

UNIT PLAN BRAINSTORM



All in the Family (English Language Arts, Visual Art, Theater)

Family can look many ways and mean different things to different people. Brainstorm with your students the definition of *family* and what it means to them. Let this spark a conversation about all the kinds of family that exist and what constitutes a family. Some questions to get you started are: *What emotions do you feel when you think of the word family? Where in your life do you find family? How does family treat one another?* Then, shift the focus to who your students consider family. This could be their caregivers, pets, friends or local community. Ask each student to write or illustrate a “family portrait” that includes all the members of who they consider family. For each family portrait, encourage your students to create an accompanying pose or tableau that reminds them of their family or how their family makes them feel. One by one, have your students share their family portrait and their accompanying pose with the class, so everyone can learn about where each other comes from and all the different types of families. Finally, invite your students to take their visual artwork out of the classroom and share it with the people they depicted in their portraits, making sure to tell their unique families how much they mean to them.

To support this unit, use the [My Chosen Family Creativity Page](#) in the Discover and Create section.

The Elephants in the Room (Science, Theater)

There are three different types of elephants: African Savanna, African Forest and Asian. Embark on a class research project to learn more about each type of elephant and what these incredible animals can do. Some topics to explore are: the foods elephants eat, where they live and how they communicate with each other. Be sure to research what makes the three species of elephants different from each other and the unique features of each species! Once your students have researched all about elephants, bring them to life right in the classroom. Have each student create an elephant character and name. Make sure that they specify which species of elephant their character is. Once they’ve created their elephant, let them come up with a backstory for their animal inspired by their research. Some questions to inspire them are: *What does your elephant like to eat? What does your elephant like to do? Do they have large or small ears? Do they have tusks?* Now, it’s time to get on your feet and embody them! As a class, practice walking like an elephant, thinking about an elephant’s weight, size and mannerisms. Next, have your students adjust their movements to fit their elephant’s character. Have them mime eating, drinking water and playing in the mud! Finally, transform your classroom into a watering hole, and have all the students’ elephants interact with each other and exist in their natural habitat.

To support this unit, use the [A Stuffy Story with Cuddly Characters Activity](#) in the Respond and Connect section.

One Person’s Trash... (Science, Visual Art)

All of the puppets in *Aanika’s Elephants* are made out of recyclable materials! Build a work of art and help the planet at the same time by inspiring your class to craft using only found resources. Start with a class discussion about the importance of recycling and what it can do for the environment. Then, gather recyclable materials in your classroom such as newspaper, popsicle sticks, empty tissue boxes or old binders. They can even venture outside the classroom by examining what could be reused at your school, in your students homes or in your community. After they’ve gathered their materials, put your students into pairs and have them build a three-dimensional shape, or sculpture, by gluing or taping different materials together. Since *Aanika’s Elephants* centers on family and home, have the pairs construct something that reminds them of their family or where they come from. This could be an object that reminds them of their home or just a shape that conveys how their family makes them feel! Start small by trying to build a sculpture with only three or five different materials. Then, have pairs team up to see if they can attach their sculptures to each other’s and build something bigger! Keep growing the groups and the scale of the sculptures until you can attach every pair’s object to form one giant creation as a class! Now this mega sculpture has a piece of every student’s family and home living inside it. Give your sculpture a safe home in your classroom and use it as inspiration for storytelling or as a reminder of where your class comes from.

To support this unit, use the [Standing for Something Creativity Page](#) in the Respond and Connect section.