

Families in Literature

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Overview

This multidisciplinary unit will focus on the ever-changing American family. The students will examine family life in 1930's, 1960's, and present day 2007. The years selected compliment novels being read in literature and historical units studied in social studies. This unit is designed for middle school students; however it could be adapted for high school students. This Unit will take 8 class periods to complete.

Middle school is time when children believe everyone is watching them, they are constantly checking to make sure they are "normal". Given this fact, engaging a group of middle school students in a talk about family can be quite difficult. This unit will explore different techniques to involve students in the discussion of family. Students will be expected to create their own family tree, respond in their journal to each lesson, review census data and infer meaning. Their final project will be to create a proposal paper relating to the needs of the family in 2007. Students will explore families through their roles, functions, activities, demographics, emotional bonds and child rearing practices. Census data, literature and film will be used to bring each time period to life.

This unit was created for the students in the Therapeutic Support Classroom at Arlington Accelerated Learning Academy. The Therapeutic Classroom is a program unique to Pittsburgh Public Schools. Students are referred to the classroom because of social/ emotional and behavioral needs. The classroom is set up using the ideas of Applied Behavior Analysis and positive reinforcement. When the students begin to show more socially appropriate behaviors they begin to transition back to their regular classroom.

The 2006-2007 school was the opening school year for Arlington Accelerated Learning Academy. Two schools were merged and staff was changed. This year provided a number of challenges; new curriculum, new students, new staff. It also created a unique opportunity to develop a cross curricular unit. I hope that this unit will fill in gaps, and get them to look at ways society affects family and vice versa. The main goal of this unit is to open students' eyes to the variety of family experiences.

Rationale

1932- Families during the Great Depression

The 1930's began with the Great Depression, A difficult and trying time for many Americans. Many lost their jobs, others took pay cuts. People lost their homes and were forced to travel in order to find work. Farmers suffered through the "dust bowl". However, Upper-class Americans managed to sidestep many of these hardships and continued on with life as normal. When teaching the Great Depression and the 1930's to early adolescents it is often difficult to get them to understand the widespread poverty. I have found that by covering a few basic topics you are able to broaden their horizon; The Cause of the Great Depression, Family Life, The New Deal.

The Cause of the Great Depression

The Great Depression came on slowly and for a number of reasons including but not limited to the Stock Market Crash. Many farmers left their land, other farmers borrowed money to buy new machinery. Around the same time bumper crops (particularly good harvest yielded for a particular crop) from other countries flooded the land and pushed down the price of food. Farmers had to sell their crops at a loss rendering them unable to repay their debts. At the same time many farmers in the Western and Plain States continued to abandoned their farms in hope of success in the city, others stayed and suffered the drought which came to be known as the "dust bowl."

Other industries suffered as well, wages fell across the country which meant people had less to spend. Fewer consumers resulted in an overstock of goods. The overstock drove prices down, which in turn meant lower prices and increased unemployment.

The news media contributed greatly to widespread panic. They reported early and often causing many people to overreact.

Family Life

Families faced economic difficulties like never before in American history. Mass unemployment left families hungry and often homeless forcing them to live in one room shacks, sewage pipes and "hooverilles." Many families were forced to give up their children to orphanages, simply because they lacked the basic resources to support them. In addition to the newly poor, immigrants, female headed households and unskilled workers continued to live in destitution. There are two main views on how the depression affected day to day family life. Some historians noted that families turned inward and spent more time bonding. These historians cite a lack of resources for outside activities and shared

hardships, tied the families together. Other historians, state that the Depression had a destructive impact on the family, they cite the increase in the abandonment rate, increase in children placed in institutions and the number of children suffering from diseases caused by nutrient deficiencies.

The diversity of labor in homes also changed families carried a heavier load, trying to plant gardens, hand wash clothes, pickle foods and make their own bread.

Many fathers felt disempowered and embarrassed by their inability to provide for their families. At the same time a mothers responsibilities increased, she was budgeting and attempting to earn extra from home businesses.

Children suffered in a number of ways, as stated above. Many were institutionalized, others suffered diseases. Classrooms across the country closed or reduced their schedule because of lack of funds leaving children on the streets during the day. Children were expected to find odd jobs to help make ends meet.

The New Deal

The New Deal affected American family life like no other federal program. This was the first time that the government accepted responsibility for the general welfare of the family. Franklin Roosevelt enacted the New Deal in order to ease the widespread suffering of the Great Depression. Critics still argue the success of the New Deal, stating that one part often cancelled the effects of another. Despite its critics, the New Deal changed life for many Americans. Rural electrification programs brought running water and electric light to farm families across the country. Their day-to day lives changed dramatically, they no longer needed to carry water from wells, or keep food on ice. Farm families benefited from polices through a rise in income and improved farm equipment. These benefits were not evenly distributed but nevertheless life improved.

The Social Security Act acknowledged that the government had a responsibility to care for senior citizens, the disabled and the unemployed. Other policies protected family savings and provided insurance to safe guard families from losing their homes.

The majority of state governments began to offer family-planning and birth control information. Prior to the Depression 28 clinics in the country offered family planning, ten years later 746 clinics provided family- planning services. America Families left the 1930's with safe-guards and sense of stability they had not seen in years.

Bud, Not Buddy

Bud's journey to find his father takes place in the 1930's. The students who

will participate in this unit will have finished reading Bud, Not Buddy. It is important that prior to reading the book students are given a brief introduction to the Great Depression. Students often have a hard time comprehending this era. I have found that activities that compare prices and video clips help them grasp the concepts. A good video to use in class is: The Great Depression Blockside Inc. (PBS)

After reading the novel students will receive direct instruction on family life in the 1930's.

1963- The Civil Rights Movement Family

The 1960's were a time of great change for American families. Chain stores and franchises began to replace "mom and pop stores," offering more choices and lower prices to consumers.

The majority of women worked up until they married and then quit their jobs to tend to their families. However, some chose to stay in the workforce for economic reasons or independence. These women encountered sexism on a large scale.

Children faced widespread change as their schools faced integration, curriculum changes brought foreign language classes to schools and for the first time students questioned what was written in the history books. Young males faced the drafts and service in Vietnam.

The African American Family faced the greatest challenges of the decade. Many people joined the effort to end racial discrimination. All over the country boycotts, sit-ins and protests were used to get the message to the people.

The turmoil of the 1960's extended to the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy's assassination and the cold war. The unrest in the political climate caused citizens to question their world.

2007- Today's Family

Today's families vary in every way; two parent families, single parent homes, grandparent headed households, same- sex partners, groups of friends. People are putting off marriage and childbearing, having fewer children and foregoing marriage. Not only has the make-up of the American family changed but the ideals and role expectations

Many people are chasing personal happiness and forgoing the societal pressures to conform. No one knows how this will effect the children of this generation.

Objectives

The goal of this unit is get students to examine literature and its context in time periods. Students will explore character and be able to compare them to actual people during the given time period. Students will explore families through their roles, functions, activities, demographics, emotional bonds and child rearing practices. Census data, literature and film will be used to bring each time period to life. The Student will interpret graphics and charts, make connections with text and graphics.

Students will improve their comprehension by connecting text to real life experiences and activating prior knowledge.

Strategies

Students will complete a variety of activities both cooperatively and independently. Students will use the given rubrics to develop quality work. The students will understand the purpose of their work and find meaning in their learning. Students will be able to cite the standard they are working on and give examples of work that meets the standard.

In addition to standards based assignments, students will receive direct instruction on each time period. The instruction will be followed by an activity to tie the novel to the period of family history.

Classroom Activities

Day 1 and 2 The Great Depression- *Bud, Not Buddy*

Opening- Poverty Graph

Presentation- The Great Depression Family

Work Period- Students will work in groups to complete “Bud Not Buddy” search, to find sections of the novel that describe family life during the 1930’s.

Closing – Group Presentations

Day 3 and 4- The Civil Rights Movement *The Watsons Go To Birmingham*

Opening- # of single families by race Graph

Presentation –The Civil Rights Movement and the Family.

Work Period- Students will work independently to complete a compare/ contrast chart of the Watson Family with the typical 1960’s family.

Closing- 1960’s TV family Video

Day 5 and 6 - Today's Family *Ziggy and The Black Dinosaurs*

Opening- Educational Attainment Graph

Presentation- The Modern Family

Work Period- Family focused book report

Closing- Family Collage

Day 7 and 8 Proposal Paper

Opening- Review of elements of a proposal paper

Work Period- Brainstorming and Rough Draft

Writers Workshop

Closing Meeting

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Annotated bibliography for teachers:

Egan, Timothy, *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived The Great American Dust Bowl*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006

Pendergast, Tom, and Sara Pendergast. *American Decades 1930-1939*. 10. Detroit: The Gale Group, 2003. A broad overview of life in 1930's America. Social trends, Education, Business and Medicine are a few of the topics covered.

Pendergast, Tom, and Sara Pendergast. *American Decades 1960-1969*. 10. Detroit: The Gale Group, 2003. A broad overview of life in 1960's America. Social trends, Education, Business and Medicine are a few of the topics covered.

Mintz, Steven, and Susan Kellogg. *Domestic Revolutions A Social History of American Family Life*. 20th: The Free Press, 1988. This book provides an overview of family life in America, beginning in 1620 and ending in the 1980's.

McElvaine, Robert S. *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941*. New York: Times Books, 1984

Walktins, T.H. *The Great Depression : America in the 1930's*. New York; Back Bay Books, 1993

Walktins, T.H., *The Hungry Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression in America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999

Annotated bibliography for students:

Cole, Sheila. *To Be Young in America, Growing Up With the Country*. 10. New York: Time Warner, 2005. This book examines what it was like to be young in America beginning in 1776 and ending in 1940.

Feinstein , Stephen. The 1930's from the Great Depression to The Wizard of Oz..
10. Berkeley Heights: Enslow Publishers, 2001. A look at life in 1930's;
lifestyles, sports and movies are used to explain what it was like to live in the
1930's.

Annotated list of materials for classroom use:

Curtis, Christopher. Bud, Not Buddy. New York: Delacorte, 1999. This book
follows on boys search for his father during the Great Depression.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. Watson Go to Birmingham, 1963. New York: Delacorte,
1995. The Watson family takes a trip from Flint, Michigan to Birmingham,
Alabama during the height of the civil rights movement.

Draper, Sharon. Ziggy and the Black Dinosaurs- The Buried Bones Mystery. New
York: Aladdin, 1994. This book is the first in a series about Ziggy and his three
friends and their many adventures

Appendix I-Content Standards

1.3.8

Analyze the use of literary elements by an author including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone and style.

Analyze drama to determine the reasons for a character's actions taking into account the situation and basic motivation of the character.

1.5.8.

- Edit writing using the conventions of language.
- Spell common, frequently used words correctly.
- Use capital letters correctly.
- Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses).
- Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
- Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

1.6.8

- Listen to selections of literature (fiction and/or nonfiction).
- Relate them to previous knowledge.
- Predict content/events.
- Summarize events and identify the significant points.
- Identify and define new words and concepts.
- Analyze the selections.
- Contribute to discussions.
- Ask relevant, probing questions.
- Respond with relevant information, ideas or reasons in support of opinions expressed.
- Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
- Adjust tone and involvement to encourage equitable participation.
- Clarify, illustrate or expand on a response when asked.

- Present support for opinions.
- Paraphrase and summarize, when prompted.

2.6.5

Organize and display data using pictures, tallies, tables, charts, bar graphs and circle graphs.

2.6.8.

Compare and contrast different plots of data using values of mean, median, mode, quartiles and range.

Appendix II – Holiday Letter Assignment Sheet

Narrative Letter

We are working on standard 1.4.5

A. Write poems, plays and multi-paragraph stories.

- Include detailed descriptions of people, places and things.
- Apply literary conflict.
- Include literary elements (Standard 1.3.5.B.).
- Use literary devices (Standard 1.3.5.C.).

Writing Assignment- Family Holiday Letter

Please choose 1 family from Ziggy and The Black Dinosaurs by Sharon Draper and write a holiday letter from the mother (or grandmother). Your letter should retell what happened during the past year. Use your knowledge of the characters to *add* details and be creative.

Question and Answer

Q :“Mrs. Dean I don’t know what happened to the family, it does not say everything in the book!”

A: “Use what you have read and what you have *implied* (Even though it doesn’t say I think, I know, I believe...). Be creative, think outside of the box, and engage the reader!

Are you still confused... Check out my sample!

RUBRIC

	ADVANCED	PROFICIENT	BASIC	BELOW BASIC
Content	Includes descriptions of people, place and things that fit the characters in the book.	Letter is easy to follow and includes descriptions of events of the past year.	Letter is missing descriptions of basic events and is difficult to follow.	Letter does not contain descriptions from the book. Letter does not make sense.
Grammar and Mechanics	None Grammar and/ or Spelling errors. Follows all letter writing conventions	1-2 errors Errors do not effect overall flow of letter	3-4 errors. Mechanics and grammar affect the flow of letter and make it difficult to understand.	More than 4 errors. Letter does not follow conventions of letter writing.

Style and Voice	Attention grabbing and entertaining letter that has the voice of the character, Letter makes sense and flows. 1 page in length or more	Letter has the voice of the character, letter makes sense and flows. 1 page	Paper has the voice of character however it is not the appropriate length or Is the appropriate length but does not have character voice.	Letter does not make sense, difficult to comprehend. Does not meet length requirement
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Appendix III

FAMILY FOCUSED BOOK REPORT PLANNING SHEET

G. STANDARD 1.1.8

Demonstrate after reading understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text, including public documents.

- Make, and support with evidence, assertions about texts.
- Compare and contrast texts using themes, settings, characters and ideas.
- Make extensions to related ideas, topics or information.
- Describe the context of a document.
- Analyze the positions, arguments and evidence in public documents.

1. THE SETTING—WHERE DOES THE STORY TAKE PLACE? HOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE THE STORY TAKES PLACE? DOES THE AUTHOR TELL YOU OR JUST DESCRIBE THE PLACE, WHAT ARE YOUR CLUES?

2. THE TIME PERIOD—IS THE STORY SET IN THE PRESENT DAY OR IN AN EARLIER TIME PERIOD? HOW DO YOU KNOW, DOES THE AUTHOR TELL YOU, WHAT ARE YOUR CLUES?

3. THE MAIN CHARACTER(S)—THAT IS THE STORY MOSTLY ABOUT? GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION. DESCRIBE THE FAMILY, EACH MEMBER, AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES?

4. THE PLOT— WHAT EVENTS HAPPEN IN THE BOOK? HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE FAMILY?

Appendix IV
WATSON FAMILY

	Responsibilities	Personality	Other Facts
Dad			
Momma			
Byron			
Kenny			
Joetta			

Typical 1960's FAMILY

	Responsibilities	Personality	Other Facts
Dad			
Mom			
Brothers			
Sisters			

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