



Yale-New Haven
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1997 Volume III: American Maid: Growing Up Female in Life and Literature

American Girls Through Time and Trial

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.03.09
by Lesley E. Troppe

This unit focuses on women of different cultures, races, and religions. The books presented will feature diverse American girls from select time periods in our history as well as the present day. The three books chosen are based on the criteria mentioned. In this unit, each book will have approximately a one- to three-page summary that will include the main characters, plot, problems, and other pertinent information. The second section will be a two page abbreviated “history” describing and detailing some of the more important or significant characteristics of the culture, women, and time frame being studied. The third section has a lesson plan for the classroom teacher to implement in his or her curriculum, based on this unit. The information should allow the students to explore the historical perspective associated with the time period being studied.

The books represent a variety of time periods and cultures. The first book is entitled *Dear America: A Picture Of Freedom The Diary of Clotee, A Slave Girl, Belmont Plantation 1859* . This book examines the life of a twelve-year-old house slave who has secretly learned to read and write and records her experiences. Clotee must decide whether or not to risk the journey to freedom. The second book is *Plain Girl* . The main character is Esther Lapp, an Amish girl who is going to a public school for the first time at the age of nine. This experience gives her a new perspective on her family’s way of life. The last book in the unit is *Julie of the Wolves* . This is the story of a young girl who sets out across the Arctic tundra alone. Her quest for survival leads her through new adventures and strengthens her Eskimo beliefs.

(Recommended for Social Studies, History, Literature, and Reading, grades 3-8)

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