

**Fund for the Future of our Children (FF)**

*Annual Children of Abraham  
Peace Essay Contest*

***READING LIST***

[www.futureofchildren.net](http://www.futureofchildren.net)

## **GENERAL READING**

**Smith, Huston. Illustrated World Religions. San Francisco: Harper, 1995.**

*The Young Adult Library Services Association says this about Smith's classic: "The interconnectivity of the world's great religious movements, with their parallel and disparate beliefs, is lyrically explored." Smith explores each of the world's religions in the best possible light. There is one chapter each on Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. This text is frequently used in introductory college religion courses.*

**Heft, James (Ed.). Beyond violence : religious sources of social transformation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. NY: Fordham University Press, 2004.**

*Table of Contents:*

*Introduction: Religious sources for social transformation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam / James L. Heft*

*Notes on the sources of violence : perennial and modern/Charles Taylor*

*Judaism, Christianity, Islam : hope or fear of our times/Mustafa Ceric*

*God is the all-peace, all-merciful/Mohamed Fathi Osman*

*Judaism on violence and reconciliation : an examination of key sources/Reuven Firestone*

*Religion as a force for reconciliation and peace : a Jewish analysis/Irving Greenberg*

*Disciples of the Prince of Peace? : Christian resources for nonviolent peacebuilding/ R. Scott Appleby.*

**Armstrong, Karen. The Battle for God. NY: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 2000.**

*A history of fundamentalism within each of the three traditions. Good for students who have only heard the fundamentalism applied to Islam and may not know that each religion has been interpreted in extreme ways. Slightly difficult.*

**Armstrong, Karen. A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993.**

*A history of religions intro that is complex but very readable. Possibly too advanced for some students because of complexity of concepts, not writing style.*

## **JUDAISM**

**Elie Wiesel. Messengers of God. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985.**

*This book by a Nobel Prize winner summarizes the powerful life of Moses and other Old Testament figures.*

**Yechezkel Kaufman. The Religion of Israel: the analysis of the rule of prophets in shaping the history of Israel. Schocken, New Ed edition, 1972.**

*This book goes back to 3,300 years to the period when the Israeli belief was born, and looks at what can be learned from the bible books. Kaufmann aims to prove that the Judaism is an original creation from the days of Moses.*

**Marin Buber. On the Bible. NY: Syracuse University Press, New Ed., April 2000.**

*This book offers an analysis of the prophetic character of Moses in light of his study of encounters between man and God.*

**Rabbi Joseph Teluskin. Biblical Literacy. New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 1997.**

*This book contains chapters on the historical life of Moses, as well as other historical Jewish prophets and leaders.*

**Charles Swindoll. Moses: A Man of Selfless Dedication. Nashville, TN: World Publishing, 1999.**

*This is a book written by a Christian theologian on the life of Moses.*

**Joshua Heschel. The Prophets. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics; 1st Perennial classics ed edition, 2001.**

*This book provides a deep knowledge of the prophets of the Old Testament.*

**Haim Nachman Bialik. Priest and Prophet.**

*This book provides an analysis of the difference between the role of priest and prophet.*

**Ariel, David S. What do Jews Believe?: The Spiritual Foundations of Judaism. NY: Schocken Books, Inc., 1995.**

*This book provides mid-depth introduction to current Jewish beliefs. Appropriate reading level.*

**Fackenheim, Emil L. What is Judaism?: An Interpretation for the Present Age. NY: Summit Books, 1987.**

*Three sections deal with 1) current religious beliefs in relation to Torah, 2) Jewish life, and 3) nationhood and Israel. The last section is unique and deals with issues not covered in other intro books. Slightly difficult.*

**Robinson, George. Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals. NY: Pocket Books, 2000.**

*Broad and readable intro to current beliefs, customs, and rituals. Long (500+ pages).*

## **CHRISTIANITY**

**Albert Nolan. Jesus Before Christianity (25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition). New York: Orbis Books, 2001.**

*This book is by a famous South African Dominican priest who portrays Jesus as deeply involved with the real problems of his time – which are the real problems of our time as well.*

**Eugene Peterson. The Message: The New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs. Navpress Publishing Group, 1998.**

*This book contains a very modern easy-to-read translation of the four Gospels of the story of Jesus – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It conveys a more down-to-earth picture of the life of Jesus than some harder-to-read translations.*

**Walter Brueggeman. The Prophetic Imagination. Augsburg Fortress Publishers; Rev Upd Su edition, 2001.**

*This book by a very distinguished scholar talks about the tradition of peace from the era of Moses through Jesus.*

**Crosson, John Dominic. The Birth of Christianity: Discovering what Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.**

*Probably too specific and removed for a general list. Good for an essay question that deals with the history of the three religions. Enlightening for students who have imagined that a unified Christianity existed right after Jesus. Slightly difficult language/concepts.*

**Sennott, Charles M. The Body and the Blood: The Holy Land's Christians at the Turn of a New Millenium. NY: Public Affairs, 2001.**

*Discusses life in the Holy Land, focusing on Christians (an issue that receives little attention either in the media or in other texts). Great source if the essay question deals with current Middle Eastern events. Appropriate reading level.*

**Childester, David. Christianity: A Global History. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000.**

*History of Christianity as a set of global movements, avoiding trap of Euro-centrism (mostly). Good on current ethno-religious issues, especially in non-western societies. Slightly difficult, but manageable for almost all students.*

**Edwards, David L. Christianity: The First Two Thousand Years. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997.**

*Somewhat more Euro-centric, but well-written. Good for a question that deals with history, but otherwise too heavy. Appropriate to slightly difficult reading level.*

**Wink, Walter. Jesus & Nonviolence: A Third Way. Fortress Press, 2003.**

*This book presents the Christian tradition of nonviolence as an alternative to the dominant powers of violence and consumerism of today's world. This book provides an interesting perspective on Jesus and his message to politics and nonviolence.*

## **ISLAM**

**Bassiouini, M. Cherif. Introduction to Islam. 2004. November 13, 2004.  
<http://www.mideasti.org/indepth/islam/index.html>**

*In-depth and accessible online introduction to Islam. Listed in Montgomery County Public Library's web catalog.*

**Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity. San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2002.**

*This is an excellent book not only about the heart of Islam but also about what Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity.*

**Renard, John. Seven Doors to Islam: Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims. University of California Press, 1996.**

*A comprehensive and enlightened presentation of Islam.*

**Yahiya Emerick. The Life and Work of Muhammad (Critical Lives).** Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 2002.

*This book tells a very readable and moving story of the life of Muhammad, including the great social reforms he introduced to protect women, children, and other oppressed groups.*

**Karen Armstrong. Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet.** HarperOne, 2001.

*This best-seller book on the life of Muhammad is by a leading national scholar on world religions.*

**Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an: New Edition with Revised Traslation, Commentary and Newly Compiled Comprehensive Index.** Beltsville, MD: amana publications, 2001.

*Accessible, but not overly simplified translation of the Qur'an. Comprehensible commentary and notes on translation.*

**Sells, Michael. Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations.** Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 2001.

*Introduces the role of the Qur'an in Islam, translates and provides commentary on a number of suras (and portions of suras), and then discusses the sounds of the Qur'an. The text is accompanied by a CD with the call to prayer and six suras discussed in the final chapter. Overall, this is a highly recommended source.*

**Cook, Michael. The Koran: A Very Short Introduction.** NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.

*This text is more challenging and somewhat dryer than Sells' book. Addresses the history of the Qur'an and the language(s) used in it. May be too advanced for our audience.*

**Thomas Cleary. The Essential Koran: The Heart of Islam.** Castle Books, 1998.

*This book by a famous writer on world religions provides a brief introduction to the Qur'an, the sacred text of Muslims, as well as selected readings from the Qur'an.*

**RECENT PEACEMAKERS IN THE TRADITION OF MOSES, JESUS, AND MUHAMMAD**

**Ekknath Easwaran. Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan, A Man to Match His Mountains. California: Nilgiri Press, 1999.**

*This book tells the story of the life of a famous 20<sup>th</sup> century Muslim friend of Gandhi who lived an incredible life of nonviolence inspired by his religious faith, and in opposition to great oppression of his countrymen. He came from a group of mountain fighters along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and persuaded many of them to become “nonviolent soldiers” for serving their fellowmen against impossible odds.*

**Ekknath Easwaran. Gandhi the Man: The Story of His Transformation. California: Nilgiri Press, 2002.**

*This book traces, in easy reading, how Gandhi changed from a shy kid and an early unsuccessful lawyer to a spiritual leader who nonviolently led hundreds of millions of people of India to freedom from the British empire. Albert Einstein described Gandhi as the greatest man of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This book is written by a personal friend of Gandhi who knew him well.*

**Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi on Nonviolence (New Directions Paper). 1965 (edited by Thomas Merton).**

*This short book contains powerful quotations by Gandhi on compassion and nonviolence. It also has an introduction to Gandhi by Thomas Merton, a famous Catholic writer on peacemaking in today’s world.*

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Strength to Love. Augsburg Fortress Publishers; New Ed edition, 1981.**

*This book explains Martin Luther King, Jr.’s philosophy of non-violence, a belief in a divine, loving presence that binds all life.*