

Thematic Unit Plan

US small communities: Amherst



Rationale:

US information is popular all over the world. It seems we know much about this country: its main cities such as Washington, New York, Los Angeles; its culture and people. But actually it is far from the truth, so as these ones are not all the USA. To help our youth to get real awareness of America, to get its real smell one should get deeper information about small diverse communities such as Amherst, Mass.

This Thematic Unit Plan is supposed to be used as an elective course in terms of American studies.

Student Profile: 16-17 years old, 10th grade. (group of 10-15 students).

Level: pre-intermediate.

Methods: Communicative Approach, Multiple Intelligence Approach, Student-Centered Approach, Critical Thinking Development Approach.

Techniques: brainstorming, elicitation, modeling, internet-based project group work, reading, discussions, meaning negotiation, reviewing, retelling, answering questions, task-based activities, filling gaps, role-plays, grammar exercises.

Material: pictures, films, texts, maps

Topics and vocabulary:

1. Amherst – a small community of Massachusetts: *recreation, pristine, play tribute, sophistication diverse, draw, wilderness;*
2. Historical Roots: *Hadley, to graze, fertile, to venture, to conduct, to govern, to honor, agreement, to grant, precinct*
3. Typical Amherst family.
4. Local Authority
5. Educational Institutions.
6. Attractions.
7. **Assessment:** Formative assessment - peer and group observation, self and peer evaluation, subjective assessment, objective assessment (essays), portfolios, rubrics.

Summative assessment – project work presentation evaluation

Lesson 1.

Theme: Amherst – a small community of Massachusetts.



Seal

Nickname(s): A-town, The Herst

Aim: by the end of the lesson students will be able to discuss general information about the US small community – Amherst.

Objectives:

- cultural awareness of US small communities, its peculiarities that leads to mutual understanding;
- enlarging students' knowledge about US geographical diversity;
- communicative competence of the topic;
- new vocabulary learning: *recreation, pristine, play tribute, sophistication diverse, draw, wilderness;*

Focus on reading, speaking, writing and listening.

Time: 45 min.

Equipment: pictures, text from brochure “Amherst”, internet site – www.amherst.gov

Procedure:

1. Brainstorming

Have your students look at the pictures and give ideas what kind of town Amherst is.

Is the city in the picture big or small? Why do think so?

What can you say about the way of living in a small community?



2. Pre-reading task

Pre-teach your students vocabulary: *recreation, pristine, play tribute, sophistication diverse, draw, wilderness;*

3. Reading task

Get your students read the text and compare their ideas about the communities with the ideas presented in the text:



In the heart of the Pioneer Valley is the town of Amherst, offering rich culture, historic sites, family recreation and pristine beauty.

Amherst is the home of the Emily Dickinson Homestead, the Basset Planetarium, the National Yiddish Book Centre Museum and the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art and the new Amherst

Cinema.

The town is host to more than 2,500 live performances and art shows every year. Evening jazz concerts, Shakespeare dinner theatre, all play tribute to Amherst' sophistication and sense of play.

The major industries are education and agriculture. The Amherst area produces 10,000 college graduates per year and more than 10,000,000 roses! Amherst College, Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts, combined with the nearby Smith and Mt. Holyoke campuses, constitute one of the nation's oldest and most diverse centers of academic excellence... offering public shows, exhibits, lectures, movies, concerts and sporting events.

The town is noted for being progressive and socially conscious, with outspoken citizens bringing national issues to the local level. This independent spirit, combined with good schools, open spaces, and a vibrant intellectual life, has made Amherst a magnet for newcomers.

One of the sweetest draws to this heaven is Nature herself. The town is bordered on the east by the protected wilderness of the Quabbin Reservoir. A short bike ride to the west lays the Connecticut River, the city of Northampton and the beauty of the Berkshire Hills. To the north is historic Deerfield.

4. Post – reading task.

Have your students elicit the information from the text:

1. Where is Amherst situated? Show it on the map.
2. What historical monuments is it famous for?
3. What are Amherst major industries?
4. What places is it boarded with?



1. Extension.

Divide your students into three groups and distribute a chart to each group. Have your students read the opinions of Amherst visitors about the town and make a conclusion what kind of place the community is.

- a. group reading and discussion;
- b. group short presentations of ideas;
- c. class ideas eliciting and making a Venn diagram;
- d. making a general conclusion about the town.

5. Assessment: class observation, reading comprehension evaluation, discussion evaluation (rubric), objective assessment.

6. Home assignment: writing an essay “Amherst: why is it worth visiting?” (support students with the e-film address - www.amherst.gov – “Welcome to Amherst”)

Long - term assignment: divide your students into groups of 3 and distribute the internet – project tasks for them – to find out peculiarities of other US small communities – **Amhersts** that are situated in different states.

Group 1. – General information – geographical position, nature, weather, main industries, attractions. – Amherst, NY

Group 2. – Historical roots (differences and similarities) – Amherst, Maine

Group 3 – Typical Family for this particular area. – Amherst. Ohio

Group 4 - Local Authority (duties, responsibilities, rights) – Amherst, Virginia

Group 5 – Education. – Amherst, Colorado

Links:

- [Amherst, Colorado](#)
- [Amherst, Maine](#)
- [Amherst, Massachusetts](#)
- [Amherst, Nebraska](#)
- [Amherst, New Hampshire](#)
- [Amherst, New York](#), the largest suburb of the city of Buffalo
- [Amherst, Ohio](#)
- [Amherst Township, Lorain County, Ohio](#)
- [Amherst, Texas](#)
- [Amherst, Virginia](#)
- [Amherst County, Virginia](#)
- [Amherst, Wisconsin](#)

Charts:

Group A.



Ann, Belgium

The first time I arrived it looked like Disney World for adults because the buildings are so beautiful and clean, because of the grass, lawns and trees. There is a little town of Amherst where we are in a quite season here. I keep thinking that in a school year they will be very busy. People are very friendly and polite. Everybody is helpful when you ask anything. I think that relates to the point that a lot of foreigners come here. The way the cars stopped struck me as well.



Dai, Japan

I like Amherst because it is a typical American University town. It has history. People are kind. It's small and there are enough shops and restaurants. I like a calm academic atmosphere.

Group B.



Jose, Mexico.

The town is very traditional, a kind of typical American town. Buildings are in an old fashion and style. Quite atmosphere. Everything is green. I like being here – tall trees, very nice and very high.

People are nice, talkative, supportive when you need something.



Snjezana, Croatia

I like Amherst because of very nice buildings. People are very helpful and polite. It has rich history. Being a University and College town it differs from the big cities I've visited like New York or Washington. I like because of lots of facilities – bookshops, restaurants, cinemas. Saturday markets are very good.

Group C.



Alistair, United Kindom.

A very quant new England town. Very academic and middle-class. An example of localism. And not a true reflection of American life. People are very friendly, approachable and helpful. A beautiful

etc. And it is close enough to big cities to go for a weekend.



Mory, Cote D'ivoire

Amherst is a quite, nice, small place. Very interesting. People look open and warm.