



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume I: The Use and Abuse of History in Film and Video

Parenting in the Movies: Examining Responsibilities in Modern American Films

Curriculum Unit 98.01.11
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For today's teenagers, the fine line between reality and fiction sometimes disappears in the dark caverns of the movie houses or on the magical screen of the television. Yet real or not, the visual images presented in the 200 seat theater or through the television cube are integral components of the life of today's adolescent. These images persistently invade the lives of today's American families. For the majority of today's adolescents, role models very often are real and fictitious media "stars" up on the screen. So, it is important that teachers, in part at least, reconstruct teaching methods and materials to include more video and film in order to teach skills and transmit information. With many high caliber productions about real people on the market today, this use of media also allows unique opportunities to introduce students to many important people as they begin to parent children. Videos and movies can be excellent instructional tools.

Students in parenting classes throughout New Haven are very diverse in their lifestyles, but similar in their needs. Several years of experience show that these students want to be introduced to role models who demonstrate good parenting practices. As many as 10 to 20 per cent or any high school population may be parents already. Another part of the total population contemplate parenthood seriously and frequently. The last of these students seek a social group, like those formed in parenting classrooms.

In the parenting classroom, however, there is little distinction between groups. And, no matter what the composition of the class, one prevailing topic is responsible parenthood. Whether as a part of the planned curriculum or an unplanned emerging conversation, students exhibit a desire to understand how they can become a "good" mother or father. The question unfolds weekly as the class topics move from choosing to become a parent to pregnancy, infancy and toddlers.

At the risk of appearing patriotic, the use of films produced as statements of American history whether they be documentary or entertainment production, is, in essence, a means of passing yet another slice of American values along to young people.

"The historical is history as a vision - a vision that involves such an enormous perceptual and conceptual change from the academic sense of the past that to find its equal we would have to skip past the significant alterations in historical practices of the last three hundred years and return to that period over two thousand years ago when, in the Western world, the written word began to replace the oral tradition. Despite vast differences in the game, both historians and filmmakers approach the materials of the past with one major

similarity. Both possess attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs - entire value systems - that color everything they express and underlie the interpretations by which they organize and give meaning to the traces of the past.” (Robert Rosenstone, *Revisioning: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, page 6)

Filmmakers can introduce events and real human behavior in a unique way. It is true that film or video about real people, no matter how well done, reflect the author’s views. But, generally, positive or negative, what underlies all of this are American standards and values. The theory here is to promote the positive, particularly in viewing parents in action. Standards and values are most important issues in the field of parenting.

Thus using film and video gives the classroom teacher another way to present information, a method utilizing a medium most amenable to today’s student. This is the generation which is growing up with sprawling cineplexes and television in living rooms, bedrooms, and kitchens. Constant visual images on the screen are great in number and constantly flashed before the teen of today.

This unit may introduce some productions to which young, urban parents would not usually be exposed. In addition, it may help them to gain a new perspective from some films already quite familiar to them.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The teacher will strive to highlight the importance of personal integrity as necessary for good parenting. This is an extremely lofty goal, nearly impossible to measure. There are some goals which can be measured, however.

The intent of this unit is to show high school students experiences of real people, as depicted in film and movies, an introduction of instances of good parenting in films about modern Americans. In the traditional classroom, it is the teacher who poses as the expert on the subject matter. While this might remain true in this instance, introducing students in parenting class to other real life experiences is important. In addition, guiding the development of the student’s ability to discern the truth and make judgement on the actions of parents on the screen will result in a far greater skill than just providing them with information. The unit is designed to enhance critical thinking skills and to assist students to separate fact and fiction. If students are observed using skills in decision making and if they adopt positive attributes, then the unit will be successful.

In general, the goal of this unit is to introduce films depicting Americans in several different historical eras as they are shown in parenting situations. Students will be guided in exercises which will enhance their critical thinking skills and ability to adopt and/or adapt positive attributes. As the year progresses, the teacher will promote self direction.

Although the parenting classes in New Haven Public Schools are usually filled with young black and Hispanic mothers, this unit is designed for young African Americans, male and female, who are already parents. It may be adapted for a wider audience. It presents a procedure for taking 20 to 25 selected days over the course of a school year to introduce African American parents and others, living or dead, as depicted on videotape and in film and to define and instill criteria for delineating responsibilities appropriately exercised. The exposures will be deliberately selected to show parents over several periods in American history. In fact, some of the parents will be people who hold positions of importance in American history.

When it comes to parenting and learning about parenting, young parents sometimes become even more

stressed when confronted by obvious fantasy. They are turned off by unreal people in obviously made up situations. Their attention is captured, however, by discussion with people who also have young children. They respond well when their parenting education involves real people in real situations. Film and video has been chosen as a medium because, unlike guest speakers, they are always available and the pool of films available contains a great variety of viewpoints. In its use, film can complement the traditional use of textbooks and guest speakers. Film can show students people who, for many reasons, can not come into the classroom - people from other centuries, for instance. Historian Robert A. Rosenstone noted that "A century after the invention of motion pictures, the visual media have become arguably the chief carrier of historical messages in our culture." (Revisioning, page 3)

Certainly, the unit is designed for use in the regular high school classroom with heterogeneous groups. However, block scheduling or longer periods now used in some public high schools in New Haven present settings for using full length, commercially available features. Therefore, the lessons which involve movie watching can easily be conducted in the 90 minute periods, rather than the traditional 45 minutes. While even this longer time may not allow a class to view the entire film, teachers are encouraged to run the production at other times, such as afterschool, should that be possible. Secondly, the films chosen will be available in local video stores and in the public libraries and parents of the young parents will be encouraged to view the films with the students. It is assumed that the interest level will be high and that the discussion may spread to the family dinner table or TV room.

Students will be guided to identify the parents in the films and discuss their interactions with children. Students will, with close supervision, be assisted to focus on specific parental responsibilities as shown in the movies. Another anticipated result is that students may be motivated to read more about the parents in the films and, in general, life of that time period.

OBJECTIVES

There are eight specific objectives. First (1), students will be introduced to appropriate parenting skills and techniques of real life people from different walks of life in different periods of time: colonial New England, slavery through Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights Era. While covering the various periods provides obvious variety to the presentation, it may prove interesting to reveal the differences and similarities of parenting throughout the decades. As students begin to see parents in action, (2) the class will begin to develop a mutually agreed upon definition of a parent and the group will initiate specific criteria upon which to judge good parenting. At some point in the year, the students may frame an ideal or several criteria for labeling some "good parents." Students will view and focus on parents of several ethnic and cultural backgrounds (3). While this particular unit has an African American focus, the intent is to bring students to the revelation that the basic job of parents and the skills used to nurture offspring are rather similar in most periods of American history.

With careful guidance from the teacher or the students' own families, they will be able to discuss exercise of parental responsibility (4). How do you separate a good parent, or an instance of good parenting, from less desirable relationships and behaviors? Do they know of some real good parents? Student will compare or contrast parents on film with themselves, their families, or families close to them (5).

Families of students will be encouraged to view movies together at home and to take time to discuss the

films and parenting in general (6). In the hustle/bustle of urban life, the accomplishment of this objective lends credence to the validity of informal learning in places other than the classroom. In terms of parenting, this may prove to be a highly important objective, if one accepts that parents are the child's first teachers and continue to be, even in the turbulent years of adolescence. In order to reach this goal, the teacher will create study guides to be sent home, along with information on locating some of the films suggested. The use of the public library and its free services will be first reference.

Most reading specialists will agree that at the teenage years, the expansion of interest is a key to reading improvement and skill building. This unit reintroduces the public library and popular films. The library can be a family place and the films will feature leading figures with which many families can identify.

If other objectives are successfully reached, students will be motivated to read books and articles about the parents shown in films. They will be encouraged to read reviews and other pertinent material (7). The focus on the use of film here must revitalize the students' desire to seek more information and role models in print. Each week, the local magazine racks are filled with new articles about important people and stars who are parenting. Local bookstores, libraries, and personal bookshelves are filled with biographies of well known parents. For instance, LL Cool J, a popular rap artist and television star (James Todd Smith), released his autobiography, *I Make My Own Rules* (St. Martin's Press, New York, 1997), about a year ago. The teenagers of today all know him and also know about his three children and family life.

The last objective is for the teacher. This unit is designed to practice some creative uses of block schedules (8). Public high schools have traditionally maintained periods of about 45 minutes for instruction in the required classes. Now, some experimentation with longer periods of time or blocks of time is taking place. In some places, this is involving interdisciplinary approaches to graduation requirements. Just filling up 60 or 90 minutes is not the objective here. This unit calls for using the longer period of time to foster student directed learning in creative, modern ways.

STRATEGIES

As currently conceived, one week near the beginning of the school year will be spent on an appropriate text book chapter on parenting and responsibilities and child care skills. Six movie viewing days should be set aside in October, before the holidays, January, February, March, and in April-May. In addition, a class before each movie will be used to introduce the movie and another day or two for class discussion or activities closely may follow each viewing. With some preparation time and related activities planned for other days, then, this unit will cover 25-30 days of the school year.

In New Haven, parenting is taught in varying ways. Very often, a textbook is used only occasionally. At Hillhouse, the textbook is *Child Care and Parenting* by Westlake. A review of several textbooks on parenting shows that, without exception, each book follow the same outline. They begin with the questions around what it takes to make the decision to become a parent. They then go on to review conception, prenatal care and delivery. Usually, the next section deals with infancy and the major of the chapters following deal with the development of the child through school age. The final chapters deal with selecting child care providers and the more modern texts conclude with a chapter on child care as a career.

The actual conduct of the course in New Haven classrooms usually involves responding to the immediate

needs of the young parents. Sometimes, these are topics or questions introduced by the student and, at other times, the teachers introduces a topic which she identifies as a prevailing issue.

This unit is constructed to allow that to continue. It has proven to be a healthy approach for people who are caring for children from 0 to 3 years old and should be allowed to continue. However, showing movies opens up new avenues, provides fodder for new thoughts, and introduces historic figures in a new light - as parents. So, the strategy is to show movies monthly, after some very brief introduction. By the second half of the year, students will be expected to carry on much of the discussion of the movie independently or with little guidance from the teacher.

At this point, it appears unimportant to present the films in any particular order. Because this course is not focused on history and parenting across the ages is basically the same, the chronology has little significance here. What may be important to the design of the unit is that students get to view parenting in different periods - colonial times, slavery and Civil War, Reconstruction, and Civil Rights. The strategy is to look at American parents at home - not fighting foreign wars or spreading democracy in the far corners of the world.

Listed in Appendix A are some films which may be used. Any teacher can identify a host of others which may be used. The intent is to find a well presented view of positive parenting on the part of real people of significance in any film or video. No matter how short the segment, the teens must be able to see positive parenting in action and must be able to begin to apply criteria which identifies the character as a "good" parent.

Popular educational references today cite the parent as "the child's first teacher." Although this is usually a part of the early childhood literature, its premise continues to hold true for older children, even the adolescent who may appear to discount the knowledge base of their own parents.

It is a deliberate part of the strategies of this unit to create a source for family discussion. This may help reestablish the parent (or grandparent) as the primary teacher of parenting skills. The films chosen should be easily available in the public library or local video stores. It may be that students might desire to see parts not shown in class or to show their parent an interesting segment. At best, the classroom activity will be a source for at home family conversation. Students may be interested in their parents' views on the particular parenting skill in the movie or seek their own parents' observations. It may create an environment where students may learn from their own parents.

Copies of reviews can provide quick and easy handouts. To ensure some type of directed discussion at home, handouts including more formal study guides will be prepared and sent home. Students will be encouraged to share them and the movies with their families. This may provide a more pleasurable homework assignment.

The use of block scheduling was discussed earlier in this paper. The obvious reason for suggesting the use of block scheduling is, of course, that it provides more time for lessons. The suggestion, however, is that more creative uses be employed. Block scheduling, or longer periods on Tuesday and Thursday as it is not used at Hillhouse, is not necessarily successful if the teacher simply crams more of the usual into the 90 minutes. This strategy encourages creative use of the period - not just showing the movies. Several methods can be employed. Some suggested below may be used alone or in combination.

- * view a segment focused on a specific parenting skill
- * view a segment highlighting a parent in a particular environment

- * view a segment featuring a specific, but ordinary, parenting situation
- * demonstrate an appropriate child song, such as a lullaby
- * review appropriate living, learning and recreational spaces for children
- * plan a child's menu promoting healthy development
- * invite a parent who might offer specific insight
- * travel to the library, school or public
- * travel to the local video store to review procedure and check inventory

Using these alone or in combination might result in some exciting classroom activities.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Three sample lesson plans have been included in this unit to illustrate more specific use of the ideas above. Basically, it is expected that teachers will employ activities which include work for 20 to 25 selected days over school year. A very rough schedule might be -

one week near beginning of school on initial
text book chapters on parenting and responsibility

movie 1 - October
class discussion or activity

movie 2 - November/December
class discussion or activity

movie 3 - January
class discussion or activity

movie 4 - February

class discussion or activity

movie 5 - March

class discussion or activity

movie 6 - April/May

class discussion or activity

Three sample lessons have been included in this unit to illustrate more specific plans for activities. Basically, it is expected that teachers will employ activities which may include

- movie viewing
- class discussion
- demonstrations in the classroom
- adult role models
- trips to both the school and local libraries
- trip to local video store
- the text book
- copied handouts
- study guides constructed by the teacher
- homework for students
- homework for students and their families

In terms of specific lesson plans, students will be familiar with Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. However, using the film version and focusing on what he speaks about his own little children in high school can be an avenue for examining this great American as a father. In addition, students could be asked to review Coretta Scott King, her comments on single parenthood, and the children as adults today. One part of "Ruby Bridges" deals with a problem the young girl develops around food. This is a perfect entry to teaching about proper nutrition for an elementary child. Her mother talks about Ruby not eating a necessary variety of food. While discussing the Civil Rights era, a former Freedom Fighter might be invited in to talk about their own parenting and how those moments in history affected their application of parenting skills. There is a wide variety of specific lessons which can be taught.

RESOURCES

As stated previously, one important resource which may be reintroduced is the library. School libraries and public libraries have made very special efforts to enlarge their video sections in recent years. The collections are generally quite good and available free or at very low cost. In addition, for those students who do not know, a visit to the local video store will be built into the unit. "Ruby Bridges" has several scenes which involve food and the young child's unfortunate experience with it. Viewing these portions of the film provides a good opportunity for demonstrations on proper meal planning and nutrition. The local 4H or extension service can provide this service.

Teenage parents, especially, need to have lessons which may help them use resources. In fact, the greatest test of the success of this unit will be the degree to which outside educational and recreational resources are used later in life. Therefore, emphasis will be placed on popular films, books, and magazines available to the general public. Local role models will be common references. Students' suggestions will be readily used.

CONCLUSION

Most young parents believe that theirs is the most complicated life. Their obstacles are the hardest faced, their problems are new. Teachers often hear "You just don't know." This unit attempts to take them back in history and to stretch their imagination with real life characters in historical situations. The choice here is to gear the unit toward African American students in an urban setting. At this point, parents as seen in "Ruby Bridges," a very recent (1998) Disney movie made for television, will be the focus. Overall, the intent is to examine parenting in three important periods in American history - slavery through the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Civil Rights era. Movies such as "Roots" and "The Diary of Miss Jane Pittman," although somewhat fictionalized highlight the years of slavery. MGM released a production around the life of Dr. George Washington Carver some fifty years ago. Dr. Carver lived through the turn of the century. There are numerous renditions of parenting in the Civil Rights era of United States history. There may be appropriate material in Spike Lee's "Four Little Girls" or "Malcolm X", in addition to "Ruby Bridges." In addition, it is pertinent to include reels about parents of other ethnic backgrounds. Good parenting is neither black, white, yellow or red. Good parents provide for the children's physical and emotional needs. They provide guidance and organization for work and recreation. Along the way, parents provide opportunities for their children to develop problem solving process. While there are some differences related to religion or geographic location, they are relatively minor. The main goal here is to help students recognize parenting responsibilities properly exercised.

While the main objective is to assist student to identify the responsibilities of parenting and the appropriate applications of skills to exercise the responsibilities, the unit will also teach critical thinking skills, as students separate fact from fiction, cull information on families and parenting, and make decisions on whether to adopt attributes seen on the screen. They will be encouraged to base their decisions on the truths which are uncovered. They will be directed to define the roles of parents and parent figures. They will be guided to view these roles against criteria developed as the unit progresses. They will be introduced to major figures in American history in the meantime.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR TEACHERS

Amelio, Ralph J. *Film in the Classroom: Why To Use It, How To Use It*. Dayton, OH: P. F. Flown/Standard, April 1969.

This book provides a description of a two semester film study course for high school and college teachers interested in setting up a film department. Not only is there a set of objectives, but there are suggested activities information on how to use discussion. It is available in the Hillhouse High School Library in New Haven.

Billingsley, Andrew. *Black Families in White America*. New York, A Touchstone Book by Simon and Schuster Inc., 1968.

This text focuses on the historical background of the Negro family. Billingsley provides his perspective of black families from slavery through migration to the North and Reconstruction.

Bogle, Donald, *Toms, Coons, Bucks, Mammies, and Mulattoes: Blacks in U.S. Films*. NY, Crossroad, 1988.

The author discusses the struggles of black actors. A review may be helpful in comparing the actors' presentation of real people and guiding students to the truth as opposed to the dramatic rendering.

Bottomore, S. "The Coming of the Cinema". *History Today*, vol.46, March 1996, pages 14-20. Burgoyne, Robert. *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U. S. History*. Minnesota, 1997.

The author includes Malcolm X in a discussion of slavery and industrial exploitation and their depiction by contemporary American filmmakers.

Cripps, Thomas. *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to The Civil Rights Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

The idea that popular culture reflects society's values is examined.

Harrison-Ross, Phyllis and Wyden, Barbara. *The Black Child: A Parents' Guide*. New York: Peter H. Wyden Books, 1973.

This is actually a guide to rearing children. Like the classroom textbooks, its content may be used to support the illustrations of positive parenting uncovered in the films and videos featured in this unit.

James, David E., *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the "60s*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1989. Klawans, S. (review of "Four Little Girls) *The Nation Magazine*. Vol. 265, July 28 to Aug. 4, 1997. Murray, James P. *To Find An Image: Black Films From Uncle Tom to Super Fly*. New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1973. Noble, Peter, *The Negro in Films: The Literature of Cinema*. New York: Arno Press and the NY Times, 1970.

This reference includes a list of films from the earliest (about 1902) to wartime (1947). There is also a discussion of major actors. Peter Noble is considered a leading authority on African Americans in film. The volume is available in the library at Hillhouse High School in New Haven.

Rivlin, Harry N. *Teaching Adolescents in Secondary Schools*. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts Inc., 1961.

While this general text may appear dated, the basic principles offer support for classroom approaches and techniques, even with today's adolescents.

Rosenstone, Robert A. *Revisioning History: Film and the Reconstruction of a New Past*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

While the book is actually a collection of the works of historians from around the world, the introduction by Rosenstone and its content demonstrate that the written word is but one way to understand history.

Sheridan, Marion C., *The Motion Picture and the Teaching of English*. Appleton Century Crofts, 1965.

Although dated, this reference was written by the former Chairman of the English Department at Hillhouse High School and offers much for today's classroom. It is out of print, but a copy is available in the Hillhouse High School library.

Stone, O. "A Filmmaker's Credo: Some Thoughts on Politics, History, and the Movies". *The Humanist*, vol. 56, Sept./Oct.1996, pages 3-6.

READING LIST FOR STUDENTS

Bone, Jan, *Opportunities in Film*. Lincolnwood, IL: VGM Career Horizons, 1983.

This book helps young people explore careers in film and outlines the curriculum goals of the Connecticut State Department of Education.

the preparation necessary for the obs. Its use fulfills a part of

Hardy, James Earl, *Spike Lee*. New York: Chelsea House, 1995

For students, this book offers an overview of the life and career of this prize winning filmmaker. There is an entire chapter devoted to the making of "Malcolm X". Students will find the life of Lee interesting reading and the photos add to the easily read text.

(review of "Four Little Girls) *Jet Magazine*. Vol. 92, July 28, 1997.

This magazine can be found in the homes of most African Americans. It is a quick reference for all members of the family and its use may encourage all to watch the film in the home.

Lerner, Gerda, editor. *Black Women in White America*. New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, February 1973.

This text provides short readings, the original words of Black women from 1811 to 1971. There are many appropriate passages highlighting the complications and successes of parenting.

Poussaint, A. F. "Taking Movie Ratings Seriously". *Good Housekeeping*. Vol. 224, April 1997.

Students will recognize Poussaint as a consultant for several of their favorite television shows. He has presented many scholarly articles on child rearing. In this article, he helps parents use the ratings to select appropriate materials for their children to view.

Rozen, L. (review of "Four Little Girls) *People Weekly*. Vol. 48, July 21, 1997 *Upscale Magazine*, May 1997.

An article includes pages on three Civil Rights widows. Students will enjoy another article on Kadeem Hardison and fatherhood, as well as comments from other celebrity parents.

SOME SUITABLE MOVIES

Colonial New England

“A Midwife’s Tale”

Slavery and Civil War “Roots” “Diary of Miss Jane Pittman” Reconstruction

“The Biography of Dr. George Washington Carver”

“Rosewood”

“His Eye Is On the Sparrow”

Civil Rights Era

“Four Little Girls”

“Malcolm X”

“Ruby Bridges”

“The Long Walk Home”

“Lone Star”

“Mississippi Burning”

“Separate But Equal”

“Simple Justice”

“The Ernest Green Story”

“Ghost of Mississippi”

“The Wilma Rudolph Story”

“The Learning Tree”

Lesson Plan #1

Parenting Before Birth: Selecting A Good Mate

“Malcolm X”

Goal

to show a couple making decisions about their future together, to understand their criteria for decision, and to watch the tradition of marriage in a particular religion

Objectives

to explore the resources of the downtown public library, emphasizing free or low cost video and services for toddlers and pre-schoolers

to view courtship of Malcolm X as a traditional pre parenting activity

to assist students in making judgments on what they see

to use the longer period or block to bring variety to presentation of the subject matter

Summary of Content

This is the second of a two part lesson. On the first day, students will be escorted to the downtown, main branch of the public library during the school day. While there, they will meet the children's librarian and hear about services for toddlers which are available.

Also, a copy of "Malcolm X" will be checked out for classroom use.

In this section, students will see a couple move through mate selection and the tradition of marriage.

Review of New Subjects or Vocabulary - 10 minutes

For the students who are unfamiliar with the American Muslim traditions, some information

on mate selection or dating and marriage will be necessary.

Students will listen to a brief account of the United States in the 1960s and the importance of Malcolm X and the birth of the American Muslim movement.

Materials and Resources

An Imam or knowledgeable American Muslim customs

a copy of "Malcolm X," a Spike Lee movie and the book by Malcolm X and Alex Haley

television/VCR

Methods

a short talk about the traditions of mating and marriage
showing of selected scenes
class discussion, student led if possible

Motivation/Warm Up - 30 minutes

Ask students to report on Malcolm X's wife and children. How many children are there? What kind of a father was he? How do the students know about his parenting?

Ask if any student has ever attended a Muslim wedding ceremony? Were there any differences from Christian traditions?

The Imam will speak about mate selection and marriage in the American Muslim tradition.

Activity - 40 minutes

Ask students to observe the courtship and marriage of Malcolm X as they watch selected scenes, the courtship and marriage, in the movie. What criteria did Malcolm use to choose Betty? What attracted Betty to Malcolm? What role did Elijah Mohammed and others play in the marriage? What ceremonies did the couple observe?

Several students will be asked to retell what they saw and give comment on what they saw.

Ask if students would share what they know about the traditions of other groups and religions.

Ask students to imagine Malcolm's life, were he not married and a father. Would history be different? Would he have behaved in a different manner? Were there special considerations because he had a wife and family?

Home or Seat Assignment - 10 minutes

Ask students to list the attributes of a good mate, the father or mother of future children.

There should be at least ten items on each list which will be displayed around the classroom.

Ask students to consider watching the entire movie at home with their families. On

subsequent school days, allow for brief reports.

Ask students to present a written critique of the portion of the movie which they saw.

Suggest a selection of pertinent movies or television programs for the coming week. Concentrate on The History Channel, The Learning Channel, and others.

Evaluation

There will be at least one question on the mid term examination in January on the topic of courtship, mating, and marriage.

If the conversation in class is lively and all participate, there will be no need for a written examination.

A short quiz will concentrate on recall of facts on the parenting information presented in the film. On a marking period or mid term examination, a thought question will call for an essay response.

Students will remember the movie and conversation in a subsequent lesson on relationships when more information on Betty Shabazz, her single parenting and tragic death will be highlighted.

Lesson Plan #2

On Becoming a Parent: The Birthing Process “Midwife’s Tale” Goal

to introduce students to life in New England during the Colonial period and the community participation in child birth

Objective

to allow students to discuss the similarities around childbirth between modern times in the African American community and colonial times and the White community, different ethnic and cultural backgrounds

to vary presentation of materials in the block schedule when the periods are 90 minutes long

Summary of Content

Students will see scenes in "Midwife's Tale" which depict the customs of courtship and marriage and child birth and infant care and then will participate in a guided discussion on the similarities and differences between their own lives and what they saw on the screen.

Review of New Subjects or Vocabulary - 10 minutes

The teacher will provide an introduction to the movie and tell the students that they should think about how the scenes in the movie compare with similar occurrences in their own lives. They should participate in listing some facts about Colonial New England, such as the years covered, the geography, and the lifestyle.

Materials and Resources

a copy of "Midwife's Tale," the video
enough copies of an entry in the book on child birth
a map of the United States
copies or overhead transparencies of the maps in the book
television/VCR

Methods

a home study guide for presentation prior to the day of class and information on the nature of the scenes to be shown for students' parents teacher introduction with reference to geography and history viewing of the movie class discussion

Motivation/Warm Up - 15 minutes

collect any responses to the study guide and parental information sheet

Ask students who was in the delivery room at the birth of their child. What preparation did they have? Who helped?

Ask if they know about the customs of child birth in other countries?

Ask if any of them experienced birth at home.

Tell them that the film shows child birth in another time, but in a place not too far from New Haven. Show them the place on a map. Tell them the date and help them envision what colonial Maine was like.

Activity - 60 minutes

Students should prepare a sheet of paper, folded vertical. The first column on the left side should be headed colonial Maine and the right side modern New Haven. While watching the scenes, students will be asked to record brief

notes under colonial Maine. The teacher will provide some suggestions, if necessary, such as no men present, mother sat in a chair, everyone watched.

Watch three scenes from the movie - the courting scene, the child birth scene, and another which shows the family with an infant.

Check to see that all have at least seven observations. Allow students to share notes.

Ask the students to match each comment recorded with an observation under modern New Haven, out loud and together as a group. If very personal comments are made, be prepared to deal with both positive and negative. Allow the group to address the issues. Walk around and be sure that all have matching lists of at least seven items.

Use the lists of several students to point up the similarities.

Ask one or two students to gather the differences from other and speak about them. Ask them why the differences occurred. While some are obvious, others may call for some thought. For instance, it is obvious that a full service hospital was not in existence in colonial Maine. However, students should be prompted to tell why men were not present at child birth in colonial times. Students may want to share their own tales and opinions about fathers in the delivery rooms of local hospitals.

Home or Seat Assignment - 5 minutes

A student may choose not to participate in the conversation about their own experiences. At that point, the teacher should allow anyone, not everyone, to simply list what they see in the movie and to remain silent, non responsive to any prompting about personal experiences. They should be asked to listen and to respond in writing. Or they could be offered an alternative assignment.

The teacher should distribute the copies of the passage in the book. For homework, students should be asked to read the entry. They will complete the assignment by writing a half page about one instance in the delivery room or one person, a helper at the hospital. Again, for the student reluctant to speak about personal experience, they may provide a half page critique on the movie scenes.

Conclusion

If the objective is clear and the introduction accepted, students will carry this lesson themselves. This may be an occasion when young mothers can talk about their own experiences with their peers. It is also an opportunity when

even the poorest student can be an expert. At the end of the period, students will have discussed some commonalities with their peers and they will have seen and discussed commonalities with women on the screen who are quite different from themselves.

Evaluation

Both recall and thought questions will appear on marking period, mid term and final examinations.

Some students may discuss the circumstances of their own birth with their families and bring that information to subsequent classes.

At the end of class or before the next class, students will present their observations about colonial Maine.

Lesson Plan #3

Three Mothers in the Civil Rights Era “The Medgar Evers Story” Goal

to acquaint students with the real experiences of three women of historical significance

Objective

to delineate good single parenting

to use the block schedule or longer period and another regular period to cover print and electronic materials

Summary of Content

Students will be introduced to the widows of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King in an effort to show how good parenting can be accomplished in the wake of the tragic death of a mate or father.

Materials and Resources

There are at least two film versions of the death of Medgar Evers. Both show family life as well as scene of the children and parents together. Both also present vivid snapshots of the mothers and their public and private lives. The movies are "Ghosts of Mississippi" with Whoopi Goldberg and "The Medgar Evers Story."

There are also actual newsclips which may be shown here.

television and vcr with pause button

The May 1997 issue of Upscale Magazine contains an article about the three women. The teacher will need copies of this article and copies of the cover for classroom display. In addition, six copies of the complete magazine should be available in the classroom.

It is suggested that a color copy of the Upscale cover be hanging in the classroom for four to six weeks.
enlarged and left

Day One Motivation/Warm Up - 10 minutes

Display the photo of the three women.

Pose the question - can you tell me who these women are? Ask why they are so important to be placed on the cover of a magazine and in an article called "Mothers of the Movement."

Tell the students to look for good parenting skills displayed by Mrs. Myrlie Evers before and

after her husband's tragic assassination. Let them know that the video will be put on pause at their request. Time will be allowed for a brief comment or question.

Tell the students that the Day One lesson will concentrate on the video and they will report on the printed article on each woman for Day Two.

Activity 60 minutes

Show selected family scenes from the movie, including the brutal slaying of Medgar Evers, after appropriate preparation. Allow pauses for brief discussion. What did Evers' work mean for the country? What were his family considerations? Did he allow his wife to operate as the sole authority for the children, while he worked with the NAACP?

Home or Seat Assignment 20 minutes

Ask the students to locate other information about or pictures of the three women and their children in magazines and newspapers. The articles and pictures can be mounted and hung around the room.

Students will be asked to tell the last known occupation and other information on the three women in the next class and to participate in reporting on the three women. Small groups or pairs will each receive a copy of the article. They will be asked to prepare an oral presentation on the person for the following day's class. Allow 10 minutes for them to plan their presentations.

Day Two Warm Up/Motivation - 10 minutes

Ask if any new information was uncovered. Are there any questions?

Activity 30 minutes

Have three students or small groups retell the story of each of the three mothers and give their critique of the article in a ten minute report. What did they find out about the three

mothers?

Home or seat assignment

Students should seek an adult over 45 or 50 years old and interview them about Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, or

Martin
Luther
King.

Do you recall anything about the families of the heroes?

How did their deaths affect the families?

Were they good parents? Why do you say that?

What is a good parent?

Tell me about the successes of their children.

Conclusion

It may prove difficult to focus the conversation on positive parenting, once the students see the murder.

The teacher should be prepared to follow up on any conversation about tragedy in the personal lives of the individual students. In fact, ready resources, like clinical social workers, should know that the subject of tragic death will be broached so that quick referrals are available.

This lesson may open up a topic very close to some in the class. In most cases, the students are and will be single parents. In addition, several may have experienced some personal tragic separation from the other parent or another family member.

Evaluation

Both recall and thought questions will appear on marking period, mid term and final examinations.

Some students may discuss the circumstances of their own birth with their families and bring

that information to subsequent classes

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