

# **An Exploration Of Hispanic and Native American Culture through Literature**

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## **The Academic Setting**

I teach a literature electives class at John Adams Middle School, located on the Westside of Albuquerque, New Mexico. John Adams is in a working class, Hispanic neighborhood adjacent to a main boulevard. The student population of approximately 1,000 students makes it one of the largest middle schools in Albuquerque. The ethnic mix is as follows: 72.9 percent of the students are Hispanic, 13.9% Anglo, 7 percent Indian, and 4.7 percent Black. Asians and other minorities make up less than 2 percent of the student body. In the 1999-2000 school year, 63.5 percent of students received free or reduced meals, a prime indicator of socio-economic status. The average number of students receiving free or reduced meals for all middle schools in Albuquerque is slightly over 40 percent.

John Adams' students, like most middle school kids anywhere, are preoccupied with social status and immersed in pop culture. They want to fit in. Current social trends, from musical tastes, fast-food, footwear and body piercing form the lifeblood of adolescent culture. In many ways that teenagers don't pay particular attention to, they are complacent consumers of mainstream society. Friendships and intimate relationships are tentative. They are distrustful of authority and even more strikingly, each other. They are cliquish as students tend to form alliances along cultural lines. Anglos hang out with Anglos, Hispanics with other Hispanics. Recent immigrants from Mexico with their own distinct language and culture are isolated by themselves.

The goal of this unit is to educate students about some of the different cultures of New Mexico and open up lines of communication by creating a forum for students to share their feelings and ideas while improving reading skills. New Mexico is often called the land of many cultures, but in many ways, these distinct groups remain isolated from each other and stereotypes thrive. Schools themselves often perpetuate these superficial boundaries. In implementing this unit, I hope to expand and challenge students' perceptions of themselves and each other while improving their reading skills.

Literacy and developing basic reading competencies for all students is a district-wide goal in Albuquerque Public Schools. At John Adams, reading scores are well below the already low national average. Currently, there is a tremendous emphasis to improve this trend. As a teacher of a semester-long literature electives class that includes sections of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, I have the opportunity to help students of all levels and abilities. But, in designing a curriculum for a non-required course, I have the added challenge of making the

class as engaging and meaningful as possible to students who are there largely by choice.

## **Background Information: A Historical Overview of New Mexico**

### Early New Mexico History

The earliest inhabitants of New Mexico date back to at least 12,000 BC. These cave dwellers hunted large game such as mammoths. In Sandia Cave, discovered in the Sandia Mountains in Albuquerque in 1936, scientists found organic specimens that indicated the existence of extinct forms of horse, bison, camel, mastodon, and mammoths. Ancient spear points were also found. Radiocarbon tests have demonstrated that these samples are around 12,000 years old (Lavash 20). By the end of the ice age, around 8,000 BC., drought caused the extinction of large game. Hunters turned their attention to smaller animals and began to gather wild foods. During the last part of what is known as the archaic period, about 3,000 BC., these hunters and gatherers began small-scale agriculture practices borrowed from their neighbors in Mexico. Evidence of the earliest domestic maize, or corn, was found in Bat Cave in western New Mexico during this period. As seasonal planting developed, hunting and gathering could be limited to smaller areas to make it easier for the people to return to plant and harvest their crops (Jenkins and Schroeder 1).

About 2,000 years ago, the people of the Southwest learned how to make baskets out of grasses and willows. The Basketmakers, as they are now called, began to use stone tools. They grew corn, beans, and pumpkin (Lavash 22). By around 500 AD., they learned to use the bow and arrow and became skilled hunters. They farmed small patches around streams and arroyos and domesticated turkeys (Reeve and Cleaveland 36).

Eventually, larger communities grew. The Anasazi (Navajo meaning "ancient ones") is considered to be the most advanced civilization of early Pueblo life. Pueblo Bonito (Spanish for Pretty Village) in Chaco Canyon in northwestern New Mexico, is the largest pueblo ever found. A vast complex ranging from three to five stories high was built out of stone and plastered with mud (Lavash 23). The communal dwelling of Pueblo Bonito covered over three hundred acres and included more than eight hundred rooms that could house over 1,200 people. The Anasazi built their pueblo gradually over many decades, and it was finally completed around 1130 AD. Underground rooms, or kivas, were dug out and were used for ceremonies and special meeting places (Reeve and Cleaveland 39).

The Anasazi hunted with bows and arrows but were also adept farmers. They planted maize, beans, berries, pumpkins, and cotton (Lavash 23). They used digging sticks to plant seeds of corn along arroyos (desert waterways). During flash floods, water would accumulate on the low, flat lands creating a simple but effective irrigation system (Reeve and Cleaveland 42).

Improvements in agriculture led to more leisure time which enabled them to create arts and crafts, including weaving and pottery. The Anasazi made pottery with intricate designs and color patterns. They painted murals in the pueblo rooms and on the kiva walls telling of their rich ceremonial customs (Reeve and Cleaveland 38). Pictographs, or wall carvings, are considered to be the oldest writings ever found in the United States (Lavash 28).

At the end of the thirteenth century, there was a drought that lasted twenty years. Plants and water became so scarce that the animals began to leave. Soon the people had to abandon the sprawling dwellings that took them decades to build and head south in search of food and water (Reeve and Cleaveland 42). Eventually pueblos were re-established near rivers and fertile valleys. Most of these pueblos in New Mexico are located along the banks of the upper Rio Grande. Here, the rich soil offered excellent farm land. Forests provided wood for buildings, fuel and tools as well as hunting. The Pueblo Indians were skilled at making clay pottery, baskets, clothing and jewelry. They established permanent homes and thrived (Lavash 29). This is how the Spaniards found them when they arrived in 1540.

### The Spaniards Arrive

In 1521, Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztecs in Mexico, keepers of America's richest empire. In 1540, propelled by reports of a land to the north with great riches, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, a young governor from New Spain (Mexico) set out with over 1,000 men in search of the Seven Cities of Antilla. When his party arrived in Cíbola in western New Mexico, he was "profoundly disappointed" (Gutiérrez 43). The rumors were false.

What a strange and terrifying sight it must have been for the Indians to witness Coronado's approaching army. The hooves of large beasts (horses) shook the earth. Men wearing shiny armor and plumed helmets rode atop the horses and announced their presence with trumpet blasts and hails of gunfire (Gutiérrez 43). They claimed to be sons of God, children of the Sun, but the Indians were suspicious.

The conquistadores regarded the Pueblo Indians as inferior beings worthy of contempt. Any degree of intelligence credited to them was attached to their willingness to serve the Spaniards (Gutiérrez 45). Coronado searched the southwest in a quest for gold. His efforts were in vain. After a year, he abandoned his search and returned to Mexico where silver had been discovered in the north. New Mexico was temporarily free of invaders.

### The Spaniards Return

Between 1581 and 1680, Spanish Franciscans colonized New Mexico. They organized the Indians into a theocracy, a system of government based on divine guidance. In other words, the priests had all the power. This lasted for one hundred years until the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

In 1573, the King of Spain passed the Ordinances of Discovery which effectively

outlawed military expeditions like those of Cortés and Coronado. Now the Spaniards were after "discoveries" and not conquests. All missions into New Mexico were to be peaceful and charitable. Therefore missionaries were given the charge of directing settlements in the new land (Gutiérrez 46).

The Franciscan missionaries were impressed with New Mexico. Their enthusiasm was not lost on King Philip II of Spain who ordered Don Juan de Oñate to be in charge of the colonization of the Kingdom of New Mexico. The main purpose of the mission, the king instructed, would be to spread Catholicism and to do this the natives would need to be subdued.

The expedition of 129 soldiers set out from Zacatecas, Mexico, in January 1598. By April, the Spaniards had reached the banks of the Rio Grande in New Mexico. They wasted no time in their efforts to make the right impressions on the Indians. The Spaniards staged plays that were designed to dramatize the Spanish defeat of the Aztecs in 1523 and demonstrate the new social order that would prevail under Christian rule (Gutiérrez 47).

At Santo Domingo Pueblo, Oñate assembled the chiefs of 31 surrounding Pueblos and demanded that they swear allegiance to the king. The chiefs did and demonstrated their obedience by kneeling and kissing Oñate's hand. This was the first time that Indians had ever kneeled before a leader or a god. Later, village chiefs were warned that if any of their people failed to obey the priests, or *padres*, their people and villages would be destroyed (Gutiérrez 50). The Franciscans were the first to report the atrocities committed by the Spaniards which included theft, rape, and murder (Gutiérrez 51). Thus the often brutal process of domination began.

The Indians gave freely of themselves and their food. The Spanish readily accepted the offerings thinking that they were going to condition the Indians to give without being asked. But, to the Indians, giving, especially food, was a way of establishing appropriate power boundaries. Elders would give to juniors who were expected to reciprocate with obedience, labor, and respect. Those who accepted items without giving back would be indebted and therefore obligated to provide servitude and labor. But under the rules of Spanish society, Indian elders were seen as ignorant serfs who gave food and water to their conquerors in exchange for lessons in civility (Gutiérrez 52).

During one hundred years of occupation, the Spaniards succeeding in bringing about many changes to pueblo culture. These included introducing foreign livestock and European tools, demographic changes, changes in labor division among men and women, and even changing the calendar.

The only animals the Puebloans domesticated were the turkey, for their feathers not the meat, and dogs. The Europeans brought enormous herds of cows, sheep and pigs. The permanent, year-round supply of domesticated animals reduced the need for hunting (Gutiérrez 57).

In order to facilitate the spread of Christianity, the Franciscans concentrated loosely dispersed Indian villages. During the seventeenth century 150 villages were reduced to 43 (Gutiérrez 74).

Tools of domination used by the Spanish also included changes in the division of labor between the sexes. Men were assigned tasks traditionally performed by women such as building houses. Women were given jobs like weaving, work formerly restricted to men. This new arrangement provided an additional consequence: it was humiliating for Indian men to be seen doing women's work. Many of them were laughed off the job sight, never to be heard from again (Gutiérrez 76).

Other demeaning tactics involved the religious dramas the friars staged. The theme of the plays usually involved the Indian adults playing the devils and infidels and their children playing the Christians. The outcome was always the same: the adults would be subordinated by the Christian children and the Indian culture subdued (Gutiérrez 76).

Finally, the Spaniards re-invented the Indian calendar. Instead of the earthly rhythms followed by the Pueblos which were based on cosmological events, the Spaniards imposed their calendar which was based on the life of Christ (Gutiérrez 83).

Pueblo Indians who adopted the ways of the Spaniards and accepted Christianity did so partly out of fear and partly to gain the technological benefits of the Europeans:

"Christianization to these persons mean a reliable meat supply, iron implements of various sorts, and European foods: wheat, legumes, green vegetables, melons, grapes, and a variety of orchard fruits" (Gutiérrez 94).

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Indians adopted the dominant beliefs, at least to a superficial degree.

### The Pueblo Revolt

Between 1666 and 1670, there was a major drought. Corn production fell. By 1670, famine, disease, and death were widespread. Indian population fell to less than half of what it had been a generation earlier to 17,000. In 1672, Apaches and Navajos began settlements killing and raiding as they went. Pueblo bitterness and resentment mounted. Medicine men alerted their people that the gods were angry they needed to be appeased with gifts and homage and only then would their plight improve.

The Tewa were the first group to defy the colonial rule. Throughout the seventeenth century, they had the closest contact with the Spaniards. In 1673, they publicly performed forbidden dances and made offerings to their gods, begging them to return. Other pueblos began to revolt. Popé, a medicine man from San Juan, moved to Taos Pueblo, located farthest to the north, to plan a province-wide rebellion. He was a brilliant organizer and a persuasive speaker. He told the Indians that they would never have happiness and prosperity until the Christians and their God were dead. "The Indians' fury had struck the entire province like a bolt of lightning. In one moment a century's work seemed destroyed" (Gutiérrez 133).

Indians stole horses and mules, which the Spaniards had introduced and had been instrumental in the conquest of the Puebloans. Indians sacked villages, desecrated Christian sacred objects, and killed Spanish settlers. Interestingly, Friars who were killed were considered by the Spanish to be Christ-like martyrs. "Like Christ, they had died because of their Father's love for humanity and because of man's hatred and ingratitude" (Gutiérrez 137). Christians were amazed at the violence, yet had committed similar assaults to the Indians during the Spanish conquest.

Popé promised his people that if they returned to their ancestral way of life, they would have peace, harmony and prosperity. But to do this, they would have to eliminate all traces of the Spaniards and Christianity. A key part of this would be to burn the seeds of crops the Spanish had imported and return to planting only maize and beans.

The Pueblo revolt brought a hasty end to a century of Christian rule. Although the Indians were successful in driving out the Spanish who retreated south, they faced new difficulties. Poor harvest, famine, disease, and death plagued the Indians. Civil war broke out among the pueblos as different groups vied for power. There was speculation among the people that Popé had deceived them. Another decade of drought followed. Perhaps the Puebloans found solace in their spiritual beliefs, because according to Pueblo mythology, such struggles were a natural part of life and "always forced them to migrate until they found a safe place called home" (Gutiérrez 139).

Spain abandoned efforts to retake New Mexico until the French began exploring the Southwest and Spain became concerned about a threat to their silver mines in northern New Spain.

### Reconquest of New Mexico

Spain's reasons for re-conquering New Mexico in the eighteenth century were different than they were a century earlier. Other nations were encroaching on Spanish American territory. French colonies in the midwest were pushing Indian tribes further west. Apaches, competing for shrinking hunting grounds, began raiding tribes in New Mexico. Spain wanted a buffer.

In 1692, Don Diego de Vargas marched into Santa Fe with 160 men to re-conquer New Mexico. The Indians who occupied the walled city were under siege for three days before they surrendered. 70 warriors were executed and over 400 women and children were given to colonists as slaves. Santa Fe was captured, and from there, the Spaniards could easily branch out and take the other villages.

There were four main population groups under eighteenth century Spanish rule. The dominant ruling class was composed entirely of nobility. The middle class was made up of peasants and mestizo, people of mixed European and Native American blood, but differentiated themselves from the Indians.

Genízaro were detribalized Indians, mostly Apache and Navajo, who were forced into domestic service and made up the lowest class. They lived in Spanish towns but performed the community's most menial and degrading tasks (Gutiérrez 149). They were slaves. In theory, slavery was outlawed in Spanish territories as of 1542, a policy reiterated in 1680, but was tolerated in New Mexico and other remote areas of the Spanish empire as a means of compensating much needed colonists. Culturally the genízaro were stuck in the middle, to the Spanish they were intruders and to the Puebloans, they were considered outcasts.

Pueblo Indians constituted the fourth major population group. They weren't as low as the genízaros, but still lived outside of mainstream society. "They lived in their own economically independent and politically autonomous towns" (Gutiérrez 149). They gave tribute and labor to the nobility in return for legal rights and protection from Spain.

Superior birth, blood, and honor defined Spanish society. The upper class boasted of pure (Spanish) blood, although these claims were exaggerated. Only a tiny percentage of people were direct Spanish descendants. Spanish nobility valued bravery, physical prowess, and power—which meant land. Fortunes came from agriculture. Men of honor owned slaves, rode horses, and carried arms — everyone else needed a special permit.

When Popé and his allies succeeded in driving out the Spaniards in 1680, their goal was the total destruction of Spanish cultural influence in the pueblos. But after 100 years of European contact, Pueblo culture had changed dramatically. Some of these ways the Indians were not willing to let go: iron tools, wheat, cattle, pigs, and chicken were now main meats for Indians. Horses became a requisite for warfare. Spanish had become the language of choice for communicating across native language boundaries.

Still, in equally dramatic ways, pueblo culture would be changed for ever. The Spaniards continued to concentrate pueblos as an increasing number of smaller villages were abandoned. There was a shift from matrilineal to patrilineal families. Household ownership passed from women to men as newlywed women were forced to establish their own homes away from their mothers. A century of Christianity changed Pueblo religious symbolism. Kivas were filled in, Indian

ceremonies prohibited, and sacred objects destroyed. Indians were forced to abandon their worship of many gods and female-based creation myths for a single Christian God and a religion where males dominated.

### New Mexico in the 1800s and Beyond

Most of New Mexico's early colonizers were descendants of people from Mexico. Yet, many New Mexicans chose to call themselves *Hispanos*, or Spanish-Americans, as opposed to Mexicans. This was because they believed themselves to be descendants of the Spanish conquistadores, and since New Mexico was isolated from the rest of the Southwest during the colonial period, they should be racially pure Europeans and not mestizo (half-breed) Mexicans (Acuña 81). Thus, New Mexicans attempted to distance themselves from the intense racism toward Mexicans, hoping to improve their lot economically and socially.

In reality, colonists had mixed with Mexicans and Pueblo Indians throughout the settlement of New Mexico. During the nineteenth century, the label Spanish-American was used widely throughout the Southwest, but European Americans referred to New Mexicans as Mexicans. It wasn't until the twentieth century that New Mexicans vehemently denied their Mexican identity. During this time, a large number of Mexican laborers migrated to New Mexico. At the same time, white Texans and Oklahomans settled the eastern plains and discrimination against Mexicans grew. New Mexicans, especially the more affluent, tried to differentiate themselves from Mexicans by calling themselves Spanish-Americans. But European racism was not the only factor in this denial of heritage. "The racial attitudes of New Mexicans are deeply rooted in the Spanish conquest and colonization" (Acuña 81). A natural part of the cast system was to "think white." Skin color determined purity, and individuals aspired to marry "up" — in other words, marry lighter skinned people.

Land is New Mexico's greatest resource. When the Spaniards tried to force the Pueblo Indians into landless laborers, the Indians revolted. This resulted in some changes: the Spanish conceded land grants which helped agricultural development and defense. The Spanish elites established large sheep and cattle ranches, and the poor relied on subsistence farming and *partido* contracts (raising sheep for a large owner and keeping half the increase). Eventually, New Mexican villagers grew close to the Pueblo natives through trade and intermarriage. Independence from Spain brought the hope of political changes, but this quickly faded with the arrival of North Americans.

North Americans established regular contact with New Mexico in the 1820s through the Santa Fe Trail. Before this, New Mexicans traded mostly with Chihuahua. Soon cash transactions replaced bartering and capitalism was in full force. The elites grew wealthy at the expense of the poor. "While capital circulated in New Mexico, the poor had little access to it, and could hardly buy imported goods which required cash" (Acuña 84). In 1837, the Pueblo and poor Mexican

villagers in the Tewa Basin revolted. The rebels seized Santa Fe and established a new government with democratic ideals. Only six months later, the Mexican government regained control.

In 1846, Colonel Kearney of the U.S. Army arrived in New Mexico with 3,000 soldiers and announced his plan to make the province a permanent possession of the United States. The wealthier New Mexicans seemed ready for a change as they were unhappy with the edicts and taxes imposed by Mexico, although this was not true for all the influential New Mexicans. A revolt was underway. Rebels, organized by a Mexican peasant and a Pueblo Indian, led the opposition. Key American politicians, including Governor Bent of Santa Fe, were killed. During the attack, all land documents were destroyed. An insurgent capital was established in Taos, but soon they were overwhelmed by U.S. military forces. After the Taos rebellion, a military dictatorship ruled New Mexico for four years. Any revolutionary movement was quickly crushed with military violence.

In 1851, New Mexico's first civilian governor took office. The people were supposedly free, but rich ranchers, land speculators, and the Catholic Church had all the power. Territorial governors established local control based on the American legal system, and in so doing, destroyed the familiar Mexican system of government (Acuña 87). Many forts were established throughout New Mexico to maintain control and keep the power in the hands of the wealthy traders and politicians.

The U.S. conquest of New Mexico had unfortunate results for many of the residents. Women, who had certain rights guaranteed by Spanish law, lost power. Almost ninety percent of female adults worked menial jobs by the turn of the century. New Mexico also had social and economic problems. In 1860, 32,785 adults could not read. In all of New Mexico, there were only 17 public schools and 33 teachers. Even though the legislature voted for education, schools were supported by taxes and many voters would not approve local funds for them. To make matters worse, the Catholic Church was against public education and the poor were left out. In 1913, only seven out of 87 public school graduates were Mexican (Acuña 89).

Because New Mexico was so isolated, its economy was dependent on the Santa Fe Trail. Shipping was expensive and gold from California or silver from Mexico was the payment of choice. Pueblo people and villagers lost again as wealthy ranchers competed for their land to meet the demand for more meat, wool, and mules to supply the California Gold Rush. The Hispano elites that controlled New Mexico politics until well into the twentieth century did little to help the lower classes. They were against compulsory education and favored a parochial system that served the rich. They refused to abolish Native American slavery until Congress did so in 1867.

By the time of the Civil War (1861-65) the alliance between the Euroamericans and the New Mexican elite solidified. Together they controlled the legislature and

dominated the economic and political life of New Mexico. The Santa Fe Ring of well-connected politicians controlled all the territorial politics. By the turn of the century, ring members held about 80 percent of New Mexico land grants. Their new policies ignored the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, invalidating Spanish and Mexican land titles. Lawyers and land speculators used any means necessary, including trickery, to wrest land away from the people. "The blatant opportunism of 'Spanish American' brokers had contributed to delaying the statehood of New Mexico" (Acuña 106).

Many politicians were against statehood fearing "Anglo-American" rule, taxes, public schools, anti-Church policies, and loss of land. Rich Mexicans also opposed public education: "*Educar un muchacho es perder un buen pastor*" ("To educate a boy is to lose a good shepherd") (Acuña 106). By then, New Mexico had over 100,000 residents and more than half of them did not know how to read or write. Most of the illiterate were Mexican.

New Mexico became a state in 1912 and civil right issues rose to the surface. During the constitutional convention, Mexican and Euroamerican supporters put a measure through that assured that Chicano's right to vote, to hold office, and to sit on juries could not be denied on the basis of race, religion, or language (Acuña 106). However, New Mexico had, and still has, a long way to go before all of its people experience true equality.

### **Works Cited**

- Acuña, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. New York: Longman, 2000: 81-106.
- Gutiérrez, Ramón. *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991: 46-149.
- Jenkins, Myra, and Albert Schroeder. *A Brief History of New Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974: 1-5.
- Lavash, Donald. *A Journey Through New Mexico History*. Portales, New Mexico: Bishop Publishing, 1971: 20-29.
- Reeve, Frank, and Alice Cleaveland. *New Mexico: Land of Many Cultures*. Boulder, Colorado: Pruett, 1979: 36-42.

### **Implementation**

The goal of the curriculum is to develop reading skills in middle school students by engaging them with material that is both meaningful and relevant to their lives. I have chosen books based on their strength in addressing cultural issues, their availability in both English and Spanish, and their high appeal for mid-schoolers. The challenge for middle school teachers is to find books that are both engaging

(they capture student interest) and are age appropriate. With some chapter books, the reading level might be too difficult and/or the subject matter too adult. Please consult the Suggested Student Readings list in the Bibliography section that follows to find books that will be appropriate for your class. The following lesson plans have been designed to work with any of the suggested material.

### Reading in Class

As a reading instructor for students of a range of abilities and motivation, I have found it best for students take turns reading aloud. This way it is possible to provide everyone an opportunity to read and to monitor class progress as a whole. If you maintain a regular seating chart, you can create a classroom map of each student's location. By each name, you can draw twelve small circles (about the size of a fill-in bubble on a multiple choice question) in two rows. Each time a student reads, fill in a circle. If a student is absent, put an "x" over the circle. If a student refuses to read, circle the circle. This way, you can keep track of individual class members and still pay attention to whoever is reading.

Once each student has had a turn, I will usually stop reading and, at that point, ask a couple questions about the book for closure. Then, students can use the remainder of the period to work on their projects or work on puzzles. To keep up motivation, I have found it most effective to read three out of five days each week. When you begin reading on a new day, it is important to ask the class for a quick recap of the previous sessions events. The off days can be used to work on projects which are outlined below.

### Student Journals

One of the most effective strategies I have found to help me get to know my students is to have them keep a journal. This gives them the opportunity to reflect on the reading, share personal experiences and organize their thoughts. At the beginning of each class, I have two questions written on the board. Students are to choose one. Providing the freedom of choice is empowering for students, especially teenagers. Questions should be as open-ended as possible. They can range from specific questions about the reading to thoughts on current events or how they would handle a given situation. Towards the end of the semester, as students are used to writing each day, I may allow classes to write and answer their own questions. Each response should be two to three sentences long.

Sample questions are:

- "What do you think the main character of the book will be like in ten years?"
- "How would you change the way your parents are raising you?"
- "What would you do if you were in [character's] situation?"
- "Would you eat a dozen live crickets for \$10,000?"

The point is to get students to think, to get them to consider their life experiences and, most importantly, to write. I recommend collecting journals every two weeks. This way, you can take home journals from half of your classes every week. For example, if you teach six classes, you can collect journals from periods one, two, and three on one Friday, and periods four, five and six the following Friday. Another option, is to have the students choose one entry each Friday from the previous week to develop into a five sentence paragraph and hand only that in. Grades can be based on the number of entries and completeness. For example, each entry must be a minimum of two complete sentences, and students will need to have eight out of ten to get an "A" for the two-week period.

*Performance Standards Met:*

Language Arts:

- Thinking: predict reasonable outcomes, make inferences, apply decision making skills
- Communication: write legibly to express ideas, use writing process to convey information related to language arts
- Writing: write to convey information and to express individual ideas and understandings

Project #1: Personal Poem

This is a great project to start off with because you can learn a lot about your students, and it's a great opportunity for them to get to know each other. The idea is for them to create a thirteen line autobiographical poem. You provide the beginning of each line and they complete it. You can do a line or two each day, and when it's complete, students can create a collage from magazine pictures of their favorite objects. They can glue their poem onto the collage and present it to the class.

Materials needed: magazines, scissors, glue, construction paper

Time: one to two weeks to be worked on after reading sessions

Line 1 First Name

Line 2 Two adjectives that describe you

Line 3 Three short phrases about your family

Line 4 "Lover of..." three nouns, each with one adjective

Line 5 "Who feels..." three phrases

Line 6 "Who needs..." three phrases

Line 7 "Who gives in to..." three nouns each with adjective

Line 8 "Who fears..." three nouns each with an adjective

Line 9 "Who admires..." three nouns

Line 10 "Who dislikes..." three items

Line 11 "Who would like to see..." three nouns

Line 12 "Resident of..." describe a place - not an address

Line 13 Last Name

*Performance Standards Met:*

Language Arts:

- Writing: learners write to convey information and to express individual ideas and understandings
- Speaking: Learners communicate orally, speak clearly and adjust speaking style to audience

Personal Art Expression:

- Learners use visual arts to express personal ideas, feelings and preferences

Project #2: Neighborhood Map

The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to consider their neighborhoods and their relationship to their physical environment.

Materials needed: Drawing paper and markers

Time required: one to two weeks

See Worksheet 1 for assignment sheet

*Performance Standards Met:*

Social Studies:

- Geography: learners exhibit an understanding of the connections and relationships among people, places, cultures, and physical environments and construct maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context
- History and Culture: learners exhibit an understanding of the ways human beings view themselves in time

Project #3: Character T-Shirt

The object of this exercise is to have the students design a tee-shirt that reflects the way the main character from the reading thinks and feels. The shirt design should be in color and must include eight of the following items:

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| mood/emotion he feels  | a wish he would have          |
| favorite hobby         | music group he would enjoy    |
| nickname he would have | an animal that represents him |
| tattoo he would wear   | person he admires             |
| product he would enjoy | saying/proverb he would like  |

Grading: 6 points for every category used  
50 points for neatness and creativity in illustration  
2 points for remembering to include your name

Materials needed: markers or colored pencils, a simple outline of a t-shirt on a 8 1/2 x 11 paper with categories listed.

*Performance Standards Met:*

- Visual Arts: learners use visual arts to express personal ideas, feelings, and preferences
- Language Arts: learners write to convey information and to express individual ideas and understandings

Project #4: Cultural Awareness Poster

The purpose of this assignment is to have students work with partners to create a poster that promotes awareness and a positive message about a specific culture or ethnic group. Students should have the opportunity to research a culture of their choice. If a computer lab is available, the internet is a wonderful resource. Each poster should list five facts and have a catchy message that offers a positive message about the particular group. The facts could include some of the contributions the particular culture has given the world, for example: Native Americans were the first to cultivate corn, an African American invented peanut butter.

Materials needed: poster board and markers, resources on inventors, famous people

*Performance Standards Met:*

- Reading: learners read and gather information from a variety of printed material, literature and own written language
- Computer Skills: Use a variety of software and hardware to conduct investigations
- Speaking: learners demonstrate speaking skills in group oral report/presentation

Project #5: Children's Book

As a final project for the unit, the students will write and illustrate their own book for children or their peers that gives a clear, strong message about an issue that they feel strongly about. This could be any topic. Possible topics could include: racism, child abuse, drugs and alcohol, family violence, death, friendship or dating issues, etc. Refer to Worksheet #2 for assignment sheet.

When students have finished the book, they should present it to the class.

Materials needed: blank paper, construction paper for the covers, markers, colored pencils

### *Performance Standards Met:*

- Writing: write for specified purposes including narration and description; write paragraphs using correct format and content; edit for content and grammar; use technology as a tool
- Visual Arts: learners use visual arts to express personal ideas
- Speaking: learners demonstrate speaking skills by speaking clearly, develop technical skills like projection and pacing

### **Resources**

#### Suggested Readings for Students

Anaya, Rudolfo. *Bless Me, Ultima*. Berkeley: Tonatiuh-Quinto Sol, 1984.

Perhaps one of the most famous books in Chicano literature. A novel about a young boy and his profound relationship with his grandmother while growing up in a rural New Mexican town. Advanced middle school level. Some profanity.

Cameron, Penny. *Bridge Across the Americas: Favorite Hispanic Stories*. San Diego: Dominie Press, 1992.

Excellent collection of short stories with reproducible language arts exercises. Level: easy middle school.

Griego y Maestas, José and Rudolfo Anaya. *Cuentos: Tales from the Hispanic Southwest*. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1980.

More challenging tales than above, dual language.

Hayes, Joe. *Coyote &....:Native American Folk Tales*. Santa Fe: Mariposa, 1983.

Funny collection by expert storyteller. Great for read alouds.

Hayes, Joe. *A Heart Full Of Turquoise*. Santa Fe: Mariposa, 1988.

Same as above with background notes.

Henry, Jeannette and Rupert Costo. *A Thousand Years of American Indian Storytelling*. San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1988.

Extensive collection of stories and myths arranged by category.

Krantz, Hazel. *Walks in Beauty*. Flagstaff, Arizona: Rising Moon, 1997.

Coming of age novel about a Navajo girl about to graduate from junior high and caught between two cultures. Level: seventh grade or above

Lummis, Charles. *Pueblo Indian Folk-Stories*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.

Collection of thirty-two Native American myths centering around Isleta and Rio Grande Pueblos. Level: challenging mid-school.

Paulsen, Gary. *Sisters* (Bilingual). San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1993.

A story of two girls, both fourteen years old. Traci is a Texas debutante who is pushed by her mother to be pretty and popular. Rosa is an illegal

immigrant from Mexico who sells her body to support herself and dreams of becoming a model. Dual language. Level: easy mid-school.

Sagel, Jim. *Always the Heart* (Bilingual). Santa Fe: Red Crane Books, 1998.

Coming of age story about a high school freshman who experiences her first love and struggles to find her own identity. Dual language. Level: mid-school

Soto, Gary. *Buried Onions*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1997.

Engaging story of an art student making his way in Fresno. Realistic portrayal of Latino culture. Some drugs and profanity. Spanish words and phrases glossary. Level: mature mid-school.

Soto, Gary. *Crazy Weekend*. New York: Scholastic, 1994.

Tale of two seventh-grade boys from East LA on a summer adventure in Fresno. Suspenseful, cops and robbers theme. Spanish words and phrases glossary. Level: mid-school

Soto, Gary. *Summer on Wheels*. New York: Scholastic, 1995.

Another novel involving the above junior high characters. Level: mid-school.

Viola, Herman, and Carolyn Margolis, eds. *Seeds of Change: A Quincentennial Commemoration*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Great flip-through reference chronicling 500 years of cultural change since Columbus. Level: challenging mid-school

#### Suggested Readings for Teachers

Brady, Margaret. *Some Kind of Power: Navajo Children's Skinwalker Narratives*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984.

Greenman, Nancy. *A Model for the Multicultural Study of New Mexico*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1976.

Good resource list of supporting materials for Multicultural studies.

Gutiérrez, Ramón. *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1546*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

Sophisticated book offering an alternative view of Spanish Conquest.

Lamadrid, Enrique. *Tesoros del Espíritu: A Portrait in Sound of Hispanic New Mexico*. Embudo, New Mexico: El Norte/ Academia Publications, 1994.

Great collection of music to play as a warm-up for a class, or for students to enjoy while working on projects. 3 cd set.

New Mexico Town Hall Report #12. *Breaking Down the Barriers: Cultural Sensitivity in New Mexico*. Albuquerque: New Mexico First, 1993.

Extensive report on current perceptions of cultural issues from a variety of perspectives.

Rodríguez, Sylvia. *The Matachines Dance*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.

An intimate view of a fascinating cross-cultural tradition.

Vigil, James. *From Indians to Chicanos: the Dynamics of Mexican-American Culture*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: 1998.

Viola, Herman, and Carolyn Margolis, eds. *Seeds of Change: A Quincentennial Commemoration*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.

Wannamaker, Hallie. *Multicultural Activities for the American History Classroom: Four Centuries of Diversity from the 1600s to the Present*. New York: 1996.

Good all-purpose resource of ready-made lesson plans of multicultural activities.

### **Worksheet 1: Neighborhood Map Project**

The object of this assignment is to design a specialized map of your world as it exists for you today. By world, I mean the five or ten mile radius that surrounds your house. You will include the buildings and places that are important and meaningful to you. You must include ten (10) items. Choose from the following or invent your own:

1. \_ your house
2. \_ your school
3. \_ your friend's house
4. \_ a place where you like to shop
5. \_ a place where you like to eat out
6. \_ a place where you like to be alone
7. \_ a place where you feel safe
8. \_ a place where you feel threatened or scared
9. \_ a place where you like to hang out
10. \_ a place you would like to see go away
11. \_ a place you would like to create that does not exist
12. \_ a place you would like to own
13. \_ other: (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_ other: (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_ other: (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

- You first will need to make a rough draft so you'll have a general idea about where you'll put things in your map.
- You must include the main (important) streets in order to tie together your various places. ***This is a map !***
- Your map must be in color on construction paper.
- You must include a compass (a North, South, East, West indicator)

### **Worksheet 2: Children's Book Project**

**ASSIGNMENT:** To write and illustrate a book for children OR teens that gives a clear, strong message about an issue that YOU feel strongly about. Your book must satisfy all six (6) of the following criteria:

### **I. STORY**

A. The story must be a minimum of twenty (20) complete sentences. That is not a lot, therefore you will need to choose your words carefully. Your goal is to get your message across as plainly and effectively as possible.

B. Your story must have a problem or a conflict, a climax, and a resolution. Think of an episode of one of your favorite shows, or consider one of the books we have read.

C. You will need to have one or two sentences per illustrated page. Each sentence must be printed neatly in blue or black ink. You may choose to type your lines on computer and paste them into your book. Spelling and punctuation will be counted in the grade.

### **II. ILLUSTRATIONS**

A. Your story must have a minimum of ten (10) illustrated pages.

B. Each picture needs to be neatly done and must effectively illustrate the text.

C. You will need to create your pictures freehand using COLOR or you may create ORIGINAL images with computer graphics.

### **III. FRONT COVER**

A. The front cover must be made of construction paper and decorated in color.

B. You must include the TITLE and AUTHOR (you) on the cover.

### **IV. DEDICATION PAGE**

A. You will need to dedicate your book to someone. "This book is dedicated to...because..."

### **V. ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

A. You must include a brief (3-5 sentences) description of yourself, the author. This is usually the last page of the book.

### **VI. CLASS PRESENTATION**

A. You will read your story to the class.

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#### **POSSIBLE POINTS:**

#### **AWARDED:**

<b>STORY:</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>ILLUSTRATIONS</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>COVER</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>5</b>

#### **POINTS**

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