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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2006 Volume III: Children's Literature, Infancy to Early Adolescence

Fantasy Books: There's a Whole Other World Out There

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This unit will focus on reading and analyzing the genre of fantasy. There are some specific aspects of fantasy that make it a genre of its own. We will study these aspects and learn what makes this genre so engrossing. In addition to reading, we will do some writing. It is amazing how easy it is for kids to create the supernatural. This unit includes a lesson to have pairs or small groups of students write an original piece of fantasy with illustrations — basically, to create a fantasy picture story book.

This unit specifically focuses on the use of fantasy books. Novels and picture books are used to teach the seven motifs of fantasy, which are: magic, otherworlds, universal themes, heroism, special character types, talking animals, and fantastic objects. The unit uses books that are for use in a sixth grade classroom. However, the stories can be used in any classroom, especially the picture books.

This unit also teaches seven literary elements, which are: plot, characterization, point of view, conflict, foreshadowing/flashback, tone/mood, and setting. These literary elements are looked at in fantasy picture story books as well as fantasy novels.

This is a great unit because it teaches the skills every English or Reading teacher needs to incorporate in their class, but uses stories that are popular with students today. We all know students these days devour any fantasy novel they can get a hold of. This unit takes that passion for reading and utilizes it for teaching basic concepts.

(Developed for Reading, grade 6; recommended for Reading and English, grades 5-8)

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