

# BRIDGES ON THE I-WAY: MULTICULTURAL RESOURCES ONLINE

## MULTICULTURAL LESSON PLANS

by Frank Alan Bruno

Although I encountered published lesson plans as a student of education at a major university, I did not fully realize their practical use until I was in the classroom teaching. A lesson plan is a brief overview or outline for a specific lesson that may include brief concepts, outcomes, needed equipment, and/or teaching tips. Lesson plans tend to be categorized by broad subjects taught in elementary school, middle or junior high school, and high school such as language, literature, science, math, and history. Beginning teachers use them as a framework for preparing a lesson. More experienced teachers use them as ways to stimulate new ideas. As a second grade and fifth grade teacher, I used lesson plans to spice up my curriculum. By consulting a few lesson plans you can come up with material that will capture the students' interest.

As a librarian I have helped many education students/educators improve the quality of their teaching by sharing useful lesson plan sites. As editor of this column I feel it is instructive and helpful to identify quality multicultural lesson plan sites for student teachers, current teachers, curriculum developers, and librarians to prepare better multicultural content in the classroom.

The premier site that comes to mind in locating multicultural lesson plans is The Multicultural Pavilion (<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/sites/lesson.html>). The Multicultural Pavilion has links to the better multicultural sites and is a good starting place for locating multicultural lessons for the classroom. The site is the product of Paul Gorski, who set it up while completing his doctorate in 1998 at the University of Virginia. Currently Gorski is the coordinator of the Diversity Works and Student Intercultural Learning Center at the University of Maryland. He is also an advisory board member for *MultiCultural Review*. He has a personal web site, Paul Gorski's Home Page (<http://home.earthlink.net/~gorski/home.html>), where he shares personal information and his multicultural interests. Gorski is easily approached and can be contacted at [gorski@earthlink.net](mailto:gorski@earthlink.net) with suggestions. He has created two other multicultural sites worth exploring that cover a broader range of multicultural content—McGraw-Hill's Multicultural Supersite ([www.mhhe.com/socscience/education/multi/links.html](http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/education/multi/links.html)) and Diversity Web ([www.diversityweb.org](http://www.diversityweb.org)).

Other lesson plan sites with multicultural material that I think are worth looking at are as follows:

A to Z Teacher Stuff Thematic Units (<http://atozteacherstuff.com/themes/>)

AskEric Lesson Plans (<http://askeric.org/Virtual/Lessons/>)

Mid Continent Research for Education and Learning ([www.mcrcel.org/resources/links/behavior/behavlessons.asp](http://www.mcrcel.org/resources/links/behavior/behavlessons.asp));

The Gateway to Educational Materials ([www.thegateway.org](http://www.thegateway.org))

Encarta Schoolhouse ([www.microsoft.com/education/default.asp?ID=LessonPlans](http://www.microsoft.com/education/default.asp?ID=LessonPlans))

Education Place ([www.eduplace.com/activity/](http://www.eduplace.com/activity/))

Inclusion...Yours, Mine, Ours (<http://rushservices.com/Inclusion/>)

Educational Resources Explorer K-5 Cyber Page ([www.wmht.org/trail/explor02.htm](http://www.wmht.org/trail/explor02.htm))

New York Times Daily Lesson Plans ([www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/archive.html/](http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/archive.html/))

Apple Learning Resources (<http://henson.austin.apple.com/edres>)

edHelper.Com Free Lesson Plans ([www.edhelper.com/](http://www.edhelper.com/))

The Lesson Plans Page ([www.lessonplanspage.com/](http://www.lessonplanspage.com/))

Marco Polo Internet Content for the Classroom ([www.marcopolo-education.org/index.aspx](http://www.marcopolo-education.org/index.aspx))

Multicultural Lesson Plans & Resources ([www.cloudnet.com/~edrbsass/edmulticult.htm](http://www.cloudnet.com/~edrbsass/edmulticult.htm))

Multicultural Math Fair (<http://mathforum.org/alejandre/mathfair/mmflinks.html>)

Multicultural Passport (<http://jeffcoweb.jeffco.k12.co.us/passport/index.html>)

Lesson Planet (<http://lessonplanet.teacherwebtools.com/directory.html?fromgoogle=1>)

Teacher's Net Lesson Plans (<http://teachers.net/lessons/>)

Teach Net Lesson Plans ([www.teachnet.com/](http://www.teachnet.com/)).

A bilingual lesson plan site with a handful of lessons that I will mention only in passing is Paso Partners—Integrating Math, Science, and Language ([www.sedl.org/scimath/pasopartners/welcome.html](http://www.sedl.org/scimath/pasopartners/welcome.html)).

A to Z Teacher Stuff Thematic Units has dozens of lesson plans. Many are related to children's literature, such as *Harriet Tubman: Guide to Freedom*, *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *Farewell to Manzanar*, *Arrow to the Sun*, *Ashanti to Zulu*, and

*World Book: Cinco de Mayo.* The site has a theme section with several thematic units devoted to multicultural lesson plans. Under this area of the site, the Native American section includes 10 thematic units, one webquest where students navigate the Internet, two worksheets that are printable, and links to five books that support the subject. Under Social Studies themes are six sections with multicultural content: Ancient Egypt, African-American Studies, Australia, Colonial America, Native Americans, and the Olympics. The African-American Studies section is subdivided into Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, and Miscellaneous Black History. This subsection has some nice thematic units, songs and poems, printable activities, and additional resource sites. A really strong feature is the webquests, which are Internet scavenger hunts where students take a topic and find answers to worksheet questions as they go from site to site researching individuals or subjects.

An excellent site for locating multicultural lesson plans is AskEric Lesson Plans. The site contains over 2,000 lesson plans with hundreds of different multicultural-related ones in the arts, computer science, foreign language, health, information literacy, interdisciplinary, language arts, mathematics, philosophy, physical education, science, social studies, and vocational education. The Multicultural Education Lesson Plans section ([http://ericir.syr.edu/cgi-bin/lessons.cgi/Social\\_Studies/Multicultural\\_Education](http://ericir.syr.edu/cgi-bin/lessons.cgi/Social_Studies/Multicultural_Education)) includes 14 lessons on such topics as class culture, comparing cultures, holidays, ethnic folk dancing of Hungary and Romania, apples across cultures, multicultural fairs and music festivals, traditions surrounding rain, and Swedish culture.

The AskEric Lesson Plan search utility allows the user to search by keyword with refinement by word or phrase. Searches can be limited by field, title, description, or category. The site can be searched by grade level: K-12 as well as adult/continuing education, vocational education, or higher education. A keyword search for "African American" produced 642 hits; there were 598 hits for "Hispanic American," 628 hits for "Native American," and 602 hits for "Asian American." A keyword search for "multicultural" produced only 33 hits. On examining these search sets, I noticed that several hits contained references to all four groups, so there is probably some duplication. A few sample multicultural lesson plan titles are "Multicultural Fair," "Multicultural Community—My Home," and "Using the Internet for Multicultural Education."

Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning Lesson Plan Library includes multicultural content in behavior/social studies. Some links included on the site are the University of Wisconsin—Madison's African Studies K-12 Resources (<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/afirst/outreach/k-12.html>); the Asia Society's AskAsia Lesson Plans ([www.askasia.org/for\\_educators/instructional\\_resources/lesson\\_plans/less\\_plan.htm](http://www.askasia.org/for_educators/instructional_resources/lesson_plans/less_plan.htm)); Western/Pacific Literacy Network's Culture & Society Story Archives (<http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/cultsociety.html>); the National Clearinghouse for U.S./Japan Studies Lesson Plans Database ([www.indiana.edu/~japan/LP\\_Search.cgi](http://www.indiana.edu/~japan/LP_Search.cgi)); Marty Levine's CSUN Lesson Plans and Teaching Strategies for Social Studies ([www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/plans.html](http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/plans.html)); the Smithsonian

Institution & U.S. Department of Agriculture's Seeds of Change Diversity Activities (<http://horizon.nmsu.edu/garden/diversity/welcome.html>); the National Council for the Social Studies, Social Education: Lesson Plans from NCSS Publications ([www.socialstudies.org/resources/lessons/home.html](http://www.socialstudies.org/resources/lessons/home.html)); McGraw-Hill's Social Studies Activities ([www.mhschool.com/teach/ss2003/index.html](http://www.mhschool.com/teach/ss2003/index.html)); and Social Studies School Services Lesson Plans ([www.socialstudies.com/](http://www.socialstudies.com/)).

The Gateway to Educational Materials ([www.thegateway.org](http://www.thegateway.org)) advertises itself as the "one-stop, any-stop access to high quality lesson plans." This educational resource site, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, offers the ability to search through browsing a list organized by subjects, browsing a list organized by keywords, or using a search utility accessed by keyword, title, or grade level. A keyword search of the term "multicultural" returned 119 hits. One useful link included the Awesome Library—Multicultural Lesson Plan ([www.awesomelibrary.org/Library/Materials\\_Search/Lesson\\_Plans/Multicultural.html](http://www.awesomelibrary.org/Library/Materials_Search/Lesson_Plans/Multicultural.html)). Lesson plans included here are African American Achievements (PBS Teacher's Source), Coming of Age in Ethnic America, Comparative Civilizations, Diversity—How Student Diversity Contributes to Learning, Integrating Global Education, Hispanic Heritage Month, Holocaust, Japanese Culture, Native Americans, Race and Representation in American Cinema, and Self-Esteem.

The Encarta Schoolhouse interface is a bit clunky to use and has only a couple of hundred or so general lesson plans. Even though there are only a few on multicultural subjects, they are still very well done. Noteworthy offerings are Virtual Classroom Tour: Examining Prejudice; Virtual Classroom Tour: Discovering Native Americans; Around the Pacific Rim; Discovering Africa and Their Culture; Discovering Native Americans and Their Culture; Let's Go Travel; Pita Tortilla Baguette; and World Pizza.

Education Place has only a handful of lesson plans under the Activity Search theme page. Some categories include ancestors, celebrations/holidays, cultures, folk/legends/fairy tales, Native Americans and storytelling. The Inclusion...Yours, Mine, Ours site has about a dozen lesson plans to integrate bilingual students into the mainstream. Educational Resources Explorer K-5 Cyber Page has a very good list of culture-specific resources links. A few worth exploring for their information and lesson plans are African Information for K-12 Education ([www.sas.upenn.edu/African\\_Studies/K-12/menu\\_K-12.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/K-12/menu_K-12.html)); the American Immigration Home Page ([www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/Immigration/index.html](http://www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/Immigration/index.html)); Christmas Tradition Around the World (<http://christmas.com/worldview/>); Holocaust Museum ([www.ushmm.org/](http://www.ushmm.org/)); Native American Resources ([www.hanksville.org/NAresources/](http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/)); and the *Seattle Times* Martin Luther King Jr. page (<http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/mlk/index.html>).

*New York Times* Daily Lesson Plans is searchable by keyword and can be limited to all subjects and grade levels 6-8, 9-12, or 6-12. A search of the term "African" produced 71 lessons; there were 23 lessons for "Hispanic," 14 for "Asian," and 23 for "Native American." There were even a few interesting lesson plans about Afghan and Albanian refugees. I found

many of the site's lesson plans well researched and interesting. The *New York Times* site is a valuable educational resource.

Apple Learning Resources, associated with Apple Computers, has been in the curriculum development business for many years. They have produced a few superior curriculum aids, such as *Traveling To Mexico: A Technology Integration Lesson* ([http://ali.apple.com/ali\\_sites/ali/exhibits/1000030/](http://ali.apple.com/ali_sites/ali/exhibits/1000030/)), which helps sixth graders develop an appreciation for the Mexican people, and *Français Interactif* ([http://ali.apple.com/ali\\_sites/ali/exhibits/1000090/](http://ali.apple.com/ali_sites/ali/exhibits/1000090/)), a first-year interactive French program.

edHelper.Com Free Lesson Plans is precise in its claim of having "11,443 Lesson Plans, 1,296 WebQuests, 5,000 Free Worksheet Generators, 1,600 Word and Critical Thinking Problems, and Exams and Puzzles for Standardized Tests." Lesson plans are organized into 22 different subjects: arts, computers, dance, drama, economics, environment, geography, health, history, journalism, language, languages, literature, mathematics, music, phys ed, reading, science, social studies, thematic, webquests, and monthly themes. A perusal of the arts category showed some interesting lessons—"A Rainforest Splash" and "African Textile Design." Drama includes "Black Actors in American Cinema," "*Blue Monday* and *Friends*," and "Traditional Jewish Holidays." Economics includes "African American Population Shifts" and "What Is Currency? Lessons from Historic Africa." Geography includes "A Village in India," "Africa: Its People and Places," "Australia: The Country Down Under," "Comparing Countries," "Countries on the Internet," "Ellis Island: Immigration Boom of 1892–1924," "Immigration to Hawaii," "Native American Indian Musical Instruments," and "Osage Prairies." History includes "African American History," "Ancient Rome," "Arab-Jewish Coexistence," "Civil Rights Movement," "Famous Black Americans," "JFK and MLK Jr.," and "The Underground Railway." Language includes "Cooking Your Way Around the World" and "*The Diary of Anne Frank*." This site has thousands of tips and suggestions.

The Lesson Plans Page has a few hundred multicultural lessons. Kyle Yamnitz at the University of Missouri, Kansas City runs the site with submissions from faculty and students. The site is primarily geared to the elementary school level and is arranged by math lessons, science lessons, music lessons, language arts, computers & Internet, social studies, art lessons, P.E. & health, other lessons, and multidisciplinary. It has two basic search boxes—keyword or keyword delimited by matching all words or matching any word. Instead of overwhelming you with hundreds of hits, it selectively lists 10 to 15 lessons in three sections. A keyword search of the term "African American" returned 5 results internally from the LessonsPlanPage, externally 11 results from EdHelperNet Site, and 15 results from Educationally Reviewed Materials. The search box includes the ability to find both onsite and offsite lessons.

Marco Polo Internet Content for the Classroom combines National Geographic Society's Xpeditions ([www.national-geographic.com/xpeditions/](http://www.national-geographic.com/xpeditions/)); John F. Kennedy for the Performing Arts' Arts Edge (<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/>); American Association for the Advancement of Science's *Science NetLinks*

([www.sciencenetlinks.com/](http://www.sciencenetlinks.com/)); the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics NCTM ([www.nctm.org/](http://www.nctm.org/)); National Endowment for the Humanities' EDSITEMent: The Best of Humanities on the Web (<http://edsitement.neh.gov/>); the National Council on Economic Education's EconEdLink ([www.ncee.net/](http://www.ncee.net/)); and the International Reading Association/The National Council of Teachers of English's ReadWriteThink ([www.readwritethink.org/](http://www.readwritethink.org/)) into one searchable interface. Many graphically pleasing lessons with multicultural content are featured.

The New Lessons section on the Marco Polo site includes plans on Ancient Greece, Tecumseh, South Pacific World War II Stories, Mexican Revolution and Five Mexican Artists, and the Viking Longhouse. Another section with valuable multicultural content is MarcoGrams. This section highlights lessons on freedom, Hispanic Heritage Month, family history, and globalization. The Featured Lesson Plans section includes lessons on Harlem street games, ancient Olympics, and Shaquille O'Neal. A search for the term "multicultural" turned up 139 lesson plans, including "Native Americans Today," "Exploring Native American and Puritan Cultures," "Greek Mythology," "Responsible Tourism in Nepal," "Legend and Life of Rudolph Nureyev," "Native American Arts," "Inca Artifacts," "Afghan Tribal Diversity," "Fairytale from India," "African Studies," "Latinos in America," "Ellis Island," "Diego Rivera," "Diversity in the Casting of Actors," "Mexican American Murals," "Malaysian Culture," and "Immigration."

Multicultural Lesson Plans & Resources is only updated every few months but has an extensive list of curriculum materials. The site is arranged into 19 major topics: Collections/General Multicultural Lesson Plans, Teaching Tolerance, Art, Literature, Math, Music, Science, Social Studies, Women, Hispanics, African Americans, Civil Rights, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Immigration, Homelessness/Refugees, Jewish Americans, Russian Americans, and Arab Americans/Moslems. Each section has between 6 and 10 lessons. There are a few unique offerings such as "Teaching Tolerance: The People's Attorney" on the life of Louis Brandeis (the first Jewish American on the Supreme Court). Other notable plans include "Changing Attitudes in America," "Multicultural Calendar," "Collage and Romare Bearden," "Islamic Foil Art," "An Introduction to Mexican Art and Culture through the Day of the Dead," "*Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*," "Meet Rosa Parks," "*The House on Mango Street*," "Classic Philippine Folktales about Fruit," "Arna Wendell Bontemps," "Marlys Henke's Cultural Relevance Model," "Herbs in Latin America," "Sojourner Truth," "American Indian Stereotypes," "Booker T. Washington," and "W. E. B. Du Bois."

Multicultural Math Fair is a specialized site with nine major subjects and only 25 lesson plans. The site attempts to underscore the contributions of non-European cultures to math through such plans as "Navajo," "Pyramid," "Nile," "Benjamin Banneker," "Hanoi," "Srinivasa Ramanujan," "Sonya Kovalevskya," and "Mayan Culture."

Jeffco, the Jefferson, Colorado, school district, has collected several multicultural themes dealing with different cultural groups at Multicultural Passport. The site is arranged by

African American, Arab American, Asian American, European American, Latino, and Native American. It is organized by global regions, multicultural content areas, and topics on equity. A general section linked to the American Library Association ([www.ala.org/parents/greatsites/people.html#b](http://www.ala.org/parents/greatsites/people.html#b)) includes 30 useful multicultural links that will help educators understand and locate material on other cultures and their practices.

Lesson Planet is a subsection of Education Planet ([www.educationplanet.com/](http://www.educationplanet.com/)), which is a very slick-looking, professionally designed education portal. It is a subscription-based service that allows free access to about 3,000 of the 20,000 lesson plans on the site. It is a bit tricky to sign up for free access since you go to a payment screen that offers no instruction for the free Bronze Membership. To complete Bronze Membership, you simply do not fill out anything and then click submit with no credit card or personal information attached. Then you go back and log in with user name and password on the home page and gain instant access. The site charges \$9.95 a year for access to the larger 20,000-item collection. It also offers a free 15-day trial membership. The lessons are arranged under arts and music, geography, health, nutrition & sports, lesson directories, language arts, math, online projects, teacher resources, thematic units, science, social studies, technology, featured book, featured software, featured map, and featured video. I looked at a few selected multicultural lessons. Under art and music I found "Chinese Kites," "African American Art," and "How to Recognize a Painting by Frida Kahlo." The search utility allows searches by keyword and grade levels K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12, and higher education. It was one of the few sites that had information geared for college teaching. I was frustrated by the fact that most of the multicultural lessons were in the paid subscription area. Three lesson plans were selected to entice the user to buy the service. A search of "African American" returned 3 free lesson plans with 60 total, "Hispanic" returned 3 free lesson plans with 7 total, "Native American" returned 3 free lesson plans with 96 total, and "Asian American" returned 3 free lesson plans with 5 total. "Multicultural" returned 3 free lessons with 22 total lessons. A close examination indicates that many can be found at nonpaying sites. You are paying for the convenience and ease of use of the web site.

Two very limited sites that overpromote themselves are Teacher's Net Lesson Plans and Teach Net Lesson Plans. Teacher's Net Lesson Plans claims that it has over 1,500 lesson plans "free for the taking." A search of the term "multicultural" produced only 17 hits. I found five of these to be of limited use: "Folktales around the World," "African Theme," "Making a Multicultural Brochure," "Unit on China," and "Multicultural Day." There were a total of six lessons on "Black Americans" with only three of them being of any value: "Famous Black Americans," "Civil Rights Movement," and "A Freedom Unit." A search of the term "Hispanic" returned six lessons with only one, "A Famous Spanish Person," being of much value. Teach Net Lesson Plans is a little bit better but also doesn't have much multicultural content. It has longer, more complete lessons than Teacher's Net, but some of those aren't

as good as sites such as Marco Polo. I was a little concerned that the term "multicultural" was not indexed or included in any way on the site. The term "ethnic" also had only three possibilities, with two complete lessons on "Classical Music" and "A Cornucopia of Traditions." Both sites are more supplemental, providing descriptions of activities rather than complete units. I don't recommend these two sites as primary sources for lessons.

Most of the sites mentioned throughout this article include numerous links to even more lesson plans and web sites. Several contain ideas for improving classroom instruction and making better bulletin boards and displays for schools and libraries. I only covered those sites that I felt had potential for multicultural applications. I hope educators and librarians will take time to explore each site more fully to improve their understanding of multicultural subjects so that they can produce better lesson plans.



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