



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1991 Volume II: The Family in Art and Material Culture

Changing Images of Childhood in America: Colonial, Federal and Modern New England

Guide for Curriculum Unit 91.02.09
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The premise of this unit is that how people of this area lived, what they believed and how they expressed and transmitted values has influenced our present culture. Third and fourth graders explore the dual nature of this concept in an interdisciplinary unit that combines visual and language arts, math, science and social studies. We examine change over time through two earlier periods in New England. At the same time, through comparison, we learn more about ourselves, our environment and culture.

The first half of the unit examines context, in separate sections for changes in time, place and objects. The second half focuses on children, what they wrote, how children appeared in paintings and one of their arts. Each section of the unit has parallel activities for past and present; art activities help students to enter imaginatively into the past and to create autobiography in the present. Projects include drawing architectural forms and objects, painting self-portraits, and the design and creation of a sampler. Students will work with maps of New Haven, timelines, excerpts from diaries, historical buildings and objects in New Haven, and paintings as evidence of the past.

Through studying history we come to appreciate that we are part of a continuum, and that our present lives are in many ways connected to the past. Our region's history is part of our legacy, but it is only our inheritance to use (or reject) if we, like Jacob, wrestle with it, so that the knowledge of it becomes part of our experience and understanding. Unless we struggle to understand the objects and beliefs of former times and their meaning in our life, that legacy will be lost, and our lives impoverished by the loss.

(Recommended for Art, grades 3 & 4)

Key Words

Portraiture Childhood American Art History Children Colonial New England Haven Connecticut Sociology

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