



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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The American Dream and Experience in Literature

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.05.01
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The American Dream unit is appropriate for College English 3, College English 4, Basic English 3 and 4 classes. The three parts of the unit will take one marking period or eight weeks. The first part of the trilogy on the American dream, American values and the American experience will require one week and will consist of reading pertinent essays from American literature. Next, the second week will be set aside for viewing American paintings, listening to “America: An Epic Rhapsody in Three Parts for Orchestra” by Ernest Bloch and reading stories and poems which exemplify the themes of the unit. The last part of the trilogy will take six weeks and will include reading, performing and doing related activities from “Death of a Salesman” by Arthur Miller, “The American Dream” by Edward Albee and “A Soldier’s Play” by Charles Fuller.

When beginning the unit, students will write an essay about their interpretation of the American dream. What does the idea mean to them and why? How can their ideas or values be achieved in society? When we complete the three parts of the unit, students will write an extended essay expressing how their concept of the American dream has changed, how Arthur Miller, Edward Albee and Charles Fuller have defined it in their respective plays. I will suggest some of the following points to be included in the essay: What are the goals Americans should strive to achieve? What are the important assumptions of American society? What happens when a dream is unfulfilled? What is the nature of your own dreams? How can you attain your dreams? What aspects of the American dream do Arthur Miller, Edward Albee and Charles Fuller express in their respective plays?

(Recommended Basic English 3 and 4, Honor’s English 3 and College English 3 and 4)

Key Words

Drama Teaching Pantomime Staging

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