



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2007 Volume I: American Voices: Listening to Fiction, Poetry, and Prose

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## **The Civil and the Wild in American Discourse**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 07.01.05  
by Melissa Dailey

This unit emphasizes the power of the spoken word to articulate an outsider's perspective on society's problems. Tone, structure, style, sound, audience and content all play a role in voice. Each of these elements has the potential to be civil or wild although neither exists without the other. We will be reading Maya Angelou, Mark Twain, Martin Luther King Jr., Sojourner Truth, Henry David Thoreau, Claude McKay, and Miguel Pinero. Each of the texts comments on the ills of society. Each of the writers is critical of the mainstream in one fashion or another. In addition to the texts above, we will listen to music and look briefly at art.

In this unit students will think critically about what they are reading as well as the world around them. They will engage in the writing process while being aware of their purpose and audience. Drawing connections between texts and personal life will be key to the intent of the unit.

Students will produce numerous writing assignments. A journal will be kept throughout the unit. The final projects will be published in a class magazine. Part of the intent of the unit is for students to sharpen their own voices. Through the study of different writers and artists students will develop an understanding of how to manipulate the elements of language in construction of their voices.

(Recommended for English, grade 11.)

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