



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
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American Tapestry: Interconnectedness Revealed through Historical Fiction

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by Waltrina D. Kirkland-Mullins

America! Our nation is a complex mosaic of people across race and ethnicity whose lives are more times than none interwoven. Their interactions and/or contributions to the American framework are worth recognition. By learning about the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups within our society, we gain better insight into the American mosaic. Equally important, we learn to embrace one another as members of the American community. Literary resources across genre coupled with classroom instructional practices, however, reveal that complex aspects of our history are rarely delved into or acknowledged. Rather, the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups are often marginalized and/or excluded from courses of study—particularly in the primary grade levels. How do we create an inclusive learning environment where "uncomfortable" subject matter rooted in our country's history can be taught? In an effort to help young learners develop a true understanding of the American mosaic, should we make use of historical fiction to convey this—particularly at the elementary level? I contend "yes." Thus, the reason for my curriculum unit, "American Tapestry": targeted at students in Grades 3, but modifiable through Grade 5, this unit uses historical fiction to take students on a journey to the mid-18th through mid-19th century, where they experience the lives of a few common folk from diverse cultural backgrounds who possess a common vision: to thrive and live free in America.

(Developed for Social Studies/Language Arts, grade 3; recommended for Social Studies/Language Arts, grade 3 [modifiable to grades 4-5])

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