



Celebration

Thematic Ideas and Plans for Teachers

The following are eight different themes that can be used in Middle or High School classrooms to engage students in various subjects. Literature, Music, History, Visual Art, Science, Math and Activism can all be addressed by using the Registry. This site can provide material to draw from, create from, and explore.

These Unit plans are constructed to make use of the site, to encourage ways of creating lessons that are interdisciplinary, and interactive, while still meeting standards.

So often *teaching from a theme* can be inclusive and deep as opposed to teaching separate units on “black poets” African American music”. In this way we do not “other” a culture, race or community, but weave them into the inclusive world we want to create in our classrooms while still emphasizing the importance of their unique identity.

As you will see, the Registry provides a natural resource into many themes that connect to student lives, concerns and passions.

Note: You can pick or choose among the suggestions for each Thematic Unit. It could be an activity from the Unit that takes one day; or you may want to pick and choose what activities and lessons you want to do that amount to one week of exploration and instruction. The Registry is ideal in its flexibility. These Units aim to be flexible as well.



MDE Social Emotional Goals—All Are Part of Every Unit Plan for the Registry

Self-control of feelings and behavior

Shared use of space and materials

Identify of self in relations to others

Social and emotional understanding

Relationships and social interactions with familiar adults

Relationships and social interactions

Conflict negotiation

Responsible conduct as a group member

Standards Addressed in the Unit: Celebration

Standards addressed in this unit include

Citizenship and Government --Civic Skills, 8.1, 9.1

Geography—9.3,

Historical Thinking Skills—9.

United State History—Indigenous and Slave labor-9.4.4.16.5

United States History—Slaves struggle for rights-9.44.19.4

United States History—Jim Crow –racism 9.4.4.20.5

Language Arts:

Conventions of English when writing or speaking: 6.11.1.1

Consulting Reference Materials 6.11..44

Evaluate Content in Diverse Media 6.5.77

Write Narratives and Other Creative Texts—7.7.3.3- 12 th grade

Prepare for and Participate in range of conversations –7.9.1.1- grade 12

Communicate using traditional or digital multimedia formats—7.9.8.8

Write Narratives and other Creative Texts—9.7.3.3



Theme: Celebration: We often recognize graduations, birthdays, rituals, holidays, weddings and other events in our lives by joining together with others. This unit can come at any time of year and can even be used to encourage students to think of new ways of celebrating. At the end of the unit are some suggestions for a Celebration Project.

Intersections: Music, Literature, Photography, Visual Art, Social Studies, (History)

Age Range: Middle to High School

Goal: Students are often surprised to find out how rich their lives and cultures are. This unit encourages them to look at the idea of celebrating from multiple perspectives. It also instructs students in thinking about small celebrations as well as major holidays: their sister graduates from third grade, their mother brings home ice cream for dinner, the winter is finally over. Students will be encouraged to create their own rituals and celebrations for small and large events. They will be asked to work collaboratively with others to accomplish these celebrations.

Materials: Note taking materials for planning and writing, music with small speakers to listen to celebratory songs, art materials for those students who want to create images to show celebration. If possible, recording devices.

Introducing the Unit:

Reproduce the definitions below and ask students to read them or read them aloud to your class.

Merriam Webster Definition of celebrate: v. to do something special or enjoyable for an important event, occasion, holiday, etc : to praise (someone or something) : to say that (someone or something) is great or important. : to perform (a religious ceremony)

Celebration n.

A celebration is a special enjoyable event that people organize because something pleasant has happened or because it is someone's birthday or anniversary.

I can tell you, there was a celebration in our house that night.

2. singular noun

The celebration of something is praise and appreciation which is given to it.

This was not a memorial service but a celebration of his life.

mid-15c., "to perform publicly with appropriate rites," originally of the Mass, from Latin *celebratus* "much-frequented; kept solemn; famous," past participle of *celebrare* "assemble to honor," also "to publish; sing praises of; practice often," originally "to frequent in great numbers," from *celeber* "frequented, populous, crowded;" with



transferred senses of "well-attended; famous; often-repeated." Its etymology is unknown.

General sense of "commemorate or honor with demonstrations of joy" is from 1550s; formerly it also could be with demonstrations of sorrow or regret. Meaning "make widely known, praise, glorify"

- Ask students to list times when celebrations happen for joyful events: birthdays, winning games, Make a list on the board.
- Ask students to list or call out times when celebrations happened for more solemn occasions: funerals, graduations, religious rituals, expressions of sorrow.
- Give them time in small groups to talk about each category, expand it, find events that fit neither solemn or joyful.

Activities

1. Play Voices That Guide Us: [Kwanzaa Seven Principles](#)

List the 7 principles on Kwanzaa on the board:

Kwanzaa has seven core principles, or Nguzo Saba:

- **Umoja:** Unity
- **Kujichagulia:** Self-Determination
- **Ujima:** Collective Work and Responsibility
- **Ujamaa:** Cooperative Economics
- **Nia:** Purpose
- **Kuumba:** Creativity
- **Imani:** Faith

Assign seven small groups, one for each of the principles.

Ask them to define what each principle means to them.

Have them to list stories from their own life or their parents or community or neighborhood that illustrate the principle they have been assigned.

Create posters for each group with the principle and examples from their own community. Besides Kwanzaa what are other celebrations their religions or cultures have that illustrate the principle?



2. A quick way to ask students to celebrate their own birthdays is to use the **Birthdate function on the Registry**. Ask them to put their birth month and date in the Search engine and they will find a list of people who were born on the same day or locations or episodes that occurred on their birthday. They can pick one of these individuals, locations or episodes and look for more information about their choice. This can be a quick research lesson in using the internet or the books in the media center.

Ask students how they would want their birthday to be celebrated if they could choose anything, any way to celebrate it. This can often be a joyful, even humorous experience for a whole class discussion. A list of their ideas for celebration would be a great outcome of the exercise.

3. On the Registry find [Juneteenth National Freedom Day observed](#). Ask students to read aloud the entry so everyone can understand this holiday.

Put up the poem [Late Winter Blues and Promises of Love](#)

Given what we know about our history, why would African Americans feel they needed a separate “Independence Day”? Ask students to back up their opinions with research and logic.

Have students gather in groups to create a day they would like to see added to the calendar: it could be a humorous idea, (doughnut day) or a serious or solemn one, (Immigrant celebration day). How should it be celebrated? What food? Music? This can be a light- hearted exercise accompanied by the serious instruction to develop an argument grounded in facts and logic for celebrating. This asks them to back up their idea.

Some days are celebrations of a single person, Lincoln’s birthday, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Christmas and Easter celebrate a religious figure, Jesus’ birth and his death and life.

In a more serious and extensive assignment, ask students to write a convincing case for what they think should be added to *national* celebrations. This would be a paper where they must back up their selection with reasons and debates. They will need to research their man or woman, event in history, or contemporary person still living whom they think deserves to be recognized by all in the country.

4. Ask students to think of a wedding they may have gone to or seen portrayed on film. A wedding celebrates the coming together of two people who are committing to each other for life. On separate slips of paper pass out “characters” often found at weddings: Bride, Groom, Mother of the Bride, Father of the Bride, Mother of the Groom, Father of the Groom, Best Man, Bridesmaid#1, Bridesmaid #2, Bridesmaid #3, Bridesmaid #4, Officiator (Minister, Priest, Imam, Rabbi, Justice of the Peace,) Friends



of the bride (1-4) Friends of the Groom(1-4) Cousins and Relatives of both groom and bride.

Ask each student to look at the character on their slip and write a paragraph in the mind of that character. They will have to make this up. They will not know what the others are writing.

After 20 minutes ask students to read what they have written for each character, starting with the Bride. These will be a mixture of points of view at a wedding, and while they will not all “fit” together, students will enjoy the odd juxtapositions that they create.

Read [Lucille Clifton’s Homage to My Hips from the Registry.](#)

Note how the poem dances on the page. Ask students to describe what music, what food, what sounds, and sights will be part of the wedding. “What will your “character” say if they have a chance to toast the Bride or Groom?

Have students draw a picture of the wedding scene, if you want to extend this exercise.

Discuss with them “point of view” in literature.

Extend the idea of point of view to Opinion pages in a newspaper. Ask them to think about the difference between point of view or opinion piece, and a factual piece that describes an event.

5. Pull up [The Debut of the Negro Anthem](#) and the accompanying video with Anton Armstrong from the Registry.

Bring in a recording of “Lift Every Voice and Sing” if you have it. Ask students to talk about times of celebration when they sing with others: In church, with a band, in school, as part of a school musical, at a game, for example. Ask them to write a poem that is lyrics to a song, or a memory of music, or an essay about their connection to music over their life.

6. As a wrap up to this unit on exploration of celebration, both big and small, ask the class to plan a celebration of their own. They can invite friends, relatives, or make it just for themselves. What goes into celebrating? What do they want to recognize as important in their lives, as a group and individually? Some may want to do art work for the celebration. Others may want to put together songs. Some may want to write poems. If you can find it, get a copy of Margaret Walker’s poem “For My People”. This may encourage students to write a celebratory poem for the event. Some may organize food from the different cultures in their classroom. Their imaginations will take this in many directions and challenge their ability to work together, to collaborate and to be inclusive.



7. Pull up [Margaret Walker](#) from the Registry. Read the entry aloud. This is a woman, judging from her story, who celebrated so much in her life. Keep this in mind as you think up celebrations.

8. Look at the Video in Voices that Guide Us of [Bill Cottman, Career Achievements in Photography](#).

In a sense, Bill Cottman is saying he realized he could celebrate those people and events close to him with his camera. Ask students to bring in cameras or phones to photograph their celebration if they have them.

Put up an exhibit of the photos in the days following. Ask students to draw from those photos or paint. Make the celebration and observation a project that uses their imagination, their artistic minds, their planning and organizing abilities.