



Yale-New Haven  
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2012 Volume II: The Art of Biography

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## **Biography in the Moment: Studying Civil Rights Leaders at Their Moment of Glory**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 12.02.04  
by Sean Griffin

Studying the lives of others has been a fascination for scholars and students for as long as mankind has focused on communicating through the written word. What is it about others' lives that drives us to study them? It is as if through the study of past lives we seek to discover something magical or insightful about our own, as if others' lives hold some secret key to our own happiness, to our own success. This unit is designed to explore the world of biography, autobiography and memoir by focusing on figures from the Civil Rights Movement. Beginning with an exploration of our own lives through autobiography and biography and continuing to explore the subject through the reading of *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* by Chris Crowe, the unit will culminate with the writing of biography and role playing of "moments of glory" in the lives of Civil Rights-era figures. The final assessment in the unit is a filmed interview which will be part of a class-created documentary on Civil Rights leaders in their moment of glory.

(Recommended for English Language Arts, grade 8)

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