



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

People, Places & Pictures

Curriculum Unit 96.03.08
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In the past academic year (1995/96), many teachers from New Haven participated in the Anti-defamation League's "A World of Difference" diversity training workshops. In these workshops, "empathy" was promoted as the primary means by which diverse ethnic/cultural groups can come together, learn about each other and from each other, and ultimately foster a nurturing environment in which to provide multiculturally-focused curriculums in our schools. In this regard, the main objective of this curriculum unit is to enhance student awareness of various cultures through film study. Along with interdisciplinary emphasis in the arts and academics, the unit offers students the opportunity to contrast and compare these cultures in relation to their personal experiences; and to build exponentially to a global, humanistic perception of culture by recognizing commonalities and developing an expanding appreciation for diversity.

People, Places & Pictures is intended primarily for 7th and 8th grade writing students, but is also applicable for 7th and 8th grade theatre students. The unit is comprised of eleven film (video) presentations covering various topics concerned with diversity and culture. (There is an appendix at the end of this unit that briefly describes the films mentioned herein.) The film topics offer activities in main curricular areas for writing students, i.e., language skills, reading and writing; as well as activities in related areas, i.e., film, art, drama, social studies and science. Each film will either be shown in excerpted clips or in its entirety (which would be scheduled as an "in-school" field trip). Most film presentations and related topics will require a minimum of three classes.

All film makers begin with the "word" and the word is made "film." Therefore, writing is the main activity of the unit. Students will be engaged in viewing video tapes of films and a few TV shows, subsequently followed by discussion, research and reading in order to gain insight and information and to foster critical thinking regarding the topics presented. Writing is then featured as a creative way to gain visceral awareness of the film topics presented and to express creative thought. Evocative, original writing that begins to make the students' individual writing voices recognizable is the main objective of the writing exercises. The unit largely focuses on poetry. Therefore, brainstorming, clustering and vignette writing will be featured as a way to engage right-brain creativity and lend an aesthetic quality to student writing. Poetic forms included in writing assignments include: Found, Acrostic, Calligram, Blues, Chant, List, and Cento.

Rather than introduce new topics to the school's already packed curriculum, 8th grade Social Studies topical areas are the main focal point from which films (and related curricular activities) have been selected. Interdisciplinary activities are employed as diversified methods to explore information on individual film topics

within a historical context. And rather than “reinvent the wheel” by introducing a plethora of new data sources, the unit largely relies on existing text books and resource materials—already in use by 8th grade teachers—in order to reinforce a connectedness with academic and arts content areas and to demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach to learning. In this way, continuity between course studies is established for the student and learning becomes more relevant than by rote as education is approached holistically.

The unit also offers three project lesson plans. Project assignments will rely on prior writing, and students will be apprised of writing form and techniques as well as editing mechanics. Related academic focus in the disciplines of Social Studies and Science are largely offered as background research; and related arts focus, such as in the disciplines of Film, Visual Arts and Drama, are offered to support project assignments.

Organization

Students will keep four folders throughout this curriculum: 1) a *Student Work File* that will contain all preparatory written work and will include a table of contents listing assignment titles (to be attached to the inside left-hand flap of the folder). Work in progress will remain in this folder until finalized; 2) a *Student Resource File* for various handouts distributed at the start of each film “screening” in class, such as bibliographies, and technical info sheets on film, poetic form, art and drama; 3) a *Student Research File* for reading enrichment assignments, independent research and critiques; 4) a *Student Portfolio* for final work.

Library Media Center

“Product” is the hopeful conclusion of any process, although process, in and of itself, can be an invaluable life and learning experience. Most students will respect their own work efforts to the degree that their work is respected. Our Library Media Center at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School has expanded its activities in order to offer more representation of student work by including plays, storytelling sessions, poetry readings and art shows. Therefore, the student project work will be presented in poetry readings, readers theatre performances, and displays in the Library Media Center. Student work will also be included in our in-house anthology publication, *The Poets’ Posse*, which will be produced in the Library Media Center.

Film ¥ Education & Entertainment

In Europe, before Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press and movable type in the 1400s, books were privileged forms of entertainment and scholarship reserved for royalty and the church. In the movie, *In the Name of the Rose* (based on Umberto Eco’s novel under the same title), the lost library of Alexandria has become the clandestine treasure of a monastery, hidden in an Escheresque labyrinth tower. Scholarship of the library’s “heretical” information, dating back to works by Aristotle on humor, is surreptitiously bartered in exchange for “unspeakable favors” and blackmail, which leads to a few murders. In the end, the library is burned by its mysterious caretaker (also the murderer) who fears that its brilliance could illuminate the Dark Ages. A world in which the common man, and even the poor, could be enlightened, would become a world open to question and investigation; a world that could and would become literate. With literacy among the masses, Europe would eventually put an end to the tyranny of the Church of Rome, its Inquisition and abject power. Monarchies would take a back seat to parliaments, and while world power would see-saw economically and politically for better or for worse, the common man would come to understand such power through more broadly distributed literature made possible initially by Gutenberg’s invention. Consequently, people would reason their fate rather than blindly accept it solely on the basis of divine intervention. And as time and

technology would continue to expand, the world would shrink, making human existence (for the individual, if not the state) far more precious.

Coming into the twentieth century, steam power and electricity continued to shrink the globe even more. Pictures captured on film were made to move at the cinématograph and the cathode-ray tube brought them home. It became well-known that “A picture is worth a thousand words,” and painfully, many Americans, especially young ones, took that message to heart as they traded in literacy skills for the instant gratification that the television offered. Books had engendered literacy and with literacy came thinking skills, brain power and intellectual interaction. Film and television had (and has) the potential to do the same, but more often than not, it has created fictitious companions for the lonely, a vicarious physicality and a tenuous connection with the surrounding world that can all too easily be tuned out or switched off. While our libraries have not been burned to the ground for fear of illuminating the common man as in *The Name of the Rose*, they risk obsolescence at the hands of a new kind of heresy—film, largely as it has been filtered through TV sets—reconstituting a kind of modernized serf in the creation of the “couch potato.”

Peeling the Potato

A fundamental objective of this curriculum unit is to introduce students to film as an interactive medium; one that is at the same time educational, entertaining, and mind-expanding. In order to do this, students will be apprised of various sensory awareness factors that affect how they see a movie, such as: involuntary attention (the sensation of surprise); voluntary attention (points of interest that motivate one to see); novelty; movement; intensity and size; comfort and surroundings; lastly, mindset (based on past experience, need for acceptance, and personal and cultural prejudices). In this regard, students will view the film, *Babe*, a fanciful story about a pig who overcomes the prejudices of the more uppity farm animals on the food chain. This film will be shown in its entirety (as an in-school field trip) with some intermittent discussion relating to sensory awareness factors that will guide them in determining how they “feel” about the film. Student attention will also be directed to production design as the architecture of all the visual aspects of the movie—the “look” of the movie—and how color, settings, properties, costumes, etc. are coordinated by the production designer to create a feel and an atmosphere that will be believed by the audience. Various film making roles will be represented throughout the curriculum unit. Since the production designer is usually one of the first people hired to work on a film, this role is presented in this introductory section.

Lastly, students will write a short movie critique. They will be supplied with background information that will include: film title, producer, director, actors, screenplay writer, director of photography, costume designer, makeup artist, art director, special effects and copyright date. (Students will be given background information sheets for each presentation in the unit.) They will be instructed to write a preliminary outline of the plot: beginning (setting, character introductions); middle (challenge and/or conflict presented); turnaround (a twist in the story); ending (resolution). From the background information and their preliminary outlines, they will begin drafting one-page critiques. Focusing on the sensory awareness factors previously discussed, they will formulate opinions and express feelings; backing their observations with examples taken from their outlines. They can also use the background information should they want to make mention of something that they either liked or disliked with regard to the production or the performances in the film. Students will share their critiques and will be advised that sensory awareness, production design and story line are elements that will be discussed in each film presentation.

The next three presentations will focus largely on diversity. Diversity is introduced to students in three ways: Allegorically through further film study of the movie *Babe* ; practically by viewing excerpted clips from an NBC special for children titled *A Nationwide Town Meeting on Racism* ; and philosophically in viewing a clip from a

PBS Bill Moyers interview with Houston Smith titled *The Wisdom of Religion*.

Babe (1995)

Babe, previously viewed in its entirety in the introduction to this unit, will be viewed again in selected clips to further emphasize the film's theme. As its opening narration states, it is "The story of an unprejudiced heart." *Babe*, in a friendly way, clearly illustrates societal problems with diversity, namely: stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and scapegoating. The film also offers viable solutions to regaining and maintaining one's integrity. Students will explore some of the predicaments that Babe finds himself in as well as how ingeniously or haphazardly he manages to get out of them. Definitions for *stereotypes*, *prejudice*, *discrimination*, *racism*, *religious bigotry*, *anti-semitism*, *sexism*, *heterosexism*, and *scapegoating* taken from the Anti Defamation League information sheet, "Some Helpful Terms," will be given to students, which they will review in class and keep in their "Resource File" folder since these terms will be referred to frequently throughout the entire unit.

In the next class, students will receive five sheets of printed matter in various color stocks. These sheets will contain randomly placed words and phrases (printed in various type styles and font sizes) that have been taken directly from quotes in the movie and the ADL definition sheet. From these items, students will compose or perhaps, "construct," a found poem. They are not limited to the color hand-out sheets, but may also use words and phrases clipped out of magazines or other disposable print media. They will be instructed to compose a found poem in much the same way that they might put a puzzle or collage together. They may also add graphics (cut from magazines) if they wish, but they are coached to only use words and phrases that they "find." They may not cut letters in order to make words. Toward the end of class, we will review the work in progress and make revisions as are deemed desirable.

A Nationwide Town Meeting on Racism (1993)

Various clips will be presented to students from this 1993 NBC children's special. This show not only offered an open dialogue on prejudice to a diverse group of young children and teenagers, but also explained the origins of race and culture. The purpose of this section will be to explore those origins in order to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the diverse qualities of peoples from various places that comprise the whole of humanity. After viewing selected clips from this show, students will be introduced to acrostic poems. They will randomly select name tags from a box, which will give each student the name of a particular ethnic or cultural group, e.g., Mexican, African, Jewish, etc. A series of maps taken from *Exploring American History* (the 8th grade Social Studies text) will be shown in an overhead presentation in order to illustrate where many American cultural groups came from. Transparencies of the maps to be included are: "Arrival of the First Americans" (p. 7); "Early Voyages of Discovery" (p. 58); "Early Spanish Explorers" (p. 70); "North America in 1750" (p. 168); "North America in 1763" (p. 184); "The U.S. and Its Neighbors in 1825" (p. 304); "Immigration to the U.S.—1840-1920" (pp. 458). Students will be advised to take notes pertaining to the ethnic/cultural groups that are listed on their name tags. They will also be instructed to find three facts about their respective groups from their Social Studies text for homework.

In the next class, the homework will be reviewed and discussed. I will then demonstrate the acrostic poetic form to the class by using the group, "Irish," and will briefly discuss the history of the potato famine that killed 750,000 Irish by 1850 and led thousands of them away from their homeland.

Sample Acrostic:

I reland surrenders to A

R ighteous crown, bereft of wil **L** ,

I mmigrating to empty arms, t **O**

S hameless greed, she carries o **N**

H ungry, hated and alon **E**

The students will work independently on their acrostic poems for approximately ten minutes at which point they will share the work in progress. Comments, suggestions and cooperative editing will aid in fine-tuning their work. Lastly, the class will work cooperatively on an acrostic for the word “A-M-E-R-I-C-A-N.” At the end of class, homework will be assigned to read: “Race and Culture” from the 7th grade Social Studies text, *A Changing World* (pp. 65-67).

The Wisdom of Religion (1996)

Thus far students have addressed some political, social, geographical and historical aspects of human diversity. In this next presentation, a philosophy for diversity will be the focus as students view a clip from the PBS Bill Moyer’s interview with Houston Smith, Professor of Comparative Religions, regarding Confucianism. In this presentation, students will explore the pragmatic aspect of this religious philosophy. Simply stated, Confucianism offers a cosmic view of existence that emanates from the family at its center. The key to the philosophy is empathy (which correlates to the ADL’s focus on understanding and overcoming prejudice), but we are warned that to give empathy only to our family creates nepotism; to give empathy only to our community creates provincialism; to empathize only with our “own kind” creates nationalism; and not until we can give our empathy to the entire world, can we create humanism. Beyond humanism, Confucius believed that we could expand our empathy even further to the cosmos and to our existence into the infinite. After this presentation and subsequent discussion, students will be given the homework assignment to read: “Cultural Borrowing” (*A Changing World* , pp. 60-64).

The homework will be reviewed at the start of this next class and the poetic form of calligram will be introduced. Students will be instructed to draw five concentric arcs on a sheet of plain paper. The arcs should be drawn in light pencil line, spaced about one inch apart from each other, and labeled (in color marking pens) as follows. (Please note that the sample is a reduced version.)

(figure available in print form)

Students are then instructed to write a phrase (in pencil) that describes the importance of empathy for each area. They are to write on the line of the arc (that appears above the label) for each phrase. After reviewing the work and revising accordingly, students will be instructed to use color marking pens to ink their phrases (using a specific color for each phrase). Then they will erase the pencil lines. What they will end up with should resemble a rainbow. Students will be told that the rainbow is often used as a symbol for diversity, and that this kind of poetic writing that forms a shape and/or design is called a calligram. At the end of class, students will be given a homework assignment to compose another calligram (in another shape) that will represent some aspect of empathy and/or diversity.

LESSON PLAN: (5 Classes) The Unprejudiced Heart ¥ a poetry performance ¥

OBJECTIVES To involve students in performance poetry resulting in a Library Media Center poetry reading.

PRESENTATION Students will be introduced to performance poetry as a dramatic way to present their work. Clips from *The United States of Poetry* (PBS, 1996) will be shown as examples of performance poetry.

METHOD & APPLICATION

- ¥ Students will review their “Student Work Files” in order to select pieces for performance;
- ¥ Students will discuss their selections and fine-tune them as necessary;
- ¥ Students will memorize their selected pieces for homework and will spend part of their class time in rehearsal;
- ¥ Students will focus on voice and gesture with respect to rehearsing and will be advised to work in front of a mirror at home;
- ¥ Students will be invited to use props and/or costume pieces as they wish;
- ¥ Accompanying art forms such as music, dance and set pieces may also be included;
- ¥ Students will decide upon a program for their pieces and will advise on any technical requirements (sound, set changes, etc.) that they will need (and which I will work with them to provide);
- ¥ Students will hold a dress rehearsal prior to performance;
- ¥ The class will offer two performances of the poetry reading and a couple of classes will be invited to attend each one. The second performance will be video-taped and shown to the school via television.

EVALUATION Students will be evaluated based on the “real-world” criteria of audience response as reflected in applause and commentary.

Since W. K. L. Dickson and Thomas Edison’s development of the kinoscope in the early 1890s in America, the inventions of the Vitascope in France by Thomas Armat and C. Francis Jenkin in 1895 and of the cinématographe by Louis and Auguste LumiEre that same year, the world has been watching pictures move. Two key players transformed peephole novelties (single shots as viewed through a kinoscope) into multi-shot productions during the early 1900s—George MéliEs of France and an American, Edwin S. Porter. George MéliEs, the forerunner of special effects technique, experimented with trick photography and elaborate sets. While *Star Wars* was a ground-breaking film in 1977 for its special effects, seventy-five years earlier, George MéliEs made astronauts shoot to the moon in a projectile, whereupon the moon wept a tear, in *A Trip to the Moon*. Since the turn of the century, special effects have become increasingly more sleek and sophisticated, but the objective remains the same—to make spectacle believable. Edwin S. Porter, the forerunner of the action adventure movie, created the strong narrative quality of film through the use of the closeup and editing or intercutting between scenes. *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) was comprised of fourteen single-shot scenes

that depicted four scoundrels trying to rob a train and meeting up with a violent demise. While Porter didn't invent intercutting, his skilled use of this technique thrilled the audiences of his day and ". . . initiated an American film style of vigor, movement and melodrama"—Lewis Jacobs (*Movies in America* , p. 10).

By 1906-07 the popularity of storefront Nickelodeon theatres became a mainstay of entertainment for America's working class for whom it could fulfill fantasies that only the wealthy had seemed privy to. The market demand for moving pictures became so great that over the course of a decade film would emerge as an industry with production studios, a clearing house (The Film Exchange) and theatres throughout the country, thereby establishing the industry's lines of production, distribution and exhibition. People obviously liked what they saw and wanted to see more. The economic viability of theatres relied on fast audience turnover. Therefore, more movies had to be produced faster, which kept producers on their toes looking for ways to keep up with the demand. Toward the end of the decade, producers streamlined the industry even further—and constrained creativity in the process—by employing a procedural code of direction that played like theatrical melodrama. The creative achievements of Méliès and Porter notwithstanding, movies had become little more than canned stage plays. But in the next ten years between 1910 and 1920, the innovations of D. W. Griffith and the poetry and pathos of Charles Chaplin would see the movie screen become a virgin canvas awaiting its marriage to art. Upon that canvas would come another masterful brush stroke in the artistry of Oscar Micheaux. Micheaux would write, produce and direct over twenty films from 1918 to 1940, and in the process, he, among others, would help to create a new market for race films featuring African-American casts for African-American audiences.

Within Our Gates (1919)

To give students an idea of what some of the early race films looked like, they will watch several clips from Oscar Micheaux's *Within Our Gates*. The story line of this movie will be discussed intermittently and student attention will be directed to examples of particular kinds of shots and sequences. This activity will continue into the next class and students will be given the homework assignment to read: "Harlem Renaissance" (*Exploring American History* , pp. 546-547).

The next class will begin with a review of the homework and a biographical sketch of Oscar Micheaux (compiled from *Movies in America* and *The African American Cinema I: Oscar Micheaux's Within Our Gates* (The Library of Congress Video Collection, Vol. 1). We will also discuss the roles of the producer and the director. The class will continue viewing clips of the film, but will focus on thematic content. After the viewing has been completed, students will be presented with several 8" X 10" cards displaying quotes of some of the intertitle shots from the film. As this 1919 film speaks to issues of civil rights, women's rights and overcoming the injustices forced upon African-Americans, the quotes selected will reflect these issues. Students will then be introduced to Blues poetry as a uniquely African-American form that sprung from "field hollers" (work songs) and blossomed full bloom during the Harlem Renaissance. Borrowing from the thematic content of the film, students will compose a Blues poem. They can look to the intertitle quotes for ideas if they wish, or they can "go with the flow" of the instrumental blues and jazz music that will be played during this writing assignment. In either case, students will be advised that the content of Blues poetry is "blue" or melancholy. Work will be shared toward the end of class.

The Power of One (1992)

In the first class for this next presentation, students will gain an understanding of South African politics by viewing clips from the 1990 ABC News documentary, *Mandela, The Man and His Country*. This documentary addresses the life of Nelson Mandela and the social consciousness he spread throughout his country that

affected African and Afrikaner (white African) alike; and which resulted in his eventual release from prison on February 11, 1990 after having served twenty-seven years of a life sentence. After viewing and discussing the clips, as well as bringing students up to date on the current South African scene, the following quote by Nelson Mandela will be presented to the class:

"I have cherished the ideal of a free society in which all persons live together in harmony and equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for . . . but if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Students will select phrases from this quote, e.g., "I have cherished the ideal" or "harmony and equal opportunity," etc. Each student will have his or her own distinctly unique phrase, from which to begin composing a chant. Students will begin their work by repeating their selected phrases several times until the repetition begins to establish a rhythmic pattern. I will then read to the class, "War God's Horse Song II" by Navajo author, Frank Mitchell (*Handbook of Poetic Form* , p.45), in order to demonstrate the structure and cadence of this poetic form. The theme of Mitchell's chant is unrelated to our topic and this sample is used intentionally for that reason so as not to influence the thematic content of student work. Students will work on their chants and review their progress. They will be instructed to complete this work and be prepared to present it in the next class.

Students will present and critique their work on chants in the next class. Since the repetitive phrasing stems from the Mandela quote from which their chants are drawn, the thematic content of their work will more than likely lend itself to issues of freedom (although this is not a requirement). However, in this regard, *The Power of One* will be introduced as our next film presentation.

The Power of One tells the story of a young English boy (Stephen Dorff) living in South Africa in the 30s-50s, who through his own trials in growing up in a politically turbulent time, is befriended by a man (Morgan Freeman) who would transform him into a "rainmaker" in order to unite the many African tribes into a formidable power of "one." This film will be viewed in its entirety (as an in-school field trip screening) in order for students to further explore the historical, political and philosophical themes that address prejudice and the intrinsic grace of some special people to rise above it. This screening will also focus on camera work as well as the role of the film editor. Color, composition and sound will be emphasized with regard to the visual, aural, aesthetic and animated qualities of film making. Students will also be assigned to read: "Filmmaker's Magic" (*Understanding the Film* , pp. 74-79) in preparation for our next class.

The next class following the full-feature screening will be directed to viewing various clips from the movie that deal with metaphorical content and that show how metaphors are created with word and image. Film editing becomes very recognizable in these kinds of sequences where shots are juxtaposed to show comparative imagery. Such an example is evident in the sequence of shots portraying PK's (the young English boy) problem with the "night waters" that plague him at boarding school. While visiting his home during a semester break, a Zulu medicine man puts him in a trance and conjures up images of loss and fear, which when confronted by PK, cures him of bed wetting. Another powerful image is created when PK looks to nature for direction in his life; when he witnesses the power of a great waterfall and begins to understand his role as the rainmaker. Students will also be apprised of the construction of the metaphor in language as it is defined by its Greek root words; and will be introduced to types of metaphors.

META (beyond, across, over)

+ PHOREO (to carry, bring, bear)

METAPHOR
(to carry
= one thing
over to
another)

TYPES OF METAPHORS

one thing *carried over* to another = metaphor

sorrow *is like* a thorn = simile

sorrow *is* a thorn = metaphorical comparison

sorrow *of* thorn = (made out of)

sorrow-thorn = kenning

In the next class, students will use the creative device of metaphor to work on prose and abstract poems. They will be given a word list that will include thirty-two words that have to do with the film as well as its historical backdrop, e.g., *Apartheid*, *identity*, *African*, *freedom*, *rainmaker*, etc. Students will be asked to look at the list and see which words jump out at them and to circle those words. “Dawn Rising,” a quietly powerful instrumental from *Silk Roads* by Kitaro, will be played during this time. Within about fifteen to twenty seconds, each student should have approximately five or six words circled. The next step is to write down these selections in a column on the lower half of the Word List page; and while looking at the selections—and *not* thinking too hard—jot down images that come to mind for each word. Then each student will select the word and corresponding image/s that he or she finds most appealing. The favored word/image will be transcribed onto a fresh sheet of paper. Students are then apprised of stream-of-consciousness writing and are instructed to use their selections as a starting point and to see where stream of consciousness takes them. They may also refer back to the word list if they wish.

Work in progress will be reviewed after a few minutes and critiqued with regard to emotional impact and comparative imagery. Some students’ work will have found a focal point, in which case the writing will be more structured. Others may find their writing more disjointed. Either case is fine in that both prose and abstract poems will be the final expression of writing to be focused on. Both forms will be introduced by excerpted examples from *The Teachers and Writers Handbook of Poetic forms* : “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll (p. 1), as a sample of abstract poetry; “The Beggar Woman of Naples” by Max Jacob (p. 152), as a sample of prose poetry. Students will then be instructed to massage their work into either a prose poem or an abstract one.

LESSON PLAN: (5 Classes) Screenplay Writing

OBJECTIVES:

- ¥ To introduce students to screenplay writing by creating a story synopsis and one developed scene;
- ¥ To introduce students to the role of the screenplay writer and the process of converting stories and plays for film work;
- ¥ For students to illustrate a storyboard for either a full scene or a shot sequence.

PRESENTATION:

- ¥ Students will be presented with the book, *American Historical Images on File; The Black Experience* (Media Projects, Inc., 1990), and will flip through its pages to gain an overview of the hundreds of prominent African-American people who played major roles in our nation's history;
- ¥ Students will also be given a "Black History Time Line" from this book and each student will be instructed to select a specific event from which he or she will write a fictionalized scene;
- ¥ Students will be instructed in the basics of dramatic structure;
- ¥ The class will have an oral reading of "Writing Film Scripts" (*Writing Magazine*, December, 1986, pp. 3-10).

METHOD & APPLICATION:

- ¥ Students will research their topics and this research will be used to help create an authentic quality to their work;
- ¥ Students will develop the setting for their scenes and will begin to develop the main characters by sketching their physical, emotional, psychological and social qualities;
- ¥ Students will explore the themes of their pieces, and with these in mind, will begin to map out the story, exposition to denouement;
- ¥ Student maps will be converted to synopses, from which students will select scenes for development;
- ¥ Students will do thumb-nail sketches to illustrate their scene selections in storyboard fashion, with due regard for the camera techniques discussed in the unit thus far;
- ¥ Students will create dialogue between the characters and they will rely on their storyboards to include technical requirements and direction;
- ¥ Students will design a marquee to advertise their "movie";
- Students will present their work in a report that will include—a cover showing the title and author (a photocopy of the Marquee design), a table of contents, a synopsis, a screenplay writing sample (scene), a storyboard, and a bibliography.

EVALUATION Student marquee work will be on display in the Library Media Center, and the class will give oral presentations of their screenplay writing work to a small audience of invited students and teachers. The audience will be asked to rate the work of each presenter as if they were movie producers looking for scripts.

Having gained an overview of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and scapegoating; and having addressed some of the political and economical behind-the-scenes aspects of social unrest from films presented thus far

in this unit, students will continue to explore issues of ethnic discrimination and bigotry in the next three presentations with regard to Mexican-and Jewish-Americans, and the Oglala Sioux of North America.

Before continuing to the next film, the class will refer to their “Research File” and review the map presentation that was given earlier on in the unit (during *A Nationwide Town Meeting*). We will also read several selections entitled “America’s People” from *Exploring American History* with respect to various cultural groups in our country. After viewing the next three films, students will begin work on a collage project depicting cultural diversity in America. In preparation for this work, students will discuss and decide upon which ethnic or cultural group each one of them will represent. Throughout the next three presentations, students will collect material for the collage—magazine pictures and clippings, clip art, photocopied material, etc.—as part of their homework assignments.

Stand and Deliver (1988)

“Neither the Greeks, nor the Romans were capable of using the concept of zero. It was your ancestors, the Mayans, who first contemplated the zero, the absence of value. True story. You burros have math in your blood.”

So explains the “finger man” who can multiply by nine using his hands and who inspired eighteen kids from his class at Garfield High School in East L.A. to pass the Advanced Placement Calculus exam in 1982. In subsequent years, the numbers grew with thirty-one students passing AP Calculus in 1983, sixty-three in 1984, seventy-seven in ‘85, seventy-eight in ‘86 and eighty-seven in ‘87.

Stand and Deliver tells the real-life story of Jaime Escalante (Edward James Olmos), an extraordinary teacher who oversteps his bounds in teaching “logarithms to illiterates.” Escalante takes the unpopular stance, against the better judgment of his colleagues, to believe that students will rise to great expectations to the degree that teachers are willing to envision their potential for achievement, supply them with necessary skills and foster confidence in their abilities to attain goals. In his first year at Garfield, Escalante does just that. By the end of the year, having conquered the students’ apathy and resistance, his class passes the AP Calculus exam with flying colors. But the American dream has two strikes against them—their names and their complexions. Consequently, the students are accused of cheating. Ready to give up, Escalante laments to his wife: “You know what gets me? It’s that they lost their confidence in a system that they are now finally qualified to be a part of.”

But his indomitable spirit and “ganas” (desire) will not allow defeat. Escalante confronts the Educational Testing Service representatives who have deemed his students’ scores invalid. He disputes their decision, which they claim is based on two factors: 1) the students’ use of unorthodox and illogical computations resulting in a preponderance of correct answers, and 2) a consistency of error in very few incorrect answers. Escalante argues that he taught them all the same way. Hence, the test results, but his argument falls on deaf ears. The only consideration the ETS reps will allow is for the students to retest. With only one day to prepare, Escalante’s kids take the test over and once again pass with high scores. From their ancestral roots, and by the overwhelming commitment of their teacher, these eighteen Mexican-American kids came to intrinsically understand the absence of value by filling up the hole that societal prejudice and discrimination had left to them—with their diligence, their courage and their dreams.

Students will view this film in 35-minute segments over the course of three classes (leaving approximately fifteen minutes for exercises toward the end of each class). Since the introductory segment focuses largely on Escalante’s teaching skills in introducing his students to basic math concepts, the class will discuss these concepts as well as how Escalante presented them in a way that motivated his students to learn. Students will

be given a definition sheet of these concepts for their “Resource File” and this will be used during the last class of this topic area.

In the second class, we will see how Escalante’s students, who would otherwise be falling into a pattern of existence in keeping with the status quo of barrio life, become transformed through their scholarly pursuits. They give up a great deal to focus their attention on calculus in the hope of improving their lives. They forfeit free time, their summer vacation, jobs, boyfriends, girlfriends, and in the case of Angel (Lou Diamond Phillips), running the streets with his brothers of the night. Motivation will again be discussed in this class, but with emphasis focused on the students and their willingness to envision dreams and work to achieve to them. Self-discipline as a means to achievement will be addressed by reviewing several quotes by the students as well as by Escalante and discussing these in relation to ourselves, our school and our community. The homework to be assigned will be to read: “The U.S. and Mexico” (*Exploring American History Teacher’s Resource Book* , Reading Enrichment, p. E70.)

The last third of the film will be shown in this next class, which strongly depicts the courage and commitment of Jaime Escalante and his students to persevere in a system that offers them little more than futility. Prejudice against Mexican-Americans will be discussed in relation to the homework and students will discuss how “ganas” can serve to meet a challenge even in the face of unfair disadvantages. Students will engage in a writing exercise after viewing this section, which will involve brainstorming ideas that address disadvantages and dreams. “Spanish in our Language,” another enrichment reading assignment from *Exploring American History Teachers Resource Book* (p. E 23), will be assigned for homework.

The last class for this presentation will introduce students to List poems. “Genesis” (one through eight) from *The Bible* will be read to students as one of the earliest examples of list poetry. This form will also be described as a kind of catalog that offers a series of events and organizes details. Prior to writing, students will read the story of “La Loba” from the book, *Women Who Run With the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés (pp. 23-24), which will be an oral class reading. It is the story of La Loba, “wolf woman,” an old hag who roams the desert collecting bones and transforming them into a beautiful creature through her magical song. The story serves as a wonderful allegory for the creative process. With respect to their list poetry writing, students will, in a sense, use La Loba’s methodology.

collect the bones = gather ideas (prior writing, research, math concepts, Spanish words, etc.)

assemble the skeleton = arrange ideas

decide upon a song to sing = select poetic form (List)

sing louder and louder = brainstorm and stream-of-consciousness

let the creature go = let a focal point emerge

keep singing = writing and revising

Ravel’s “Bolero” will be played during this writing assignment. We will review progress and students will be instructed to complete their poems for homework.

To Be or Not to Be (1988)

*“Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles.
And by opposing, end them.”*
—Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act 3, Scene 1)

After Nazi troops annexed the Rhineland in 1936 and Austria in 1938; occupied Czechoslovakia in 1939 and moved on to the western border of Poland that same year, Europe tenuously awaited World War II. “But in Warsaw, despite the threat of eminent invasion, the Polish people [forgot] their troubles at the Bronski Theatre.” *To Be or Not to Be*, the Mel Brooks 1988 remake of the 1942 film (under the same title) directed by Ernst Lubitsch, will be shown in its entirety (as an in-school field trip screening). The film tells the story of the Bronski Theatre Company and their escape from the Nazis during the Occupation of Poland.

Who but Brooks, who had the chutzpah to turn the Torquemada, “can’t-talk-him-outta-anything” grand Inquisitor into a song and dance man (followed by a chorus of Ester Williams-type swimming nuns performing water ballet) in *History of the World, Part II*, could display such super silliness in his portrayal of actor, Frederick “He’s-world-famous-in-Poland” Bronski, not to mention mugging Adolf Hitler in yet, another musical number entitled “Naughty Nazis.” Well! . . . Jack Benny, I suppose, who played the role in the original, but Brooks gives it music and choreography, and perhaps surprisingly—considering his schtick style and genre-bashing career—some deeply poignant moments. After this full-feature screening, students will be given a reading assignment for homework: “World War II Begins” (*Exploring American History* , p. 556).

After the initial screening, students will further explore the historical content of the film, as well as some of its technical aspects. In this second class, students will review the “Naughty Nazis” musical number in which Frederick Bronski plays the role of Hitler. Bronski, as Hitler, enters his office and is greeted by two SS officers who alternately greet him with, “Heil Hitler,” “Heil Hitler” and to which he responds, “Heil Myself.” Having reacted to the negative press of foreign newspapers, he (Hitler) claims that he is not a monster, nor a madman; that he doesn’t want war; he only wants peace, peace, peace . . . “A little piece of Poland, a little piece of France, a little piece of Portugal and Austria perchance . . . ”

The song (also written by Brooks with Ronny Graham) continues. As Hitler prances and sings of his gluttonous desires for little pieces of the world—“a little slice of Turkey, a little spot of Greece . . .”—his officers tear off corresponding countries from a world map. After viewing this clip, students will be presented with an article from *Life Magazine* written in 1939 entitled, “U.S. Readers Can Now Examine Adolf Hitler’s Creed in Full.” This is a two-page spread that includes excerpts of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (published in Germany in 1925) with an unfavorable introduction portraying him as “naive,” “cranky” and “paranoid.” The spread also displays two maps; one showing pre-Hitler Germany, Hitler’s acquisitions (up to 1939) and arrows indicating Hitler’s future plans for occupation; the other, Germany’s pre-War African colonies. Dramatic emphasis in this regard will be focused on satire and how the apparent silliness of Brooks eating up the world serves as a metaphor for Hitler’s megalomaniacal appetite. Technical focus will also be directed to the roles of the musical composer and the choreographer. This class will end with the homework assignment to read: “Frequently Asked

Questions” (a handout prepared by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). This two-page handout addresses questions regarding what the Holocaust was; who the Nazis were; why the Nazis wanted to kill large numbers of innocent people; how they carried out their policy of genocide; and how the world responded to the Holocaust.

In the next class the homework will be reviewed. Several clips from the film that deal with “Final Solution” Nazi prejudices will be viewed, and the labeling of people with patches, such as the yellow Star of David for Jews and the inverted pink triangle for homosexuals, will be discussed. Students will then begin a writing exercise that deals with the word, “respect.”

Respect will be defined by its Latin roots, *re* (again) and *specere* (to look); “to look again.” In this context, students will be advised that respect means more than looking with one’s eyes; that in order to truly treat others with respect, we need to “look again” using intelligence—the perceptive qualities of thought—and compassion, the vision in our hearts. Students will then be instructed to write a piece about the concept of respect. They will first brainstorm for ideas until they find a focal point. The work will be reviewed at this point and students will be instructed that they may chose any poetic form of writing that they wish for the final expression of the work. Work that is not completed in class, should be finished for homework. At the end of this class, students will also be given the assignment to read: “America’s People, The Jews” (*Exploring American History* , p. 110).

In the last class for this section, students will be introduced to the story of Anne Frank as a young Jewish girl, about their age, who hid from the Nazis during World War II. The story of Anne and her family hiding in the “secret annex” will be briefly summarized, emphasizing the diary and the most famous line in it—“In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart.”

Several poems written by the children of Tereizenstadt from *I Never Saw a Butterfly* will also be presented to the class, as well as the two quotes from Shakespeare that are used in the film, *To Be or Not To Be*— the first mentioned at the beginning of this topic area; the second (on the next page) from Shylock’s famous lines in *The Merchant of Venice*, (Act 3, Scene 1).

Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, heal’d by the same means, warm’d and cool’d by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

From these poems and quotes, students will compose a cento poem, which is poetry that is made up from pieces of existing poems by other authors. Work will be shared and critiqued by the end of class.

***Thunderheart* (1992)**

“You know, Ray, when we were kids, we used to play ‘Cowboys and Indians.’ I always wanted to be Gary Cooper. I didn’t want to be an Indian. Boarding school made sure of that—cut my hair, washed my mouth out with soap when I spoke my own language.”

—Sheriff Walter Crowhorse to Ray Levoi in the film, *Thunderheart*

U.S. government boarding schools for Indians began opening up around the turn of the century and as the quote illustrates, were instrumental in abolishing the aboriginal cultures of this land. Ironically, brainwashing

children to “Christian” ways and away from their “savage” roots through shearing their hair, changing their dress and forbidding them to speak their own language or practice their beliefs (under the threat of severe beatings), was actually considered humanitarian in its day. Considering the ethnocide that took place after the Treaty of Laramie (1868) was made all but null and void by General George Armstrong Custer (who had opened up the sacred Black Hills and Bozeman trail to financial concerns as well as poor miners), the virtual internment of Indian children was, by comparison, humane. Custer may have gotten his comeuppance at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876, but it wasn’t long after that the formidable force that had defeated him would “surrender” at the Red Cloud agency in Nebraska, led by Crazy Horse and followed by three hundred warriors and a thousand Oglala Sioux and Cheyenne, herding in twenty-five hundred ponies.

Thunderheart , which will be viewed in three classes (in 35-minute segments), speaks to issues of ethnocide as well as the reclamation of culture. Basically a police procedural, the story opens with a murder of a “native” in the Badlands of South Dakota. FBI agent, Ray Levoi (Val Kilmer), is put on the case. Much to his chagrin, Levoi has been selected for his Sioux ancestry, which he has spent most of his life trying to deny. But as a token of diplomacy, he is advised by his superior, William Dawes, that although “This is a murder investigation . . . It’s also about the people. Helping people caught in the illusions of the past come to terms with the realities of the present.” (Undoubtedly, the character of William Dawes was named after the Dawes Act passed by Congress in 1887, which parceled off tribal lands in 160 acre plots in order to break up the tribes.)

As Levoi comes to find out, “the realities of the present” are, in fact, illusions. More accurately, they are lies force-fed to the Oglala Sioux in order to do what the U.S. government has always done—rape their homeland for profit; in this case, profit gained from the illegal test drilling of uranium on reservation land. At odds at first with the Oglala Sioux, Levoi gradually begins to befriend Sheriff Walter Crowhorse (Graham Green), who cloaks his finely-honed detective skills in the kind of stereotypical mysticism that Native Americans are often associated with. In the course of his investigation, Levoi not only begins to unravel the case, but to unravel his identity as well. In the process, he discovers his heritage. The “real” mysticism begins when Levoi starts having visions of a ghost dance (a ritual dance designed to bring back the old ways). While Hollywood takes liberties in dramatizing this kind of stereotyping, the ghost dance works symbolically in this story in that it gives us a translucent view of the history behind the story.

In the first class for this section, the symbolism portrayed in the film segment to be shown will be compared to actual accounts of Sioux history. We will have an oral reading of “The Decline of Native Americans on the Great Plains” (*Exploring American History* , pp. 346-349). This selection chronicles the early Sioux and U.S. government relations that led to the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. After this class, students will be given a reading assignment for homework: “Native Americans—How did Native Americans Fight for Equal Rights?” (*Exploring American History* , pp. 629-631).

The homework will be reviewed in this next class and we will discuss the various events that led up to the Occupation of Wounded Knee on February 27, 1890. During this time period, AIM (American Indian Movement) activists and local Oglala Lakota Sioux took over the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and a trading post in an attempt to have their grievances regarding civil rights and honoring treaties heard. While the Occupation of Wounded Knee pitted Native Americans against the U.S. government, it also subtly represented the conflict between traditional “native” values and Native American assimilation into a Eurocentric culture. *Thunderheart* represents this conflict through dramatic tension created in the character of Levoi and his struggle to understand and accept his Sioux roots and culture; as well as in the conflicts between Traditionalists and the Tribal Police, and Traditionalists and the FBI. After viewing the second segment of this film, students will discuss various quotes taken from the movie that clearly show this kind of conflict. Two examples are listed

below:

"I feel for them [Native Americans], I do. They're a proud people, but they're also a conquered people and that means that their future is dictated by the nation that conquered them."— an FBI agent

"We know the difference between the reality of freedom and the illusion of freedom. There is a way to live with the earth and a way not to."

—a Traditionalist Sioux

The final segment of *Thunderheart* will be viewed in this next and last class. Afterward, students will be introduced to the poetic form of epitaph. In introducing this form, I will refer to the scene at the graveyard at Wounded Knee, and the gravestone carved with the names of the many Sioux who were killed in the massacre (of which "Thunderheart" is one). Thunderheart—as explained by Tribal Chief, Grandpa Reaches (Chief Ted Thin Elk), to Levoi—was a holy man who was killed at Wounded Knee: "It is his blood, the same blood that was spilled in the grass and snow, that runs through your heart like a buffalo."

Students will be instructed to review their reading for this section and to select a subject for their epitaph writing assignment. They may choose a person, such as Crazy Horse or Custer; or they may choose an event, e.g., The Dawes Act of 1887 or the extermination of the buffalo with less than 1,000 left in 1895. Subjects will be discussed by the class and styles of epitaphs will be demonstrated, i.e., serious, sarcastic, rhymed, unrhymed, etc. Students will begin this work in class and will finish it for homework.

LESSON PLAN: (5 Classes) What Does America Look Like ¥ Poetry & Collage

OBJECTIVES *Students will work cooperatively on a collage that will include poetry and graphics, and that will also be somewhat representative of the American flag in that it will have stars and stripes.*

PRESENTATION *Martha Savage, the Art Department Chair at BRAMS, will give a presentation on collage techniques.*

METHOD & APPLICATION:

¥ Students will look over the graphic materials that they have been collecting throughout this section;

¥ They will brainstorm for ideas and make sketches for the overall structure of the piece (2-D, 3-D, stationary or with moving parts, etc.);

¥ Students will ensure that the design will clearly show the diversity of cultural groups that are present in American society today;

¥ Students are welcomed to do further research as they deem necessary;

Once the design has been decided upon, students will decide how they are going to proceed—they may choose to work individually, cooperatively or alternate working in both ways.

EVALUATION *The final piece will be mounted in the Library Media Center for viewing. Students will also offer some selections of their work in a poetry reading during this time as well.*

The next two presentations will focus on issues of diversity and civil rights as they are expressed in a futuristic milieu. While a lot of popular science fiction is largely focused on action-packed adventure in outer space, there are also films and television shows that deal with more down-to-earth themes. As an aging baby boomer, my first experience with multiculturalism came in 1966 while watching television. Gene Roddenberry, a fairly accomplished teleplay writer for TV westerns and detective shows, introduced American TV viewers to an interracial, cross-gender, politically diverse and peacefully coexisting group of people from various planets called “The Federation.” The cast of characters who flew about the cosmos on board the Starship Enterprise in search of adventure featured an Iowan captain, a good ole boy country doctor, an African-American “lady” lieutenant in charge of Communications, a Russian helmsman, a Chinese navigator, a Scottish engineer, and an emotionally austere Vulcan (alien) science officer-slash-ascetic who bore a remarkable resemblance to Satan (and who was originally to be featured with fire-engine red skin in the pilot until the producers decided against it). The name of the show, of course, is *Star Trek*. Considering the 60’s—the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War protests, the Cold War, and the beginnings of a resurgence for women’s rights—it seems amazing that *Star Trek* ever got air time. As it turned out, it didn’t get very much at that. The show ran a couple of seasons and was canceled, but Trekkies (*Star Trek* devotees) survived a lot longer; long enough and strong enough to create a market demand for *Star Trek* movies and to usher in a “new generation” of *Star Trek* TV shows almost twenty years later: *Star Trek The Next Generation*, *Deep Space Nine*, and *Voyager*. Added to the social consciousness that Roddenberry had tapped into in the 60’s, *Star Trek* shows continued “to boldly go where no one had gone before” into the heart of old prejudices as well as some newly resurfaced ones—heterosexism and equal opportunity for physically impaired people—with shows exploiting such concerns in the politically secure world of the future.

Perhaps the most salient reason for the success of *Star Trek* shows can best be expressed by Ursula K. Le Guin in her article, “My Appointment With The Enterprise, an appreciation” (TV Guide, May 14-20, 1994): “I like *The Next Generation* because it shows us a future I could live in.” A future we can live in is the cosmic objective of this topic area. Understanding the past, acknowledging its existence and coming to terms with the present, helps us to envision that future. In this regard, two shows from the series, *Star Trek, The Next Generation*, will be featured. *STNG* was the second in the line of *Star Trek* shows. In this series, which takes place in the 24th century—again on board the Enterprise, but she’s a new and improved model—Captain Jean Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) takes command. His first officer is William Riker (Jonathan Frakes), a kind of mellowed Kirk (captain in the first series). The rest of the crew includes: ship’s doctor, Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) and her teenage wiz-kid son, Wesley (Wil Wheaton); the blind-with-optical-visor head of engineering (originally the navigator), Geordi LaVorge (LeVar Burton); ship’s shrink-slash-psychic, Counselor Deanna Troy from Betazed (Marina Sirtis); Klingon security officer, Warf (Michael Dorn); Data, the android, who like Pinocchio, wishes to be human (Brent Spiner); and ship’s barkeep-slash-sage, Guinan (Whoopie Goldberg).

At the beginning of the first class in this section, the homework assignment, “The Solar System Evolves” (*Exploring the Universe* , pp. 56-59)—which will be given after the collage project has been completed—will be reviewed. We will also discuss the *Star Trek* phenomena as well as science fiction as a way to make

commentary on some of our present day ills. Students will be advised that they will view two *Star Trek The Next Generation* shows; that we will view these during class time as well as during lunch time since the shows run about 45 minutes in length and we will need extra time for discussion.

Loud As A Whisper

This first show, “Loud As A Whisper,” features guest actor, Howie Seago, in the role of Riva, the great Ramatisian mediator of universal acclaim for his prowess in negotiating peace treaties. When Captain Picard and Counselor Troy first meet Riva, they are somewhat surprised by his entourage of three unique individuals who appear to be speaking in Riva’s stead. As we soon find out, Riva, like all the members of his ruling family, was born deaf and acts in tandem with a three-member chorus who communicate telepathically with him and verbally for him. Midway through the show, Riva’s chorus is accidentally killed. The easiest sci-fi solution might have been to cook up a device similar to Geordi’s visor that provides far greater than 20/20 vision. But the solution offered in this show was far more culturally aware in that Riva decides to bring the warring factions—the ones he has been sent to help negotiate a peace treaty for—together by teaching them a common language of signing. It is interesting to note that the resolution in this scenario was proposed by Seago, who is deaf. After the viewing, students will be given a homework assignment to read “Science and Technology Transform America” (*Exploring American History* , p. 658-661).

In the next class, we will discuss the homework in relation to physically challenged people. With respect to the show viewed in the last class, students will be given a sign language chart, and Marianne Fountain, a dance teacher at our school and formerly a teacher of the deaf, will speak to us about the deaf as a cultural group. Lastly, students will be given the homework reading assignment: “The Different Ones,” a science fiction teleplay by Rod Serling (*Scope English Program Reading Anthology* , pp. 248-254), which may be started in class as oral reading, time permitting.

The Measure of a Man

The homework assignment, “The Different Ones,” will be discussed in class and will also serve as a segue into this next topic area—from mistreatment and/or misconceptions about physically challenged folk to the institutionalization of those who are “different.” In this episode, Captain Picard represents Data in a court case to dispute a three-hundred-year-old law that he (Data), as an artificial life form (android), is, in fact, the property of Starfleet (the military branch of The Federation). The case is precipitated by the request of a Starfleet cyberneticist who plans to disassemble Data in order to study him and make duplicate models. In the course of the trial, the evidence against Data seems overwhelming, but Guinan, in her ever sagacious way, advises Picard that “an army of Datas” without rights sounds all too familiar. Picard realizes that she is speaking of slavery and that idea becomes the keynote for Data’s defense.

In our next class, and with respect to this scenario that speaks to issues of the law and civil liberties, students will read, “The Story of the Amistad Affair,” by Jeannette Rogers (excerpted from the Yale-New Haven Teacher’s Institute Unit: *Learning through Drama* , 1990, Vol. 2, under the name, Jeannette Gaffney). This is the story of Cinqué, who has become a hero of civil liberties in New Haven, and whose statue appears in front of Town Hall. Excerpted material from Rogers’ unit chronicles the Cinqué story from his capture in Africa to his return to Africa three years later in 1841.

“The story of the Amistad Affair is a confrontation on the national and international level of law, morality and treaties. I have referred to Howard Jones, Mutiny On The Amistad, for this condensed version of the story. It begins with the kidnap of Cinqué, a free African farmer. The story ends with Cinqué’s return to Africa from

America, where he, with the help of the New Haven community, was able to use the law to ensure his liberty. It is a very important case in the history of slavery and abolition. It is also a very important story in the history of the relationship between those people whose ancestors were brought to this country as slaves and those whose ancestors came here seeking freedom.”

—Jeannette Rogers

In discussing this story, students will gain a better understanding of the Judicial branch of government and the law of the land. Reading homework in preparation for our last writing assignment will be assigned: “The Space Age” (*Exploring the Universe* , pp. 126-129).

The last several classes for the unit will involve students in writing a 1,000-word science fiction short story. Thematic content should include one of the following: stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, racism, religious bigotry, anti-semitism, sexism, heterosexism, or scapegoating. Students can refer to their “Research File” for information on astronomy in order to make their stories plausible. They can also refer to their “Resource File” for help with characterization techniques and dramatic structure. Work in progress will be reviewed and advised upon frequently, and final work will be presented in Library Media Center storytelling sessions.

Children, like everyone else I suppose, enjoy being entertained. More and more, teachers are met with the challenge of distilling the information age into a tantalizing elixir that can be swallowed easily and savored over time. Therefore, since students spend a great deal of their free time watching TV and going to the movies, film has not only been topical to this curriculum, but has served as a mainstay of its pedagogy in that the unit has been geared to an audio/visual audience of learners. Through its interdisciplinary focus, it is hoped that students will come through this course with enhanced analytical skills with which to view films (and life). Through their discourse and expression—their poetry, their artistry, their inventiveness—students will hopefully feel empowered to continue on in creating the future in a richly diverse world.

FILM APPENDIX

Babe (1995)

—The story of an orphaned piglet who overcomes the prejudice and stereotyping of his barnyard companions to become a prize-winning sheep-herding pig. Starring James Cromwell as Farmer Hoggett. Directed by Chris Noonan.

Mandela, The Man and His Country (1990)

— ABC News documentary that chronicles the life of South African leader, Nelson Mandela—from events leading up to his imprisonment on June 12, 1964, to his release on February 11, 1990.

Nationwide Town Meeting on Racism (1993)

- NBC children’s special, hosted by Peter Jennings, that addresses issues of prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping; and also explores ethnic and cultural origins.

The Power of One (1992)

—Set against the turbulent background of political unrest in South Africa, a young English boy, under the tutelage of a South African prisoner, grows up to become a “rainmaker.” Starring Stephen Dorff, Morgan Freeman and John Gielgud. Directed by John G. Avildsen.

Stand and Deliver (1988)

- A powerful classroom drama based on the real-life story of Jaime Escalante, math teacher at Garfield High School in Los Angeles, who motivates his Mexican-American students to become academic achievers in spite of prejudice and discrimination within the community and the educational system. Starring Edward James Olmos. Directed by Ramon Menendez.

Star Trek The Next Generation, Fox Network Television

¥ *Loud As a Whisper (January 9, 1989)*

- A deaf ambassador, Riva, who communicates through a telepathic chorus of three people, is sent on a diplomatic mission for the Federation of Planets. After his chorus is struck down in an unfortunate accident, Riva uses sign language as a bridge to communication between warring factions. Starring Howie Seago. Directed by Larry Shaw.

¥ The Measure
of a Man
(February 13,
1989)

- When the almost-human android, Data, stands trial to argue whether or not he is the “property” of Star Fleet, issues of slavery become the keynote in his defense. Starring Brent Skinner. Directed by Robert Scheerer.

Thunderheart (1992)

- The personal odyssey of an FBI agent who discovers his Oglala Sioux roots in the course of conducting a politically maneuvered murder investigation. Both the Massacre at Wounded Knee (1890) and the Occupation (1973) are symbolically referenced in this film. Starring Val Kilmer and Graham Green. Directed by Michael Apted.

To Be or Not to Be (1988)

- A Mel Brooks musical comedy about the Occupation of Poland during World War II, and a theatre company that manages to escape to England. Issues of prejudice and anti-semitism are comedically as well as poignantly dealt with. Starring Mel Brooks and Anne Bancroft. Directed by Alan Johnson.

The United States of Poetry (1996)

- A PBS five-part series representing poetry
- throughout the U.S. in traditional and nonconventional forms.

The Wisdom of Religion (1996)

- A PBS Bill Moyers interview with Houston Smith that explores the philosophy of Confucianism and its goal to become “human” through the expression of empathy.

Within Our Gates (1919)

- A young school teacher tries to raise funds in the aristocratic white community in order to keep a mission school running. Struggling with overwhelming prejudice against African-Americans, she triumphs in her cause. Starring Evelyn Preer. Directed by Oscar Micheaux.

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