



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **Celebrating Diversity through the Study of Nine American Holidays**

Curriculum Unit 98.05.08  
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### **RATIONALE**

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Major change is occurring in the ethnic composition of the people who make up the United States. No longer are we a nation where the majority of us trace our roots to European countries. "White" Americans will soon be a minority, as racial and cultural diversity continues to expand. The students we teach, and the colleagues we teach with, are an exceptional mix of individuals with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Helping students to understand the benefits of interacting with others, from different backgrounds, is a challenge. Students may be hostile to those different from themselves. They tend to associate with groups only of their own kind. Being with people who are "different" can be an anxiety provoking experience. It is more comfortable to remain with the known. However, in our rapidly changing world we will need to feel comfortable with each other in order to interact successfully in both the workplace and in social situations. We all need to embrace values which include tolerance, respect for others, and a sense of responsibility for the common good. Understanding between cultural groups must be cultivated. I believe that this is the first step toward acceptance of others who are different from ourselves.

A beginning step in the process toward inclusion of all people is to gain some knowledge of other ethnic or racial groups. Learning about the customs, celebrations, and holidays associated with diverse cultures is one small way of achieving that goal. Studying the ways of people different from oneself can be an enlightening and positive experience. This learned knowledge can enhance communication and promote mutual understanding, which in turn can lead to multicultural strength and unity.

### **STUDENT POPULATION**

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This curriculum unit is designed to be used in a special education classroom within a small inner city public secondary school located in an urban community. The school provides an alternative academic setting for pregnant teens and young mothers. Students, ranging in age from twelve to twenty, are enrolled in grades six through twelve. Instruction is provided through a selection of academic subjects, as well as through courses offered in home economics, life skills, and computers. All students participate in parenting, prenatal and

postnatal classes.

Students transfer into the school throughout the year, depending on individual circumstances. Most students stay for at least two marking periods, others remain until the end of the year and then return to their sending schools. Because of the ongoing population flux, curriculum planning needs to be elastic as well as flexible.

The special education population attending the school includes students who are mentally retarded, learning disabled, brain damaged, and or seriously emotionally disturbed. Ability levels within the special education classes cover a wide range. Most of the students have limited reading and writing skills. Some students tend to exhibit negative behaviors, which are best addressed in small groups within a highly structured setting. Many of these students have a history of poor school attendance, which has resulted in significant gaps in their learning. Whole sections of information may be missing from their fund of knowledge. Individual educational plans, which address specific strengths and weaknesses, are implemented in teaching the curriculum to the special education population attending the school.

Although the unit is designed to be used in a special education setting, it could be modified for use in regular classes as a unit of study to be included in an English class, history class, social development program, or as part of an arts curriculum. Various outcomes may be achieved by building on the core holiday background information. The unit may be presented to students in its entirety, or as separate mini units which explore individual holidays. Presentation and study should be based on the particular needs and interests of the population being served.

## **UNIT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

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### **Unit Goals**

To promote harmony and mutual understanding among people with diverse backgrounds

To promote exploration of multicultural literacy

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will demonstrate a basic understanding of various cultural traditions through the study of nine selected American holidays.

Students will demonstrate academic progress and developmental growth in reading through the study of children's literature relating to selected holidays celebrated in the United States.

Students will demonstrate academic progress and developmental growth in writing through the process of responding to written assignments relating to selected holidays, and cultural diversity.

Students will demonstrate creative expression and developmental growth in art through the process of creating objects and works of art relating to artifacts representing various cultural celebrations.

## **INTRODUCTION TO TEACHING THE UNIT**

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The unit goal, to promote harmony and mutual understanding among people with diverse backgrounds, is based on the assumption that knowledge is a necessary component in achieving that goal. Learning more about the people of various cultures, through the study of their holidays and celebrations, is one way of gaining understanding.

The core foundation of this unit is the use of children's literature to explore facts and fictions associated with the selected holidays. Each section includes a brief history, and further explanation of the particular holiday being cited. There follows a listing of interesting and appropriate books for classroom use. I have chosen children's books from town libraries and local bookstores. Other titles could easily be interchanged with those which I have suggested. An abundance of books depicting the major holidays is readily available. More difficult to find selections include children's books on the celebrations of Three Kings Day, and Cinco de Mayo. Children's books which tell about Kwanzaa are well represented. The selection of reading material will be influenced by the individuals within the group.

Many of my students are limited in their reading ability. Therefore, the use of children's books as a remedial activity is a strategy which I will employ throughout the curriculum unit, to both improve reading skills and to build funds of information. During the presentation of the unit, we will discuss, practice, and prepare for reading to younger children. Concerning my particular students, I will continually stress the importance of reading to their own children beginning at a very early age. I believe that all students need to hear that message. In our school students may put it into practice sooner, rather than later.

The unit will be taught as a series of mini units, each representing a specific holiday. This will be done in a timely fashion, as holidays approach, throughout the school year. Approximately two weeks of fifty minute classes will be devoted to each of the nine holidays selected. Background information, described in detail within the unit plan, will be presented by the teacher. This will be augmented by the exploration of children's literature which will be available to students in the classroom. Books encompassing a variety of reading levels will be included. The use of children's books plays an integral part in the teaching of the unit by providing sustained reading practice, along with the presentation of factual information. In addition, the knowledge gained by learning about holiday traditions different from their own, will help the students to better understand their classmates and others in the community. Classroom projects, including arts and crafts activities, and written assignments, generated by the unit of study, will be used to represent each holiday celebration. A wide range of product outcomes are to be expected because of the various ability levels within

my classes. As an example, written assignments might be as simple as expressing a thought in a full sentence for some students to creating a complex story of two or three pages for another student. Selected finished products will be displayed within the classroom, and throughout the school building.

A second option to teaching the unit is to present the unit as a whole, encompassing the study of all the holidays cited over a period of two to three weeks, during fifty minute classes. Here the emphasis would be on comparing and contrasting holidays by focusing on their similarities and differences. An example might be to illustrate one or two of the differences between Christmas and Three Kings Day, two holidays with many similarities occurring during the winter holiday season. Students might choose a particular holiday to present to the group. Individual or group research papers could be assigned. Books, representing particular holidays, might be read to the class by individual students. Projects would focus on the variety of holidays being studied concurrently, and could culminate in a comprehensive display of the end products. In our school we plan a yearly multicultural luncheon. The completion of the unit could be planned to coincide with such an event.

## **UNIT TOPIC: NINE SELECTED HOLIDAYS**

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The following background information is intended to provide the reader/teacher with a somewhat detailed explanation of nine holidays celebrated in the United States today. These selected holidays were chosen because each is associated with a particular group of people, such as Hispanic, African American, Irish, Jewish, Chinese, etc. These cohesive groups of individuals reflect the broad cultural diversity currently present in America.

Book suggestions for classroom use, research or pleasurable reading, are listed at the end of each holiday section. These book selections are fully credited and annotated in the bibliography.

### **Labor Day**

Labor Day has come to mean parades, family celebrations, and the end of summer to many Americans. It has become not just a day, but a three day weekend event of outdoor activities with friends and picnic food. Hot dogs, hamburgers, salads, watermelon, soda, and beer are traditional favorites. The true meaning of Labor Day- to honor the working class of the country-tends to be lost in the festivities.

Peter J. Maguire, president and founder of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and joiners was a man who believed strongly in the dignity of the working man and the importance of his place in the industrialized United States. It was he who suggested that a day be set aside to honor the American working man. On September 5, 1882 ten thousand workers paraded in Union Square, New York and were reviewed by officials of their fraternal society, the Knights of Labor. Following the parade there were political speeches, fireworks, and a picnic. The celebration was a great success and was repeated the following year. In 1884 a resolution was passed by the General Assembly of the Knights of Labor designating the first Monday of September as Labor Day, and thus, it has become an annual event.

*Celebrations The Complete Book of American Holidays* , Myers

*Celebrating America, A Cookbook* , Schulz

*Labor Day*, Scott

## **Columbus Day**

Columbus day is celebrated each year on October 12 in memory of the discovery of the New World on that date in 1492 by Christopher Columbus. Celebrations are also held in Central and South America and parts of Canada. In Spain and Italy the day is marked with processions and church services. Columbus is credited with creating a permanent link between Europe and the New World. Columbus Day is the holiday that commemorates the discovery of North and South America.

There are some who think that Leif Ericson should be named as the person who "discovered" America. This Viking explorer landed on the coast of North America in about A.D. 1000. He tried to start a colony, but he and his men were driven away by the Native Americans who already lived there.

The first known celebration of the discovery of America was held by the Tammany Society, on October 12, 1792, in New York City. A monument was erected to Columbus and a dinner was given. Following this celebration there was increased recognition and popularity associated with Christopher Columbus. King's College, in New York became Columbia College in 1784 and the nation's capital was baptized the District of Columbia. The song "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean" became well known. A statue of Columbus was placed in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. The Italian citizens of Philadelphia provided the funds.

The first Catholic fraternal group, the Knights of Columbus, was organized

February 2, 1882. The efforts of the knights promoted having Columbus

Day eventually proclaimed a legal holiday.

The first legal celebration of Columbus Day in New York State was on October 12, 1909. A large parade, with the members of sixty Italian societies and the crews of two Italian ships, marched to Columbus Circle. The governor addressed the Knights of Columbus in Carnegie Hall while replicas of the Santa Maria, the Pinta, and the Nina were viewed on the Hudson River. In 1937 a proclamation was issued by President Franklin Roosevelt designating each October 12 as Columbus Day. He encouraged the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies in schools, churches, and other suitable places.

A native of Genoa, Italy, Christopher Columbus has become a popular hero of Italian Americans, and Columbus Day has become a patriotic occasion of importance.

*Columbus Day* , Liestman

## **Hanukkah**

Hanukkah is a festival which celebrates the first great victory for religious freedom won by the Jews more than two thousand years ago. The Syrian King Antiochus IV occupied Jerusalem, forcing the Jewish people to worship the Greek gods. He did not permit them to pray, to study the Torah, to celebrate Jewish holidays, or to practice Jewish customs. His soldiers made sure that the rules were obeyed. The Jews became very angry and decided to fight. For three years Judah the Maccabee led a rebellion against the Syrians. Even though the Greek army was bigger and had more weapons, the small brave Jewish army succeeded in pushing the Greeks out of Jerusalem and back to Syria. Then the Jewish people could worship freely again. When they returned to the Temple, they found it in disarray. Things inside were broken or missing, including the Menorah. The

gardens were dry and the gates destroyed. The men cleaned and repaired the Temple. To rededicate the Temple they relit the Menorah and had a celebration. There was only enough oil to last for one day, but a miracle happened and the oil lasted for eight days.

Today Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days, beginning on the twenty-fifth of the Hebrew month Kislev (usually December). Families gather around the Menorah to celebrate the miracle. The Menorah is a religiously significant Jewish candelabra with a tree-like shape. The Hanukkah Menorah has nine branches, one for each of the eight celebration nights, and the remaining one to hold Shammash or "servant candle" which is used to light the other candles. Each evening candles are lit to celebrate the importance of freedom. There are blessings, songs, and special foods. The children receive gifts and play games. A traditional Hanukkah symbol is the dreidel, a four-sided top used for game playing. Long ago, dreidel playing was used as a disguise for the fact the Jews were really praying together in places where they were forbidden to practice their religion. Another symbol of Hanukkah is gelt, or a small amount of money, usually coins, given to the children during the eight days celebration of the "festival of lights".

*A Jewish Holiday ABC* , Drucker

*Eight Days of Hanukkah* , Ziefert

*Festivals for You to Celebrates* , Purdy

*Jewish Holidays* , Purdy

*The Complete Family Guide to Jewish Holidays* , Renberg

## **Christmas**

Christmas, the major festival in Christian countries, celebrates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. The season begins with Advent, the first Sunday in December, and continues through the Twelfth Night, on January sixth. The exact date of Jesus' birth is unknown, and for many centuries the celebration date was not set, often occurring on Epiphany. Later the Western church began to observe the birth at the end of December as a way of countering the pre-Christian festivals celebrated at that time of year. It is believed that Pope Julius I fixed the date of Christmas at December 25 in the fourth century.

Here in the United States, Alabama was the first state to grant legal recognition of Christmas, in 1836. By 1890 all states, including the District of Columbia, had acknowledged the legal date of the Christmas holiday.

The American celebration of Christmas has been influenced by the traditions brought by settlers who came from other lands. The singing of carols, the holly wreath, and the legend of mistletoe came from the English Druid festivals. In England, itinerant musicians walked through the streets and stopped to sing beneath windows. Mistletoe was hung in the temples to provide a winter refuge for the fairies and pixies, and became a symbol of fertility. The Germans are credited with contributing the Christmas tree, and with the introduction of the benevolent character, Kris Kringle, also known as Santa Claus. Saint Nicholas originated from the Dutch influence. He is said to represented a bishop of the early church, who devoted himself to the welfare of children. The Scandinavian influence on the celebration of Christmas is seen in Yuletide customs. Central to the Yuletide feast is the burning of the Yule Log, which evolved from the earlier custom of celebrating the winter solstice with a bonfire.

Traditional Christmas observances for many Christians, of all denominations, include midnight church services

celebrating the birth of Christ. Often there is also an earlier church service in which children reenact the biblical story, playing the parts of the shepherds, the Three Wise Men, Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus. Carols are sung in unison by the congregation, and often the traditional "Oh Holy Night" is presented by a soloist accompanied on the church organ.

During the holiday, families gather in homes to share food, good cheer, and gift-giving. Community groups come together to provide food and gifts for those in need. Christmas morning is a busy and exciting time for households with young children. Little ones are encouraged to believe that Santa and his helpers spend all year in the North Pole making toys for "good boys and girls" to be delivered down the chimney on Christmas Eve. Children leave milk and cookies for Santa, and vegetable treats for his reindeer. Some families prefer to open gifts on Christmas eve and may attend church services or other functions on Christmas Day. The prevailing message of the season is one of goodwill to all men. However, for those individuals who are not able to experience the joys of the season, the Christmas holiday can be a time of letdown and melancholy due to unfulfilled expectations. Many American families succumb to the commercialism of the season, and treat Christmas as a major gift-giving event, forgetting the religious significance of the holiday.

*The Christmas Tree* , Ada

*Santa Claus* , Kunnas

*Waiting for Christmas* , Greenfield

*Countdown To Christmas* , Peet

*Christmas* , Pien'kowski

## **Kwanzaa**

Kwanzaa is a cultural celebration observed by many African-Americans and their friends. It begins on December 26 and lasts through January 1. In 1966 the idea for Kwanzaa came from Dr. Maulana Karenga who was, at the time, a young history scholar. Dr. Karenga is now director of the African-American Cultural Center in Los Angeles. He teaches classes and directs the department of black studies at California State University.

Kwanzaa was created to remind people of their African history, culture, and customs. It celebrates ancestral values and honors black heritage. It is based on regional harvest celebrations in Africa. The word Kwanza comes from Swahili and means "the first fruits of harvest". It is said that the extra "a" was added to match the seven principles of Kwanzaa. At Kwanzaa celebrations, families and friends come together to share and give thanks.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa were established to encourage black unity. There is a different principle for each of the seven days. After sunset one colored candle is lit each evening. A black candle represents the people, three red candles signify their struggle, and the three green candles symbolize the hopes and dreams for the future. These three colors, red, black, and green make up the bars in the "bendera" or African flag.

The principles of Kwanzaa help people to learn, achieve, and grow. On the first day the black candle is lit to represent unity - living peacefully together as a family and community. A red candle is lit on the second day. It

stands for self-determination - deciding on a course of action and making goals. Collective work and responsibility is the principle of the third day, when a green candle is lit. On the fourth day another red candle is used to symbolize cooperative economics - family savings and owning and operating businesses. Purpose is the principle of the fifth day when a second green candle is lit. The sixth day celebrates creativity- making or doing something in a unique way. The remaining red candle is lit on this day. On the last day of Kwanzaa the green candle is lit to represent faith to believe in oneself as well as others. The Kwanzaa feast and celebration commences on the seventh day. It is a time for sharing and rejoicing.

*Kwanzaa Karamu* , Brady

*My First Kwanzaa Book* , Chocolate

*K is for Kwanzaa* , Ford

*Kwanzaa* , Freeman

*Kawanzaa* , Johnson

*Seven Candles for Kwanzaa*, Pinkney

*Kwanzaa* , Porter

### **Three Kings Day**

Three Kings Day or El Dia de los Reyes Magos is celebrated on January 6. It may also be called the "Feast of the Three Kings". It commemorates the three wise men who traveled to Bethlehem twelve days after the birth of the baby Jesus. Also referred to as The Epiphany (meaning appearance), or the Twelfth Night, it is one of the oldest Christian celebrations.

It is said that a brilliant star, shining in the west, led the three Wise Men to the manger. The first to arrive was Ethiopian and his name was Balthasar. The gift he carried was myrrh. The second was Melchior, an old Hindu with a long beard, bearing gold. Gaspar, a young Greek, was the last to arrive. He brought frankincense as his gift to the "newborn King".

The anniversary of this holy night is celebrated today with feasting and rejoicing. Creches are carefully arranged in homes and in churches, depicting the manger scene. Figures representing Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus are placed close to the Three Kings.

Children have come to associate receiving gifts "from the Three Kings" during this twelfth night. Traditionally they fill boxes or shoes with hay (for the camels) and leave them by the doorstep. In the morning the hay is gone and in its place candy, fruit, and toys. On the afternoon of Three Kings Day, many families gather together to eat the "Cake of the Magi". It is shaped in a ring and looks like a king's crown. It is decorated with candied cherries and slivers of pineapple. Small surprises are baked inside the cake. It is traditional for the first adult who finds a gift in his piece of cake to host the Three Kings Day celebration the following year.

*Feliz Nochebuena* , *Feliz Navidad*, Presilla

*Pinatas and Paper Flowers* , Perl



## **Chinese New Year**

Chinese immigration in relatively large numbers began in the United States in the 1850s. Unemployment drove the Chinese people to Mei Kwok "Beautiful Land" as America was known. In 1852 approximately 19,000 Chinese arrived on the West Coast, gold had recently been discovered in California. This sudden influx of foreigners caused conflict. The immigrants turned to other pursuits in order to earn money to support the families that they had left behind in China. One of their well known accomplishments was the laying of railroad tracks for the Central Pacific. Within the Chinese family unit, ties are extremely strong and customs and habits of the past tend to perpetuate. Second and third generation Chinese Americans have moved away from the ties associated with the homeland of their parents and grandparents. However, many remain proud of their heritage and continue to observe The Chinese New Year as the most important day in the Chinese calendar.

Every Chinese community in the country holds New Year's celebrations. The date is determined by the lunar calendar. The holiday begins with the first new moon after the sun enters the sign of Aquarius. This places the holiday between January 21 and February 19. The years are named for twelve symbolic animals - the rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar. Festivities last for several days, beginning with family celebrations. Ancestors are remembered at family shrines, and there is visiting among relatives. Many activities are dominated by the symbols of the Yin and Yang, which represent the balanced opposites in the world. Examples would include male and female, positive and negative, and life and death. Noise and light represent the Yang forces which banish evil spirits. Consequently, sounds of gongs, cymbals, and drums fill the air during the public celebrations. Red firecrackers, the traditional color of good omens, are set off at all important events. There are parades with colorful floats and marchers in elaborate costumes. The climax of the holiday period is the Dragon Parade. The Golden Dragon is one of the Divine Creatures to the Chinese. He is a symbol of strength and goodness, who dispels bad spirits and is worshipped as ruler of rivers, lakes, and seas. His structure is made up of the head of a camel, horns of a deer, neck of a snake, claws of a hawk, belly of a frog, and scales of a fish. The dragon's appearance is a way of wishing everyone peace, good fortune, and good luck for the coming year.

*Chinese New Year* , Brown

*The Chinese New Year* , Cheng

*Chinese New Year*, MacMillan

## **St. Patrick's Day**

Saint Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland. The religion of the Druids, a ritualistic sect based on sun worship, prevailed during the early history of Ireland. Saint Patrick traveled throughout Ireland, during the fourth century, starting churches and schools, and convincing people to become Christians.

The exact date of Saint Patrick's birth is not known. He was born in Scotland between 373 and 395, and given the name Maewyn. His grandfather was a Christian priest, and his father a deacon and an official of the Roman Empire. He was captured by Irish raiders at the age of sixteen and sold into slavery in Ireland, where he spent six years in captivity tending sheep. After escaping his captors, he received his religious training in continental monasteries during the next eighteen years. He entered the priesthood and became bishop. He was named Patrick by Pope Celestine I and sent to Ireland as a missionary.

The legends attributed to Saint Patrick arose during his campaign to convert the Irish from Druidism to Christianity. The shamrock was used to explain the concept of the Trinity. The three leaves joined at the stem

symbolized this idea of three Gods in one. Saint Patrick's arrival on his missionary travels was often announced by a drummer. According to legend, it was the drumming and accompanying sermon that drove all the snakes from Ireland, the last of which he hurled into the sea.

It is said that Saint Patrick was a small man in stature, with great energy and activity of mind and body. He wore coarse garments and was said to be humble, cheerful, and a diligent worker. He mixed well with all kinds of people and accommodated himself to all sorts of conditions. It is said that he refused gifts unless they could benefit the poor or be used to build religious houses. He often slept on the bare ground. His strength and dignity inspired many. His memory continues to live on through yearly celebrations.

The first observance of Saint Patrick's death occurred in the United States in 1737 and was sponsored by the Charitable Irish Society of Boston. Saint Patrick's Day was first celebrated in Philadelphia in 1780 by the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick. These groups were supported by the Irish veterans of the American Revolution.

Today in the United States, Saint Patrick's Day is celebrated by the "Swearing of the green" by many people of Irish (and other) descent. The traditional food served at family functions on March 17, is corned beef and cabbage. Often green beer accompanies the meal. Parades are held in cities and towns across the nation. The St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York City began in 1762, and is the largest in the United States. Much of the happy celebrating takes place in neighborhood bars.

*Sliamrocks, Harps, and Shillelaghs*, Barth

*St. Patrick's Day*, Gibbons

*St. Patrick's Day*, Kessel

## **Cinco de Mayo**

Cinco de Mayo is a Mexican National holiday, but it is in the United States where it is celebrated more widely with parades, music, folklore, and dancing. Mexicans and Americans share in the celebration of this holiday emphasizing the friendship between the two countries. It is especially popular in the southwest in the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. In Los Angeles more than 500,000 Chicanos, Hispanics, and their friends celebrate Cinco de Mayo outside City Hall where Mexican orchestras and local bands play Mexican patriotic songs. The streets are colored in red, white, and green - the colors of the Mexican flag. The American flag as well as the Mexican flag decorate the steps of City Hall. Mexican dignitaries are guests of honor. After speeches are heard, the crowds walk through the streets to the old section of the city. Sporting events, dances, and picnics featuring Mexican food, take place in city parks.

The fifth of May, 1862 marks the victory of the Mexican Army over the French at the Battle of Puebla. The Mexicans did not win the war, but the "Batalla de Puebla" became a symbol of Mexican unity and patriotism. The Mexican Army demonstrated that Mexicans were willing to defend themselves from foreign intervention. Cinco de Mayo commemorates the defeat of the French by General Ignacio Zaragoza. Cinco de Mayo celebrations of today represent a bold stand against outside forces, oppressions, and interventions.

*America Celebrates!*, Cohen

*All About American Holidays*, Krythe

## METHODOLOGY

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Students will gain an understanding of the unit topics in a variety of ways, according to their individual learning styles and ability levels. Materials will be presented on several levels. Children's literature relating to the selected holidays and celebrations, will be made available to the students in the classroom. Students will select books to study and read based on individual interests and reading levels. They will be encouraged to read aloud to the class and to each other. The teacher will interact with the students in order to inform, explain information, and to clarify ideas and concepts. The teacher will model expressive interpretation by reading aloud to the class from appropriately selected material, and will present information to the class through lecture, demonstration, and guided group discussion. Students will respond to teacher made worksheets and project suggestions through written expression assignments. The teacher and students will participate in creating experiential, hands-on projects representing various holiday celebrations.

Classroom materials will include teacher generated informational/ background sheets relating to selected holidays, children's holiday books, and general art and craft supplies such as colored paper, paints, markers, papier-mache supplies, pen and ink, and collage materials, etc. Students will have access to research information available to them through the use of encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet.

## EVALUATION

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Gauging student progress in a special education classroom is directly related to carefully following each students individualized education plan (IEP). Progress is measured in increments of growth, such as improved reading levels, as measured by standardized tests. Strengths are built upon and weaknesses are remediated whenever possible. Individual portfolios containing written work are studied by the classroom teacher in order to further evaluate progress. Depending on the outcome, adjustments may be made in content focus or in teaching strategies.

Teacher observation of a student's individual and group participation in classroom projects, as well as interaction with other students is an ongoing process of evaluation. Behavior management is measured according to an individual's specific behavioral plan and might include such things as; time on task, promptness to class, use of appropriate language, control of outbursts, or completion of assignments, etc.

Graded tests and quizzes, teacher corrected worksheets, completed assignments including both classroom and homework assignments are additional ways of evaluating student progress. Classroom participation, including positive contributions to group discussions is another valuable tool for accessing individual progress. Clearly the most important evaluation of an individual's school success or failure is a review of his attendance record. All failures in my classroom are due to lack of consistent school attendance. The ramifications of poor attendance override the best teaching strategies and the finest curriculum plans.

Sample Project Unit Topic: Kwanzaa

### **Personal Identity Flags**

This project should be assigned during the unit of study depicting Kwanzaa. Students will have already read several books on the topic, and will have engaged in group discussions concerning the holiday.

Students  
will  
create  
individual  
"Identity  
Flags" in  
the  
following  
manner.  
The  
teacher  
will:

1. Lead a discussion focusing on the African American flag, emphasizing the significance of the colors red, green, and black, found in both the flag and the Kwanzaa candles. Information to be reintroduced:  
  
RED - struggle for fairness and freedom, blood  
  
BLACK - symbol of African American unity, dark skin color  
  
GREEN - hope for the future, spring, new growth
2. Introduce the idea of creating flags representing individuals. Show examples. Explain the meaning of the designs and colors.
3. Generate a list of at least eight items representing personal attributes. Share this with the class, and assist them in creating their own lists. Brainstorm.
4. Help the students in selecting two to four items from their list to base their flag designs on. Discuss how these could be represented.
5. Guide students in planning a sketch of what their flags will look like. Make suggestions and encouraging comments. Suggest various sizes and shapes to use for the flags.
6. Present the students with a choice of materials to use; colored paper, felt, material, paint, markers, etc. Assist students in creating individual flags or banners.
7. Assign students the task of describing their flags in writing. Expect outcomes to vary according to ability levels.
8. Display the finished products (flags with descriptions) in the classroom, or in another suitable location within the school building.

**Sample Test** Unit Topic: St. Patrick's Day

This test should be given following the completion of the unit of study on St. Patrick's Day.

Directions: Answer the following statements with the words TRUE or FALSE. If you think that a statement false, please correct it with your own words.

1. Saint Patrick is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland.
2. Churches and schools in Ireland were started by St. Patrick.

3. Irish people celebrate St. Patrick's Day by wearing blue.
4. Saint Patrick spent six years in captivity, tending sheep.
5. The shamrock is a symbol of St. Patrick's Day.
6. According to legend, St. Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland with drumming, and hurled the last one into the sea.
7. Saint Patrick was a humble man, who helped the poor.
8. People celebrate St. Patrick's Day in the Fall.
9. The largest St. Patrick's Day parade is held in New York City.
10. People often celebrate St. Patrick's Day by eating a meal of corned beef and cabbage.
11. Adults never drink beer on St. Patrick's Day.
12. Saint Patrick's Day was first celebrated in Philadelphia in 1780 by the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick.

**Sample Activity** Unit Topic: Hanukkah

This worksheet should be assigned during study of the Hanukkah holiday. Students will be in the process of reading various books cited in the unit.

Directions: Choose the best answer from the words in the box below. Write that answer in the blank to complete the sentence. You may use reference materials to help you find the correct answer.

eight Hanukkah freedom gelt

Shammash

Festival of Lights Menorah dreidl

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the holiday which celebrates the religious freedom won by the Jews many years ago.
2. Today Hanukkah is celebrated for \_\_\_\_\_ days.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a Jewish candle holder, shaped like a tree.
4. Each evening during Hanukkah, candles are lit to celebrate the importance of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ or "servant candle" is used to light the other candles in the Menorah.
6. The four-sided top used for playing games is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Coins given to Jewish children are called \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Hanukkah is sometimes called the \_\_\_\_\_.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY - ADULT**

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Brady, April, *Kwanzaa Karamu Cooking and Crafts for a Kwanzaa Feast* (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1995).

Adults and high school student, as well as some middle school children, would enjoy trying out the cooking and craft ideas in this nicely illustrated book about Kwanzaa. There are recipes for "Cornmeal and Wheat Corn Bread" and "Pick-a Pepper Soup". Colored photographs enhance the food section. Craft items, such as "Kindra Tapestries" and "African Bowls" are shown with clear instructions for their creation.

Cisneros, Sandra, *The House on Mango Street* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).

A series of short segments/ stories told by a young girl growing up in the Latino section of Chicago. Middle School children would enjoy having sections read to them. Suitable for High School age through adult.

Cohen, Hennig and Coffin, Tristram, *America Celebrates!* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1991).

Described as a patchwork of weird and wonderful holiday lore, this comprehensive text presents descriptions of holiday origins, historical backgrounds, and associated folklore, as well as games, poems, superstitions, and songs associated with holidays celebrated in America. Suitable for grades seven through adult.

Kozol, Jonathan, *Amazing Grace* (New York: Crown, 1995).

A sad and disturbing account of life in the South Bronx, where children struggle to find a reason to smile amid poverty, death, and segregation. Suitable for mature High School students through adults.

Malamud, Bernard, *The Assistant* (New York: Avon Books, 1957).

The story of a tired Jewish family living a life of quiet desperation above the failing food store which they own, and the impact a young man has on their lives. Suitable for adults and possibly High School students.

Myers, Robert, *Celebrations The Complete Book of American Holidays* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1972).

A fact filled volume describing holy days and holidays celebrated in America. Cultural and historical backgrounds and traditions of major holidays are covered in detail. Beautifully executed pen and ink drawings are scattered throughout the text. Suitable for high school through adult.

Schulz, Phillip, *Celebrating America A Cookbook* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

A guide to America's culinary heritage, this volume includes holiday folklore, history, and recipes suitable for all festivities. From "Irish Coffee" for Saint Patrick's Day to "Tangy Broiled Fish Steaks" for Chinese New Year. Suitable for High School through adult.

Straalen, Alice, *The Book of Holidays Around the World* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1986).

Starting on January first, this book describes a holiday or event to celebrate every day of the year. Included are well known celebrations, along with less familiar references such as "The Moby Dick Parade" or "Pan American Day". It is a fascinating book to browse through and would be a pleasure to own. There are over eighty full color photographs and illustrations. Suitable for ages fourteen through adult.

Takaki, Ronald, *A Different Mirror A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993).

A comprehensive history of America's progress through the twenty-first century, told by a multicultural scholar. Reading this book gives one a very different perspective on the history of the United States, compared to the more traditional versions written by "white America". May be difficult reading for High School students unless given in small doses. A book worth reading through.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY- STUDENT**

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Ada, Alma, *The Christmas Tree*, *El arbol de Navidad* (New York: Hyperion Books, 1997).

Painted illustrations featuring people of color complement the simple text which describes a family tree decorating, written in both English and Spanish. Suitable for children ages four through seven.

Barth, Edna, *Shamrocks, Harps, and Shillelaghs* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977).

An interesting mix of facts, legends, and folklore associated with the celebration of St. Patrick's Day. Shamrocks, leprechauns, shillelaghs, and the music and poetry of Ireland are topics of interest. The illustrations are nicely executed pen and ink drawings, highlighted with areas of green. Suitable for ages seven through twelve.

Brown, Tricia, *Chinese New Year* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1987).

Each page of this book contains photographs of real Chinese people getting ready for and celebrating the Chinese New Year. The accompanying text is straightforward and informative. Suitable for grades three through six.

Cheng, Hou-tien, *The Chinese New Year* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976).

Cleverly illustrated with black and white scissors cuts, it describes the family preparation for the five-day celebration which begins on New Year's Day. Good for grades one through five.

Chocolate, Deborah Newton, *My First Kwanzaa Book* (New York: Scholastic, 1992).

This book is presented from a very young child's point of view. He tells how his Mama and Daddy get ready for Kwanzaa, and about the good things his Grandma brings to eat. Full page colored drawings illustrate each page, along with a simple text. Suitable for children preschool through third grade.

Drucker, Malka, *A Jewish Holiday A B C* (San Diego: Gulliver Books, 1992).

An alphabet book designed for young children, featuring simple text and cut-paper illustrations. An example: "H Minnie's hands are sticky on Rosh Hashanah from eating apples dipped in honey for a sweet new year." Included is a glossary of Jewish holiday terms and brief explanation of eleven Hebrew holidays Suitable for children ages six through nine.

Ford, Juwanda, *K is for Kwanzaa* (New York: Scholastic Inc., 1997).

Each letter of this alphabet book represents some aspect of Kwanzaa. The full page illustrations are colorful and childlike. They depict people of color engaged in the rituals of Kwanzaa. Children from preschool through fourth grade should enjoy this book.

Freeman, Dorothy, *Kwanzaa* (New Jersey: Enslow publishers, 1992).

This informative, easily read book would be suitable for children in grades four through six. It tells the history of Kwanzaa and

explains the seven days of rituals. Interspersed throughout the text are relevant illustrations and photographs.

Gibbons, Gail, *St. Patrick's Day* (New York: Holiday House, 1994).

Full page pictures, done mostly in shades of green with accents of color, illustrate the informative text. The story of Saint Patrick's life and six legends are depicted in words and pictures. Suitable for young readers, aged seven through eleven.

Greenfield, Monica, *Waiting for Christmas* (New York: Scholastic Press, 1996).

Full color painterly illustrations depict a family's preparation for the Christmas holiday. African American parents, grandparents, and children are illustrated in warm family scenes. The text is very simple. "We decorate and wait for Christmas". Suitable for grades preschool through second.

Johnson, Dolores, *The Children's Book of Kwanzaa* (New York: Atheneum Books, 1996).

A comprehensive, two hundred and fifty page book suitable for children in grades six through high school. Teachers may find the craft suggestions useful for projects involving students of all ages. Included are chapters on the history of Africans, the seven principles of Kwanzaa, and an explanation of the symbols used to celebrate the holiday. Chapter six is titled "Recipes for a Well-Fed Kwanzaa".

Kessel, Joyce, *St. Patrick's Day* (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1982).

A detailed account of Saint Patrick's life told in simple language, easily read by young children. Included are sections on Irish legends, and modern day celebrations. Suitable for grades one through four.

Krythe, Maymie, *All About American Holidays* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962).

Covers more than fifty holidays, their origins and how they are observed today. A useful reference book for both teachers and students. Suitable for grades six through twelve.

Kunnas, Mauri, *Santa Claus* (New York: Harmony Books, 1982).

Full page cartoon-like illustrations of Santa, his elves, and reindeer preparing for the Christmas delivery are truly fascinating to look at. Amusing details abound in the hidden workshop in the North Pole. An original text describes the preparations, delivery of gifts, and the aftermath of these efforts. Suitable for children and adults of all ages.

Liestman, Vicki, *Columbus Day* (Minnesota: Carolrhoda Books, 1991). Written with a young reader in mind, it tells the story of the voyage of Columbus in simple sentences and short phrases, yet it does not "talk down" to the reader. Suitable for ages seven through twelve. MacMillan, Dianne, *Chinese New Year* (New Jersey: Enslow Publishers, 1994).

An informative book written for young children, it not only tells the facts, but captures the spirit of the Chinese New Year story. The writing is both clear and expressive. Children ages seven to eleven would enjoy this book.

Peet, Bill, *Countdown to Christmas* (California: Golden Gate junior Books, 1972).

In typical Bill Peet style the amusing and detailed illustrations accompany a cleverly rhyming text which describes Santa's hectic days prior to Christmas Eve. Suitable for grade school age children (and their parents).

Perl, Lila, *Pinatas and Paper Flowers Holidays of the Americas in English and Spanish* (New York: Clarion Books, 1983).



This wonderful book tells the stories of eight holidays celebrated in the Americas. The tales are related in both English and Spanish. Children in grades two through six would enjoy having these stories read to them.

Pien'kowski, Jan, *Christmas* (New York: Dragonfly Books, 1984).

The text tells the traditional Nativity story of the birth of Christ. The illustrations are truly a work of art. They appear in the book as black silhouettes highlighted with gold, over softly colored luminous backgrounds. Children and adults of all ages would appreciate this book.

Pinkney, Andrea, *Seven Candles for Kwanzaa* (New York: Dial Books, 1993).

This story of Kwanzaa emphasizes the family unit and describes the holiday as a family day in the park and Thanksgiving and a birthday, all rolled into one. The history and meaning of Kwanzaa is written along side especially interesting illustrations which are done using a scratch board technique. It would appeal to children of most ages.

Porter, A.P., *Kwanzaa* (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1991).

An informative text which explains the history and meaning of Kwanzaa in a clear and simple manner, suitable for grades two through five. The subtly colored, realistic drawings on each page of the book show African Americans experiencing life and celebrating Kwanzaa. Included at the beginning of the story is a list of words and their meanings, taken from Swahili, which are used throughout the text to explain the celebration of Kwanzaa.

Presilla, Maricel, *Feliz Nochebuena, Feliz Navidad* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994).

A journey through the history of Christmas in the Hispanic islands. Food, people, and customs are described in text, along with beautiful, watercolor illustrations. Included are several Spanish recipes. Suitable for children of most ages - eight and up.

Purdy, Susan, *Festivals for you to Celebrate* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1969).

Full of well illustrated art and craft ideas relating to the seasonal holidays. There are directions for Three Kings' costumes and cupcake stencils, with many more suggestions in between. Suitable for grades two through eight. Some sections could be used in high school as well.

Purdy, Susan, *Jewish Holidays* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1969).

A text which explains the history of sixteen major Jewish holidays. Included are craft ideas and activities directly related to the significance of each holiday. Suitable to be used selectively by all grades.

Renberg, Dalia, *The Complete Family Guide to Jewish Holidays* (New York: Adama Books, 1985).

Students in grades five and up will find this text a useful guide to research information. All the major Jewish holidays are presented in an easy to read format laced with details and important facts concerning Jewish heritage. Included are songs, stories, games, foods, and arts and craft ideas.

Schulz, Phillip, *Celebrating America , A Cookbook* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

More than a cookbook, this interesting guide describes celebrations, festivals, and holidays through twelve months of fact and feasting suggestions. Inspired recipes follow each holiday explanation. Useful to adults of all ages, and children with supervision.

Scott, Geoffrey, *Labor Day* (Minnesota: Carolrhoda Books, 1982).

The history of Labor Day presented in large print, suitable for grades one through four. Realist drawings clearly illustrate the simple, yet interesting text.

Ziefert, Harriet, *Eight Days of Hanukkah* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997).

A unique book with "step pages" and lovely colored illustrations of family groups. The very simple text explains the lighting of the Hanukkah candles. Suitable for ages four through seven.

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