

SAMPLE INTEGRATED THEMATIC UNIT

GROWING UP

An Integrated Unit for Middle School by Alan Nero

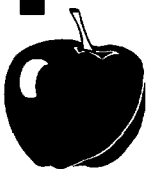
This unit explores issues of growing up as treated in various media—in film, fiction, autobiography, music, students' own experiences and in the experiences of family members. Students will determine a set of stages of human life and will gain knowledge of terms, processes, responsibilities and decisions involved in growing up.

Activities

- ① **Comparing Young and Old.** Show pictures of a baby, a child, an adolescent, an adult, and an old person. Discuss what makes one feel, look and act young or old. Write students' descriptions of "young" and "old" in two columns. Reread together. Read aloud and discuss a story about growing up or about the contrast between young and old people. Optional: discuss the riddle of the Sphinx: "What walks on four, then on two, then on three?" (Answer: humans, who crawl as infants, walk as adults, and use a cane when old.)
- ② **Stages of My Life.** Bring in photos of yourself or a family member at various ages. Arrange them in chronological order and tell about important events at various ages. Invite your students to bring photos from home showing themselves at several ages. (Students who can't get photos can make drawings.) Have students arrange the photos in chronological order on their desks, then tell partners highlights of their lives at the different ages, i.e., when they first learned to walk, when they started school, their first date. Have students use the writing process to develop captions for each picture then mount the pictures and captions on construction paper or on pages of a book.

Materials

- ① Chart paper or transparency and markers; Suggested literature: *Outside-Inside*, by Arnold Adoff; *Leo, the Late Bloomer*, by Robert Krause; *Now One Foot, Now the Other*, by Tome de Payola.
- ② Photos from home; art and writing materials



Activities

- 3 **Writing about Growing Up.** Read aloud autobiographical selections. Explain difficult passages. Help students make a time line of important events in the selection(s). Discuss point of view, illustrating with examples how autobiographies are usually written in the first person. Have students choose interesting events from the Activity #2 time lines to write about. Throughout the unit, they can write and collect descriptions of important and interesting events in their lives to compile into autobiographies. Make sure that students include stories of how they or their families came to the U.S. and to San Francisco. Encourage students to read aloud selections from their autobiographies.
- 4 **Family Interviews.** Have each student choose a member of his/her family to interview. Write down a list of appropriate questions as students dictate, including such questions as, "Where did you grow up?" "When did you decide what you would do when you grew up?" "When did you go on your first date?" "How did you feel?" Encourage students to report on the responses to their interviews. Help them compare their own answers to those of their parents and grandparents. Help students try to make some generalizations about responses from the different generations: students, parents, grandparents. Have students dictate, revise, and read aloud together their generalizations.
- 5 **Transition to Adulthood.** Show and discuss a film about experiences of adolescents transitions into adulthood. Encourage students to write in journals comparing their own experiences with those of characters in the film. Respond in the journals yourself or have the students exchange journals with classmates or students in another class.
- 6 **Decision-Making Under Pressure.** Read aloud Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken." Invite students to draw a picture of the image of the poem: two roads diverging and someone making a decision about which to take. Discuss the poem, asking what the "road less

Materials

- 3 Selections from *Prentice-Hall Literature: Bronze*: "No Gumption" by Russell Baker, pp. 328-335; "Barrio Boy," by Ernesto Galarza, pp. 336-341; "A Time of Beginnings," by Jade Snow Wong, pp. 342-348; "The Seven Ages of Man," Shakespeare, *Adventures in Reading*, p. 391.
- 4 Writing materials.
- 5 Possible films: *Stand by Me*, *My Bodyguard*, *The Outsiders*; journals.
- 6 "The Road Not Taken," by Robert Frost, *American Literature Signature Edition*; chart paper or chalkboard.



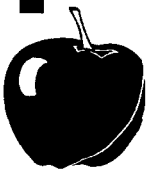
Activities

taken” means and encouraging students to relate the decision to an important one teens must make, e.g., to smoke or not to smoke. As students dictate, list pros and cons in two columns. Have students role play situations in which some peers try to convince others who resist the persuasion. Have students brainstorm ways to refuse to do something they don’t want to do.

- 7 **Love You Forever.”** Read *Love you Forever* aloud to your students or have them read it independently. Have small groups of students map the stages of human life as described in the story. Have students discuss what this story tells them about love, caring, growing up, and reaching adulthood. Encourage the students to find specific examples in the story that back up their opinions about it.
- 8 **Responsibility.** Write the word “responsibility” on the board. Brainstorm with students words and phrases that come to mind. Divide students into small groups. Assign each group a category from this list: children and parents, students and teachers, owner/manager of gas station and employees, coach and athlete. Have each group list responsibilities of persons in its category on an index card, then make up a skit to perform before the class that illustrates those responsibilities.
- 9 **Comparing Responsibilities.** Have students use the information from Activity #8 to make a semantic map comparing the responsibilities of different age groups.
- 10 **Where I’ve Come From—Who I Am.** Have students discuss with partners things that represent their background, characteristics, likes, and dislikes. Have them cut out magazine pictures that represent their preferences in sports, clothes, food, etc., and mount them along with their own drawings and/or lettering. As you hold up each collage, ask students to try to guess the

Materials

- 7 *Love you Forever* by Robert Munsch.
- 8 Index cards, props for drama.
- 9 Chart paper and markers.
- 10 Old magazines with pictures of people from many cultures; art materials for collages.



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author of each one. Encourage students to give reasons for their guesses.

- 1 **Song Transcriptions.** Assign students to choose a favorite song about growing up and write down the lyrics on transparencies. Play tapes of the songs that students have brought while the class follows along on the transparencies. Include Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car" as your selection. Discuss poetic devices used in the lyrics: rhyme, rhythm, simile, metaphor, repetition, etc. Discuss how the songs address the theme of growing up. Have students make a wall chart showing each student's name, the chosen song title, performers, theme, and how the song relates to adolescents growing up.

Materials

- 1 Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car," transparencies with lyrics, blank transparencies and markers for students to use, overhead projector, music tapes brought in by students; chart paper and markers.

Source:

McCloskey, M. L. (Ed.). (1990). *Integrated language teaching strategies and integrated thematic units: A middle/high school ESOL curriculum guide*. Atlanta, GA: Educo Press, pp. 2.13-2.14. Reprinted with permission.

