

Eighth Grade Unit 3

Theme Overview:

“Against All Odds” was selected for an eight-week interdisciplinary unit focusing on multiculturalism and beginning after World War II through the 1970s. Students will analyze the nature and meaning of *culture* as they read, research, and write about the experiences, histories, beliefs, and accomplishments of diverse peoples. They will reflect on the influence that culture, ethnicity, and geography have in shaping individual perspectives and actions and will investigate the similarities in seemingly different cultures. Students will study the work of people from various cultures in the fields of science, technology, art, and literature and consider how their contributions made and continue to make America the country it is today. The thematic unit will incorporate language arts, science, and social studies standards. Students will be able to work as individuals, on teams, and in small groups.

DRIVING QUESTIONS

- **How can learning about people from other cultures lead us to an awareness of our place in the world? What are some of the customs and values of other countries that we can learn about through literature?**
- **How has the American culture evolved as a result of conflict and peace in our country and around the world?**
- **How does my culture shape the way I see others, the world, and myself? How do my beliefs and values influence the choices I make and the way I act?**
- **How does geography influence the culture of a people?**
- **How do natural disasters affect people around the world?**
- **How does the music of an era reflect the voice of the people?**

New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards specific to this unit:

Language Arts Teachers:

Next to certain novels in this guide are notations about the geographical location of the settings. It is appropriate and meaningful to address the geographical location on maps. For students, this will provide reinforcement for similar topics in social studies.

Social Studies Standards

*Note that geography is embedded across all grade levels and units. It should be addressed within the topic of study rather than in isolation. The geography standards are highlighted, but mapping the location of any standard when appropriate enhances learning for students. *

6.1.8.C.1.e. Determine the influence of economics on migratory patterns and identify unintended outcomes.

6.1.8.C.1.f. Analyze how technological innovations transformed the economy, affected the status and social class of different groups of people and the outcomes that resulted.

6.1.8.D.1.f. Compare and contrast the migratory experiences of different groups of people and explain why their treatment differed.

6.1.8.D.1.g. Determine how cultural transmission from different ethnic groups has impacted the development of the American culture.

6.1.8.A.2.a. Explain the changes in America's relationships with other nations by analyzing treaties and other agreements.

6.1.8.A.4.d. Evaluate the effectiveness of United States foreign policy in promoting democratic values from multiple perspectives.

6.1.8.B.4.a. Assess how unequal distribution of resources led to cooperation and conflict among different groups of people.

6.1.8.D.4.c. Analyze the evolution of the American narrative during times of conflict and peace through analysis of primary and secondary source documents.

6.1.8.D.4.f. Compare and contrast the challenges faced by individuals and groups as they fought for fundamental rights such as liberty, justice and equality for all.

6.1.8.A.5.d. Explain how and why the United States and major international organizations work together to provide basic human rights to people in all nations.

6.1.8.D.5.a. Explain how exercising the rights and responsibilities of citizenship contributes to a democratic government and influences political decisions.

6.1.8.D.5.e. Determine actions that citizens can take to prevent incidences of discrimination, persecution and genocide, similar to the Holocaust, from happening in the United States or world.

Science

Standard 5.2 (Science and Society): All students will develop an understanding of how people of various cultures have contributed to the advancement of science and technology, and how major discoveries and events have advanced science and technology.

A. Cultural Contributions

1. Recognize that scientific theories:

- develop over time,
- depend on the contributions of many people, and
- reflect the social and political climate of their time.

2. Know that scientists are men and women of many cultures who often work together to solve scientific and technological problems.

3. Describe how different people in different cultures have made and continue to make contributions to science and technology.

B. Historical Perspectives

1. Describe the impact of major events and people in the history of science and technology, in conjunction with other world events.
2. Describe the development and exponential growth of scientific knowledge and technological innovations.

Materials:

Possible core and/or authentic readings: (geographical location noted when appropriate)

The Pearl by John Steinbeck (A+) -- Mexico

Forgotten Fire by Adam Bagdasarian (A) – Turkey/Armenia

The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck (C) – China

City of the Beasts by Isabel Allende (C) – South America/Brazil/Venezuela

Guided Reading:

Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis (E) -- Afghanistan

Before We Were Free by Julia Alvarez (C) – Dominican Republic

Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz (E) -- England

Crossing the Wire by Will Hobbs (E) – Mexico/Southwest USA

Kira Kira by Cynthia Kadohata (A) – Georgia (in the US, not the country)

Beyond the Western Sea by Avi (E) --Ireland

Troubling A Star by Madeline L'Engle (A) – Antarctica/South America

Taking Sides by Gary Soto (E) -- Mexico

Prentice Hall Anthology

“The Old Grandfather and His Little Grandson” p. 74

“Grandma” p. 75

“The Ninny” pp. 174-175

“Prospective Immigrants Please Note” p. 194

“This We Know” pp. 196-197

“Gentleman of Rio en Medio” pp 272 – 275

“The New Colossus” p. 366

“Ellis Island” p 367

“Hamadi” pp. 562 – 569

“Tears of Autumn” pp. 586 - 591

“The Medicine Bag” pp. 602 – 609

“Hokusai: The Old Man Mad about Drawing” pp 654-655

UNIT 10 – pp. 902 – 919 (Native American, Mexican, African American myths and tales)

Poetry

The poetry written by Paul Simon (Simon and Garfunkel) is incredibly rich in terms of thematic and poetic elements: simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia, allusion, alliteration, personification, etc. Some suggestions:

1. “Sparrow “ - Relates to the Viet Nam theme through allegory;
2. “He was My Brother” - Viet Nam
3. “A Poem on the Underground Wall” - The rebellion of youth - the life of a subway graffiti artist is captured through poetry: "And the train is gone suddenly / on wheels clicking silently / like a gently tapping litany / and he holds his crayon rosary / tighter in his hand...Now from his pocket quick he flashes - a crayon on the wall he slashes/ deep upon the advertising / a single-worded poem comprised of four letters. And his heart is laughing/screaming/pounding...the poem across the tracks rebounding; Shadowed by the exit light / his legs take their ascending flight / to seek the breast of darkness and be suckled by the night." It's pretty great stuff.
4. “April Come She Will”
5. “At the Zoo”
6. “Old Friends / Bookends”

7. "Sounds of Silence"

8. "El Condor Pasa (If I Could)".

Independent Reading/Research in social studies:

American Reading Company's Contemporary Issues thematic baskets

National Geographic Reading Expeditions: World Cultures (10 titles of 6-packs)

Current Events magazine

Asbury Park Press online –(the actual newspaper, not like app.com) at

<http://www.app.com/static/nie/appnie/>

Time magazine

Up Front magazine

USA Today newspaper

Wall Street Journal newspaper

Junior Scholastic magazine

Resources:

The Pearl

www.kirjasto.sci.fi/johnstei.htm

<http://teacher2b.com/literature/pearl.htm>

Forgotten Fire

http://www.teenreads.com/guides/forgotten_fire1.asp

The Good Earth

http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides3/good_earth1.asp

Taking Sides

<http://www.classzone.com/novelguides/litcons/taking/guide.cfm>

Breadwinner

<http://www.onebooktwovillages.org/kidquestions.php?bookid=43847118>

Before We Were Free

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375815447&view=rg>

Stormbreaker

http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/horowitz_stormbreaker.htm

Crossing the Wire

<http://www.state.lib.la.us/empowerlibrary/CROSSING%20THE%20WIRE%20STUDY%20GUIDE.doc>

Kira Kira

<http://www.multcolib.org/talk/guides-kira.html>

Audio/Visual Aids:

Songs from the 50's, 60's, and 70's that reflect the voice of societal times.

60's and 70's music

<http://chu65nang67.us/nam/vietnam.html>

Movies:

- Across the Universe DVD-- The music of the Beatles and the Vietnam War form the backdrop for the romance between an upper-class American girl and a poor Liverpoolian artist.

NOTES: The film is not meant to be shown in its entirety. Please check out two scenes in particular:

1. *I Want You / She's So Heavy* - Features the military establishment; the draft; the price of Liberty. It's an incredible starting point for discussion in terms of standards (inference); history (Youth Protest to the Viet Nam War); governmental corruption; The ultimate price of freedom (A group of soldiers are shown carrying an enormous replica of the Statue of Liberty. They struggle beneath it just as the Beatles "I Want You" segues into "She's so Heavy".)

2. *Let It Be* - Features the Race Riots of the 1960s - The scene is juxtaposed against two soldiers arriving at a suburban home. The mother of the household opens the door and falls to her knees. The scene is wordless - the obvious inference is that her son has died in the war. The two funerals

are contrasted. Here's the kicker: Each of the lives lost is heartrendingly valuable in terms of home, hearth and motherhood. Yet each is of little relevance to a government gone awry and driven by greed. Standards of Inference, Compare and Contrast, come readily to mind.

The music serves as a segue to the driving question: *How does the music of an era reflect the voice of the people?*

- No Direction Home DVD-- A chronicle of Bob Dylan's strange evolution between 1961 and 1966 from folk singer to protest singer to "voice of a generation" to rock star.

National Geographic Video Clip Library

<http://www.youtube.com/user/NationalGeographic>

UnitedStreaming Video Clip Library

<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/home/aboutus.cfm>

PBS.org online video The American Experience

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/onlineFilms/>

Browse the entire American Experience series featuring over 200 films. Watch full films online, download teacher's guides, go behind the scenes, and learn more about your favorite films.

- The Presidents
- Biographies
- War & Politics
- Technology
- Popular Culture
- The American Landscape

PBS.org also has a good documentary on Pete Seeger (born May 3, 1919.) Seeger is an American folk singer, political activist, and a key figure in the mid-20th century American folk music revival. He was actually accused of being a communist and was blacklisted as a result of McCarthyism. Dylan and others were heavily influenced by his work, leading to the rise of youth as a major political voice.

Suggested student activities for a combined language arts and social studies PBL:

Theme Introduction

Objective: Students recognize the diversity of cultures in America and begin to discuss how one's culture influences one's perception, values, and beliefs.

Materials Needed: Newspapers, poster board

Ask students what they think is meant by that old-time saying, "America is a melting pot." Ask students who know their family history to describe their family origins to the class; or tell them something about your own background.

Group Activity:

Look for articles about new immigrants to this country. Have the class read the articles; then ask students to try to imagine what life is like for these new Americans—new language, new schools, new jobs, etc. What day-to-day problems might they face? What changes would they need to make in their life styles? How might we help new Americans adjust?

To drive home the "melting pot" idea, make a big black kettle out of poster board. Hang it at the base of the bulletin board. Coming out of the top of the kettle could be a montage of student-selected newspaper articles and photographs that reflect America's diverse population.

Science PBL ideas:

1. Select an important earthquake or volcanic eruption that you would like to research. You may choose from one of the lists found at the following links or choose another earthquake that is of interest. (**google** these links)

[Significant Earthquakes of the World: From 1980 to present day](#)

[Links to Recent and Significant Earthquakes](#) From 1857 to the present day with on-line reports and photos

[Earthquakes with 1000 or More Deaths: From 1900 to present day](#)

2. Pretend that you are a reporter who has been assigned to conduct an interview with a person who experienced the earthquake or volcanic eruption that you chose. Make a list of questions that you would ask the person. Keep in mind that your goal is not only to inform your readership, but also to make your interview interesting and compelling.
3. Based on the information you have found in the resources above, pretend you are the earthquake or volcano survivor being interviewed and answer the questions as though you were he or she.

Option: Turn your interview into a television report. As a group, "act out" the interview for the class.

Some additional sites online for ideas, resources, and research:

[Ask-An-Earth Scientist](#)

[Ask a Geologist](#)

[Ask a Mad Scientist](#)

ScienceNet

Scientific American Ask the Experts

Geography PBLs for novels:

The Good Earth -- Students can research farming methods in China and how the terrain of the country factors in to the types of crops raised. They can include an investigation of the frequency and effect droughts, flooding, and locust infestation on the land.

City of the Beasts-- Students can research the rivers of South America and the species of plants and animals that are indigenous to the areas around the rivers.

Troubling a Star -- Students can investigate the terrain, climate, and animal life in Antarctica. Students can also research the Falkland Islands and investigate the recent Falklands Islands War.

The Pearl-- Students can investigate the effect of the desert terrain and the proximity of the Gulf of California on the way people live in Baja California. They can include a study of how the climate is hospitable to scorpions.

Other short and long-term PBL activities:

1. Create a video or skit from one of the scenes in the core novel.
2. Research the history of Ellis Island: Create an online or print scavenger hunt.
3. Class or school-wide survey of national origins. Create a chart/poster/presentation graphing or otherwise identifying the nations from which the ancestors of the students came

Assessments

- Informal daily observations
- Writing Conferences
- Anecdotal Notes (Guided Reading and Guided Writing)
- Rubrics:

Writing Rubric

Speaking Rubric

Oral Presentation-Dramatization

Open Ended Scoring rubric

Final Project