

Unit Guide

21st Century Natural Disasters: Exploring Children's Experiences

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In this unit, the juxtaposition of children and natural disasters presents an opportunity for upper-elementary students and teachers alike to increase their awareness and understanding of the devastation caused by increasingly horrific natural and weather-related phenomena. It is important to realize that the reason for classifying these weather events as 'disasters' is that they destroy people's lives. Elementary students are beginning to understand the world in which we live, including the suffering which occurs in the lives of other children as well as their own. The 21st century has seen multiple natural disaster events, which the students can choose to research and discuss. Summaries of five recent natural disasters are included in this unit, as well as an extensive bibliography to propel and support the research. The ultimate goal of this curriculum unit is for participants to explore how children have been affected by these events and to determine what can be learned from their experiences. I believe the educators and their pupils will begin to become aware and understand how their peers have been affected by the different devastations, how they coped with their losses and challenges, and how they have become resilient and regained hope. Guiding questions have also been included to assist in the research, leading to a final product and an individual and/or group presentation.