



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2010 Volume III: Creating Lives: An Introduction to Biography

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## **American Biographies: Lives Transformed by Literacy**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.03.01, published September 2010

by Holly Kiser Banning

This unit, "American Biographies: Lives Transformed by Literacy," was developed for my first grade class as a cross curricular unit, addressing standards of learning in both language arts and history. This unit provides a means for children to connect with historical figures from the past with an emphasis on literacy and its transformative effect on the lives of the people we study in history. It is designed to be implemented primarily in history and/or social science class, but elements of the unit can be utilized as either enrichment to, or a component of, first grade language arts instruction.

The unit is intended to be cross-cultural and inclusive; having the potential to be used in virtually any demographic. It is a six week unit focusing on the biographies of Frederick Douglass, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington Carver, Benjamin Franklin, and Helen Keller. Although the unit was envisioned and created for first grade, it readily lends itself to be adapted in full or part for any grade level. The historical figures could be added to, subtracted from, or completely changed according to the state and local standards as needed.

(Developed for Language Arts and History, grade 1; recommended for Language Arts/English and History/Social Science, grades K-8, but adaptable to most any age range)

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