



American Life—A Comparison of Colonial Life to Today’s Life

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.05.04
by Phyllis S. Grenet

The American family and family life itself has changed considerably since the Pilgrims arrived at Plymouth, Massachusetts. My unit has been designed for grade one when families and family life are studied. It is a comparative study of life as our students today live it and as the colonists of Connecticut lived it. I have focused on two areas to use as comparisons—the Pilgrim’s life (as enacted at “Plimoth Plantation”), and life in colonial Connecticut. It will begin in November when Thanksgiving time begins and will culminate at the Christmas season. The unit is basically a visual and hands-on unit, in keeping with the reading level of grade one students (at this time of the year). It also focuses on concrete things—those that our children are familiar with and are able to relate with: homes, clothing, food, education, and games. It is a unit on everyday life, now and then. It includes background history of early Connecticut and (I think) has some interesting, little known facts such as: How did Connecticut get to be known as the “Land of Steady Habits”? Where did the term “Yankee” come from? What is “Starving Time”? What is a “dame” school? These are all answered in the background portions of the unit.

I have tried to make this a fun unit for the children so that they will remember the lessons better. By experimenting with mud and water to see how it hardens, by dyeing our own fabrics, by drying our own fruits and cooking colonial foods, the class can begin to understand life in colonial Connecticut and get the feel of the differences in life in the 1600s to today’s life style.

(Recommended for Social Studies, grade 1)

Key Words

Family Life History American Colonial Connecticut

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>