I hadn’t looked into MFW very extensively before this. Here is my experience… trying to be as objective as possible, but understanding I do unquestionably have a Sonlight bias!

My first impression is MFW might be a good product for a mom who really likes to gather materials herself and do her own prep work as she teaches her children. But then, why would she want to pay $90 for very bare-bones teacher’s manual? Honestly, if I had ordered this to use it with my children, I would be sending it back for a refund! Sonlight has me spoiled!

Ordering was easy. Shipping was prompt.

I ordered their Year 5 Teacher’s Manual. It covers from 1850 to Modern Times and is recommended for 4th to 8th graders (and 2nd and 3rd graders with older siblings in the program). It basically covers the same historical period as our Core 4 and the end of Core 7, using SWB’s SOTW Vol. 4 as the main text.

The teacher’s manual I received was a soft cover, spiral bound. The front cover was clear plastic and the first page was an attractive full color title page. The back cover was black plastic. It seems like it would hold up pretty well to daily wear-and-tear but did not offer the flexibility of a loose-leaf manual. It also does not have dividers of any kind, not even regular pages dividing the different sections. I thought it was confusing. It is thinner than SL’s Core K IG. There is an 11-page PDF sample on their site.

The student pages were another $30.

Since I only got the teacher’s manual, I went back to their website to see what else made up a complete package. I typed in myfathersworld.com and got a website for a “Christian wildlife video ministry.” That’s not it! So I tried mfw.com. Nope, that wasn’t it either. I finally Googled it and discovered that their web address is mfwbooks.com. I’ll be sure and remember that!

MFW offers two different packages for this particular level: the Basic package and the Deluxe package.

The Basic package is $264 and includes the TM, student sheets, a timeline book, States
& Capitals songs, plus 10 history and science books. Then there is a list of 10 other required resources to use with this package (presumably started in an earlier level) totaling $100. Plus the supplement for using it with 2nd and 3rd graders is another $70.

The Deluxe package is $363 and includes everything from the Basic package (but not, of course, the required resources or the supplement for younger students) plus another 12 items that are “highly recommended but optional”. This list includes a cookbook, music appreciation materials, science kits, and 6 historical novels or biographies.

The package seemed quite skimpy to me, although it includes materials for Bible, history, and science. (Language Arts and Math are separate subjects.) That’s all well-and-good, but where are the books? I thought MFW was supposed to be a literature-based curriculum, but as I checked their main webpage I don’t see that they actually say that anywhere.

As I began to study the TM I realized that neither the package nor the schedule included Readers. Naturally, the student is expected to read but the TM instructs you, “Together with your child, select a book appropriate to his reading level. When possible, choose a book that relates to the historical time period being studied. Otherwise, select a general book…”

The Appendix includes a recommended reading list for each week, with a brief note about each book, as well as a 3-page “Recommended List for General Reading” including Easy Readers, Picture Books, and grade-level books for 2nd through 6th grades. “The Recommended Resources list is only a starting point. Begin with our list, but also use your library’s card catalog to search for books on each topic. Every library is different. If you find it difficult to locate the books we recommend, you can use any books in your library on the specified topics.”

I don’t know about you, but I really appreciate Sarita doing all that leg-work for me! I actually do enjoy going to the library and scouting out books to supplement our studies, but most of the time “any book… on the specified topic” is not nearly the educational quality I know I can depend on with books that are included in our SL curriculum.

However, I can see the benefit of perhaps offering such a list as a Club benefit (like we offer the Tip Sheets) for supplemental reading for each Core.

The TM included a 2-page article on “Help! How Do I Fit Everything In?” I did not find the article encouraging at all. Rather than giving the poor mom “permission” to not do it all, with ideas for making adjustments to fit her family, the article advises a very rigid schedule with the children getting up early, cooking their own breakfasts, and meeting mom in the living room at 8:00 sharp ready to begin school. As a new homeschooler I would have been intimidated and overwhelmed.

Could I make it work? Sure. Has the “work been done for me”? Not much! I just don’t see how this is much of a bargain.

Here are some comparison points between similar packages from both SL and MFW. Keep in mind that MFW does include World History for this time period, while SL mainly focuses on American History (thus covering it more in-depth). MFW also includes Science in this same package, yet the teacher’s manual is less than half the size of SL’s.

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| **Sonlight Core 4:** **Intro to AH, Part 2 (mid-1800s to present)** | **MFW Year 5:** **US/World History, 1850 to Modern Times** |
| Usually used by students in 4th to 7th grade. | For 4th to 8th graders (and 2nd-3rd graders with older siblings in the program)  |
| Subjects scheduled in IG: Bible, American History, Geography, Literature, Reading | Subjects scheduled in TM: Bible, American and World History, Geography, Literature, Reading, Science |
| IG size: over 400 pages | TM size: approximately 200 pages |
| IG format: drilled loose-leaf paper, designed to go in a binder with 36-week and study guide dividers | TM format: spiral bound, no dividers |
| IG price: $64 | TM price: $90 |
| IG includes study guides for all books. | TM does not include study guides. |
| 4-day package price: $367.16 | Basic package price: $264 |
| 4-day package includes: IG, timeline figures, Wee Sing America CD, 35 books | Basic package includes: TM, student sheets, States & Capitals Songs CD, America’s Favorite Patriotic Songs CD, U.S. Map Pad, timeline book, 8 books |
| 5-day package price: $437.34 | Deluxe package price: $363 |
| 5-day package includes: everything in 4-day package plus 10 additional books | Deluxe package includes: everything in Basic package plus cookbook, 2 science kits, 2 CDs, a video, and 6 books |
| Required Resources cost: $104.88 | Required Resources cost: $99.85 |
| Bible materials: sold separately, memory verse CD available | Bible materials: included in package, TM recommends you make up your own melodies for memory verses |
| Readers: included in Core package | Readers: not included, recommended reading list is provided for you to use the library |
| Can use lower levels of readers and language arts to include younger students in this Core. | 2nd-3rd grade supplement available for $69.95. |
| LA 4 designed to complement Core 4. | Offers a stand-alone LA program. |
| Offers stand-alone art and music electives. (Not scheduled.) | Schedules art and music activities related to history and science.  |