



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume II: The Modern World in Literature and the Arts

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## **A Comparative Literary View of U.S. History, 1820-1900**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.02.09  
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This unit consists of a three-week block of ancillary instructions for eighth-grade Social Studies students, providing them an opportunity to design a research project of their choice. Students will create I-Search proposals, conduct the research that will either answer their questions or require them to redirect their research and write an I-Search paper or Personalized Research Paper. An I-Search project allows students to create a research project from the initial question through the final presentation of the I-Search Paper. The I-Search is based on the K-W-L reading strategy, a method of helping students to comprehend written material. Prior to reading students indicate what they know about the topic they are about to read. They indicate what they want to learn. Finally, students indicate what they actually learn. The students will start with a topic of considerable interest to themselves. Students will list what they already know about the topic. The students will then list three or four questions for which they want to find answers. The object of the I-Search project is for students to develop a goal; investigate a topic or issue; use their own voice; take into consideration an audience - usually their classmates - and present their findings.

In this unit, students will build their background knowledge of the westward expansion of the United States during the 19th century by completing class and homework assignments on the materials contained in their textbook, *American History*. At the conclusion of those assignments, students will conduct an I-Search, write an I-Search paper and present their findings to their peers. They may employ computer slide shows or other visual presentations. The areas of study for I-Search are comparisons of accounts from various sources that describe the same historical event surrounding the westward expansion of the United States across the North American continent, for example, the Trail of Tears. Students must utilize "I" to tell the stories of their searches. The most important purpose for using the I-Search is for students to develop effective methods of communicating.

(Recommended for U.S. History, grade 8)

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