

THE ARTS, SOCIAL STUDIES, TECHNOLOGY, CONSUMER, FAMILY AND LIFE SKILLS,  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

# The Families Left Behind: A Comparison between Homer's Odyssey and Deployed National Guard Troops

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**Teaching Team:**

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**School:** Teaneck HS, Teaneck

**Grade Levels:**

English 9 Honors

Intro. to TV Production, 9-12

**Project Description:** Students in English 9 H will draw connections between classical literature (*The Odyssey*) and the modern world by focusing on universal themes such as leaving one's family to go to war. Students will explore this theme by interviewing National Guard troops and their families and offering their service to families affected by deployment. The TV Production class will capture the footage and interview students, troops, families and faculty to produce a documentary on service learning.

**Target Audience:** Families of deployed National Guard Troops

**Timeline:** English 9H: first week in September through mid-November. TV Production: mid-October through mid-Spring. The service projects will be on-going.

**Project Scheduling:** Class time, some after school and weekends.

**Equipment Needed:** Digital and video cameras, editing equipment, children's books, posters, markers, children's board games, paper products, party favors, gifts, refreshments, bus transportation.

**Academic Focus/**

**Core Curriculum Standards:**

The Arts (Visual and Performing) 1.1, 1.2

Comprehensive Health and Physical Education 2.2

Language Arts Literacy 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5

Mathematics 4.5

Social Studies 6.1, 6.2, 6.6

World Languages 7.1

Technology 8.1B

**Academic Focus** - Through compare and contrast analysis, students analyze the text to elicit themes, and then draw conclusions that the themes are more similar to, rather than dissimilar to those of today. In essence, they realize that the themes are universal and that the literature is still relevant.

**Visual and Performing Arts** - Students will demonstrate knowledge, skills, creation and performance creating a documentary or scrapbook.

**Health & PE** - students learn responsibility and how to advocate for others.

**Language Arts Literacy** - English 9 students utilize reading comprehension skills in understanding the work and listening and speaking skills in collaborating with one another and National Guard troops and families. The Intro. To TV Production class will utilize listening and speaking skills and master media literacy as they create a service-learning documentary.

**Mathematics** - Understanding the Family Assistance Center's problems and developing programs to alleviate them.

**Consumer, Family & Life Skills**  
9.1A, 9.2A, 9.2C, 9.2D

**Core Ethical Values:**

Respect, responsibility, caring, empathy, civic mindedness

**Hurdles Encountered:**

**Hurdles** scheduling conflicts among classes, National Guard, reporters, and the English unit time frame

**Solution** scheduled all activities far in advance and received input from all parties

**Celebration:** We will have a party for the students. They will be recognized by the Board of Ed., veterans' groups and the community.

**Recognition:** The entire project is being covered by local newspapers and publicized on the district website. Students will also be recognized by the Teaneck Board of Education

**Key Findings:** This was a new project and the students found it personally rewarding as well as educational. They became much more sensitive to the needs of those less fortunate and what they can do to help them.

**Social Studies** - Develop skills, civic responsibility, and learn about the Middle East.

**World Languages**- Students develop communication skills.

**Technology** - Students will learn to use TV production equipment.

**Consumer, Family & Life Skills** - Students show critical thinking, and self management in making choices, and ethical values by showing empathy and compassion for others.

**Educational Strategies:**

**Performance-based Education** - Students will create a documentary

**Cooperative Learning** - Students work together inside and outside the classroom to develop service programs for the Family Assistance Center. Some will create children's weekly reading and crafts programs while other focus on holiday parties and helping the food pantry.

**Interdisciplinary Approach** - English and TV production classes will work together and the journalism class will cover the story for the school newspaper

**Personal Growth Outcomes:**

Combining a needed service and academic standards is a goal of this project. By connecting with those in need and experiencing first hand testimony, students develop a sense of responsibility, good citizenship and a desire to continue the habit of helping others.

**Community Involvement:** The students brought public awareness to the work and needs of the Family Assistance Center.

**Parents and Volunteer Involvement:**

Family Assistance Center volunteers worked with students to develop children's programs. In the spring the students will give a presentation to the PTO and veterans' groups.

**Reflection Activities:**

Written and oral reflection; a carousel activity to reflect in small groups by navigating through a series of questions; multiple-genre scrapbook for a deeper personal reflection.

**Means of Assessment:**

By poetry, music, illustration and writing. The scrapbook will show what was learned about service learning and how this specific experience changed or confirmed their perceptions. The TV students' documentary and the new service programs for the families will be evaluated, and all students will complete a post project survey, and which skills it developed.