



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1987 Volume II: Epic, Romance and the American Dream

Would You Like to Swing on a Vine?: The Epic Tradition and Edgar Rice Burroughs

Guide for Curriculum Unit 87.02.05
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Edgar Rice Burroughs was one of the most commercially successful authors of this century and yet is not read with any regularity in the classroom. This unit attempts to introduce Burroughs to the English classroom in grades 7-8 as a writer who could tell a very interesting story. Three of Burroughs' works: "At the Earth's Core," "The Land That Time Forgot," and of course, "Tarzan of the Apes" will be read by students and will be studied in the context of the epic tradition as examples of the early twentieth century romance and the notion of quest.

Suggested activities as a result of this unit include a study of the nature of conflict as seen in Burroughs and as experienced by students as challenges both now and in later years. Also, students will be introduced to journal writing and will maintain a journal throughout the year. Various other writing assignments in the narrative and descriptive vein will round out the students' activities as participants. Class discussion regarding Burroughs, the works read, and the nature and remedies of real-life challenges faced by students will provide ample fodder for these intended writing assignments. The unit may be used in its entirety or in part depending upon the number of readings attempted.

The unit can be easily scheduled over a period of from six to eight weeks with one or two days class discussion per week.

(Recommended for English classes, grades 7-8)

Key Words

Burroughs Edgar Rice Epic Tradition Novel Adventure Literature Writing Instruction Science Fiction

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