



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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The Sparkplugs: Special Occasions for writing in the History Classroom

Guide for Curriculum Unit 81.04.03
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This unit is written for the high school history courses but it could also be used in some middle school classes. The purpose of the unit is to show how classroom discussion of current events generates enough opinions so that the students are able to write a composition. The “spark” is when a student asks for the teacher’s opinion about a major current event. The student’s interest in the topic brings about a class discussion. The teacher can lead the class to express their opinions honestly by creating an atmosphere of total freedom of expression. The unit indicates where topics can be found, for instance: special holidays, national observances in honor of historical figures, and world problems. It also shows how to go about providing opportunities for the students to do research work, how to make it easier for low-ability students to write a composition, and how to prepare them for the task of writing. The unit indicates what type of audio-visual aid is better suited for the students that need help in writing a composition. It stresses that the teacher should get to know the capabilities of the students in heterogeneous classes in order to ensure fairness in grading papers. The unit offers samples of lessons that eventually lead toward writing compositions. A bibliography for teachers and a listing of classroom materials are included.

(Recommended for High School and Middle School U.S. History I and II.)

Key Words

Writing Instruction Teaching History General Composition

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