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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume I: Geography through Film and Literature

The Geography of Learning: Creating the World through Film and Literature

Guide for Curriculum Unit 03.01.06
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Through various mediums - film, television, literature, maps, and of course through actual physical contact - we all "create" our own geography of the world, by the extent of our exposure to it and our ability to imagine it. Largely through the element of "visual literacy," I plan to facilitate my students' learning in both content and skills. The unit will ask students to discuss and formulate opinions about the people who live in the geography of the films and literature we will study, and ultimately, because I am an English teacher, to write about them in a five-paragraph essay.

In this unit, I have divided geography into two categories: that of *place* and that of *space*. The geography of *place* is simply an objective naming of things with which we have no personal relationship: rivers, streets, buildings, countries, and the like. The geography of *space* is defining one's relationship to these objective things when they become part of our lives; it is a subjective consciousness of how people adapt to and live in these *places*. This eight-week unit will give students the opportunity to develop their geographical literacy, commencing with the exploration of their own neighborhoods as both *place* and *space*, and then widening the circle to take in all of New Haven, and then, through film and literature, expanding the circle to include New York City, Brazil and, finally, Australia.

(Recommended for English and Social Studies, grades 9-12.)

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