocolate cookie pieces into the bowl with the dry ingredients.
- Mix oil, milk, and vanilla in a small bowl.
- Pour into dry ingredients and whisk.
- When smooth, add vinegar, stir quickly.
- There will be pale swirls in the batter as the baking soda and vinegar react. Stir just until vinegar is evenly distributed.
- Use an ice cream scoop or measuring cup to fill cupcake pan quickly.
- Bake for 25 to 30 minutes and set aside to cool.
- Cool cupcakes, remove from pan and refrigerate until chilled.
- Combine frosting ingredients, except dye, and beat until smooth and creamy.
- Mix in dye a little at a time, until you have reached the shade of blue you want.
- Frost chilled cupcakes.
- Shape each of the 18 Oreo cream centers to look like the top of an iceberg.
- Top each with a thin layer of white sparkle gel and white sparkling decorating sugar.
- Place one iceberg on each cupcake and arrange figurines on the icebergs.



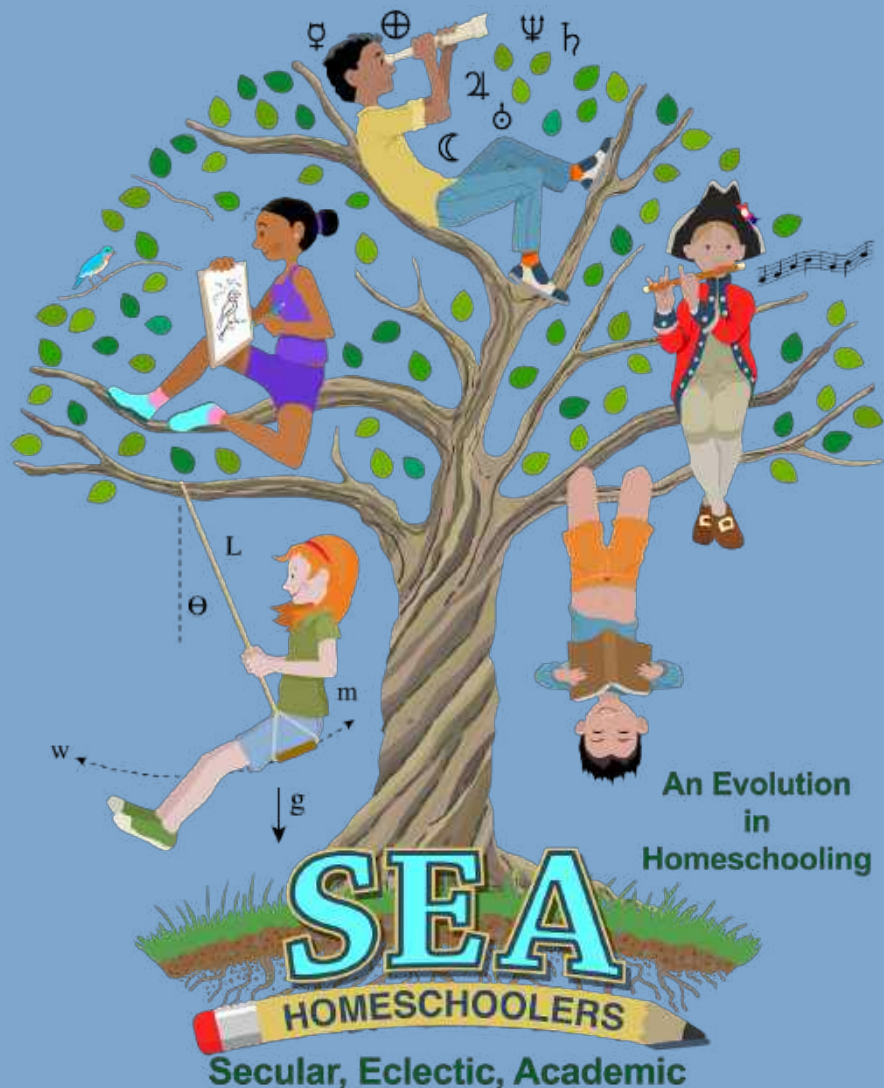
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We are a community-focused group. It is the goal of SEA Homeschoolers to build a strong, healthy, and vibrant network for secular homeschooling families, educators, and business people.

I want to personally thank you for being an important part of the SEA Homeschoolers community.

Blair Lee, founder of Secular, Eclectic, Academic Homeschoolers

If you have any submissions, ideas, questions, or comments, please email us at editor@seahomeschoolers.com or visit us on Facebook at [Editor at SEA](#).



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