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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2006 Volume I: Stories around the World in Film

Raising Social Consciousness

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by Jennifer Vermillion

The focus of this unit is fostering multiculturalism and social consciousness in tenth grade English Language Arts students. Using family life as a platform, the unit uses film and nonfiction texts to explore issues of social concern in foreign nations. The material focuses on apartheid in South Africa, the Travellers in Ireland, women in Afghanistan and the one-child policy in the People's Republic of China. Each of these issues and the skills required to understand them are scaffolded to ensure student growth. Carefully selected nonfiction texts promote reading skills and create active and informed readers. The films are engaging and offer opportunities to promote literacy and awareness of social issues. Explicit analysis of the films will provide students with critical thinking skills as well as a foundation for the appreciation of foreign cinema. This unit utilizes a discovery learning process that engages the students and challenges them to perpetuate the process of acceptance and understanding of other cultures. Students will engage in discussions, group activities, and written activities that prepare students to engage in lifelong literacy as independent learners. The content and culminating unit activities actively promote visual and cultural literacy as well as introduce the idea of social activism.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 10; recommended for English Language Arts and Social Studies, grades 9-12)

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