



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2008 Volume III: Pride of Place: New Haven Material and Visual Culture

Cultural Artifacts in a Time of Change: Material Culture of Daily Life

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.03.04
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This unit provides the elementary-school teacher with a framework for the study of everyday American artifacts representative of the time period between 1800 and 2000. Because the specific functions of rooms have changed over these two centuries, the organizational rubric for this unit is the “period room.” The consideration of the context of function is further elaborated through the analysis and interpretation of specific objects that structure and enable the activities within these room settings. By studying period rooms across time, students will be able to observe the different technological, industrial, social, demographic, economic, and cultural changes that took place.

This unit is based on the premise that artifacts are essential to the interpretation of past history. Through the study of objects as social and historical documents, one can have a better, or at least tangible understanding of history and everyday life. In this unit artifacts become primary sources from which we can extract historical information. Although this unit focuses mainly on the parlor/living room and the bathroom/kitchen as period rooms, the methodology of study is applicable to other rooms and material culture regardless of time period. A list of student, teacher, and electronic resources, extension activities and standards is provided for the implementation of the unit.

(Developed for Integrated Social Studies and Language Arts, grade 5; recommended for Social Studies and Language Arts, grades 5-6)

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