



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

*to strengthen teaching in public schools®*

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2011 Volume IV: The Big Easy: Literary New Orleans and Intangible Heritage

---

## **Feathers and Beads: Exploring Heritage through the Mardi Gras Indians**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.04.12, published September 2011

by Barbara Biesak Wesselman

What is woven together to create the heritage, tangible and intangible, of a culture?

Some things seem to have existed forever, a part of culture and society, when in reality their existence comes from years of struggle and development. When I think of New Orleans I think of the brilliant colors, feathers, costumes, food and more costumes! Looking into the Intangible Heritage of New Orleans is like exploring a world within a world and will provide fascinating comparisons in all interdisciplinary studies. As a Apparel Design / Costume Design teacher at a public magnet school for the arts making those connections for my students would provide an exciting learning experience.

We will learn about the people, their culture and costumes. Our goal is to understand why the Mardi Gras Indians create such vibrant and "showy" costumes, and the significance of their color and design choices. We will be able to look locally, or globally to find connections of arts, clothing, costumes and the history, in a quest for an understanding of the people and their culture.

The brilliant heritage of New Orleans is a fascinating starting point for comparisons.

(Developed for Apparel Development I and II, grades 9-12; recommended for Costume Design, Apparel Design/Development, Everyday Mathematics, and U. S. History, grades 9-12; and Civics and Economics, grade 10)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)