



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

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## **The Clock Tower on Grand Avenue: A Cultural Reading Adventure**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.05.07  
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Increasingly, I have found one of the major deterrents to students' enthusiasm for writing has been their inability to relate to the required reading associated with most academic subjects. Many cannot "see" the written word as a form of expression for their experiences. This narrow view also makes students unreceptive to learning about other cultures. In contrast, we as teachers take for granted that reading books of quality can add to a student's range of experience. However, for the most part, our students view reading as a chore. To combat this view, we must find ways to enhance their ideas of quality by selecting literature of interest to our student populations.

This unit outlines the use of three culturally different novels to review reading comprehension element skills -- setting; characterization; cause and effect; time order, theme; and conflict. The novels are *Forged by Fire* , *...and now Miguel* and *Red Scarf Girl: Memoirs of a Cultural Revolution* . The premise is that students will read books that are of interest to them and as a result of this interest the review of skills will be easier and more enjoyable. The unit shows how these three books can be compared and contrasted in each of the aforementioned element areas.

Included in the unit are strategies to correlate the readings with writing assignments. The techniques correspond to the Connecticut Mastery Test objectives for sixth and eighth graders and district reading and language arts standards. A bibliography of other recommended novels is also included.

(Recommended for Reading , Language Arts, English , grades 5-8)

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