



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

The Family that Endured—An Historical View of African-American Families as Seen through American Literature and Art

Guide for Curriculum Unit 90.05.10
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Through studying the historical development of the African-American family, this unit attempts to foster the kind of understandings that will allow pupils to see themselves, their family, and their ancestors as part of an institution whose role is one to be admired. In turn, it is expected that they will be better able to recognize and take pride in the positives of their present family, as well as better understand the pressures contributing to any existing family problems.

Beginning with a brief background on the origins of slavery and the societal and family traditions existing in Africa, pupils will examine the historical path followed by African-American in this country from slavery to the present with emphasis on “family”—the obstacles faced and the strengths developed. These objectives will be achieved primarily by providing varied opportunities for pupils to examine examples of American literature, paintings, photographs, and artifacts which reinforce the concept of the African-American family as a positive force.

The unit has been designed with a self-contained fifth grade classroom in mind, but readily could be modified to fit other circumstances. A number of activities are suggested which involve pupils in examining the positives existing within their own families. Various applicable texts and other sources are mentioned throughout the unit, along with a suggested list of appropriate children’s literature.

(Recommended for Social Studies, Reading, Language Arts, and Art, grade 5)

Key Words

Afro-American Family Life Art American Literature History

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