



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1989 Volume I: American Communities, 1880-1980

Cultural Communities of New Haven

Curriculum Unit 89.01.12
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This curriculum unit's goal is to broaden the horizons of our inner city children. Through experiential education and an artistic and fun approach, the children will be stimulated to learn. Black and Hispanic students have been given lots of insight as to their cultural backgrounds; the histories of the black and Hispanic communities are covered in my school every month.

I have outlined a curriculum to encourage more insight into other cultures in our area. They include: Jewish, Greek, Italians, American Indians, Chinese, Irish and Polish. There are many more cultures which can be explored; I chose these because of their historical significance to New Haven.

This curriculum can be used for K-8th graders. My population presently consists of 5th and 6th graders. They are non-readers to 6th grade readers. These students enjoy art, music and cooking. Through games and other creative forms of teaching, I would like to develop a unique approach to learning about other cultures.

In New Haven and America, we are known as the "Melting Pot." Immigrants faced similar tasks of assimilating with people who came before them and the customs which had been established. The greatness of our civilization has been due to the character of the American people. Immigrants to America sought security by attempting to continue their own language and customs that were familiar to them. Preserving ethnic and religious traditions has added a great deal of richness to the American way of living.

During our school year there are lots of festivals, parades and opportunities to celebrate.

Jewish People in Connecticut

In 1659, Jewish peddlers from New Amsterdam, New York, traveled up the Connecticut River by boat to sell their wares and then went to Hartford. They sold their manufactured goods for provisions and livestock to take back to Manhattan. ¹ By 1669, at least two of these peddlers had settled in Hartford. The names "David a Jew", and "Jacob a Jew" are included in a list of families in Hartford, with Quantity of grain in possession of each, dated March 9, 1669. ²

The early Jewish settlers faced a great deal of difficulty in Connecticut. A single man who wanted to marry had to choose a Gentile wife or travel to find a Jewess. A man who wanted to do this would usually have to travel to New York or Newport, Rhode Island. Jews were not welcomed, and were discriminated against because of their religion.

Connecticut was a Puritan colony where the state and Congregational Church were one. Even Christians of different denominations were not tolerated. There was a code of New Haven and of Hartford that declared it illegal to give food or shelter to Quakers and Adamites. In 1708, the Toleration Act was passed in Connecticut. This permitted freedom of worship. By the early 1770's, the Jewish peddlers opened up butcher shops, grocery and dry goods shops in Hartford and other small Connecticut towns.

The first recorded group of Jews to set up worship in New Haven was around September 13, 1772. The following information was taken from a diary of Ezra Stiles:

“A family of Jews settled here, they came from Venice, went to the West Indies and remained there. There were three brothers, with an aged mother, a widow, and her children, ... being in all 10 or 8 soul jews, with 6 or 8 negroes.” The family was worshipping by themselves in a room where there were lights and a suspended lamp. They almost had a synagogue, because you need 10 people for this. The Italian-Jewish family stayed only a few years in New Haven. ³

In 1775, Jacob Pinto lived in New Haven. Ezra Stiles, Yale's president from 1778-1795, described Jacob as the “only Jew in town”. Jacob married a Christian woman named Thankful and they had three sons: Abraham, Solomon, and William. All three of these sons graduated from Yale and served in the Continental Army.

Also, Ralph and Isaac Isaacs were brothers who lived in New Haven. They, too, were recorded as Yale graduates.

In 1840, the first community of Jewish people was formed. Connecticut's first official Jewish congregation, “Mishkan Israel” was formed and was dedicated in 1843. The first location of this congregation was in a rented hall in the Brewster Building. By 1856, there was a purchase of a synagogue building on Court Street. Many innovations were introduced into this liberal temple. A choir, a family pew, and an organ. Mishkan Israel was reformed.

Many Jewish immigrants were tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, and peddlers.

There are many holidays which are celebrated by the Jewish people:

Rosh Hashanah

This is known as a day of judgement. It is a time of repentance and hope for improvement. A symbolic aspect of this holiday is the blowing of the “Shofar”. This is the rams horn. It is an ancient wind instrument. “The Shofar” is not blown if the holiday falls on the Sabbath. This instrument is said to drive away evil spirits, and calls people to pray. The Kiddish blessing is said in Rosh Hashanah homes. They bless over a cup of wine and they dip slices of sweet apple into honey. At this time of year, usually September, greeting cards for the New Year are sent out.

Yom Kippur

This is the day of atonement. It comes ten days after Rosh Hashanah. It is a day of confession and atonement.

It is a custom among Jews to say prayers in memory of the dead on Yom Kippur. The *Torah* (teachings, laws) is read, and then the book of Jonah. At the end of the day, chanting of the “Shema” occurs. Yom Kippur is a day of fasting, and after synagogue there is a festival meal in the home.

Hanukkah

This is a home festival and a popular one with children. The children receive small gifts each day of the holiday. They receive small coins or Hanukkah *gelt* . They use these coins in a game called the “dreidel game.” A dreidel is a four-sided die that is spun, like a top. Each side has a Hebrew letter on it. The *Gimmel* represents *ganz* (all). If the dreidel falls with gimmel up, then the player gets all of the gelt . The other side has the letter *Heh* , which stands for halb (half). This means the player gets half of the pot of gelt. The *Nun* side stands for nichts (nothing), and the shin means stell (to put in). The Hebrew letters on the dreidel are symbolic; Nes, gadul, haya, sham (a great miracle happened there.) At Hanukkah a menorah is lit. The menorah is a candlestick lit for the eight nights of the holiday of Hanukkah.

In my travels for information, I came across a ceremonial kit which is available through: Ceremonial Objects, Anti-Defamation League of B’Nai B’rith, 315 Lexington Avenue, New York, 10016. The kit costs between \$10.00-\$15.00, and includes a prayer shawl, skullcap, mezuzah, mini Torah, scroll, prayer book, menorah and candles, dreidel, Sabbath spicebox, matzo, and three pamphlets.

Sample Jewish Cultural Lessons

A. Creating New Year’s Cards

1. Discuss the meaning of Rosh Hashanah with the students.
2. Pass out: pieces of colorful paper, sparkles, felt, markers, crayons, scissors and glue.
3. Let the students make cards celebrating the Jewish New Year.
4. After they are done, have the students exchange cards or give them to other classes.

B. Jewish Artists

1. Discuss the contributions of musicians, composers and performers of the Jewish faith.
2. As an example, use works by Simon and Garfunkel, Irving Berlin, Arthur Rubenstein, and Rodgers and Hammerstein.
3. Have the students listen to, read and watch the works of the above artists.
4. Give each student an assignment to bring in one of the artists’ works to share with the class.

C. Follow-up Activities

1. Write for the ceremonial kit and utilize these objects for more lessons.
2. Obtain Jewish recipes and have a bake-off in school. (Knishes, Blintzes, Challah, and Hamantaschen).
3. Watch a film or video on Jewish ceremonial dances. Have a dance in class.

Greek People in Connecticut

The first Greeks came to Connecticut as early as 1895. A number of the people came from Turkey to avoid being drafted into the Turkish army. A number of the early settlers established fruit and confectionery stores, shoeshine stands, hat cleaning establishments and restaurants.

From the very beginning of their settlement in New Haven, immigrants displayed an ability to engage in business and commerce with energy and resourcefulness. Many of the Greeks arrived with no money or experience in any of the fields they achieved success in. The Greek businessmen of New Haven had a favorable reputation because of hard, conscientious work. Their main goal was to live as economically as possible. ⁴This was in order to send money back to their families in the old country.

In 1910, the Greek Orthodox Church was established. The church was regarded as a concrete symbol of the ethnic heritage, as well as religious institution.

The choice of New Haven as a settling ground was due to the Elm City's proximity to New York City, the main port of entry for immigrants.

The Greeks love to eat, and to dance. During September, Lighthouse Park has a Greek festival. As a recommended activity, the children will be taken to the festival. Pictures should be taken if a video camera or regular camera is available.

Sample Greek Cultural Lessons

A. Greek Cultures

1. Divide the class into small groups.
2. For one week, briefly give some information on the following:
 - a. Greek costumes
 - b. Greek recipes
 - c. Greek traditions
 - d. Greek dances
 - e. Greek philosophies
3. After one week, have the students gather more information on the above topics.
4. After each student (group of) presents their information orally, have them prepare to create a festival.

B. Creating a Greek Festival

1. The following should be given to the students:
 - a. Material for costumes
 - b. Records for dances
 - c. Books on philosophies, traditions
 - d. Recipes that are easy to bake or cook
2. Given time the students will be able to practice dances, recipes, and create costumes.
3. When the above is done, make up invitations. Invite parents and staff.
4. The children can create a festival of food, music, dance and color, given at least two weeks preparation.
5. Tape the entire festival.

C. Follow Up Activities

1. Visit the Greek Festival at Lighthouse Point.
2. Visit a Sweet Emporium in New Haven that is run by Greeks.

Italian People in Connecticut

Italians were a minority in New Haven, numbering about 2,000 people. Three Jewish brothers from New Haven, Isaac, Louis and Joseph Ullman, were the best friends the Italians could have had in New Haven. The Jewish people were the Italians' defenders. They politically showed them how to get ahead. Due to the observance of Columbus Day, a bill was passed on October 12, 1908. Bridgeport held a parade because the harbor was deep enough to receive the battleship *U.S. New Hampshire* and the cruiser *Ettore Fieramosa* from the Italian Royal Navy. ⁵ Communities throughout the state were there. The following year it was held in New Haven. This became an annual event in New Haven.

The first Italians to migrate to New Haven possessed many of the qualities of Columbus. He was a man of courage, will and faith in God. He really became stubborn to succeed in his mission to the lands beyond the sea. He did this despite poverty, neglect, and lots of discouragement. Italian immigrants to New Haven showed desire to prosper in a new land. This was reinforced by their faith in the Connecticut State Motto—"Qui transtulit sustinet" (He who transplanted still sustains.) ⁶

William Diodati was recorded as being the first and most renowned immigrant of his time to come to New Haven. His grandfather was a distinguished European theologian and citizen of Genoa, Giovanni Diodati. They settled here in 1717. Not until 100 years after Diodati's death did Italians arrive here in numbers. He died in 1751. In the 1810's, groups of one hundred or so came. Some worked at hardware factories, or as railroad hands or truck gardeners. By 1880, there were 500 Italian immigrants in the city.

The Italian immigrants came to escape the burdens of inequality, overpopulation and heavy taxes. The Italians faced problems not only because of their customs, but because of competition for jobs. Since Italians were accustomed to lower standards of living, they took low wages. ⁷

The following companies employed Italians in groups.: L. Candee Company, a rubber and shoe manufacturer; Sargeant & Company, a hardware manufacturer; New Haven Clock Company; and New Haven Wire Company. In the late 1880's, Alfonso Maresca, established a funeral home on Grand Avenue in New Haven. After his death in the early 1900's, his family bought a mansion on Chapel Street and created a new funeral home. It is still there today. ⁸

Soon there was an influx of painters, shoemakers, mechanics and grocers. Antonio Pepe imported Italian food products. He was successful. He became a wholesale dealer and a president of a private bank.

The Schiavone business is an example of achievements by an Italian family. The Metal Scrap Company was started in 1898 in Brooklyn, New York. Michael Schiavone and his brother set up business in New Haven's South Front Street in the mid 1930's. The firm has grown to the point where it's ranked one of the five leading dealers in America. Today there are modern plants in North Haven and offices in Milano, Italy, Camden and Trenton, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York City.

Wooster Square has been the scene for many religious celebrations, concerts and festive events. The peak of immigration was reached by 1930.

I would like to include a brief paragraph on Columbus. Columbus believed there was a land beyond the sea of darkness. He wanted to find the East Indies by sailing west. Queen Isabella of Spain supported his idea. He was poor, and she said she would supply ships for his travels. The Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria were the three ships chartered for the journey. In August of 1492, the ships sailed. The Santa Maria was the largest, then came the Pinta and the Nina (the baby). The journey west turned into a long and dangerous one for the people on board. Columbus was a single Italian, in a group of hostile Spaniards. They grew angry at Columbus, sparing his life in hopes they'd make it home. On October 12, 1492, they spotted land. They thought it was Japan. Columbus really discovered the Bahamas. He never knew the extent of his discovery. The death of his friend, Queen Isabella, robbed him of aid for his journeys. In 1506, after three more voyages, Columbus died. He had set out deliberately to see what lay over the western horizon. Columbus was convinced that the world was not flat. Through his courage, imagination and perseverance he ventured where few Europeans had been before. He succeeded. ⁹

Another Italian mapmaker and chartmaker was Amerigo Vespucci. He called the lands he found "Mondus Novus", or New World. In 1507 a famous German mapmaker named the new world "America" after him. America thus became our name permanently.

Sample Italian Cultural Lesson

A. Remembering Columbus

1. After reading about Columbus and discussing his contribution to America, ask students to complete one of the following:

- a. Make models of the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria.
- b. Map out Columbus's route.
- c. Create a diary that Columbus may have kept daily.
- d. Create a skit with Columbus and his men on their journey.

2. When this is all done, have a day of exhibition, where the students can show off their accomplishments. Invite parents and staff.

B. Have an Italian Bake/Cook off.

1. Give 2 or 3 students a chance to work together.
2. List the following on the board:

Antipasto

Pizza

Manicotta

Pesto

Cookies

3. Let each group sign up for a food. They must obtain the recipes and find out what ingredients are needed.

4. Have each student bring in \$.50-\$1.00, and you go shopping for the food.

5. For two periods or more, have a bake/cook off. Each group creates their specialty.

6. Have staff and parents come in and taste the food. Take pictures.

C. Follow Up Activities

1. Take the class to Libbys for pizza on Wooster Street.
2. Visit the Columbus Day Parade.

American Indians in Connecticut

The story of America's Thanksgiving begins with the Pilgrims. Early in the 17th century, Pilgrims left England in search of religious freedom. In 1608, they sailed to Holland. In 1620, they went to the New World in a ship called the Mayflower. The Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts. An Indian named Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to grow native food. If he hadn't done that, they might have starved to death. Squanto showed them how to grow corn and squash, and how to catch fish and hunt. Squanto helped build houses and was a good negotiator and interpreter for Indians and the Pilgrims. He concluded a treaty that kept peace for fifty years between the Pilgrims and the Indians.

After the first Pilgrim harvest, the Governor of Plymouth, William Bradford, declared a feast of Thanksgiving. He invited neighboring Indians to share in the feast. It was called to suit the needs of the hour: 1) to celebrate the harvest, 2) to thank the Lord, and 3) to impress the Indians. The celebration truly strengthened the bond between the Pilgrims and the Indians. ¹⁰ The feast consisted of goose, deer, duck, oysters, eel, wild strawberries, squash and pumpkin. Everything was cooked over open fires. There was no apple cider, milk, bread, or pumpkin pie. Everything was boiled or eaten raw. The feast lasted three days.

In 1789, George Washington declared that Thanksgiving would be a national celebration. After a while, the holiday faded. In 1863, President Lincoln declared that Thanksgiving would be celebrated every year, on the third Thursday of November. In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday of November.

The Quinnipiac Indians of New Haven were a small, scattered tribe who spoke the Algonquin language. Quinnipiac is originally near the head of the New Haven Harbor, and the estuary of the Quinnipiac and Mill Rivers. The name Quinni-pe-auke means "long water-land or country." The river was fit for the harboring of ships and abounded with rich and goodly meadows. The Quinnipiacs lived thirty miles from upper plantations on the river Connecticut.

The Quinnipiacs when found by the English who came to settle, had several camps on each side of the harbor. One of these camps was a "Wigwam Point" or the "Old Field" east of Savin Rock. ¹¹

The corn and bean plantations bordered the harbor and rivers. Shell and scale fish were within easy reach.

The Indians showed the English how to use wire brushes or traps to spear eels. The most important occupation of the Indians was hunting for animals. Bows and arrows, spears, clubs, stones and spring poles with traps were used for animals.

The wigwams were covered with animal skins, and were made large enough for two or more families. They were constructed of poles 10-15 feet long, set in an oblong circle and drawn together at the top with hickory or grape vine ties, leaving an opening for smoke to escape.

Canoes were 20 feet long and 4 feet wide. The Indians applied fire to the trunk of an old tree, minus its bark. It was roughly hollowed out.

The Quinnipiac's pleasant existence was marred by sickness and by attacks from the powerful Mohawks and Pequot tribes. They were part of a loosely organized confederacy known as the Wappinger-Matabesec (west of the Connecticut River and extending into New York State.) They welcomed the protection of the English when they came to settle on their land. ¹²

Major John Mason was the first Englishman to discover the harbor and rich meadowlands. A Governor Theophilus Eaton also arrived from England. He and Reverend John Davenport resolved to move here and purchase the “Quillypiak” from the natives. ¹³

In April 1638, boats from England marked the end of the Quinnipiacs’ sole dominance of the land. Governor Eaton and his company of 500 arrived and planted seeds in New Haven. The Quinnipiacs were reduced to 46 warriors by this time. In November 1638, the Indians gave up their rights to all the land and rivers. The Indians agreed to live within a region or reservation at the east side of the harbor. This was East Haven from the old ferry point or Red Rock to Solitary Cove. Present day, this would be Ferry Street Bridge to Morris Cove. This was the first Indian reservation on record in the New World. The Indians were given the right to hunt, fish, and cut wood and to go to the English plantation for protection. They were a friendly group, not violent Indians. ¹⁴

An interesting fact, the name of this land of the Indian village no longer seemed suitable. A thriving colony of English Puritans now resided in this land. On September, 1640, the town was named “New Haven.” In those days, haven meant “harbor”, and Quinnipiac was the “new harbor.” A new population, a new physical appearance, and a new way of life, changed Quinnipiac to New Haven. ¹⁵

Sample American Indian Cultural Lessons

A. The First Thanksgiving

1. Read about and discuss the events of the first Thanksgiving.
2. Divide the group into half to create some costumes.
3. Provide the following to allow creativity: black and white paper, colored beads, material in light colors for aprons and vests, felt, face paints.
4. Let the students be as artistic as they wish.
5. When completed, have everyone show off their outfits.
6. Create a menu and have everyone bring in one food.
 7. Have a celebration with everyone’s costumes and food around Thanksgiving. Invite staff and parents.

B. The Quinnipiac Indians

1. Read a book on the Quinnipiac Indians and their history.
2. Discuss the important areas in New Haven and East Haven where they lived.
3. Map out the areas that had villages and forts.
4. Visit the areas that you mapped out. There are graves and forts still visible.

C. Follow Up Activities

1. Visit the museum in Washington, Connecticut and the Peabody Museum of New Haven.
2. Have a guest speaker come in, such as an Indian jazz musician.
3. When creating the feast, include cornmeal, kulfi (ice cream), and cider.
4. Make corn husk dolls.

Chinese in Connecticut

On January 21-February 20 the Chinese celebrate their New Year. This is a good time of the year to study the Chinese.

In 1892, Calvary Baptist Church gave English lessons to the Chinese immigrants in New Haven. The first Chinese to reside in New Haven studied at Yale, over a century ago.

Connecticut has established the only Chinese Congregation. It was organized in 1966. Throughout the first half of the 20th century language aid was given to the Chinese by concerned church members. The Chinese Congregation was supported by the Calvary Baptist Church in New Haven. This church had started its volunteer work with the Chinese in 1892. ¹⁶ As the Chinese population increased in New Haven, needs became more advanced. There is a Chinese minister serving with a social worker at this church.

Many of the Chinese families have lived in New Haven all of their lives. Their local businesses are all over New Haven. The Chinese Congregation really helped these people. One of the fellowships established a professionally run Chinese community in New Haven. ¹⁷ The center acted as an information and referral bureau and it helped in community resources. Tutoring, counseling and day care are offered. The Chinese population of Calvary Baptist Church is one of the 250 organized groups of Chinese Christians in America.

The Chinese reflect the pattern of immigration to the United States. They had 80 years of severely restricted immigration. One basic problem in the second generation was their loss of identity. ¹⁸

Yale University has influenced the New Haven Chinese. Many immigrants, students, and teachers are there. It is said that the first Chinese to reside in New Haven studied at Yale over two centuries ago. English-language classes were started and in 1892 Calvary Baptist opened a Chinese mission.

Some additional information on the Chinese immigration is interesting. The Chinese came in small proportions, and localized mainly on the West Coast. They aroused public opinion from coast to coast. There were some serious international repercussions.

A small number of Chinese came to California as part of the Gold Rush of 1849. In the beginning the Chinese received a cordial welcome. They built a temple worth \$20,000 in California, and brought an idol worth \$30,000 from China. ¹⁹

The typical Chinese immigrant came without his family. Chinese people came as workmen and as adventurers seeking fortunes. They acquired a reputation for docility and patience. They were welcomed as cooks, butlers, gardeners and laundry people.

Years later, after 1852, the American working men were very opposed to the Chinese. The Chinese laborers were taking away jobs from the Americans. In 1870, Chinese laborers were shipped to North Adams, Massachusetts, to break a strike among shoemakers. Then in 1877, Chinese were sent to replace striking workmen in a cutlery plant in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. The Americans saw them as threats. They also worked on rice plantations, replacing Negro labor.

Violence, deaths and overall madness against the Chinese occurred.

Naturalization was denied to the Chinese. In 1882, Congress passed a law to exclude Chinese laborers.

Chinese were smuggled in illegally from Mexico and British Columbia. There was a Chinese underground railway. ²⁰

The issue of Chinese immigration was reopened as a result of World War II. Before this there were several exclusion laws concerning all rights of the Chinese. Thousands of Chinese in the United States are American citizens by virtue of being born here.

There are Chinatowns in California and New York. New Haven has lots of restaurants, shops and cultural centers with Chinese management.

Sample Chinese Cultural Lesson

A. Learning the Zodiac of the Chinese

1. Obtain some placemats from a Chinese restaurant, that have the Zodiac signs on them.
2. Have each child find out what year he/she was born.
3. Have each child read what animal or Zodiac sign he/she is.
4. Then have students see what signs they are for their horoscopes. Compare the similarities or differences.

B. Create a Chinese New Year Party

1. During the time of January 21 February 20, Chinese celebrate their New Year.
2. Have the group create the following using bright colored paper: lanterns, hats, dragons, masks, and snakes.
3. When all of the above is completed, prepare a menu for a Chinese dinner.
4. Bring in: a wok, chopsticks, Chinese tea, fortune cookies, and simple recipes.
5. Invite parents and another class to come to the celebration.
6. Have someone videotape the art work, some mask dancing, and the actual eating with the chopsticks.

C. Follow Up Activities

1. Obtain a copy of the Parade in Chinatown, New York and show it.
2. Read some children's literature involving Chinese cultures.

Irish In Connecticut

In 1845, the Irish population was formed of laborers who came to work building the New Haven Farmington canal.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade evolved from the idea of the Irish being denied the right to assemble peacefully for the British. Religious freedom here permitted the holding of a march. From this custom came our parades. New Haven's is the largest between Boston and New York City. In 1845, the Great Famine drove hundreds of thousands of Irish citizens to this country. ²¹

It has been reported that in 1640 a group of Irish refugees who had been transported to the West Indies were brought to New Haven.

The Irish were among the original settlers of New England. Even in the Mayflower in 1620, there were settlers of Irish ancestry. In 1630, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, people were facing starvation. Governor John Winthrop hired a Captain to bring provisions from Ireland. Beef, butter, cheese, oatmeal, cheese, pork and wheat came back.

Two boatloads of Irish immigrants reached Boston in 1636. Soon Irish immigrants moved West. People settled in the Connecticut River Valley between 1634 and 1640. The Irish were involved in settling Connecticut as well as in the establishment of the Rhode Island Plantation.

The Roundhead Invasion of Ireland led many Irish to seek asylum in America. The Irish were not welcomed colonists. Most of the colonial Irish were not able to practice their Catholicism because it wasn't tolerated. ²² Irish children were baptized and the dead were buried by the Congregational clergy.

Many of the Irish in Connecticut were mariners, since they came from a seafaring nation. Most of the Irish were very poor, yet lots were prosperous. A very distinguished Irishman in Connecticut was George Berkely. His project in America was to convert Indians to Christianity. He stayed here for two years, waiting for the support that had been promised him. When he went back to Ireland, he donated his ninety acre farm and the finest books that ever came to Connecticut to Yale College. One of the colleges of the University bears his name.

The growth of the Irish-American community in Connecticut was slow until the 1840's. By 1850, many Yankees went west for fortunes.

Sample Irish Cultural Lessons

A. The Meaning Behind Irish Symbols

1. Discuss the meaning of:
 - a. shamrocks
 - b. the Blarney Stone
 - c. Irish jig
 - d. "Feis" day
 - e. St. Patrick's Day parade
2. After everyone has a good understanding of the above, have them choose one to have fun with.

3. For the shamrock group, have these children bake cookies in the form of shamrocks. They can color them with green sprinkles and give them out to other classes.
4. For the Blarney Stone group, the students should learn the Blarney Stone game and teach it to other classmates.
5. The Irish jig group has to perform and show the class how to do it correctly.
6. The “Feis day” group will be in charge of getting everyone together for a festival. This could include: soda bread bake-offs, bagpipes, rugby and cricket games, and Irish dances.
7. Whoever picks the St. Patrick’s Day parade will have to try to get the class to meet and see the parade in New Haven.

Polish in Connecticut

Poland is known as the land of the White Eagle. In 1883, five Polish families settled here. Freedom and financial status were sought. They were a sturdy, industrious and determined people. They first labored on farms in Westville and Graniss’s in Fair Haven. Employment followed in the paper mills, steel wire mills, foundries and meat packing plants. Women shucked oysters for Rowe and Mansfield in Fair Haven. Both men and women attended evening classes to become citizens and vote.

In 1895, Saint Stanislaus Benefit Society provided aid to the sick and dying, and for social functions. In 1910, since the Polish population increased, a church was needed. There is one still on State and Eld Street in Fair Haven. Many Polish people had suffered severe hardships during and after World War II. They dedicated their lives so that their children and grandchildren would have a better culture. They demanded nothing but freedom from oppression.

The Polish immigration to America was due largely to economic reasons. Polish villages suffered acutely from overpopulation. Low slum conditions existed on many Polish farms. Wages in Poland were low and taxes high.

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The communities of Connecticut and Massachusetts farms arose within the Polish culture. The advance of Polish settlement can also be traced by the establishment of Roman Catholic parishes.

Easter time is always fun for the Polish. It is a Polish custom to decorate eggs. It is called “Pisanki”. This goes

back to the 11th century. Animal, plant, abstract and geometric designs are used. Paper decorations, weaving and embroidery are artistic expressions of the Polish.

Sample Polish Cultural Lessons

A. Polish Arts Enjoy the Variety

1. Obtain some books on the art of "Pisanki" egg decorating. Polish people are noted for this Easter egg art work.
2. Bring in some eggs and have the children copy some designs from books and create their own.
3. Give the eggs to other classes or have the children bring them home.
4. Visit the library and get some records and books on the following: Bobby Vinton, Chopin, Marcella Sembrich, Kachaniska.
5. Have the children sit and listen to the above. Ask them for feedback.
6. The peasant dance the "Masurka" is a very easy dance to learn. Obtain a book or film at the library and teach this to the class. Having them actually do the dance will be a fun activity.
7. At the end of this lesson, have the students display their creative "egg work".

As a way to put closure to these cultural units, at the end of the school year have an International Day. At this time the year's videotapes of activities could be shown, crafts exhibited, and foods could be prepared for a luncheon.

Notes

1. *The Jews in Connecticut*, Sally Innis Could, 1975, Parovsia Press, Pg. 131.
2. *Ibid.* , Pg. 132.
3. *Ibid.*, Pg 134.
4. *New Haven Register*, October 5, 1961, Pg.61.
5. *New Haven Register* , October 10, 1971. An article by Luigi Gagliardi.
6. *New Haven Register* , Foreign Populations, August 22, 1976. Article on Italians, Pg. 6B.
7. *New Haven Register* , Foreign Populations, August 22, 1976, Pg. 5B.
8. *Ibid* ,Pg 7B.
9. *New World Explorers* , Louise Dickinson Rich, Franklin Watts Inc., New York, 1960, Pgs. 10-11.

10. Scott Foresman & Co., "Holidays", 1978, Pg. 83.
11. *The Quinnipiac Indians and Their Reservation* , Charles Townshend, 1931, Pg. 1, 2.
12. "Townshend Heritage", New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1971, Pg. 5-6.
13. *Ibid.* , Pgs. 7-9.
14. *Three Centuries of New Haven* , Rollin C. Osterweiss, Yale University Press, 1975, Pg. 20.
15. *Ibid.* , Pg. 21.
16. *New Haven Register*, October 21, 1978, Foreign Populations
17. *Ibid.* , Pg. 2.
18. *Ibid.* , Pg. 3.
19. *We Who Built America* , Carl Wittke, 1967, Case Western Reserve University, 1961, Pgs 35-36.
20. *Ibid.* , Pgs. 36-37.
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