



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2023 Volume II:

An Inheritance of Cultural Storytelling: Nature-Inspired Paintings

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by Debra Denise Jenkins

When I asked my secondary students if they ever metaphorically stopped to smell the roses, they looked at me like I was crazy. I was met with, “Mrs. Jenkins, we ain’t white.” “Man, gone on somewhere, Mrs. Jenkins, ain’t nobody got time for that.” Why do my students, who are not white, feel that being in nature is only reserved for certain people? Could it be that Hearne is considered a nature desert, or students have not been provided ample time and opportunities to engage meaningfully with nature? Why does their ethnicity seem to be so prevalent in relation to occupying these publicly shared spaces? This unit will explore ways to engage with nature and family members’ experiences with nature to form an appreciation of sorts of nature using painting, journaling, and storytelling to hone their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Conversations and readings taken from the seminar led by Jill Campbell inform the unit. The standards addressed will be for students at the secondary level to form a new opinion of their interpretation of what nature means to them.

(Developed for Dyslexia Intervention, grades 7-12, and ESL Beginner and ESL Intermediate, grades 9-12; recommended for Dyslexia Intervention, grades 7-12, and ESL Beginner and ESL Intermediate, grades 9-12)

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