



Ruffing  
Montessori  
School

Montessori uses its Five Great Lessons as an introduction to all topics, providing a “big picture” to demonstrate how the sciences, art, history, language, and geography are interrelated. Students are then introduced to increasing levels of detail and complexity within these broad areas.

**The Story of Creation** of the Universe describes how minerals and chemicals formed the elements; how matter transforms to three states of solid, liquid, and gas; how particles joined together and formed the earth; how heavier particles sank to Earth’s core and volcanoes erupted; how mountains were formed and the atmosphere condensed into rain, creating oceans, lakes, and rivers. Students are introduced to lessons in physics, astronomy, geology, and chemistry. For example, they learn about light, heat, convection currents, gravity, galaxies, planetary systems, Earth’s crust, volcanoes, erosion, climate and physical geography.

**The Coming of Life** explains how single-cell and multi-cell forms of life became embedded in the bottom of the sea and formed fossils. The Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic periods are traced beginning with the kingdom of trilobites and ending with human beings. A timeline shows the beginning of vertebrates, followed by fish and plants, then amphibians, reptiles, and birds and mammals. This is the basis for lessons in chemistry, nutrition, categories of animals and plants, care and requirements of different animals, and their interrelationship within an ecological system. Students are introduced to formal scientific language of zoology, botany, and anthropology.

**The Story of Humans** introduces human beings and their unique endowments of intellect and will. The aim is for the children to imagine what life was like for early humans. This is the basis for lessons in prehistory and the emergence of ancient civilizations. Students are introduced to an analytical tool to compare cultures, and how climate and topography influence culture and political geography.

**The Story of Language** describes the origin, structure, and types of writing and speaking. It begins with a discussion of the Egyptians, who had two kinds of symbols – one for ideas and one for sounds. The story goes on to describe the Phoenicians, who used the Egyptian’s sound pictures but not their idea pictures. Next, it describes the contributions of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans. Students use grammar materials, which help them examine how language is put together, and refine capitalization and punctuation. They are introduced to the study of the origin of English words from other languages, the meanings of prefixes and suffixes and different forms of writing, such as poetry, narratives, and plays. Older children may study Egyptian hieroglyphics or American Indian picture writing.

**The Story of Numbers** emphasizes how human beings needed a language for their inventions to convey measurement and how things were made. The story describes how the Sumerians and Babylonians had a number system based on 60, which is the reason for our 60-second minute and 60-minute hour. Greek, Roman and Chinese numbers are introduced, and how Arabic numerals are similar to numbers found in a cave in India from 2,000 years ago. These Indian numerals had something that no other number system had, the zero. This is the basis for learning mathematics, which is integrated into all studies. For example, large numbers are needed when measuring time and space in astronomy, negative numbers are needed when measuring temperature changes; triangulation was needed to reestablish property boundaries after the Nile flooded Ancient Egypt.

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