



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1998 Volume IV: American Political Thought

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## Letters to an Unborn Patriot

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.04.06  
by June Gold

In order to get students to become more engaged in the complex topic of American History, I have written this unit, which is designed for eighth grade learners. This unit requires students to respond to the events in developing America by writing to their unborn child, or to a real or created character living at the time of the events being studied. The student will explore events along a timeline chosen by the teacher, encompassing that material which will be studied for the duration of the term, or school year. As each event is presented and explored, the student is forced to think compassionately, putting himself into the event and becoming part of the action. The writer will be encouraged to think about the decisions that people made, doing so from several viewpoints. After thinking critically about the event and its' components, the student will then choose a place for himself within that part of history. As a demonstration and an evaluation of the process, the learner will then become a historical character and document his role, thoughts, and ideas in the form of a letter to his unborn progeny, or to a related figure living at that time. Doing this accomplishes several tasks. First, it forces the student to become emotionally involved with the political arena, and it encourages the writer to come to see and understand events in history from several viewpoints. Finally, the developing portfolio of work serves as both an assessment tool for the teacher and becomes a wonderful memento of accomplishment.

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