



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1996 Volume III: Race and Representation in American Cinema

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## **Willie Sunday: A Critical Analysis of Factual Information in Film**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 96.03.01  
by Geraldine Martin

This unit helps young children approach film and literature in a more critical manner. It also explores ways in which children can use puppetry and art in retelling and analyzing literature through film.

I have developed strategies and classroom activities centered around critical analysis of factual information presented in two films, Pocahontas and Little Red Riding Hood.

Willie Sunday is a classroom puppet who is used as my assistant along with his “journey box” for introducing lessons about early Native American life and contributions to our present society. Willie’s “journey box” contains a potpourri of crafts, pictures and artifacts from Native American culture. Along with factual information about various happenings and people in the story of Pocahontas, Willie gives suggestions for critical analysis of the story in the film. Follow-up sessions include cooperative learning activities where children are paired and discuss themes from the film then report back to class. Journal writing is included along with a written version of Pocahontas using the children’s own puppet creations and illustrated art work.

Our journey box does not end with the beautiful Pocahontas story. Willie’s “journey box” takes another turn in our travels as the children learn about the social structure in the family of wolves. This information will be used as the children use their critical eye to watch the film, Little Red Riding Hood, and, then write their own version of the story. As a culminating activity, one child’s story will be chosen and developed into a play suitable for filming on stage in the school’s All Purpose Room.

(Recommended for Reading/Language Arts, grade 1)

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