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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1990 Volume IV: American Family Portraits (Section I)

Changing Images of the American Family in Literature and Media: 1945-1990

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.04.01
by Elizabeth T. Lawrence

This unit explores the history of the American family. The educator using the book, "Past, Present and Personal," by John Demos as a basis and the unit's ideas and activities can present a very interesting outline of the American family and its ethos. The unit makes use of television, literature, film and slides of paintings to reconstruct moments when the family has changed in our American culture. We truly have a unique blend of histories which helps to enrich our nation as a whole. I begin around 1945 and basically center on post-war America. One of the goals of this unit is not only to show change in families but, in so doing, to show similarities as well. Comparing the family of the 1950s to our own today is an exciting activity which I am sure will prove successful in your own classroom. Suggested lesson plans and a set of slides are available for any teacher who wishes to use this unit. It attempts to move in a chronological way, yet allows enough flexibility for the creative teacher to implement any supplemental issues regarding "urban" families of today.

(Recommended for English and American History, grades 6 through 8, and Family Life and Sex Education, grades 6 and 7)

Key Words

Sex Roles American Family Life Literature History

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