



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

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## **A Cultural Outlook on the History of Black American Families in the Rural South**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.05.08  
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This unit is designed to teach students the history, customs, and folkways of rural black families, primarily through the literature of Zora Neale Hurston. This unit will familiarize students with her autobiography. She is an excellent role model for students because of her strength, her self-confidence, her appreciation and her understanding of black culture.

This unit has been prepared for sixth grade students. It is suitable for all middle school and high school students. It is an interdisciplinary unit that combines black American history with the literature of Zora Neale Hurston. Through the reading of Zora Neale Hurston's works, the students will become familiar with the folklore and customs of the rural South, and in particular of Eatonville, Florida. Eatonville, Florida, is the birthplace of Zora Neale Hurston. It was, and still is, a pure Negro town. It is a proud and independent self-governing black community. In her novels, her short stories and her autobiography Zora Neale Hurston has retold many of the folk tales she had heard in her youth in Eatonville, Florida.

This unit is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the history of black Americans in the United States. The second section discusses the life and works of Zora Neale Hurston. The third section includes lesson plans and an annotated bibliography for teachers and students.

(Recommended for English Literature and Black American History, grades 6-12)

### **Key Words**

*Afro-American Literature Biography Hurston Zora Neale Women*

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