

the Story of the World

HISTORY FOR THE CLASSICAL CHILD

REVISED EDITION



Volume 2: The Middle Ages

From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of the Renaissance

Susan Wise Bauer

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Volume 2: The Middle Ages

From the Fall of Rome to the Rise of the Renaissance

REVISED EDITION

with new maps, illustrations, and timelines



by Susan Wise Bauer

illustrated by Jeff West



PEACE HILL PRESS

Charles City, VA

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Peace Hill Press, Charles City, VA 23030
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Second edition 2007
Printed in the United States of America by BookMasters, Inc.
30 Amberwood Parkway, Ashland, OH 44805 50011923 July 2015

Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bauer, S. Wise.

The story of the world : history for the classical child.
Volume 2, the Middle Ages : from the fall of Rome to the rise of the
Renaissance / by Susan Wise Bauer ; illustrated by Jeff West. — Rev. ed.

p. : ill., maps ; cm.

Includes index.

ISBN: 978-1-933339-10-8

ISBN: 978-1-933339-09-2 (pbk.)

ISBN: 978-1-933339-11-5 (spiral bound)

1. Middle Ages—History—Juvenile literature.
2. Civilization, Medieval—Juvenile literature.
 3. Africa—History—Juvenile literature.
 4. America—History—Juvenile literature.
 5. Europe—History—Juvenile literature.
 6. East Asia—History—Juvenile literature.
 7. Middle Ages—History.
 8. Civilization, Medieval.

I. West, Jeff. II. Title. III. Title: Middle Ages : from
the fall of Rome to the rise of the Renaissance

D118 .B38 2006

940.1

2004112538

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements
of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence
of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Page makeup by Electronic Publishing Services, Inc, TN

www.peacehillpress.com

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The Glory That Was Rome

Wandering Through the Roman Empire

What if you owned a magic carpet? You could use it to fly around the world—and back in time.

Let's imagine that you're going to fly back past the time that you were born, back to the days when people used horses to get around. Then you're going to fly back to the Middle Ages, back to the days of knights and castles. Then you're going to go back even farther, to the time of the Romans.

Your magic carpet stops. You're hovering high in the air, above the Mediterranean Sea. From your seat on the carpet, you can look down and see the Mediterranean. It looks a little bit like a duck flying.

You notice that the land all around the Mediterranean is glowing yellow! This is the land that belongs to the Roman Empire, the biggest, most powerful empire in the world. For hundreds of years, Roman soldiers have been attacking and conquering the countries around the Mediterranean Sea. Now, the emperor of Rome rules all of these conquered countries. They obey the laws of Rome, speak the language of Rome, and serve the emperor of Rome.

The Roman Empire, Divided



Your magic carpet swoops down towards the Mediterranean Sea, towards a piece of land that looks like a boot sticking out into the middle of the water. This is Italy, the center of the Roman Empire. And the most important city in Italy is Rome itself, right in the middle of the boot.

Your carpet dives down into the middle of the city. You're carried along paved streets, through crowds of people. They are wearing white robes, draped over their shoulders and caught up around the waist with belts of leather; they wear cloaks of red, blue, and other bright colors. Tall buildings rise up on either side of you—ancient apartment buildings, made out of concrete. On your right, you see an enormous circular wall curving away from you; it looms high over your head. On the other side of the wall, you hear the clash of metal against metal and the roar of an excited crowd. This must be the Coliseum, the huge amphitheater where gladiators fight to the death, chariot racers careen around a track, and lions battle with Roman soldiers for the entertainment of Roman spectators.

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As your carpet takes you through the richest part of town, you see marble columns with the statues of great Roman generals and emperors on top of them. Slaves pass by you, staggering under the weight of litters—beds on which important Roman citizens lie to be carried through the city. You hear the sound of music, and a loud voice crying, “Clear the way! Clear the way for the Emperor!” A litter comes into view, draped in purple and surrounded by guards. On the litter lies a fat man wearing a gorgeous purple cloak and gold rings on his fingers. A green laurel wreath crowns his head. He is the ruler of all Rome!

You decide to get out of his way, and your carpet rises up above the city and carries you north, into the countryside. You’re going to travel north up through Italy. The carpet follows a broad, smooth paved road, crowded with travelers and pack animals. You cross a bridge, built of tall stone arches, above a river that runs far beneath.

The road goes on and on and on. The Romans built hundreds of these roads to link the different parts of their empire together. None of the travelers on the roads seem worried about bandits or highway robbers. After all, the Romans are careful to keep peace all over their kingdom. This *Pax Romana*, or “Roman peace,” means that all the parts of the Roman Empire obey the Roman laws. And the Roman laws are very strict when it comes to highway robbery. Bandits who are caught are executed, or forced to fight in the gladiator shows!

After you’ve flown for hundreds of miles, mountains come into view ahead of you. Your carpet soars up above them. The air becomes very cold. Far below, you can see snow on the mountaintops. These are the Alps. When you come down on

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the other side of the Alps, you are in Gaul—one of Rome’s provinces, or conquered countries. Throughout Gaul, you see Roman towns. And outside every Roman town is a garrison, or army camp. Soldiers cook meals over open fires, practice sword fighting, and exercise their horses, waiting for trouble. If the people who live in Gaul revolt, the soldiers will immediately go to war against them.

Your carpet flies you over a wide stretch of water to a huge island and hovers above the ground. You hope the carpet won’t land—because below you are crowds of fierce warriors, planning to attack the Roman army huddled on the shore. Now you’re in Britain.

The fierce warriors below you are Celts. They are painted blue; their hair is greased with animal fat so that it sticks up in points all over their heads, and they carry great, two-sided axes and razor-sharp spears. The Pax Romana doesn’t seem to be working very well here in Britain!

“Let’s get out of here!” you tell the carpet. Instantly it whisks you back up into the air. You fly down the Atlantic Ocean, down through Spain, into the northern part of Africa. As you fly along the northern African coast, you see great trading cities down below: cities built by the Romans, with busy ports where ships sail in and out, carrying spices, silks, salt, lumber, and other goods. It is a peaceful scene. The Pax Romana must be back in action.

Up ahead you see the peak of a pyramid, jutting up from the sand of a desert. You sail over the pyramids, half blinded by their white sides shining in the sun. Ahead you see a huge river, feeding into the Mediterranean Sea. It’s the Nile River. Even Egypt, the land of pharaohs, pyramids, and mummies, is under Roman control.

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The sun is starting to sink towards the horizon, but you've only gone halfway through the Roman Empire. "Hurry up!" you say to the carpet. In just moments, you swoop through Arabia, Syria, and up into Asia Minor. As soon as you fly across Greece, you'll be back in Rome.

Thanks to your flying carpet, Roman roads, and the Pax Romana, you've traveled around the Roman Empire in less than a day. But in the days of Roman power it would take months to get all around Rome. No wonder that Rome was called "The Ruler of the Whole World!"

The Fall of Rome

The emperors of Rome were called "The Rulers of the Whole World." But they had a problem: The world was too big to rule!

The Roman Empire was so large that the army couldn't protect its borders. And there were plenty of people outside the Roman Empire who wanted to come in and take parts of it away.

Imagine that you're standing in an orchard filled with apple trees. Ripe, juicy apples hang from every branch, and hungry animals are roaming in herds all around the edges. Three starving deer rush in and start to eat the apples on one side. You run at them, waving your arms and shouting. The deer dash off—but while you're chasing them, two enormous cows start snatching apples from the other side of the orchard. You turn around and charge at them, yelling, "Don't eat my

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