
Multimedia Review: Multicultural Websites

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BSU Electronic Field Trips www.bsu.edu/eft/home/00front.htm

Since 1996, Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana has developed fifty electronic field trips, many with cultural diversity themes, which have been accessed by 80 million students. Each web-based electronic field trip has four components: 1) webisodes; 2) website; 3) classroom activities; and 4) a 90-minute live broadcast with an interactive option. The websites have two perspectives: a student's side and a teacher's side. Currently BSU offers six fee-based electronic field trips (EFT) per year aimed at K-12 students. Each field trip is coordinated with a national museum. In their database of 50 field trips, there are eight or more culturally diverse topics:

- [Listening To Our Ancestors](#): Native people of the North Pacific coast
- [Desert Diamonds Behind Barbed Wire](#): WWII Internment camps for Japanese Americans
- [Sharing Perspectives at the National Museum of the American Indian](#): Includes a visit to the American Indian Museum in Washington, DC
- [Holocaust Museum—Exploring Our Daily Decision Making](#): Includes a visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC
- [Dirt on Their Skirts—150 Years of Pioneers in Women's Baseball](#): The history of the women's professional baseball league (1943-1954)
- [Untold Stories Baseball and the Multicultural Experience](#): Baseball players of color
- [Over the Line—The Art and Life of Jacob Lawrence](#): A Black artist who explored life in America
- [African Voices, Parts 1 & 2](#): African cultural values and traditions

The BSU site requires a membership fee to join an electronic field trip. The fees depend on the length of time and choice of materials. For \$75 an educator can access all websites of past trips, and \$40 will purchase access to new programs for one year. There are \$20-\$40 program packages that include a VHS tape, DVD, access to a website, or combinations of materials.

The Spring 2008 program for grades K-5 is entitled *Flying Objects on the National Mall* and is offered in collaboration with the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. The program concludes with two live 90-minute broadcasts on Tuesday, April 1, 2008.

The appearance and navigation of the BSU Electronic Field Trips website is simple and intuitive. The color contrasts are acceptable but there are compliance issues. The homepage does not comply with all of the automatic and manual checkpoints of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and HTML markup. As of November 10, 2007 the website was updated 5 days earlier.

A Web Guide for Black Parents

www.lulu.com/content/459061

This e-book, written by LaShanda Henry, includes more than 200 Afro-centric and multicultural websites for Black parents, students, children, and educators. The e-book includes topical lists of current educational self-help websites:

- Black Parenting Online: Websites that focus on Black parenting of Black children, Black mothers, Black fathers, and Black maternity.
- Black Homeschoolers: A list of websites that focus on Black, African American homeschoolers, support groups, online resources, and literary publications.
- Teaching Black Students: Websites that contain Afro-centric educational materials and lesson plans for Black homeschoolers and educators of Black students.
- Teaching Black History: Websites that focus on educating others about Black and African American History.
- Teaching about Africa: A list of websites to help others learn and teach about Africa, African culture, and historical African events.
- All about Kwanzaa: Websites with information, resources, products, and online activities about Kwanzaa.
- African and African American Folktales Online: A list of websites about collecting and displaying African and African American folktales.
- Afro-centric, Multicultural Online Games and Activities: Websites about hosting online games and activities with Afro-centric and multicultural themes.
- Afro-centric, Multicultural Online Resources: Websites that focus on promoting or selling Afro-centric, multicultural products, services, and resources.
- Blicks: Black Flicks for Families & Kids: Information about high quality Black movies, short films, and animated cartoons for Black families to enjoy online or purchase in DVD and VHS format.

- Black Bookstores: Afro-centric literature for children and teens and websites that feature Black books for young children and teens.
- College Preparation for Minority Students: Websites about books, guides, scholarships, and other resources for minority students preparing for college.
- Black Teenpreneurs & Career Planning for Minority Students: Websites that foster teen entrepreneurship among Black youth and provide career planning resources and economic opportunities for minority students.
- General Black Resources Online: Websites that offer Black resources with youth orientated content.
- Black Freebies Online for Families and Children: Information about websites that offer freebies to Black online users.

A *Web Guide for Black Parents* can be purchased online for \$9.95 at www.lulu.com/content/459061

Arthur and Friends

<http://pbskids.org/arthur/index.html>

ARTHUR is an animated series on PBS Kids television (<http://pbskids.org/>) for children ages four to eight years. Approximately 3.3 million viewers watch ARTHUR each month. The programs develop an interest in reading, writing, and social skills. The animated television program ARTHUR began in 1996 and is based on Marc Brown's book for children. Arthur is an eight-year-old aardvark who deals with life issues facing his age group. There are many humorous situations, with twists and turns in the plots all written from a child's perspective. Some parents and educators object to anthropomorphic cartoon characters dealing with issues of diversity in a social context as they separate reality from fantasy. Writers and producers prefer these characters as they do not age, can be placed in impossible situations, and quickly recover from scripted dilemmas. Developmental psychologists are more interested in whether these stories help children move on to another stage in their lives than the use of animated cartoon animals in human situations. The website (<http://pbskids.org/arthur/index.html>) contains online and printable educational games, lesson plans, and links to books. The selection of lesson plans and teacher guides includes:

- [Arthur's Communication Adventure](#)
- [Arthur's Guide to Media Literacy](#)
- [Arthur's Music Jamboree](#)
- [Arthur's World Neighborhood](#)
- [Hooray for Health](#)
- [Learn to Read with Arthur](#)
- [Play and Learn with Arthur](#)
- [Story Writing with Arthur](#)

These activities are appropriate for children between the ages of four and eight with an emphasis on early and emergent literacy. While each episode is related to a theme these, ten activities can be completed alone.

- [Art](#)
- [Creative Thinking & Problem Solving](#)
- [Diversity Appreciation & Understanding](#)
- [Dramatic Play & Creative Movement](#)
- [Language & Literacy](#)
- [Life Skills](#)
- [Math](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Science & Health](#)[Social & Emotional Development](#)

The website also contains ancillary activities that support these lesson plans:

- [Arthur at the Library](#): suggestions for school librarians.
- [Parent Guides \(English\)](#): current topical guides for parents.
- [Parent Guides \(Spanish\)](#): current topical guides for parents translated into Spanish.
- [Tips on Reading with Children](#): suggestions that encourage children to become lifelong readers.
- [Favorite Books](#): a list of favorite books recommended by a character in an ARTHUR episode.

The appearance and navigation of the PBS website *Arthur and Friends* is somewhat cluttered but intuitive with vertical and horizontal dropdown menus. There are compliance issues. The homepage does not comply with all of the automatic and manual checkpoints of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and the HTML markup. The foreground and background colors do not always have sufficient contrast as is common in animated cartoons. As of November 10, 2007 the website did not post the date and time of the latest update.