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

Faces of the Family

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.05.02
by Diana Doyle

This unit is developed around real and fictional families. The primary goal with this unit is to encourage my students to read—to read for pleasure. Teachers in New Haven have to compete with all kinds of visual stimuli—movies, computers, television, and Nintendo. I have found, however, if children become involved in a book they like, they will become focused and interested. When students are interested, they are learning. My second goal is to involve my students in writing as much as possible. Students like to write about themselves and their own experiences. Most of their experiences center around their own families and the relationships within that family. The novels that the students read will focus on families giving students a chance to discuss, write, and think about their own lives and families in a non-threatening, non-judgmental way. The books that I discuss in this unit are: “On the Banks of Plum Creek,” “Sarah,” “Plain and Tall,” “Ramona Quimby, Age 8,” “Freaky Friday,” and “The Slave Dancer.”

(Recommended for English and Humanities, grades 5-6)

Key Words

Art Family American Photography Life Literature

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