



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume V: Reading Across the Cultures

Multicultural Discovery When Reading Poetry and Stories for the Elementary Grades

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.05.02
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"Story reading to an audience is as old as Literacy. The storyteller and the true story reader (one who interprets the story through voice, expression and body language) enter into an active relationship with the audience." (Saxby, Maurice, Winch and Hoodstad.)

Reading aloud to children is important at every age. It provides children with continuous access to books they cannot yet read independently and introduces them to a variety of authors and genres. This unit of multicultural discovery when reading poetry and stories for the elementary grades has been adapted and selected in the interests and needs of the children. This unit intends to embrace the reality of multiculturalism in American society by providing a balance between learning the common core of dominant cultural knowledge (English language, democratic values) and knowledge of minority cultures. Respectfully I expose children to poetry and stories connecting learning to the child's individual world. This program is an ambitious one, rich in introducing people, places, events, ideas, concepts, and artistic productions that have shaped the country in terms of racial/ethnic composition. For kindergarten and special education students I have chosen a beautiful story about a Japanese little girl. Children at this age or level are not able to read independently; that's why the story chosen is very simple and intends to develop feelings rather than learning symbols. The primary goal in this case is to develop a love of books.

For more advanced grades, the selection is different and is based in more understanding of ethnic and/or racial background. United States enjoys the folklore of all cultures and has been influenced in many ways, but in this unit the emphasis is given in trying to extract the differences and similarities of all human beings regardless of the color or their skin or their eyes feature.

My lessons are simple and with easy-to-adapt tips and strategies. They intend to assure children's contact in a relaxed and fun atmosphere, reading stories - poems, hoping it will continue to interest students long after the unit ends.

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