

## Contemplative Homeschool Unit: Creation

by Connie Rossini

The focus of the units I have created is on helping your children grow in their relationship with Christ. Academics is part of that, but not the most important part. I want to help children learn to see God in everything. I want to teach them to practice mental prayer. I want religion to be a part of our homeschool daily, not just a subject we study a few times a week. You can learn more about [my philosophy of homeschooling here](#) and [here](#).

Don't try to do all the activities I list here. Choose the ones that work for your family. If you can't find the books I list, substitute what others you can. I usually order books online from the local library so that they are ready for me to pick up when we visit. If I start my research a few weeks ahead, I can usually get most books through an inter-library loan if needed.

How long should you spend on each unit? That's up to you. I'd say three days would be a minimum. I usually spend one to two weeks, depending on the unit. I continue using some other curriculum at the same time to fill in gaps in certain subjects, especially math. Be flexible and do what works.

These units are best suited for kids aged six to twelve, but you can adapt them to include other ages as well.

### **Bible and Religion**

Read "The Creation" in The Golden Children's Bible or Bible of your choice. In this post, I explain [why The Golden Children's Bible is my favorite Bible for kids](#). Have your kids [narrate it back to you](#). I write down their narration until they are about ten, so that grammar and spelling don't interfere with their memory for details. I usually narrate paragraph by paragraph on important stories like this one for the younger kids, so they remember the details. You can do a less detailed narration on other stories, or even do a six-point summary of the text, which I will explain in a future post.

**Copy and Memory Work:** "I praise thee that I was made so wonderfully." Psalm 139:4.

I use the Ignatius Bible for memory work, except in a few cases where I don't like the wording. Feel free to use another translation as you see fit.

**Virtue and Character Development:** Wonder/Awe.

Read [Angel in the Waters by Regina Doman](#). This is a lovely book about the life of a pre-born child. Connect it to your study of the creation of Adam and Eve. See if your child can pick out the similarities between the story and the story of Creation. [See my review for more details](#). Discuss the dignity of every human life. Look at baby pictures, or pictures of you during pregnancy.

**Catechism:** Why did God make you?

Study *The Baltimore Catechism*, nos. 1-8, *First Communion Catechism* nos. 1-4, or *YouCat* nos. 1-3, 43-50.

## Math and Science

**Math:** Tangrams. See my post on this for [a printout and my tangram of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam](#).

Read [Grandfather Tang's Story](#) by Ann Tompert. This story introduces the concept of tangrams. Use construction paper to create a tangram of something from one of the six days of creation. Glue it onto another sheet of paper. This project can double as art.

**Nature:** Divide a paper into six columns. Go on a walk or explore the backyard or a park. List in each column as many things as you can find that were created on each of the six days of creation.

Have children in sixth through ninth grade read (parts of) the first two chapters of [The Story of Science: Aristotle Leads the Way](#). These chapters deal with creation myths. I have not yet looked at the teacher's guide or workbook for this series, but you could start a good discussion about the differences between Genesis and creation myths in other religions.

## History and Geography

Use a history or geography book from Usborne or Kingfisher to study how the earth formed and the movement of the continents. Trace the outlines of the seven continents using a good atlas. Cut out the shapes and fit them together as a puzzle. Make more than one copy and glue the shapes onto a blue piece of construction paper to represent the ocean. Demonstrate the different stages of continental drift and display the final result on your classroom wall.

The early pages of these texts usually contain science as well, talking about the origins of life on earth. If you read about the origins of man according to evolutionary scientists, discuss what makes man human. How is man different from beasts? How is he like them? Can Catholics believe in evolution? Older students can write their answers as a short essay.

## Literature

Read *The Magician's Nephew* by C. S. Lewis. Great as a family read-aloud, this book contains the story of the creation of Narnia by Aslan, as well as a temptation and magical fruit. This is perfect for teaching your children about analogies in literature. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two creation stories, and later the two stories of temptation.

## Music

**Listen:** The Creation Symphony by Joseph Haydn

**Sing:** All Creatures of Our God and King, How Great Thou Art, To the God of All Creation, or All things Bright and Beautiful.

## **Art**

**Art Appreciation:** Michelangelo.

Michelangelo is the perfect artist to study as you read the Old Testament. Between the Sistine Chapel and his many sculptures, he created art based on dozens of Old Testament stories. Of course, since he was a Renaissance artist, many of his figures are nudes. Use your discretion with these. When D and M were little (grade two and under), they didn't think twice about nudes in art. But with C being eight and having two older brothers, all being taught to act and speak modestly, he was shocked by The Creation of Adam. Here is a [3D viewing room of the Sistine Chapel](#) (which made me dizzy).

The Baldwin Project has this [story of Michelangelo](#) free online.

An alternative is William Blake. He does have some nudity in his artwork, but not as much. Here is a painting of [Adam Naming the Beasts](#) from a slideshow of his artwork. [Gustave Dore also made etchings](#) of almost every story in the Old Testament.

Whichever artist you choose, here is [Karen Andreola's explanation of picture study at home](#).

**Art Project:** Draw Adam and Eve, using [Draw 50 People from the Bible](#) by Lee J. Ames. Or use your imagination to draw the Garden of Eden.

## **Just for Fun**

Numbers in Order in [Catholic Math Activities](#), p. 1.

Watch [Walking with Dinosaurs](#), an excellent BBC series narrated by Kenneth Branagh. It may be too much for very young children. Use your discretion. There are also companion series about other early beasts and the evolution of man.

Read or watch a movie about St. Francis of Assisi.

Study [Catholic thought on evolution](#).

## **Closing Prayer**

(The closing prayer is a vital part of the units I have created. Its aim is to pull the lesson together, focusing on character development. I use techniques from traditional Christian meditation to begin teaching children how to do mental prayer. Read the first part of the prayer aloud to your children, pausing as indicated. After the words, "Let us pray to Him," have children repeat the rest after you, phrase by phrase.)

In the Name of the Father...

Close your eyes and imagine you are standing in a beautiful green park, facing west. The sun is just setting and the sky is pink and orange. A breeze rustles the leaves of nearby trees. It feels cool and refreshing on your face. The sweet smell of rain is in the air. A bird calls overhead. **(Pause for several seconds.)**

Now think about God, who created all this. The creation is wonderful, but God the Creator is much more wonderful. He is more beautiful than anything you can see or hear or touch. **(Pause again.)**

Let us pray to Him:

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the wonderful world that you made. I thank you especially for making me in your image, so I can know, love, and serve you. Help me to think of your goodness when I see the beauty of creation. Teach me to respect all human life, and to love and worship you always.

Amen.

In the Name of the Father...