



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1986 Volume I: The Family in Literature

“i Have to Change!” The Role of the Adolescent in the Family: A Developmental Unit Approach to Literature

Guide for Curriculum Unit 86.01.07
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This unit was designed to be used in an average-level 6th grade English class, though the activities and philosophies presented in the unit could easily be adapted for use with older students. Using four classic pieces of children’s literature (“By the Shores of Silver Lake,” “The Witch of Blackbird Pond,” “Nobody’s Family Is Going to Change,” and “Sounder”) the unit focuses on the adolescent in the family and how children grow in their conceptual abilities. The unique problems that children face as they grow into adults will be explored as they are presented in the novels through serious class discussions, writing assignments, and dramatizations. The unit also explores the learning theories of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget and how a teacher can help a concrete operational child move into formal operational or hypothetical thinking patterns.

The unit is a unique approach to literature. It tries to help the teacher make literature come alive for the young reader and to make connections between his own life and the lives of others. These connections and the awareness they bring allow children to grow into adults.

(Recommended for English classes, grades 6-9; Humanities classes, grades 6-9; Sociology classes, grades 6-12; and Psychology classes, grades 9-12)

Key Words

Adolescence American Literature Psychology Family Life Young Adults

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