



Essential Values Woven Through Hispanic Literature:

Discovering the Soul of the People

Goals 2000 - Partnerships for
Educating Colorado Students

In Partnership with the **Denver Public Schools**
and the **Metropolitan State College of Denver**

El Alma de la Raza Project



Essential Values Woven Through Hispanic Literature:

Discovering the Soul of the People

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Grades 8-10

Implementation Time
for Unit of Study: 5-6 weeks

Goals 2000 - Partnerships for
Educating Colorado Students
El Alma de la Raza Curriculum
and Teacher Training Project

Loyola A. Martinez, Project Director

El Alma de la Raza Series

Essential Values Woven Through Hispanic Literature: Discovering the Soul of the People

Unit Concepts

- Introduce reasons for sensitivity to the names: Hispanic, Latino, Mexican-American, and Chicano.
- Define essential values: respect, responsibility, trust, sense of family, and caring.
- Analyze the values of characters in Hispanic literature through their motivations, actions, and judgments.
- Compare personal and cultural values to those revealed in literature.
- Provide, through literature and art, a cultural context for identifying the crucial problems facing adolescents.
- Examine how culture influences values.
- Develop a sense of “roots” and a personal story through Hispanic literature and art.

Standards Addressed by This Unit

Reading and Writing:

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students will write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Visual Art:

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication. (A1)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (A4)

Introduction

In light of the alarming dropout rate among Hispanic youth, educators need to empower these young people to stay in school, to acquire the skills to become economically and emotionally self-sufficient, and to cultivate the love of life-long learning. Through the exploration of Latino literature, at-risk youth can often see themselves, reflect on their rich heritage, and appreciate their own identities through the souls of their people. Essential values are expressed through the Latino novels explored in this unit: family, respect, trust, and responsibility. While students are intrigued with the conflicts, plots, and struggles, they are extrapolating and reflecting on the strong values of each selection.

After experimenting with their identities through readings, discussions, reflections, and art, students begin reading the works of a strong Chicano writer: Sandra Cisneros. A nonfiction piece, a few short stories, and her novel, *The House on Mango Street*, will be read in class while another Latino novel will be read independently. Students will choose from the following: *¡Yo!* by Julia Alvarez, *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, or *The Memories of Ana Calderon* by Graciela Limon.

Implementation Guidelines

It is recommended that this unit be taught in a high school Hispanic-American Literature course; however, it could be adapted for use in the eighth grade. Through Hispanic literature, students have an opportunity to discover how others have resolved conflicts, internal and external, and to evaluate the impact of personal decisions. The lessons incorporate real-life conflicts facing adolescents today. This unit contains a short questionnaire entitled “Student Self-Reflection” that involves the student’s self-assessment and evaluation of the unit. It can be found at the end of this unit.

Resources

- Lesson 2 *Mexican American Literature*, edited by Charles Tatum
- Lesson 3 *¡Yo!* by Julia Alvarez
Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya
The Memories of Ana Calderon by Graciela Limon
- Lesson 4 *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
- Lesson 5 *Mexican American Literature*, edited by Charles Tatum

Lesson Summary

- Lesson 1 Establishing a Sense of Ethnicity
 Ethnic labels and how they relate to personal identity. Valuing diversity.
- Lesson 2 “Ghosts and Voices” by Sandra Cisneros
 Themes of identity in an essay by Sandra Cisneros. Main ideas, metaphors,
 and similes. Creating covers for journals that express personal identity.
- Lesson 3 Evaluating Conflict, Family, Respect, Trust, and Responsibility
 Independent reading of a novel. Identifying literary elements and cultural
 values. Essays and oral presentations.
- Lesson 4 *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
 Reading vignettes, writing in a daily reflective journal, and maintaining a
 characterization chart. Creating setting webs and dramas. Watching a movie
 and creating a *piñata*.
- Lesson 5 “Three Wise Guys” by Sandra Cisneros
 Flashback technique and tone in a short story. Writing an interpretive essay
 and creating a mural.

Lesson 1: Establishing a Sense of Ethnicity

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students use comprehension strategies.

Students make connections between prior knowledge and what they need to know about a topic before reading about it.

Students use correct sentence structure in writing.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will understand how people identify their ethnicity and that it is a personal choice.

Students will comprehend and be sensitive to the terms: Latino, Hispanic, Mexican-American, and Chicano.

Students will reflect on their ethnicity.

SPECIFICS

“Mexican-Americans” is a term that describes Americans whose heritage stems from Mexico.

“Latino” is a Spanish word for Latin, generally used to identify persons of Latin American descent or who speak Spanish. “Hispanic” was adopted in the 1970s by the U.S. government to identify persons of Spanish background. “Chicano” describes people with Native American and Mexican backgrounds.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teacher-directed discussion

Read aloud

Graphic organizer

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Teacher should review the article “La Raza—Identify Yourself,” noting the opinion poll, statistics, and ethnic terms and make a key for the handout “Double Column Notes.” Teacher should also refer to *Read/Write Connection* or some other reading/writing model.

Lesson 1 (cont.)

ACTIVITIES

Taking turns reading aloud “La Raza—Identify Yourself,” completing as a group the Double Column Notes worksheet. With a partner, share which, if any, of these terms best describe you. If none of the terms describe you, share what ethnic classification you would use to describe yourself. If you are not comfortable being described with an ethnic label, discuss why. Finally, discuss how your family may have influenced your opinion about these ethnic classifications. Returning to the whole group, discuss what you learned about yourself and your partner and how the group’s diversity may be valued and respected. Review notes and write and title a paragraph about your ethnicity, using grammatically correct language.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

“La Raza—Identify Yourself” by George Pappas, June 1993. *Larasa/Report*. Latin American Research and Service Agency, 899 Logan Street, Suite 400, Denver, CO 80203.

Read/Write Connection by Maureen Auman

Double Column Notes worksheet

ASSESSMENT

Use teacher-generated key to evaluate Double Column Notes worksheet. Assess paragraph for main idea, supporting detail, and correct grammar.

Lesson 2: “Ghosts and Voices” by Sandra Cisneros

What will students learn?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand a variety of material. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication. (A1)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students use comprehension strategies.

Students evaluate the reliability, accuracy, and relevancy of information.

Students utilize elements of art, principles of design, and style to create a piece of art.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will understand main idea, metaphor, and simile.

Students will reflect on their “ghost” and write about it as a part of their identity.

Students will comprehend that people can think differently about the same information because of different backgrounds and experiences.

Students will create a reflective journal cover that expresses who they are.

SPECIFICS

Sandra Cisneros, the only girl among six brothers, was born in Chicago in 1954 to a Mexican father and a Mexican-American mother. She writes powerful poems and stories about her childhood, her experiences on both sides of the border, and women’s issues.

What will be done to help students learn?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Questioning

Journaling

Drawing conclusion

Creativity

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Teacher should become familiar with Sandra Cisneros, her works, background, style, and voice. Prepare metaphor and simile examples. Read “Ghosts and Voices: Writing from Obsession” in *Mexican American Literature*, edited by Charles Tatum, p. 335. Pay particular attention to the four elements of her theme: ghosts, writing, obsession, and voices. Prepare a key with examples of each from the essay. Familiarize yourself with the Critical Thinking worksheet. Create an example of a reflective journal cover that expresses identity through color, design, and style.

Lesson 2 (cont.)

ACTIVITIES

Respond to this question in a reflective journal: Have you ever dreamed or fantasized about living in another house or being another person? Explain, using personal accounts. Listen as the teacher explains the concepts of main idea or thesis, metaphor, and simile. Taking turns, read aloud “Ghosts and Voices: Writing from Obsession” in *Mexican American Literature*, p. 335.

Discover and write down metaphors and similes within the selection and create several of your own, changing metaphors to similes and visa versa. While you listen and read, discern and then write down the four elements of Cisneros’ thesis. Reflecting back on your journal, are there any similarities between your background and that of Sandra Cisneros? Share your response with a partner, and then rejoin the group for shared discussion. Complete the Critical Thinking worksheet. Discuss responses as a group. Thinking about your identity, create a cover for your reflective journal, appreciating your “ghosts,” background, “voice,” and experiences. Using tag board, markers, crayons, hole punch, yarn, and ruler, create a unique journal cover that expresses your identity; once completed, place all work and extra notebook paper in your journal.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Mexican American Literature, edited by Charles Tatum

Critical Thinking worksheet

8" × 10" tag board

markers

crayons

hole punch

rulers

ASSESSMENT

Use teacher-generated key to evaluate main idea, metaphor, and simile. Assess informal class discussion and sharing. Critique journal cover for thought and process.

Critical Thinking Worksheet

Below are words and phrases associate with Latinos. For each, identify why someone might have a positive value for it and why someone might have a negative value for it.

	Why someone might think positively	Why someone might think negatively
Hispanic		
Mexican-American		
Chicano		
Obsession		
Migratory Life		

Critical Thinking Worksheet (cont.)

Below are words and phrases associate with Latinos. For each, identify why someone might have a positive value for it and why someone might have a negative value for it.

	Why someone might think positively	Why someone might think negatively
“Third Floor Flats”		
Poverty		
Immigrant		
Family		
Latino		

Lesson 3: Evaluating Conflict, Family, Respect, Trust, and Responsibility

What will students learn?

STANDARD(S)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students read literature to investigate common issues and interests in relation to self and others.

Students read classic and contemporary literature of the United States about experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups.

Students recognize, express, and defend points of view orally and in writing.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will read a novel independently.

Students will understand conflict, plot, climax, and resolution.

Students will comprehend the Latino values of family, trust, respect, and responsibility and identify examples in Latino literature.

SPECIFICS

Alvarez, Julia. *¡Yo!*: A sparkling novel about an author who writes about her family with insight and honesty, achieves fame, and then must deal with the conflicts and consequences of her actions. It is a beguiling glimpse into daughterhood, friendship, sisterhood, and fame.

Anaya, Rudolfo A. *Bless Me, Ultima: A Novel*: Seven-year-old Antonio Marez is awed by Ultima, the local *curandera* (faith healer) who comes to live out her life with his family. When Ultima becomes the subject of a witch hunt, the conflicts begin. It's a powerful adventure; Antonio struggles to comprehend his relationship with his family, with this community, and with Ultima.

Limon, Graciela. *The Memories of Ana Calderon*: A captivating peek into unforgiving destiny. When her mother dies in childbirth, Ana must assume parental responsibilities, leaving her carefree childhood behind. Through discord, conflict, and deep conviction, she struggles toward self-fulfillment and independence.

Lesson 3 (cont.)

What will be done to help students learn?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Independent reading
Small group instruction
Cause and effect
Reflective response
Evaluating and drawing conclusions

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Teacher should become familiar with the independent reading activity instructions and format which follows and should read the three novels.

ACTIVITIES

After receiving the Independent Reading Packet, follow along as the teacher explains the directions, the time allotment, and the overviews of the three Latino novel choices. Listen carefully as the teacher reviews and discusses conflict, family, trust, respect, responsibility, plot, climax, and resolution and how these elements will be found in each novel. Examine the novel selections and make a choice; then gather with the others reading your book and discuss the timetable.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

¡Yo by Julia Alvarez
Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya
The Memories of Ana Calderon by Graciela Limon
Independent Reading Packet

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the Independent Reading Packet for completeness, reflectiveness, and an understanding of the key concepts.

Independent Reading Packet

Directions: Select one of the three novels to read outside of class. As you read, extract quotes (does not have to have quotation marks) from the novel that fit the different categories. The excerpt may be a sentence, a paragraph, or a few words, but each must be explained thoroughly in your response column. On Fridays, there will be 45 minutes to meet with others who have chosen the same novel as you. Each group will decide how many pages must be read between Fridays. After the four weeks, you will present one of your essays to the class or you may collaborate with a member of your group for a combined essay presentation. Use your critical thinking skills, be creative, and have fun.

Name:

Novel Chosen:

Starting Date:

Week 1: Pages to be read _____ to _____.

Week 2: Pages to be read _____ to _____.

Week 3: Pages to be read _____ to _____.

Week 4: Pages to be read _____ to _____.

Ending Date:

Independent Reading Packet (cont.)

Conflict

Example of conflict with page number

Type of conflict; cause and effect

1.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Compare one of these conflicts with a conflict in your life or a conflict facing teens today. Use expository essay form employing standard usage, punctuation, and spelling.

Independent Reading Packet (cont.)

***Familia* (Family)**

Excerpt that displays *Familia*
with page number

Personal interpretation/response

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

***Mi Familia:* Write a personal reflection, using examples from your experiences.**

Independent Reading Packet (cont.)

Respeto (Respect)

Excerpt that shows *Respeto* with page number

Personal interpretation/response

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Explore these questions: Is there a lack of respect for students with a Latino background? Is there stereotyping? Identify a set of assumptions and their underlying reasons. Write a persuasive essay.

Independent Reading Packet (cont.)

Confianza (Trust)

Examples of
confianza with page number

Personal interpretation/response

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Deeply rooted *confianza* fortifies lasting relationships. Write a reflective journal entry analyzing why trust was present or not present in different situations. Use your own personal experiences as examples.

Independent Reading Packet (cont.)

Responsibilidad (Responsibility)

Examples of *responsibilidad*
with page numbers

Personal interpretation/response

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Caring students take *responsibilidad*. Accepting responsibility is a sign of maturity: it was my fault, my choice, or my honor. When you consider reasons for taking responsibility, it is useful to consider the reasons someone may not take responsibility. Create a scenario that shows a lack of responsibility; develop a plot, climax, and resolution. For this creative writing piece, you may use a scene from your novel as the idea.

Lesson 4: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students apply thinking skill to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students read classic and contemporary literature of the United States about experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups.

Student identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of a speaker, author, or director.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will appreciate the Latino culture through literature and films.

Students will comprehend setting, characterization, and a sense of “place.”

Students will create a *piñata*.

Students will role play a vignette of their choice

SPECIFICS

The House on Mango Street is a collection of 44 vignettes written from the point of view of Esperanza Cordero, a Mexican-American girl who recently moved to a poor Latino *barrio* in Chicago with her parents. Esperanza’s conflicts center around desperation, poverty, and guilt. Esperanza’s desire to escape Mango Street combined with guilt about turning her back on her family, values and culture is a major theme.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Characterization chart

Write a letter

Role play

Reflective journals

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Teacher should read *The House on Mango Street*, research biographical information about Sandra Cisneros, preview the three films, and select one to show the class. Teacher should experiment with making a *piñata*. This lesson includes daily reflective journals. Some sample reflection topics are included. The activities in this lesson span several weeks, and they should not be rushed as the vignettes are rich with culture and personal history.

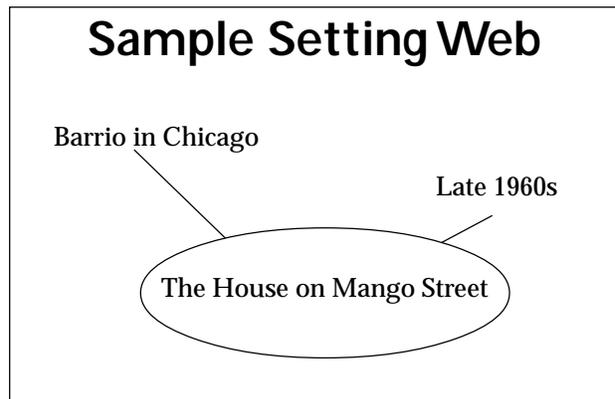
Lesson 4 (cont.)

ACTIVITIES

Complete your daily reflective journal. Listen to the teacher-guided discussion about Sandra Cisneros and explanation of how to maintain the Characterization Chart. Read the first 18 vignettes aloud with the class, taking turns.

Let the teacher read some aloud as well. Stop after each vignette and discuss the *implied* significance as it is often not directly stated. Note that these short literary sketches deal primarily with Esperanza, her family, and their home on Mango Street. Stop on page 43.

Produce a setting web. Share your web with a partner. Review your Characterization Chart, noting Esperanza's sense of Latino family, her conflicts, the stereotyping, and her hopefulness. Read the next ten vignettes in small groups, discussing, after each vignette, the world beyond Mango Street, her search for a new home, and her values surrounding family, respect, trust, and responsibility. Maintain your Characterization Chart. Stop on page 72.



Listen as your teacher demonstrates the techniques of role playing. Then with a partner or small group prepare a role play of one of the first 28 vignettes. You may add creative script, music, or props. Present your drama to the class. Read the next six vignettes with a partner, once again stopping after each to note the people around Esperanza and their conflicts. Stop on page 86.

Read the next three vignettes, which reveal a lot about Esperanza's family and her relationship with them. Esperanza doesn't wish to be like other young women who are simply waiting for a man to come along; notice how her emotional strength is emerging. Stop on page 92. Write a letter to Esperanza expressing your feelings about her conflicts, values, and dreams. In your letter, share a personal struggle with her.

Quietly read the next four vignettes to yourself, reflecting on the social issues revealed and Esperanza's emerging maturity. How is she changing? Complete your Characterization Chart.

With a partner, read the final four vignettes. Does Esperanza accept Mango Street? Does she appreciate her background as a springboard for her future? Will she leave Mango Street? Will her culture, values, experiences, and family remain alive in her heart? Discuss these questions with your partner and then participate in a whole class, teacher-guided discussion.

Watch the movie selected by the teacher. Be prepared to compare/contrast the family in the Latino community as shown in the movie with what you learned from the novel.

Create a *piñata*. Listen carefully to the teacher's instructions. Be creative and have fun.

Lesson 4 (cont.)

Directions for *piñatas*:

1. Cut the colorful tissue paper into strips, approximately 9 inches long and 4 inches wide. Cut 2-inch fringes along the width of each strip. Use 8 to 9 strips per *piñata*.
2. Add candy to the cups and then tape the two styrofoam or paper cups together at the rims.
3. Overlap the strips of tissue paper, beginning at one end of the *piñata* and working in one direction only, either top to bottom or bottom to top. You are trying to create fullness with the fringes of the tissue paper strips.
4. Loop the string or ribbon and tape the two ends together in the center at the top of your *piñata*.

Materials for *piñatas*:

candy
colorful tissue paper in many bright colors
scissors
colorful string or ribbon
paper cups, 2 per student
tape

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

Characterization Chart; students will continue on, writing about all 44 vignettes

Reflective Journal Ideas

Peer Assessment

One of these movies:

Like Water for Chocolate. Director Alfonso Arau. Rated R. 105 minutes.

A Walk in the Clouds. Director Alfonso Arau. Rated PG-13. 102 minutes.

Mi Familia. Producer Frances Ford Coppola. Rated R. 134 minutes.

La Bamba. Director Luis Valdez. Rated PG-13. 103 minutes.

Materials for *piñatas* (see above)

ASSESSMENT

Active participation is vital; therefore, each student should use the Peer Assessment form to assess their peers on the following: active listening, insightful contributions, respectfulness, and attitude.

Reflective Journal Ideas

- Day 1: *Lo que a tus padres hicieres, tus hijos haran contigo.* (What goes around comes around.) Explain this *dicho*, using an example from your experience.
- Day 2: *Amor con amor se paga.* (If you give love, you will receive love. —Jose Martí) Express your opinion about this *dicho*. Have you ever given love and not had it returned?
- Day 3: *Quien canta, sus males espanta.* (Sing away your troubles.) Does having a cheerful attitude during the difficult times help? Explain.
- Day 4: *De tal palo, tal astilla.* (A chip off the old block.) Thinking about your parents and you, explain how this *dicho* is true or untrue.
- Day 5: *Cada oveja con su pareja.* (Every sheep with its kind. Birds of a feather flock together.) Should families always stick together? Reflect on your family and give an example.
- Day 6: Reflecting on your family, which value was the most important during your elementary years? How was this value modeled?
- Day 7: Interpret this saying: When you hate, the only person you hurt is yourself because the ones you hate don't know and those that do, don't care.
- Day 8: "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart." Do you agree with this Anne Frank quote?
- Day 9: As humans, we always have two choices, two roads to take; one is easy, but its only reward is that it *is* easy. Explain about a time when you opted to take the easy path.
- Day 10: Imagine that you can change one thing about your family. What would you change? Predict the results of this change.
- Days 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: Complete these sentence stems:
- I feel energetic when...
 - I feel truly appreciated by my family when...
 - I feel whimsical when...
 - I feel respected when...
 - I feel like trusting (person) when...

Characterization Chart

Protagonist: Esperanza Cordero

Vignette

Descriptive detail about her family, friends, values, conflicts, culture, or decisions

1. "The House on Mango Street"

2. "Hairs"

3.

Characterization Chart

Protagonist: Esperanza Cordero (page 2)

Vignette

Descriptive detail about her family, friends, values, conflicts, culture, or decisions

4.

5.

Peer Assessment

Rate each peer from 1-5; 5 being "poor" to 1 being "excellent."

Student's Name	Active listening	Insightful Contributions	Respectfulness	Attitude

Lesson 5: “Three Wise Guys” by Sandra Cisneros

What will students learn?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand a variety of material. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication. (A1)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students use comprehension strategies.

Students evaluate the reliability, accuracy, and relevancy of information.

Students utilize elements of art, principles of design and style to create a piece of art.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will understand that the customs in Mexico may be different from the traditions in their families.

Students will recognize the flashback technique and tone.

Students will write a summary of the story and a short essay analyzing ambiguity.

Students will create a class mural which expresses their unique personalities.

What will be done to help students learn?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Questioning

Journaling

Summarizing

Analyzing

Creativity

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Teacher should become familiar with the Day of the Three Kings (January 6), and with the murals of Diego Rivera.

ACTIVITIES

Reflective Journal: Reflect on the excitement you feel as you anticipate a gift on a birthday or special holiday, and then write about the most unexpected gift you ever received, the most practical gift, and the most inappropriate gift. Listen as the teacher discusses the Day of the Three Kings. How are your customs different from those in Mexico? Listen as your teacher reads the first three paragraphs of “Three Wise Guys: Un Cuento de Navidad/A Christmas Story” by Sandra Cisneros in *Mexican American Literature*, edited by Charles Tatum, page 331. Follow along or volunteer to read as the class reads the story. *The House on Mango Street* is a first-person narrative while this story is written from a more detached third-person point of view. What is the tone of this short piece?

Lesson 5 (cont.)

Write a summary of this story. Then write a short expository essay analyzing the possible interpretations of the title. Writers often use deliberate ambiguity in their work to leave the meaning open to numerous interpretations. Does this title have several possible meanings? Be careful to use correct grammar.

Diego Rivera told stories of the Mexican people and their struggles for an easier life. Listen as your teacher shares more about this gifted artist. Think about what you've learned about yourself while exploring the works of Sandra Cisneros and while reading your independent novel. Do you honor your background? Do you realize your potential? Do you understand your sense of family and values? As a class we will create a "Discovering Our Souls" mural. Think about your "soul." What shape do you see? What colors? Practice on paper before you put your final "soul" on the 8" × 10" cardboard. Glue your creation along with your classmates' art on the large piece of fabric which the teacher has provided. Be proud of who *you* are.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Mexican American Literature, edited by Charles Tatum

Activities for Creating Pictures and Poetry by Stephanie Briggs

mural materials:

heavyweight cardboard, cut 8" × 10"

drawing paper

felt and fabric scraps

buttons, ribbon, and yarn

pencils

markers

scissors

tempera paint or acrylic paints

paintbrushes

glue

large piece of fabric

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the essay about ambiguity according to insightfulness, expository writing techniques, and grammar.

Unit Assessment

How will students demonstrate proficiency?

PERFORMANCE TASK

Write an essay with the following minimum requirements:

- Introduction
- Thesis statement identifying your specific topic; titles and authors of the literary works you are analyzing
- Supporting paragraph(s)
- Focused topic sentences; supporting details and facts; specific quotes and paraphrases from the literary works to clarify points; clear transitions
- Concluding paragraph
- Summary or paraphrase of main ideas; gripping closing sentence

SCORING RUBRICS

Topic Content and Depth

5. Overall effect is deeply developed, insightful, unique
4. Overall effect is adequately developed, solid
3. Developed superficially, limited
2. Lacks basics
1. Not appropriate, incoherent

Support of Main Point

5. Full, detailed, meaningful
4. Relevant, strong
3. Adequate, relevant
2. Irrelevant or few
1. No details

Organization

5. Logical, focused, structured with clarity
4. Clear, sequential
3. Missing transitions, shifty
2. Unfocused, muddled
1. Lacks structure

Vocabulary/Usage

5. Stimulating, profound, fresh, correct usage
4. Effective, generally correct usage
3. Acceptable, some usage errors
2. Simple, frequent usage errors
1. Marginal, too short

Unit Assessment (cont.)

Sentence Structure

5. Varied, polished, enhanced
4. Appropriate, some variety, few errors
3. Little variety, structure errors
2. Serious errors
1. Lacks sense

Mechanics, Paragraphing, Capitalization, Spelling, Punctuation

5. Few meaningful errors
4. Some errors affecting meaning
3. Numerous errors
2. Prominent, frequent errors
1. Serious errors

Student Self-Reflection

Essential Values Woven Through Hispanic Literature:
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4 = Low 1 = High

Name: _____

Independent Novel Title: _____

Essay Assessed: _____

1. Reading this novel was easy for me. 1__2__3__4__
2. I analyze literature well. 1__2__3__4__
3. I knew enough about the literary works to write an insightful paper. 1__2__3__4__
4. I used pre-writing strategies to organize my writing. 1__2__3__4__
5. Editing my paper went smoothly because I read my essay carefully to myself. 1__2__3__4__
6. Group discussions helped me synthesize the literature. 1__2__3__4__
7. Because I read independently, I learned time management skills. 1__2__3__4__
8. During this unit, my attendance was excellent. 1__2__3__4__
9. Completing the art projects deepened my appreciation of the Latino culture. 1__2__3__4__
10. Focusing on this unit stimulated my search for my own "soul." 1__2__3__4__

Goals I have for myself to improve my writing:

Goals I have for myself to improve my reading:

Personal reflections on this Latino literature unit (use back of sheet):

Vocabulary

abuelitos	Grandparents
algunos consejos	Some advice
barrio	Neighborhood. For many Latinos in the U.S., barrio is more of a community, a place to find support and good friends
bautismo	Baptism
biscocho	Traditional cookie. Sometimes made with cornmeal and spices
bodas de oro	50-year anniversary
capirotada	Bread pudding with nuts and raisins. Traditionally eaten during Lent
carne asadas	Barbecue
cascarón	Brightly colored paper cone stuffed with confetti and topped with an eggshell, used in Mexican celebrations
chicos	Corn dish prepared during Lent
Cinco de Mayo	Celebration of the battle of Puebla, 5th of May, 1862. It is a national holiday in Mexico, celebrating the desire to be free from foreign invaders
corridos	Ballads, usually about the struggles of the people
Día de Gracia	Thanksgiving Day
Día de la Raza	Day of La Raza, a day of cultural celebration for Latinos in the U.S.
Día de los Muertos	Day of the Dead, a holiday celebrated on November 1 or 2
Día de los Tres Reyes Magos	Three Kings Day, a holiday celebrated on January 6
empanadas	Pastries filled with meat or fruit
familia	Family
fiesta	Party
flan	Egg custard
fruta de homo	Cookies shaped like fruit
hermana menor	Younger sister
hermanito	Little brother
hermano menor	Younger brother
hija	Daughter
hijo	Son

Vocabulary (cont.)

Los Quince Años	15th birthday celebration
mi vida	An affectionate way of saying “my dear,” literally “my life”
muchachos	Young people
navidad	Christmas
piñatas	Brightly colored paper and papier-mâché structures, usually stuffed with candy; in Mexico traditionally broken by children at birthday parties and celebrations
primas, primos	Cousins
Quinceanera	Special traditional celebration of a girl’s 15th birthday
respeto	Respect. In most Latino cultures, demonstrating “respeto” means that you recognize the person’s self-dignity; it’s a much stronger word than the English word “respect”
16 de Septiembre	16th of September—Mexican Independence Day
tardeadas	Pre-parties in the afternoon
tías, tíos	Aunts, uncles

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A sparkling novel about an author who writes about her family with insight and honesty, achieves fame, and then must deal with the conflicts and consequences of her actions. It is a beguiling glimpse into daughterhood, friendship, sisterhood, and fame.

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Matiella, Ana Consuelo. *La Familia Curriculum Unit*. Santa Cruz: Network Publications, 1989.

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Viramontes, Mary Helen. *The Moths and Other Stories*. Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1985.

A touching collection of stories depicting culture, womanhood, and conflicts.

Bibliography (cont.)

Films

Like Water for Chocolate, Directed by Alfonso Arau, Rated R. 105 minutes.

Captivating tale of forbidden love and a deep look at family traditions and values.

A Walk in the Clouds. Directed by Alfonso Arau. Rated PG-13. 102 minutes.

Breathtaking scenery is the setting for this old-fashioned romance dealing with family values and traditions.

Mi Familia. Produced by Frances Ford Coppola. Rated R. 134 minutes.

An intense view of the conflicts as well as joys facing families.

La Bamba. Written and directed by Luis Valdez, 1987. Rated PG-13. 103 minutes.

Vivid story of Ritchie Valens, from Mexican-American farm laborer to star.

Gangs. Directed by Jesus Trevino. Group W Productions, 1988.

Powerful video that explains the perils of gang involvement and shows alternatives.

Cassettes

Spanish Folk Tales and Legends, read by Esther Benson, 1970.

Captivatingly-read tales that will intrigue young adults.

About the Author

Virginia “Ginia” Coors was born in the small mountain town of Ellijay, Georgia. After attending four years of high school in Naples, Italy, she returned to this North Georgia community for a summer to teach Head Start before beginning her undergraduate work in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

While studying at the University of New Mexico, Ginia became fascinated with the art, literature, and multifaceted culture of the state. With majors in English, speech, and journalism and a B.A. in secondary education, she began teaching in Albuquerque. Her classroom was filled with rich diversity; her appreciation for and enchantment with the heritage of her students grew.

Ginia moved to Denver with her family. Raising four children required much of her attention, but she also thrived as a successful entrepreneur, owning Highland Arts, a photographic art company. The challenge of becoming an effective business woman broadened her appreciation for the potential for women in nontraditional career roles.

Joining the staff at The Florence Crittenton School fulfilled a dream: teaching at-risk, inner-city teen moms within a small, holistic environment. After completing a masters degree in education at Lesley College, Ginia began integrating visual art, music, drama, and creative movement into her literature, oral communication, and drama classes. Being a part of the Denver Public Schools’ El Alma de la Raza Project has added depth to her interlacing of cultural appreciation and understanding.

Ginia lives in Aurora, Colorado with her husband of thirty years and their last “still in the nest” child.