



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1997 Volume VI: Global Change, Humans and the Coastal Ocean

Themes to Encourage Awareness of Environmental Changes on the Shoreline of Connecticut in Elementary School Students: The Case of Kelsey Island

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.06.04
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The environment is one of the most important issues in the education of our youth in the United States and in the world today. Issues of the environment lend themselves to be developed in themes. It is of utmost importance and urgency to learn and get informed about environmental changes in the world, so as to protect the limited resources for future generations. Our youth are the ones who will be making policy changes in the future in reference to environmental protection and development. Thus, it is necessary to instill awareness and respect for the environment in our future leaders. This is also a great opportunity to construct a curriculum unit integrating the scientific method, language, mathematics, and social studies with a hands-on methodology. For our essay, we have chosen to work on Kelsey Island, a small uninhabited island located at the mouth of the Farm River, off Branford in Long Island Sound.

In terms of global change, our premise is that Kelsey Island is enclosed in Long Island Sound in the way that Long Island Sound is enclosed in the Atlantic Coast and the Atlantic Coast is enclosed in the Atlantic Ocean. This ocean is finally enclosed in the world. These relationships present the opportunity of a fractal relationship: a microcosm within a microcosm. Changes in the environment taking place in Kelsey Island reflect changes in the environment that have taken place in Long Island Sound. At the same time, these changes reflect what has been going on in the larger picture of the Atlantic coast and the world in general. Man-made changes to the environment as well as changes that have taken place due to the forces of nature have affected the island, the Sound and the Atlantic Coast as well. For example, we might think of the changes in sea level during the last few thousand years due to the last glaciation and the changes in temperature when these majestic bodies of ice moved and melted.

In this unit, students participate in a series of field trips that culminate in the construction of a map of the island.

(Recommended for Elementary School, grades 2-5)

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