



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1992 Volume III: Reading and Writing the City

---

## **Recognizing Voice and Finding Your Own Voice in Writing About the City**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 92.03.07  
by Laura Spoorri

Encouraging students to write is the purpose of this curriculum unit. I believe that students will read and write more and better when they are aware of voice and have a theme to write about. Voice deals with person, tone and intended audience. Voice is developed by students once they make decisions about the subject they will write about, their approach to their subject and who they want to share their ideas with. The theme of the lessons is the city but it could have been any other theme or subject (the family, government, modern art, space exploration, etc.)

The specific lessons that are designed to encourage this objective include recognizing voice in several selections about Harlem, writing a letter seeking redress, keeping a journal of city themes, free writing about the city, using all the arts to stimulate creativity, developing vocabulary lists as the core of writing assignments, and writing descriptions of city things, places, people and finally, events. The city theme was chosen for this unit because it should enable students to get in touch with their thoughts and feelings. They can start understanding themselves through understanding their environment.

I have also included a section on finding material on city issues. It might also be used as a broad reminder of the traditional, and a few newer places to find resource materials.

The seven lessons of this unit are designed to be broad enough for use at all levels. The approaches to teaching writing and reading are applicable to all subject areas and especially for teachers who enjoy interdisciplinary teaching.

Most of the specific reading and viewing materials are directed toward inner-city middle school students (fifth grade and up) and to eighth grade through high school. I've suggested these age levels as appropriate because of the nature of much of the material, which would be more readily understandable and thought provoking for those who have lived in the inner cities.

(Recommended for English and Social Studies, grades 5-12)

### **Key Words**

*Literature Harlem Renaissance Afro-American Motivational Reading Instruction Journals Writing Letters*

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

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

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