



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2002 Volume I: Survival Stories

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Guide for Curriculum Unit 02.01.07

by

This unit, which I will implement in an English class for the duration of a marking period could also be implemented in a history class. It explores art as the narrative of both public and private history, or art as the *memory holder* of history, much of which is a narrative of survival stories. It is designed for my at-risk high school students whom I have found respond favorably and open up creatively when studying and *creating* art, where they least expect it : *in an academic class* , as part of their learning experience, in a school that offers a basic curriculum: English, Social Studies, Math, and Science.

Hence this unit explores how various mediums of art: short stories, children's storybooks, non-fiction, paintings, murals, videos, poetry, rap, CD's, and drama narrate the events of history and the survival stories of individuals, groups, movements, and whole cultures, often in highly imaginative and creative ways that lead the viewer to a new understanding. The ultimate goal of this exploration is to lead the students to discover and participate in, individually and collaboratively, their own creativity in these artistic mediums. Each student will select from the *menu* they have sampled the medium they would like to use to narrate a public or private event in history or a survival story: theirs or someone else's. The class as a whole will design and paint a mural spanning a wall in the school cafeteria.

Because this is an English curriculum, it also incorporates visual literacy with the *writing process* . At the end of the unit, students not only will have the art they have created, but, detailed in my lesson plans, they will also have a portfolio in which they have relied on their skills in visual literacy to create a *five-paragraph essay* , another skill that is one of the cornerstones of the classes I teach.

(Recommended for English and World Literature, grades 9-12.)

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