



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

People, Places, and Pictures

Guide for Curriculum Unit 96.03.08
by Yel Hannon Brayton

People, Places and Pictures is intended for 7th and 8th grade creative writing students and is designed to enhance student awareness of various cultural and ethnic groups through film study. Overall, the unit objectives are: to offer 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.

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 six films and five TV shows, subsequently followed by discussion, research and reading in order to gain insight and information, and to foster critical thinking. Writing is then featured as a creative way to gain visceral awareness of the film topics presented and to express creative thought. The unit largely focuses on poetry, and the poetic forms included in writing assignments are: Found, Acrostic, Calligram, Blues, Chant, List, and Cento.

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 is not only topical to this curriculum, but serves as a mainstay of its pedagogy in that the unit is 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 an even greater appreciation for human diversity.

(Recommended for Creative Writing, grades 7-8)

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