

GIFTED EDUCATION NEWS-PAGE

VOLUME 11, NUMBER 6

***Published by GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS; 10201 YUMA COURT;
P.O. BOX 1586; MANASSAS, VA 20108; 703-369-5017 www.giftededpress.com***

Creative Home Schooling for Gifted Children: A Resource Guide (2002) by Lisa Rivero. Great Potential Press. Scottsdale, Arizona.

This is an exceptional book for several reasons. First, it covers many topics that are of concern to parents and educators of the gifted. For example, this reviewer has searched the index and table of contents for information on learning styles and differentiation. The author has provided intensive discussions of both topics that are informative and insightful. Second, an outstanding writer and home educator wrote this book. She has no “axe to grind” against the public schools; instead, she presents a very logical argument for home schooling based on her philosophy of education and her study of differentiated and general education. Rivero has provided the reader with extensive information on educating gifted children at home in three broad areas – social-emotional and educational goals of home schooling, teaching methods, and curriculum approaches. One would expect a comprehensive book on this topic to cover these areas, but the uniqueness of this book derives from Rivero’s mastery of the subject and her extraordinary ability to meaningfully weave educational research findings, parent comments and information from various resources into these broad areas. To provide readers with a snapshot of the important areas included in her book, here are some of the chapter titles:

● The Decision – Why Home School? ● Traits of Giftedness ● Social and Emotional Needs ● Intellectual Needs ● Learning Styles: Learning With A Difference ● Curriculum Matters ● Unschooling and Self-Directed Learning ● Special Topic – Profoundly Gifted Children, Giftedness and ADHD, etc. ● Home School Resources ● References and Resource Index by Ability Level and Subject

Rivero gives the following reason for writing **Creative Home Schooling for Gifted Children**:

“ . . . As I did my research, I gradually began to put together the kinds of resources that I wish I’d had when we started. I decided to write the kind of home schooling book I wish I’d had – one that is informed by the research and scholarship of gifted education and home schooling as well as by the wisdom of other families of home schooled gifted learners who agreed to be interviewed and to share their experiences. . . .” (p. 7).

This work will become a major resource for parents and educators of the gifted. They can use it to learn about many of the difficult issues associated with home schooling and gifted education. It is a pleasure to read Rivero’s book because it reflects the thinking of one of the best writers in the gifted education field. (It should be noted that Lisa Rivero has written another excellent book, **Gifted Education Comes Home**, 2000, Gifted Education Press.)

War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars (2001) by Andrew Carroll. Scribner. New York.

This remarkable book is the result of the Legacy Project started by Andrew Carroll in 1998 to publish letters written by Americans who participated in wars from the Civil War to Operation Desert Storm. He obtained over 50,000 letters from veterans, relatives and friends of combatants, libraries and estates. (Requests for these letters were made through media announcements, radio interviews and internet sites.) **War Letters** represents a compilation of the best letters selected from this enormous pool. To increase the information value of the letters, Carroll has written historical introductions and given personal background information about the writers. The letters are from a broad range of society representing ordinary citizens to individuals who became famous, e.g., George A. Custer, William T. Sherman, Clara Barton, Theodore Roosevelt, Helen Keller, Dwight Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur. There are incredible letters from people who became war heroes, e.g., George Bush (World War II), George S. McGovern (World War II) and Joe Sammarco (Korean War). But most of the letters were written by ordinary recruits who expressed their love of family and country, their loneliness and the horrors of war. Here is an excerpt from one of Joe Sammarco’s letters, who enlisted in the Korean War and became a hero. The letter is one of several included in the book that he wrote to his wife:

“Bobbie, you will never know how lucky I am to be alive. I was on my switchboard when they broke into the house, and at first I was too scared to move. Then they killed my Buddy (Johnny) and I got over being scared. I don’t know what happened after that except that as they started to come up there were several hundred dead & wounded Chinese all over the place and they retreated (what was left of them) back to the hills. We had about 200 Americans killed, twice that many wounded, and I don’t know about the French. . . I love you so much, and I must get home to see you again. I am all right now honey, and I think it will be quiet here for a little while, anyway. Please keep writing, and remember how very much I love you & miss you, Kiss the babies for me, I love you, Joey.” (p. 344).

This letter describes the battle at Chipiyong-ni. The soldier was an American assigned to a French army battalion, and the French government awarded him the croix de guerre with the Silver Star for his heroism.

In addition to the human concerns expressed in these letters, they also provide extensive information about important historical events. As an example, many of the Civil War letters describe the massive battles of Antietam and Gettysburg (total of 74,000 casualties from these two battles), while the World War II letters cover the American military invasions of the Pacific Islands and the D-Day assault in Europe. Letters from this war also describe the Japanese kamikaze attacks and the liberation of Nazi concentration camps (Buchenwald and Dachau).

By reading **War Letters**, gifted students can learn about the personal experiences of Americans who participated in these great and tragic events. The perspectives conveyed by the letter writers can lead to meaningful questions about the impact of each war on the nation's values and development, and motivate gifted students to study the historical periods that preceded and followed them. Andrew Carroll can serve as a hero of American literature and role model for the gifted, since he has unsparingly devoted his time and economic resources to making citizens more cognizant of American history and poetry through his free book distribution program. His web site is: www.warletters.com

The Philosophers' Club (2001) by Christopher Phillips, Illustrated by Kim Doner. Tricycle Press. Berkeley, CA.

This introduction to Socratic Dialogue can be used with gifted students in the upper elementary level to enhance their reasoning abilities and to interest them in the study of philosophy. The author poses a series of questions to spur children to think about philosophical issues. They subsequently engage in a question and answer dialogue with a teacher, parent or mentor. What is philosophy? What is violence? Is it possible to be happy and sad at the same time? What is silence? What is the difference between the truth and a lie? Why are we here? These are some of the questions posed by Phillips, and he follows them with a series of tentative answers. The book also contains many drawings of children which illustrate each philosophical point being discussed. The author is director of the Society for Philosophical Inquiry. He has organized hundreds of Socrates Cafés (philosophy discussion groups) across the nation in bookstores, cafés, senior centers and delis, and has taught philosophy in many schools (his website is: www.philosopher.org). The following resources from Gifted Education Press can be used in philosophy seminars at the upper elementary through high school levels: (1) **Teaching Philosophy to Gifted Students** (1985) by James LoGiudice; (2) **Philosophy of Ethics Applied to Everyday Life** (1987) James LoGiudice and Michael Walters; and (2) **Introduction to Logical Analysis** (1989) by Maurice Stanley.

ADDITIONAL BOOKS TO READ FOR BROAD PERSPECTIVES ON CREATIVITY AND NATURE

● **Lectures on Shakespeare (2000) by W.H. Auden and Arthur Kirsch, Editor. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey.** Auden presented these lectures on Shakespeare's plays and sonnets at the New School for Social Research in 1946-47. This genius of poetry and prose provides many insights into the Bard's work. On March 26, 1947, he said: "It is embarrassing to talk for an hour or an hour and a half about great masterpieces. It's fun to talk about minor and neglected works because one can point out new stuff. Even Dante has difficulties that need to be explained. But *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra* are works that are perfectly easy to understand. Is *Lear* better read or acted? -- a great controversy. If I finally come down on the side of those who think it is not actable ... but let's postpone that." (p. 219).

● **Guns, Germs, and Steel (1999) by Jared Diamond. W.W. Norton & Company. New York.** Awarded the Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction in 1998, this book examines the reasons why certain cultures/civilizations have developed advanced technologies and high standards of living while others have stagnated. He uses findings from anthropology for the last several thousand years to explain migrations and movements from hunting-gathering to agricultural and industrial societies. Here is a fascinating study of the march of human creativity and production that gifted students will benefit greatly from reading.

In Commemoration of the Birthday of Herman Melville (August 1, 1819). Here is what Michael Walters said about this great American writer (Gifted Education Press Quarterly, Winter 1994). The great flooding produced by the grandfather of all American rivers, the Mississippi, during the summer of 1993 vividly shows the overwhelming power of this natural force. This river has affected the imagination of many outstanding American writers, musicians and artists. Themes dealing with the Mississippi and its creative individuals can be effectively included in a curriculum that appeals to the gifted child. For example, Herman Melville (1819-91), the American writer of tales that occurred on the great oceans, was also influenced by the Mississippi. He took a trip on a Mississippi steam boat in 1840. Out of this encounter, he wrote one of the most unusual books about America, **The Confidence-Man** (1857), a metaphysical inquiry into the American psyche and a forerunner of Katherine Anne Porter's **Ship of Fools** (1962). The story begins on April Fool's Day, and it tells about all the different types of people on the boat. Melville describes black workers, the crew, American Indians, Sephardic Jews from New Orleans, gamblers, Don Juans, dance hall girls, etc. These people represent a cross section of the entire human race that Melville uses to weave a tapestry of American identity.