



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1980 Volume II: Art, Artifacts, and Material Culture

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## Introduction

Fellows in the “Art, Artifacts, and Material Culture” seminar have been diverse in their backgrounds and interests, but unified in their enthusiasm for creative teaching through the use of objects. Statistically, the Fellows are quite evenly divided between high school and middle school teaching, and in subject areas between English, Social Studies/History, and the Arts and Crafts.

All of the curriculum units reflect the fundamental task of the seminar, the exploration of ways to utilize objects for the understanding of culture, both the culture of the object and our own culture. The materials range from early artifacts of pre-historic and Indian cultures of North America to everyday objects found on the streets; from such vernacular or popular materials as comic books and masks to high style art forms of poetry and painting; from the highly specialized New Haven *sharpie* (an oystering boat) to artifacts found in a student’s home. Several Fellows explore modes of using the familiar (comic books, found materials, paintings, everyday artifacts) to explicate the difficult (art history, Indian culture, poetry, creative writing). Some experiment with engagement with the artifacts of another culture as a way to make students more aware of their own culture.

Every curriculum unit demonstrates in a different way how the Fellow has taken the theoretical material of the seminar and transformed it into a vivid, personal, affective mode of teaching. Together, the units promise an extraordinary range and variety of classroom experiences. Through the use of objects, they stimulate and direct the students’ ability to use their senses, especially their ability to see; to overcome inhibitions and respond emotionally; to reflect on the meaning of these sensory and emotional experiences; to express themselves orally and especially in writing with clarity and precision; to make value judgments and decisions. The curriculum units embody the promise of converting effectively the theory of the seminar into the practice of the New Haven classroom.

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