



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2005 Volume III: History in the American Landscape: Place, Memory, Poetry

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## "Sense of Place," Special Education and Environment

Guide for Curriculum Unit 05.03.08  
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This unit aims to challenge the concept of environmental study and emphasize its relationship with the sense of place. Rather than start with a field of study that preempts the psychology, self-education and purpose of childhood, in this case, I prefer to start with those features as we find them in the world. David Sobel is among the people who are giving some attention to this. If relationships are all important in our work, more attention could be paid to the quality, number and duration of relationships we develop in the course of our studies. The feeling of safety, comfort and defining one's own space-place, almost a "secret" hideaway can be placed in this study for example. The point is that students and their teachers could bring things in to define their space.

The rules are that the 'grammar' ("a systematic treatment of the elementary principles of a subject and their interrelationships") of *the place* are influenced by the students and their teachers much more so than is typically a reflection of the school system these days. The environment of one place, for example the village in which I live, may be feature rich, with lots of access to nature and environmental community; whereas it is less so the product of school and some other places, with some exceptions such as the *communication* with the content of children's lives they bring to school. These actions are natural and psycho-pedagogically important to our students. Yards are important places for kids. We could give them more attention at schools in their education.

(Recommended for Special Education, grades K-4.)

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