



## The “family and Identity”

Guide for Curriculum Unit 86.01.04

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“The Family and Identity” encourages students to think about their family experiences and the development of their own value systems.

The unit’s main objective is the creation of a forum for students which enables them to deal constructively with their emergence into the adult world. The activity of discussion comprises the main strategy for learning in this unit; various genres which illustrate disparate cultures provide the impetus for discussion. “Warm-up” exercises are provided for students which enable them to gain a familiarity with the activity of discussion as well as the topic of the family and identity.

The various forms of literature in this unit are ordered according to both length and sophistication. Thus students will be introduced first to the theme of identity and the family by way of “On Children” by Kahlil Gibran. The two poems which will follow, “Grandpa Schuler” and “Sestina of Youth and Age,” provide two perspectives of the generation gap, yet both deal as well with youth’s search for identity.

With the study of fiction (short story, novel) comes a broadening of the theme. Students will consider experiences of parents and children amidst varying societal and cultural backdrops. The short stories to be considered are both American, but they reflect two distinct views of the American experience. “Almost a Man” considers the coming of age of a black boy in the country, “Prelude” of a white boy in the city.

The length and form of the novel allow a more complete picture of family issues. “Cry, The Beloved Country” provides the reader with varied examples of parent/child relationships, and, equally important, places familial relationships in the context of societal issues. In a sense, “Cry, The Beloved Country” is the quintessential family work, for it connects the very notion of family to larger philosophical and religious constructs. From this, students can see that their problems are set within the structure of family, and that the concerns of the family extend to the concerns of society at large.

I hope that “Cry, The Beloved Country,” the culminating work of this unit, will enable students to recognize in literature the traditional expression of values that is communicated from generation to generation. “Cry, The Beloved Country” is primarily a modern extension of the most influential of books to emerge from western culture, the Bible.

The unit provides teachers with criticism of the aforementioned literary works as well as ideas for discussion questions and class activities.

(Recommended for English classes, grades 9-12)

**Key Words**

*Family Life Literature Novel Paton Alan Cry Beloved Country*

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