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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1997 Volume II: American Children's Literature

World War II As Seen Through Children's Literature

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.02.03
by Laura Pringleton

There are many World War II books written for children. In my research I have found several journalists who are also interested in the subject. Hundreds of children's books, some in translation, have been recorded in these periodicals. Shutze (et al.) have reviewed American, European, and Asian books for children with a World War II background. Laubenfels' dissertation studies the war theme in books for Junior High readers.

I have read and will eventually use all of the books listed in my student bibliography. I have chosen Lowry's *Number the Stars*, and Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic* (which take place in Europe), Downing's *Stepping on the Cracks* (U.S.A.), and Taylor's *The Cay* (Dutch West Indies) as the four most descriptive of World War II to fully critique in my paper. These books portray the war most realistically, and have a comprehension level that is exactly suitable for middle and high school students.

I have also found several videos that are perfect for my unit. Some deal with the Holocaust. Reader's Digest's three-film series depicts fifteen turning points of the war (land/sea/air). The middle/high school study guides will help students to strategize and to solve "mock" war problems. These journals, books and videos have ample subject matter for teaching the Reading, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science in my curriculum.

(Recommended for Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science, grades 5-12)

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