



## Literature for Every Child

Curriculum Unit 98.05.05  
by Carolyn Williams

### OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

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This unit is intended to serve as a magnet for attracting teachers and students to explore America's culture through its ethnic literature. Generally, it is an invitation to use its content as a tool for learning about the customs of dress, food, language, religion and other social behaviors of America's ethnic cultures. Specifically, it asks for open communication among multi-ethnic classroom populations, to promote better understanding of some of the differences that exist among us, as a people. Moreover, it is a call to action to become a society who more than tolerates, but understands, accepts and celebrates the differences among its diverse ethnic population.

It invites teachers whose student populations include any combination of Americans ( i.e. Asian, African, European, Jewish, Latino, Native American and/or other ethnic groups) to offer a curriculum which positively exposes beliefs and practices of the represented groups. It invites students in grade four to cooperatively, as well as independently investigate fact, fantasy and folklore of selected cultures.

Together, teacher and student will attempt to create a forum which focuses on open dialogue about the real and perceived differences among cultures. By reading literature from various ethnic groups who present their own cultural experiences, each person's knowledge, ergo, perception of self and of others changes so that we begin to recognize more similarities than differences among us.

### ABOUT THE UNIT

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This eighteen week literature course is built around short stories and novels whose theme ideas mirror "every" child's culture (as determined by the group's ethnic backgrounds.) It is designed as a classroom reading program for independent readers who have been identified for New Haven's TAG Program. Designed as a child- centered approach to learning about self and others, it is most easily adaptable to any grade level and reading ability.

The intended class is an ethnically diverse group of eight to ten year old students who come together from various elementary schools across the city. They meet one day per week, for four hours, in one of three

designated TAG Resource Rooms. This unit will be incorporated as a part of their larger core study unit of Mythology and implemented by two teachers. The challenge is to structure the time and activities to fit students' individual skill abilities and address the cultural needs of each represented group, while at the same time allow for personal growth.

The unit is divided into three segments. Each segment is a lesson with background information for teaching and/or learning about differences among cultures. Each lesson features a plan for one skill activity in either reading ( analyzing literary elements and social issues of the stories) discussion (synthesizing information about cultural myth and fact) or personal writing (evaluating multi-ethnic perspectives) to be used with all of the readings. Each can be used independently as a cursory thematic focus or skill practice study. All hinge largely upon effective presentation of the theme ideas set forth in the Introduction to the Study.

Segment 1 "Understanding Cultural Differences" introduces the unit, offers background information for identifying factors that influence culture, briefly summarizes the unit's core and sample story, Hello, My Name is Scrambled Eggs and suggests guide questions for analyzing it and future independent reading selections.

This humorous, short novel features an American and a Vietnamese family and serves as the teacher-led portion of the study. It is the only story that requires cooperative reading and whole class participation for completing the related activities. It is also the story from which comparisons and contrasts are drawn when investigating the cultural practices and beliefs of other ethnic groups.

Following completion of this part of the study unit, except where noted, students are encouraged to continue independently through much of the remaining assignments.

Segment 2 "Cultural Exchanges" gives brief facts about cultural backgrounds of Vietnamese and American cultures, along with a discussion guide for Open Forum sessions. Students will use these facts in combination with information found in their readings, for whole group discussions and individual writing assignments.

@Text:Because students are reading different stories, at individual paces, different ability levels and learning interests and also from different cultural vantages, the teacher schedules and leads three or four "Open Forum" discussions about culture for the whole group. It is crucial that equal weight is given to each person's point of view during the discussions. Segment 3 "Celebrating America" offers ideas for individual writing assignments as a way of assessing the results of student learning, peer teaching and exposing individual thoughts and perceptions about cultures, to a wider audience.

## **Strategies for Teaching and Learning**

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What follows is a suggested approach to the teacher-led portion of the study. Note that the unit beginning with the Introduction through to its Conclusion is directed to the student. So that the student will be able to proceed independently, the complete study packet should be duplicated and handed out to each before beginning the study.

Assignments are individualized such that each student:

\*reads one story about his/her own culture and additional stories about two other cultural groups

- \*completes analysis questions about the literature (see Lit Log)
- \*takes an active voice in scheduled open forum discussion and synthesis activities by exchanging information from their individual readings (see Open Forum )
- \*completes and submits written assignments to teacher (see Writers' Works)
- \*writes for publication (optional)
- \*plans and researches an idea for a short-term hands-on learning project

## **Pre-Lesson**

Begin the study by outlining its purpose. Familiarize students with the content and skills with which they will be asked to involve themselves.

Use the words listed as vocabulary 1 to spark a pre-lesson discussion of individual perceptions about relationships among ethnic groups in America. (Forced participation is discouraged at this point.)

After having done this, begin the thematic portion of the study by orally reading and discussing the argument that is presented in the Introduction. Make students aware that these concepts will serve as an underlying focus throughout the study and for evaluating their perspectives about ethnic cultures.

Read aloud to the students, "Taking Issue." Survey the group to know where each stands on the issue. Divide students into teams and conduct an informal debate around the ideas presented in this section.

## **Lesson I**

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Grab the interest of students by orally sharing the story review and synopsis of Hello, My Name is Scrambled Eggs (precedes Bibliography.) Allow for questions of curiosity and speculation of story development.

Here is a good opportunity to set up Lit Logs for the three skill lessons and general research ideas. Use teacher discretion about format.

Move now to reading the complete novel, Hello My Name is Scrambled Eggs. ( See local libraries or purchase a classroom set.) This will take approximately four-six one hour sessions for whole group reading because some discussion will naturally occur.

Follow the reading with some directed general discussion about the sequence of events and have students make notes in their Lit Logs to help analyze the literary elements of the story. (See "Analyzing the Story" Activity A.)

## Lesson II

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After reading and analyzing the story, examine the information given in the segment "Understanding Cultural Differences." Focus the attention of students on factors that influence culture , as a way of helping them to understand why cultures develop differently.

Engage students in a kind of dictionary treasure hunt for definitions of the words listed as Vocabulary II. Award bonus points for speed and accuracy.

Schedule an Open Forum for exchanging information about cultures. Use the discussion guide for comparing and contrasting customs of one's individual culture to that of the ethnic group featured in the story. Make use of the brief facts , the information found in the story and personal experiences to formulate and answer questions about the featured cultures.

During open forum, in addition to reading and discussing information about culture, complete the activity Common Ground, to help synthesize the information. (The time required will depend largely upon student interest. Allow two one hour sessions, per forum.)

## Lesson III

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Upon successful completion of open forum, students are ready to evaluate, through writing, their positions on the question of emphasizing ethnic differences. Choose assignments from Writer's Works that will compliment the open forum activities. Remind students that the intent in these writings is to celebrate America's diverse culture.

Decide on a catchy and creative use for defining and using the words listed as vocabulary III.

Extension Activities are included for use at the discretion of teacher and student (e.g. discussion, writing or hands on learning.)

Now the student is free to select a first independent reading choice. This is a perfect opportunity to involve students in Library exploration for cultural readings. Gently steer each child toward an initial reading about his/her own culture. Follow with readings about other cultures, as time permits. Start them to thinking about a short term project study.

Repeat the above procedure for each of the independent choices. This is the most demanding part of teacher scheduling and evaluation of student progress. Make that information available to students. Remain vigilant!  
Are You Ready?

## INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

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America continues to serve as home to a growing population of ethnic cultures. We embrace its ethnic diversity as a strength. Yet, we question "Should America's Ethnic differences be emphasized?" Your answer is based on whether you accept the idea that American culture is the combined influence of its ethnic heritages, or whether you believe American culture is distinctly British/European?

If you support the latter idea, as did the drafters of the Bill of Rights, you believe that all other groups who have immigrated to America, after the first Europeans are culturally different - by ethnicity, (they are non-European) are ethnic minorities (small in number and lacking social status) are different in their lifestyles, economic status, religious practices, dress, diet, language and social behaviors. Also "they" look "funny" too; they should assimilate to the customs of the European majority. You should answer the question "No."

If you examine the arguments of skeptics and opponents of a workable multi-ethnic society, you are likely to be convinced that American culture will not survive ethnic and racial loyalties. That emphasizing ethnic differences can only serve to divide us. You can easily believe that language, religion and other social customs of America's culture will be supplanted by the national customs of ethnic groups who huddle together and insist on their cultural customs as a way of life. If you believe this, again you should answer "No" to the question.

You should know that these same arguments have been used against immigration, passage of civil rights laws and multicultural education, to cite a few. Keep in mind, these and other related arguments have been kept alive in an effort to continue to spread the influence of British/European culture.

While these perceptions are accurate they do not support the negative position on the question. Before firmly committing yourself to an answer on the question of emphasizing ethnic differences, consider the fact that the history and culture of North America did not begin with the arrival of the first Europeans; that the earliest European inhabitants were themselves, ethnic immigrants.

Native American inhabitants already had established a flourishing culture in a highly civilized society, by the time of their arrival. Although historians want you to forget, you have to remember that the natives were stripped of their lands and forced to accept the cultural customs of the newcomers. These fears may be well grounded.

You have to consider the fact that the influences of Native American culture is evident in America's present-day Culture. It is clearly evident in farming and environmental protection and cannot be easily dismissed. By the same token, you can't dismiss the influence of other immigrant cultures upon what we know as American Culture (i.e. diet, language, religion music, etc..) So, in that vain, answer "Yes" to the question.

While there are various schools of thought which argue both sides of the question of ethnic emphasis, this thought prevails: If we are to co-exist in this society, as one people, rather than as a nation of ethnic groups - culturally divided and if this society is to fully realize its creed of "liberty and justice for all," ethnic emphasis is only "just" recognition of the parts that make the whole of America's culture. Again your response to that age old question, is "Yes." Know however, that a Yes position raises another question: " Are those differences significant enough to keep us culturally divided?"

The true test of our abilities to co-exist as a nation of one people, is to recognize that there are cultural

differences among us as a multi- ethnic society. These differences should be understood, exchanged and celebrated. It should be realized that these differences create our national identity as Americans. One's contributions to the nation's economy, to its defense and to the over-all growth and development of a strong nation should speak of each person's commitment to a national culture that is distinctly American .

## **Taking Issue**

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Unfortunately, it is not popular to insist on recognition of oneself as "Ethnic- American". For that mode of thought breeds division. That position poses a threat to American culture, according to some. It is equally unpopular to think of oneself as "American". For that mode of thought suggests contribution without inclusion. Throughout the country's history however, it has been declared through deed and action that "all" are not included.

We were not all included as "Americans" at the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence. We were not all "Americans" during the early years of constitutional law, or throughout the history of education in this country. Not through Women's suffrage, Civil Rights, Affirmative Action or Voters Propositions have we all been included as "Americans." Who now are we? What now should we call ourselves? Are we a nation of divided loyalties to ethnic identities "Ethnic/Americans" or are we a nation of many with loyalties to one national identity "American?"

## **UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

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In the quest for a culturally diverse society, an obvious and immediate concern is a lack of knowledge about cultures, other than our own. A greater concern is that we remain culturally divided because of that lack of knowledge. Often we hold beliefs about groups of people that is more stereotypical than factual. We sometimes are unaware of how we are viewing others. It's what we have been taught or led to believe that we act upon.

There are social and political forces which serve to segregate groups in neighborhoods, schools and churches. Naturally, if there is limited daily contact among ethnic groups, there is little chance to learn more than that which is propagandized by popular media.

What is culture? As we know it, culture is the social beliefs and practices that characterize a society. As a group, people develop their way of life on a systematic base of values and beliefs; language; social, economic and political structures; social controls through law and values that are traditionally passed on through generations.

What makes us culturally different? The clothes we wear, the way we speak, the kind of food we eat, the color of our skin and our practices of religion all add up to differences among ethnic groups. There are also differences in our social attitudes and behaviors. These differences are negligible, however. Recognizing them as such leaves one free to appreciate an individual for his/her character and sense of humanity.

Recognizing these as mere attributes of cultural heritage rather than as cultural differences signifies

acceptance of another without regard for how that other differs from oneself. These attributes influence the way we think and see ourselves. They play an important role in the way others see us.

Perhaps it is the way in which we are seen by others that creates separation among groups. We have spent so little time getting to know the person who is behind that which is physically obvious, we have been unable to get beyond the obvious

## Factors That Influence Culture

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The following factors impact upon the way a culture develops. The perceived differences among cultures is a result of these factors. The combined influences of these factors, as related to national ethnic cultures have helped to create American culture. Unfortunately, they also are basic determinants of social status, here in America. Therein lies the problem. Instead of creating a workable multi-ethnic society, we are continuing to support a culturally divided one.

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Foods differ among cultures. While our diets may differ, our basic need for nourishment is very much the same. We eat to sustain life. Environmental conditions, availability of grain and seed for planting, growing and harvesting crop, demand for crop based on religious practices and the cost of producing and exporting food, all help to determine the diet of a culture.

Clothing styles, fabric and dress customs vary among humans. They vary among generations, genders, social positions, races and economic lines. Our cultural dress is determined by the availability of raw materials, the cost of manufacturing and exporting those products and acceptable traditions of dress.

Housing is based on conditions of climate. The kind of house that one constructs is suited to weather events in a particular region. The technology and availability of materials are also determining factors. Most important in determining a person's housing situation is the economic status of a family or group.

Language plays an important role in the social growth and development of a people. The language of a culture is determined by one's native tongue, by the language of previous generations and by languages spoken in the immediate area. It is further influenced by school and government policies.

Religion differs for many of us, by denomination of faith. - beliefs and ritual practices. Freedom to practice one's religious beliefs and rituals are important to the development of a culture.

Education is pursued to different degrees by different groups. The pursuit is often determined by the degree to which it is valued, past educational practices and ability to afford it.

Culture is influenced by government, available technology, transportation, talents, opportunity and other factors including economics. Because we develop differently, our practices may appear strange to others. They are simply unfamiliar to us, not necessarily "weird".

## LESSON 1 Analyzing a story

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Objective: To help students identify elements of a story.

Time required: varies

Procedure

1. Read and discuss the background information about cultural influences.
2. Read the story, " ... Scrambled Eggs" orally with your classmates.
3. During the reading period, make notes in your lit log about elements of the story, as directed by the teacher.
4. Complete Exercise A
5. Prepare to participate in the Open Forum discussion. Use your notes and Factors that influence culture.

### EXERCISE A Analyzing the story

Demonstrate your understanding of the story Hello, My Name Is Scrambled Eggs. Write the responses in your Lit Log and prepare to discuss them when directed.

1. List five major events from the story which helped to advance the plot.
2. Identify the setting of the story and tell what you discovered about the customs of people who live there?
3. List some personality traits for at least three major characters. Write one fact and one opinion



about one of them. From whose point of view is the story told?

4. How is the major conflict of the story resolved?

5. At what point in the story do you begin to see the climax? Where does the author foreshadow events of the story?

6. What was the author's purpose in creating this story?

7. What can you infer about the story's title?

8. Can you find...

- \* Examples of symbolism found in the story are:
- \* Examples of figurative language used in the story are:
- \* Three adjectives which help to create the mood are:
- \* The idea which best helps to create the tone is:

## **CULTURAL EXCHANGES**

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Faced with the reality that this country is no longer predominately Euro-centric, in its numbers, although the thought continues to prevail, you owe it to yourselves to dialogue with each other and to find commonalties that exist among you. You want to know about fresh ideas and share in cultural riches from all over the world. You want to exchange that which makes you an individual and that which makes you one in the larger group. If you are to expend your energies figuring out differences among yourselves, it would be helpful to know about others' cultures.

A culture develops for specific reasons. Customs arise because of certain specifications. Here are findings

about the cultures of the United States and that of Vietnam. They are based on a compilation of research efforts at Brigham Young University. Additional information can be found in Culturegrams '98 (teacher bibliography)

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The following information is given for your consideration as you discuss the similarities and differences among you. The information which appears here is related to the cultures portrayed in the unit's core story, but is useful to you as you consider persons from other ethnic groups, during the course of your study.

In the United States, English is the official language. However many ethnic groups speak their native tongue in the home. You speak what is commonly known as American English with great flexibility, but writing is much more standardized. The same holds true in Vietnam. The official language of the country is Vietnamese, although ethnic minorities speak their own languages at home.

When it comes to religion, America does not have a national religion. More than half the population who professes some kind of religion practice the Christian faith. There is equal freedom to practice for a percentage of Jews, Buddhists and Muslims. Religion is generally a personal matter but, some share in discussion of the subject. For the Vietnamese, the largest practicing percentage is Buddhists, with a small percentage of Christian and Taoist. Most believe, whatever their faith, that ancestors are accessible to hinder or help the living.

While claiming no national dish, Americans rather enjoy a variety of foods adopted from the national cuisine of immigrants. The daily national diet of Vietnamese consists of white rice, a salty fish soup vegetable and fruits. Eating habits may differ, but only to a small degree. Your eating utensils are spoon, knife and fork, theirs are chopsticks and spoon. You use plates which rest on the table, they use bowls which are not allowed to remain on the table; that's considered the lazy man's way. The last bit of the family dish is never taken at the time of the meal, it is left there in case someone else wants it, but food is never left in an individual's bowl, according to Vietnamese customs.

Customs of dating and marriage differ only slightly between the two cultures. Americans begin group dating in their early teens and are allowed to legally marry as early as eighteen years of age, although some opt for other living arrangements before marrying. Vietnamese teens begin dating when they are in their late teen years and encouraged to wait until they are twenty three to twenty-five before marrying. Holding hands and showing affection in public is allowed in America between males and females. The same is not acceptable in the Vietnamese culture, although it is acceptable for Vietnamese males to hold hands.

As for family lifestyles, a difference may be in the structure of the basic family unit. Americans basic unit is a nuclear family which consists of parents and their unmarried children. Over the years, the basic unit has been extended to include other family members. Wherein men were traditional breadwinners, women and children now hold regular jobs. The elderly sometimes remain in an individual home or is placed in a retirement community or home.

Vietnamese families enjoy the basic structure of the extended family which also includes the elderly. When the older sons marry they may move into their own homes and start their families. When the youngest son marries, he is given the family home and the elderly remain in the home with his new family and his remaining siblings and/or other relatives.

The two cultures dress differently, greet each other differently are educated differently, communicate differently with each other and with strangers, but have we discovered any basic human differences between the two cultures?

## LESSON 2 Common Ground

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Objective: To help you compare cultural customs

Procedures:

1. Read the information that precedes this plan as directed by the teacher. Attend a scheduled Open Forum discussion (see discussion guide)
2. In a general forum, answer questions from the discussion guide as directed by the teacher. Allow yourself some time to formulate and assess your responses before raising your hand.
3. Locate the Hand out for Activity B (chart for comparing and contrasting)
4. Divide yourselves into groups by related culture. One group may be made up of "others"
5. Allow forty- five minutes to complete the first two categories on the chart (activity B.) Record info in your lit log. Request additional time if needed.
6. Choose one idea to share with your class when you return to the large group.
7. Make notes in your lit log about factors that are common to other groups as they share their ideas.
8. Return to your small groups and complete the chart. Allow sixty minutes for shared notes,

discussions and completion of the chart.

### Open Forum Discussion guide

1. What are some of the social issues that were presented in the story?

a. Does the main character show signs of adapting to the new culture by imitating others? by trial and error?

b. Does any character show signs of being judgmental about another person's cultural ways?

2. What aspects of culture are discussed?

3. Is the ethnic group who's represented in the story considered a minority group in this country?

4. What makes the group a minority?

5. How does the label of minority affect the group in terms of housing, financial success, health care, daily diet, etc.?

6. Respond to the following: What is acceptable in your culture may be offensive to someone from another culture. Can you think of a time when this has been the case with you?

7. Role play this situation: You and your friend are at a restaurant which serves ethnic foods. One of you can't eat this kind of food for religious reasons or specific holiday custom. What are some positive ways to handle this without offending ?

### Activity B

Compare and contrast customs of your individual culture to that of the ethnic group featured in the story.

Directions In your lit log, create a chart labeled, "Similarities Differences, Factors" On it, note what in your cultures is " similar," what is "different," and what factors influence certain practices and beliefs in both cultures.

\*\* Sample Chart for comparing (name the two cultures) KEY: A= your ethnic heritage; B= Other culture

\_\_\_\_\_ |

Similarities Differences Factors

Food A

B

Language

Others

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### Celebrating America

America's early history enjoyed an influx of immigrants who came here to escape religious persecution, to escape human rights abuses and to find a better way of life. With the exception of Africans, who were forcibly brought here, immigrants came of their own free will and were welcome to the shores of America.

The United States is somewhat unique in having the world's largest diverse population. While that diversity may create some discrimination among ethnic groups as everyone competes for the country's wealth, this country has enjoyed many of the positive sides of that diversity.

Take a look at popular culture and art to see some of the fruits of America's diversity. Television and movies help to show many ethnic news personalities, athletes, actors and actresses. Writers of different ethnic backgrounds are now being read in schools. Scholars are recognized in collegiate circles. Ethnic representation has finally even reached the institution of government.

There is much work to be done, however strides have been made toward appreciation of those who have helped to make America. The struggle continues.

## Lesson 3 Writers' Works

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Objective: To use persuasive techniques in writing

Time required: varies per assignment

Procedure:

1. Read through the writing ideas listed as Activity C.
2. When directed, choose one of the ideas to write about using persuasive technique that you have previously learned.

### Activity C

Directions: You will survey, analyze and evaluate your feelings and actions toward others, who belong to cultures other than your own. Respond in writing to one or more of the following idea starters. (All ideas and skills are encouraged!)

1. What attributes do I have that make me, in some way different and in some way the same as someone of another culture?
2. I appreciate someone who is :
3. If I could belong to another ethnic group, I would choose \_\_\_\_\_. ( Tell Why?)
4. I am not \_\_\_\_\_ however, I am somewhat \_\_\_\_\_ but, I am \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Extension Activities

\* "It is best that all cultures don't have the same customs."

\* "Differences exist among us, but they should not separate us."

\* "Disabled people, people of different races, people who worship differently should not be discriminated against."

\* Retell a selected story from a different cultural point of view.

\* Write a play whose main characters are from different ethnic groups. Focus the theme around changing attitudes about others.

## CONCLUSION

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We have been unable to definitively conclude whether emphasizing ethnic differences is to the good of celebrating America's diversity or if it is to the detriment of America's national culture. We have been unable to settle on an appropriate description which includes all of America's citizens as "American" therefore, we innately return to that which is more familiar and comfortable to us.

We take a path of lesser resistance. We choose to emphasize self and/or those who are most like one self. We emphasize our ethnic heritage so that we belong to a larger group by whom we are accepted. In this way, we work for self preservation and find self love.

## VOCABULARY

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The following word list is a suggested springboard to individual or group activities for exploration of cultural discoveries. Examine them for their implied meaning in relation to culture. Make them a part of your spoken vocabulary and make a conscious effort to apply these suggested concepts to your daily social behaviors.

1. Find definitions for the words listed below and write them in the "notes" section of your Lit Log.
2. When you read the words below, what images or perceptions come to mind if you are taking a stand for or against emphasizing cultural differences among ethnic groups in America. (Open Forum)
3. Which words would you choose to convey your feelings about ethnic relations in this country. (Open Forum)
4. Take the challenge: If you were asked to make a speech to newly arriving immigrants, which of the following words would be useful to your persuasive argument for or against their application for citizenship to this country? (optional writing)
5. Use the words listed as V-III to make a positive statement about living in America. (optional writing)

V-I accept respect discover recognize know

attribute nurture empathize understand see

invite embody tolerate

V-II customs culture heritage traditions values

V-III ignore exclude discriminate stereotype segregate

Hands-on Learning

Directions: Choose one aspect of your culture with which you would like to familiarize others. Plan a short-term study which includes research information and a visual product which represents

the ideas you wish to share.(visual can be a model, written piece, music, dance, drama or art.) HELLO, MY NAME IS SCRAMBLED EGGS Jamie Gilson

Meet Harvey, Tuan and Quint as they awkwardly teach and learn about each other's cultures. Watch these three twelve year old boys, who despite their obvious cultural differences ( language. religion, education,) each recognize and nurture their common learning interests, people skills and personal desires to create a friendship, which promises to last beyond the closing pages of this novel.

Author, Jamie Gilson writes a fascinating and recognizable story about a family of Vietnamese refugees, "Nguyens," who migrate to middle America- Pittsfield, Illinois " Pig Capitol of the world," according to Harvey Trumble, narrator, protagonist and member of the American host family. The story "...Scrambled Eggs," is a

tale of two cultures. Each struggles through basic fears of cultural acceptance v. self preservation; of cultural assimilation v. cultural heritage and of fact v. fiction.

## Synopsis

The story opens with the anticipated arrival of the Nguyens. Harvey and his family can only wonder what the Vietnamese family looks like, what clothes they wear, what foods they eat? For some time now, the town had been schooled on how to behave when the Nguyens arrive. Their greatest concern was that language would be an obvious barrier to their early adjustment to America.

Harvey would take care of that little problem. He would teach the child, Tuan how to be "American." Tuan would become his sole responsibility and his friend. This is Harvey's decision, Tuan is not given a choice in this matter. Tuan is told how to dress, what cool language to use, what foods to eat and what name to call himself so that the school children would not laugh at his Vietnamese name. At school, Tuan Ngyuen was Americanized as Tom Win.

Harvey's work may have been well intentioned, but lacked respect for Tuan's desire to maintain his own cultural identity. It also lacked any effort to learn about Tuan's cultural beliefs and practices. It seemed so easy to Americanize him and hope that he would soon forget about his war torn homeland. Finally, Tuan tells Harvey that he has made a decision to no longer be Tom, but he will learn about being American.

Quint's concerns run toward being ousted by the foreigners, Tuan and his working aged father. Quint's uncle, Wayne is looking for employment and suggests that Tuan's father is the reason he has been unsuccessful at finding work Quint takes his cue from Uncle Wayne who knows about "these" people. ( Wayne knows some of the popular myth, Harvey accepts it as fact.) They are secretly hoping that the Nguyens will not adjust well enough to stay in America.

When Quint discovers that his best friend, Harvey is spending all of his time with "the kid" (so-named by Quint) and that same kid is also his competition in math class, Quint decides he had better take matters into his own hands. He wants to maintain his status as math whiz of his class and best friend to Harvey. He decides to get Tuan (Tom) away from Harvey, so that he and Uncle Wayne can have some influence over him. As it turns out, Quint learns to like Tuan for the person that he is , rather than what he represents.

By the close of the story, the Nguyens move into their own house and find that they can buy foods with which they are familiar; the Church's newly sponsored Vietnamese family members are arriving; Harvey allows Tuan to speak on the sad memories of his escape from Vietnam to America; Tuan and Quint are working together in the accelerated math group; Quint's Uncle, Wayne finds a job; Mr. Nguyen keeps his job and all of Pittsfield is planning for the upcoming Thanksgiving Festival which will include, both American and Vietnamese foods.

## Teacher Bibliography

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1900.) Volume 2 continues with an exploration of the achievements made by ethnic-Americans ( from 1900 -.) Sowell, Thomas. Race and Culture : A World View. Basic Books: New York, 1994. An exploration of what role race and culture play in a disparate society. Szumski, Bonnie ed.. Interracial America: Opposing Viewpoints, San Diego: Greehaven Press,1996. A presentation of various opinions on social issues of immigration, racism, poverty and culture. Takaki, Ronald. A Different Mirror- A History of Multicultural America, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993. A story about multi-ethnic groups coming together to create a new society in America. Takaki, Ronald. Strangers from a Different Shore- A History of Asian Americans, New York: Penguin Books. 1989. Takaki creates a portrait of Asian-Americans through a story about courage and strength

## Student Bibliography - Mythology

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Bierhorst, John. The Mythology of Mexico and Central America, New York: Quill, 1990. An anthology of myths featuring the gods and heroes of the region including Aztecs, Mayans and surviving Indian groups. Christ, Henry J.. Myths and Folklore, New York: Amsco School Publications,1989. A collection of myths, legends and folktales designed to delight the young reader with tales of magic, folk art, history and language. These tales teach about the lives of the Greeks, Romans and Norse through classical myths. It also brings to its readers tales of American folk heroes. O'Faolain, Eileen. Irish Sagas And Folk Tales, New York:Avenel Books, 1982. This book retells familiar tales transferred from the oral tradition of storytelling preserving authentic Irish charm and tone. Potter, Robert. Myths and Folk Tales Around the World, Englewood Cliffs: Globe Book Company, Inc, 1987. A compilation of stories designed primarily for classroom use in the teaching of reading. It begins with stories from Greece and Rome, then proceeds through Northern Europe, The Middle and Far East, Africa and ends with tales from the Americas. Russell William F. ed.. Classic Myths to Read Aloud, New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1989. The author promotes this book as a perfect way to raise the level of a child's cultural literacy. He offers classical Greek and Roman myths that have been told throughout the world combined with some study of etymology to show how some words became a part of the English language. Yolen, Jane, ed.. Favorite FolkTales from Around the World, New York: Random House, 1986. A library of fairy and folk tales for every child. Teachers will want to have this book around when trying to locate a tale about any particular ethnic group. Chances are this book contains a tale from the general region, if not from the specific culture.

## Student Bibliography- Culture

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Augenbraum, Harold and Olmos, Margarite. The Latino Reader. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997. Cisneros, Sandra. The House on Mango Street. New York: Vintage Books,1984. A collection of thoughts and dreams about growing up and living well, among your own people and among people of the world. Dresser, Norine. I felt like I was From Another Planet: Writing From Personal Experiences. New York: Addison- Wesley Publishing Company, 1994. A teacher resource book for teaching process writing. The book contains stories from fifteen students who tell about their cultural adjustments after coming to America. Resource Materials for Stories and Activities Artis, Nancy et.al., World Cultures and Geography, Rocky River: CLR, 1997 Aten, Jerry. Americans Too, Understanding American Minorities through Research-Related Activities. Carthage: Good Apple, 1990 Gilson, Jamie. Hello, My Name is Srambled Eggs, New York: Pocket Books: 1985 Glazer, Nathan. We Are All Multiculturalists Now, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1997 Pickering, John. Comparing Cultures; A cooperative Approach to a Multi-cultured World, Portland: J. Weston Walch Publisher,1990.

Skabelund, Grant Paul et. al. eds.. Culturegram "98 Provo: BYU's David M Kennedy Center for International Studies, 1997.

Smith, Gary and Otero, George. Teaching About Cultural Awareness, Denver: CTR Publications, 1983

Stark, Rebecca. Creative Ventures Ancient Civilizations, Hawthorne: Educational Impressions,1987 Steidl Sakamoto, Kim.

## OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

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This unit is intended to serve as a magnet for attracting teachers and students to explore America's culture through its ethnic literature. Generally, it is an invitation to use its content as a tool for learning about the customs of dress, food, language, religion and other social behaviors of America's ethnic cultures. Specifically, it asks for open communication among multi-ethnic classroom populations, to promote better understanding of some of the differences that exist among us, as a people. Moreover, it is a call to action to become a society who more than tolerates, but understands, accepts and celebrates the differences among its diverse ethnic population.

It invites teachers whose student populations include any combination of Americans ( i.e. Asian, African, European, Jewish, Latino, Native American and/or other ethnic groups) to offer a curriculum which positively exposes beliefs and practices of the represented groups. It invites students in grade four to cooperatively, as well as independently investigate fact, fantasy and folklore of selected cultures.

Together, teacher and student will attempt to create a forum which focuses on open dialogue about the real and perceived differences among cultures. By reading literature from various ethnic groups who present their own cultural experiences, each person's knowledge, ergo, perception of self and of others changes so that we begin to recognize more similarities than differences among us.

## ABOUT THE UNIT

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This eighteen week literature course is built around short stories and novels whose theme ideas mirror "every" child's culture (as determined by the group's ethnic backgrounds.) It is designed as a classroom reading program for independent readers who have been identified for New Haven's TAG Program. Designed as a child- centered approach to learning about self and others, it is most easily adaptable to any grade level and reading ability. The intended class is an ethnically diverse group of eight to ten year old students who come together from various elementary schools across the city. They meet one day per week, for four hours, in one of three designated TAG Resource Rooms. This unit will be incorporated as a part of their larger core study unit of Mythology and implemented by two teachers. The challenge is to structure the time and activities to fit students' individual skill abilities and address the cultural needs of each represented group, while at the same time allow for personal growth.

The unit is divided into three segments. Each segment is a lesson with background information for teaching and/or learning about differences among cultures. Each lesson features a plan for one skill activity in either reading ( analyzing literary elements and social issues of the stories) discussion (synthesizing information about cultural myth and fact) or personal writing (evaluating multi-ethnic perspectives) to be used with all of the readings. Each can be used independently as a cursory thematic focus or skill practice study. All hinge largely upon effective presentation can Minorities through Research-Related Activities. Carthage: Good Apple, 1990

Gilson, Jamie. Hello, My Name is Srambled Eggs, New York: Pocket Books: 1985 Glazer, Nathan. We Are All Multiculturalists Now, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1997 Pickering, John. Comparing Cultures; A cooperative Approach to a Multi-cultured World, Portland: J. Weston Walch Publisher,1990. Skabelund, Grant Paul et. al. eds.. Culturegram "98 Provo: BYU's David M Kennedy Center for International Studies, 1997.

Smith, Gary and Otero, George. Teaching About Cultural Awareness, Denver: CTR Publications, 1983

Stark, Rebecca. Creative Ventures Ancient Civilizations, Hawthorne: Educational Impressions,1987

Steidl Sakamoto, Kim. Portraits of Asian Pacific Americans, Carthage: Good Apple.1991

Westridge Young Writers Workshop. Kids Explore America's Hispanic Heritage, Santa Fe: John Mir Publications, 1993.

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