

Imperialism and Funny Clothes in the Land of Enchantment

Anthony Rodriguez

"My birthday began with the water."

Dylan Thomas

To teach history in New Mexico is as ideal a job as teaching marine Biology in the Cayman Islands or running a fly fishing clinic on the banks of the Deschutes River in Oregon; we are waist deep in the hands-on. Like many history teachers here, I try to focus on the many strengths that the people have brought to light in this great land of contrasts and balances. I also try to balance the arts with science, and the warm native culture with the cold facts of imperialism. We are a state of many people and so much art and culture that New Mexico is a magnet, attracting people from far away. These strengths in the arts and a jaw dropping natural landscape bring out many speculators, some with the best intentions, to slowly colonize and disrupt the balance that has survived 400 years.

Academic Setting

This curriculum is designed for Emotionally Disturbed high school students in a self-contained classroom. I intend to teach history. Students with severe emotional needs are looking for a very structured, predictable setting wherein they feel safe, regardless of what is happening outside of my four walls. Before any academics can be taught, the teacher must provide stability and fairness in all aspects of his/her teaching; for many of our students are living with abuse, and all are "At-Risk."

I teach at Highland High School, in Albuquerque, NM. We are a very diverse school, which draws on three distinct economic and cultural regions of the city: Nob Hill/UNM, Kirtland Air Force Base, and the infamous 87108, or "War Zone" area. With so many different children with wildly different agendas, we are a school of tolerance and understanding. Highland has the highest Asian, Native American, and African American populations of any school in Albuquerque.

Our community deals with more domestic violence calls than anywhere else in the state, with roughly 2/3 of all calls in the state to Bernalillo County, and 50% of those calls are from the 87108 area code. In many ways we are at ground zero in terms of absolute need, and those who choose to teach here are made quickly aware.

So why teach here? If teaching to an easily won audience was a

reality, anyone could do this, right? I teach for the challenge and the rewards that come with rising above it. To be what you want your students to be every day, every week is a lesson in self-awareness, peace, and empathy. When I get to see the proverbial lightbulb go off above a mealy-mouthed student's head, I feel good. If it was easy, I might get bored; and boredom be the death of me. So when dealing with these students, you must ask yourself, "Do I like them?" If the answer is yes, then all of the empathy, kindness, patience and fairness is worth it; just know what you are getting into.

To teach academics to my students, I must engage them with a subject that is both hard hitting and novel. They claim to have "seen it all," and most of them really have; so the teacher must draw on the experiences of the group and form a slightly wild curriculum that interests them. Imperialism and its restrictions on personal freedom are a real daily occurrence to my students. Most of the students who walk through my door have a probation officer whom they see frequently. To learn about the oppressions of peoples rips into a raw part of their being, and reminds them of the many things that have happened to them.

My style is to start out with some of the most severe or high interest historical occurrences then slowly move the class and the history back to a more balanced account of history. We might out studying a militant, and then move our thoughts toward Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I feel it is the natural order of progressive thinking to become enraged at our society, then patiently work the system toward equality and peace. So, as the Land of Enchantment is plucked of its wealth, the soul survives and may cycle back to its roots of compromise and coexistence.

Narrative

Imagine taking a day trip to our city different, Santa Fe. What kinds of things are you sure to see? Visualize the super sized SUV dragging an even larger shiny mobile home, burning gas like it is a renewable resource. So many accoutrements, that no one residing inside this gleaming Santa Maria need to get off the couch and interrupt their Gameboy to soak in the local sites that are magically passing them by.

At first, one might think that this is just your average tourist, chugging along the main highways, hitting all major landmarks with speed and efficiency. That is until you notice the details of the people who eventually walk out of the beast. The men are dressed in nylon bright shirt tucked into painted on wranglers, which then tuck into shiny boots. A Stetson covers the skull, none of these clothes has taken the pounding associated with ranching, nor the abrasion of anything that

resembles dirt. He is as loud as his ensemble, quickly letting his new environment know who is here and what he plans on doing. Is he a stereotype American tourist, or just a Texan visiting his newest real estate purchase in the land of enchantment?

We all have images of ugly Americans looking to bring a little (or a lot) of their home to wherever they are off next. They want to go to the Mc Donalds in Beijing Square just to say they went there, and how cute it was in such an exotic place. People bring Gameboys, instant snacks, cell phones, and a copy of "The Great Gatsby" on their trip to Guatemala, just in case. We want pizza in Puerto Rico, hamburgers on the Riviera, and a hot dog and a shake while touring the Vietnamese jungles, feeling for all the people who had to die there: and wondering why everyone is laughing at the irony associated with this scene. We really do not get it; but where did Americans get this attitude from?

Americans are the clumsiest of tourists. We are at best self-centered with good intentions toward our fellow humans, - good intentions that seem to go horribly wrong, mainly due to our lack of knowledge of the host's culture. A group of Americans will spend large amounts of money quickly without thinking twice. We like purchasing stuff and scoff at anyone who thinks debt is a bad thing. So why blame Texans with all the guilt associated with our poor image abroad?

Texans, Californians, New Yorkers fleeing from the lands which made them rich to buy up parcels of land states with in more reasonable prices. It is a story of "new age imperialism." There are no other new worlds to explore, so those with money chose to move into poorer, scenic areas of our own country and buy up the small town property. This isn't necessarily an "evil empire" scenario; the intent of the imperialist is the question. Are they there to live peacefully or do they move in purely for financial gain?

Many modern urban flight stories are wonderful tales of a self actualized person who, after escaping a financially successful/spiritually bankrupt job, moves into a small town on the banks of the Rio Grande in search of a more basic, connected, life. Many people move into these towns well aware of customs, knowing that they will have to prove themselves to the townspeople. They do not care

This trend of moving away from large areas of concentration into the more wide-open western states is a form of diffusion. All living things need a certain amount of space, and we all naturally gravitate toward what is most healthy for us. The problem begins when, in search of a cleaner life, we track our garbage with us, creating the mess we left behind back home.

Our country has seen extreme cases; we have shed blood over land, and fought against our own people. The Texas Republic and its employment of the Rangers is just one of those cases. As many tribal groups protest the use of symbols and names for professional sports teams, many Mexican-Americans cringe at the name "Texas Rangers." Looking at the way the Texas Rangers treated the Tejanos, it is not much of a surprise.

During the late 1800's, when Texas the republic was warring over the boundary with Mexico, there was a land that was neither Mexico nor Texas. The boundary changed so many times (from the Nueces River to the modern Rio Grande), that those caught in between were called Tejanos. They were men and families without a country to protect them and unsure of which side was best; they became fodder for both. So much fodder in fact that the Rangers on the Texan side were given carte blanche in their treatment of the Tejanos or any Mexican they found on what they called Texan land. Those Rangers took full advantage of this ability and began shooting anyone who fit the description of a Mexican. Many Texan civilians were killed in the decades to follow, just because they fit the description. Up until the late 1920's this massacre continued. It became a racist joke, calling the Texas Rangers' treatment of Mexican Americans an "Open Season on Mexicans."

The beginning of "Texas Imperialism" began when the Texas-Sante Fe Expedition was released in 1841, go visit what Republic President Mirabeau A. Lamar thought was rightfully part of Texas. This place was Sante Fe, New Mexico, 20 miles east of what the Republic President thought should be the common sense boundary of the republic of Texas; The Rio Grande river.

Mr. Lamar sent word of his intentions to the citizens of Sante Fe on April 14, 1840. He wanted the people to know ahead of time that "the great river of the north is the natural and convenient boundary of our territory." He also went on to congratulate the good people of Sante Fe on now being Texas citizens and welcome members of their great state. Mr. Lamar went on to state that he was willing to hold out his hand in welcoming them, "if nothing shall intervene in my present intentions."

In *the Milagro Beanfield War*, John Nichols parodies a Texan landowner named Ladd Devine. Ladd Devine is a man who inherited large land holdings from his father in the poor town of Milagro, New Mexico. His intention is to build an enormous resort with which to draw other rich Texans into the state to buy more land from him. This will eventually drive land prices up so high (and their subsequent

taxes), that the subsistence farmers will eventually have to sell. Unable to buy or pay taxes on their land in the valley they will be forced into renting. Unable to live off the land, the people (mainly Chicano) will have to work at the resort. If no one who is "local" owns anything, power leaves the locals and falls into the hands of the outside interests. Land to a local is his or her only hold on how their town will be preserved in the future.

Anyone who once worked for a corporation knows that stockholders are in charge of the company. When an outside interest begins to buy large shares of stock, that interest can be heard by the company. The more he buys the more the company must listen to him: Because of this, policies and strategies on growth are now changing. When this same interest finally gains control, it can bring its own workers and lay-off any others who do not conform to the new ways of doing business.

Towns in the Southwest are like corporations in the way they parcel out land and water rights to the people who inhabit it. Water is a scarce commodity here. Families who live in the mountains have an intimate relationship with the land they own, and are dependent on the local tributaries, arroyos and ditches that supply the blood to feed their crops. Even the poorest communities in northern New Mexico live off the water rights passed down to them by those who came before. If nothing else it is the water rights that keep power in the hands of the locals.

If the water rights are like stocks lined up along the rivers, tributaries, and acequias of northern New Mexico, then power resides in anyone who owns a parcel of land with a right to irrigate. In *The Milagro Beanfield War*, Jose Modragon was guilty of irrigating his field with the water from a ditch to which his father had lost the rights of use (due to salutary neglect many years before). Ladd Devine wanted Jose to sell his parcel of land so that he could finish his golf course. By making his beanfield green, Jose was unknowingly taking a stand against the large land(stock) owner. He was in fact taking an interest in the dealings of all stock owners in the town of Milagro. Devine had to put him down or else risk losing the poor townspeople's subservience if they realized how much power they had as a collective. By promising a richer, more steady life working on the resort these people would easily turn and go along with the plans of Ladd Devine, or so he thought. Devine was doing what every other imperialist has done in this country. The super rich exploit the super poor by making what they are doing sound like it is managing those poor ignorant locals (call them Indians, local Hispano, or Appalachians). Then they tell themselves that life is better since they

came along. Once they feel better about themselves, they can bring in a member of their faith to preach to the poor people and make them feel like sinners for wanting their own land to begin with. Now the local economy is crushed, all the land is sold, the people are now working for "The Man," and the poor people are at fault because they are sinners. The last step is to increase the amount of liquor stores and bars per capita and the reclamation is complete and irreversible.

The Land of Enchantment

Today, one in seven people in the state of New Mexico live below the poverty line; this makes us second only to Mississippi. In contrast, New Mexico has the fourth highest number of millionaires per 1,000 people. We have the highest number of minorities of any other state, but our minorities are more visible in poverty statistics than in positions of power. If these numbers remind you of "third world Mexico", you would be right. We have the greatest discrepancy between the rich and the poor of any state in our union.

New Mexico is a mineral rich state in relation to its population. We have only 0.6% of the total US population, but account for between 5 and 10% of the energy supplied to the people of the whole country. We are ranked sixth in production and reserves of coal, oil, and Uranium. N.M. is the third largest exporter of electricity and copper, and we produce 80% of our country's potash and 47% of its uranium.

If we are we so rich in raw materials and mineral deposits, why are we so poor? The answer is that all or most of the minerals, immediately after mining, are shipped to outside plants for processing, refining and distribution. This takes jobs away from New Mexicans; but the percentage profit the outside corporation takes in after getting unskilled labor to strip it out for them cheaply increases. This same technique was used on the Inca by the Europeans interested in the mineral deposits. With ease they used the local Indians to take it out of the earth and load it, to be shipped to the motherland. This left the Inca and their progeny with stripped mountains and a collapsed economy.

Relevance

The Texas-Sante Fe expedition is just another story of imperialist movements into foreign territory. Its relevance is that it is so recent in the memories of Spanish New Mexicans. It is one of the last chapters in the natural progression of taking over a new land.

To the native cultures of any land, on any continent around the world, every colonist/imperialist is interesting in the way they look to the

native. The clothes and funny hats of the newcomer are always chided by the native, for it is foreign to them and their culture. As cultures mesh, style changes hands and both fuse. Why else would modern day reservations have men in cowboy hats?

It began with inter-tribal wars and subsequent slaving of captured natives. When Cortez landed on the shores of the much suffering Maya lands, Malenche sold her soul to save her people and helped colonize the Aztec empire in search of gold.

On northward, the Spanish took over native lands, enslaved the people, and took Sante Fe. It is these histories that must be taught before the Sante Fe expedition gains relevance to the students of the Rio Grande.

It was only time before the Texans were to try their hand in this game of land acquisition. It is *my* thinking that the "Texan psyche" is still yearning for the land it was promised in the compromise of 1850. The natives were not warned of the acquisition and were subsequently upset. The main difference is that New Mexicans can be proud General Archuleta jailed the expedition and took them on a 2,000 mile tour to the capital to have justice served. It was a day that marked a rut in the road to land acquisition for speculators. Not until the most powerful nation wanted the land, did New Mexico succumb to imperialists.

Background

The Milagro Beanfield War is an excellent modern example of internal US imperialism by richer Americans against poorer Americans, in an attempt to control people by acquiring vast amounts of land and water rights. In the Southwest this pattern of internal conquest of neighbor vs. neighbor began with The Republic of Texas Governor Mirabeau B. Lamar's letter of intent to the people of Sante-Fe. It is a direct link into the psyche of outside speculators who are willing to eat the people's tacos, buy their Santos, go to their art galleries, and welcome them onto their new lands. The outsider accepts the local as long as "nothing shall intervene in my present plans."

Depending on whose history you read one will always get a different slant on the truth. Many deep-seated Southerners still believe the North did not win the war, and by God's divine right anyone fighting for the South was a hero. Many Spanish historians will write about the valor and bravery of Cortez and his conquest of ineptly armed Aztecs who thought the God's were arriving to save them. In the same vein, many Texas raised biographers have written great things about the

Texas-Sante Fe Expedition.

One story is of General McCloud who will go down as the Bill Buckner (Red Sox fans may never forget) of the Texas Militia. He was the only general to surrender without a fight. Revisionist historians from the Lone Star State will tell of the man who only surrendered because he thought General Archuleta would welcome him and his men into their new lands, and possibly invite him to dinner. After reading a book on the valor of this general, it sounds like he wasn't halfbad. Supposedly he and his men suffered greatly and almost died due to starvation in their survey of the new land. It was an honor to survey the land ala Lewis and Clark for the great new republic. Never taking what was not theirs, these men toughed it out to the end with their meeting with Gen. Archuleta; he immediately arrested them.

One thing that I have left out was that all along the way Gen. McCloud robbed and pillaged many a reservation in search of food (and possibly women) for his troops. One such account happened on The Llano Estacado, September 14th, 1841. General McCloud's army stole dogs that the Indians used as pets, and butchered them to use as food for the Anglo army (no Indian tacos here, just dog fillets for the Texan army). After word of the expedition and the army's treatment of the locals spread west, General Archuleta was not ready to throw out the welcome mat for Gen. McCloud.

Both sides agree that General McCloud did surrender without a fight. They also agree that the group was escorted in cuffs south along the Rio Grande Valley - through Albuquerque, Socorro, Las Cruces, and all the way to Mexico City. They were to stay there until their release in 1856. George Kendall, a prominent citizen, wrote about his shock over his and the rest of the expeditions arrests made on the banks of the Pecos River.

Implementation

The general plan for the first eight weeks will be to start out on a world-view level of imperialism and slowly work it to a local level, even to a neighborhood level. Constantly bring up the words imperialism and freedom in daily lessons to see how the definition of the words change. Each week has a theme for the lessons and reading in class. One major lesson will accompany each week, hopefully sparking other ideas to lessons. Every day will begin with one lesson out of the A.R.T. curriculum (20-40 minutes out of a 90 minute block of teaching time, for we are on the Block Schedule), which teaches empathy, anger control, social skills, and character education.

Following an A.R.T. lesson the class will read and write about whichever topic is given for each week.

Week 1: The Connection between Blind Ambition and Imperialism

We will look at the various personality traits of imperialists throughout history. We will use the Aggressiveness Replacement Training as a backbone, teaching empathy, social skills and overall humanity.

Lesson: The connection between ambition and imperialism through song lyrics.

I will ask the students to listen to each song and write a paragraph describing how each artist affects them. I will ask them to listen to the way each artist uses tone, pitch, and harmony to drive their lyric content.

Songs:

Cortez the Killer by Neil Young
Atlantic City By Bruce Springsteen
Bulls on Parade by Rage against the Machine
Pocahontas by Neil Young

We will then share our work with the class. I will read my interpretations and we will discuss the connection between unbridled ambition and the imposing of controls on others' freedoms. I will bring up the idea that it is very American to believe that ambition is a positive attribute of one's personality. To close we will listen to one song and write on it.

Song: *Lazy Guy* by Slobberbone

A question to think about is; Why does the lazy couch potato get dogged in the United States when he/she is only harming himself? In what ways can a 'lazy' person expect society to treat him? When and for how long has the "American psyche" been conditioned to accept imperialism as a way of life?

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards 9-12: 14A, 14B, 2C

Week 2: Religious Imperialism, How Dogma Paves the Way for Conquest.

We will continue to understand the ways in which a powerful country slips religious missions into Meso-America like a shucking knife to an unsuspecting mussel. This topic is obviously a sensitive one, and one

must proceed with caution and their facts in hand. I teach this section from the perspective that the missionaries were not always fully aware of the ultimate result of the mission (although a case can be made that they were well aware of everything that was happening to the Aztecs).

Lesson: Students will use readings/lecture on Spanish missionaries in Mexico to construct a fictitious first-person narrative about one of the people involved in the search for gold on the shores of the Aztec Empire.

List of Characters: Montezuma
Malenche'
Hernando Cortez
Spanish missionary
Spanish conquistador
Aztec citizen
Aztec mystic(priest)

Using their new found empathy skills, each student will write a personal narrative of one of the above people. It will include what life they lived before the conquest and how the mixing of cultures affected them. The students will learn to understand how each person involved was shocked by the mixing of cultures.

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards 9-12: 1A, 1C, 5B, 6A.

Week 3: In what ways do investors from wealthy states move into poor, scenic states and force change?

Look at the economic impact that investors from the big three (California, Texas and New York) have on the economically weaker states as they move in and expect the comforts from home. What are the intentions of those investors and their large corporations in places like New Mexico and the rest of the Rocky Mountain states?

Read as a class: Excerpts from: *Heart of Aztlan* Rudolfo Anaya
Who runs New Mexico? Beth Wood

Discuss the reason why an investor from a rich state with plenty of resources chooses to move?

Ask the students if they ever lived in an area that was subject to large-scale urban flight?

Discuss the effects of large corporations moving their headquarters into your area. Intel in Rio Rancho is an excellent starter. Rio Rancho is sometimes called a "little New York."

Vocabulary: Urban flight
Corporation
Tract development
Land fraud
Speculator
Realtor
Buying power
Boom towns

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards: 3B, 5C, 5D,

Week 4: Why do people need culture and arts and wildlife? Why is it that the corporations are the ones killing our environment when they may need its spiritual guidance the most?

Lesson: What are the effects of arts, wildlife, and culture on humanity? Is it possible to live without all three and still be a happy, self-actualized individual? Is it even possible to live without the gifts that the native cultures of the Americas gave to the imperialist explorers of the English, Portuguese, and Spanish?

Write a story about a person going through life without the soul/spiritual aspects of culture, art(include music), and wild life. What would you do for entertainment, growth, and learning? What types of things in society lack these three ideas? Why is a life void of these things dangerous to the self? Why would one turn to drugs to escape life?

Readings: *Indian Givers* by Jack Weatherford
America in 1492 by Alvin M. Josephy

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards:3B, 14A

Week 5: What are the forces acting on New Mexico and what are they doing? Who is "invading" the state and why?

Look into the pressures from the "barons" in Texas, New York, California, and Denver. What are the US governments' interest in the open lands of our state and why are they not working in places like upstate New York?

Readings: *The New Mexico Power Structure Report* by
Beth Wood
Albuquerque by Rudolfo Anaya
Milagro Beanfield War by John Nichols

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards: 5B, 10F, 10G, 13A

Week 6: What does it mean to be a local?

Lesson: Brainstorm on the board how one would easily recognize a local in their neighborhood. Then brainstorm on the board how they know a person is not from their neighborhood.

Circle the common statements made by the students.

Ask the students to draw comparisons and contrasts from each of the three readings which are written about various poor neighborhoods on both coasts, and are from three distinct time periods: the 50's, late 60's, and 90's.

1. Ask the class to do a round robin, group paper on what it takes to be a local.
2. Break into groups of four.
3. Have each member write a sentence on a topic for a paragraph, then change the topic.
4. Each group should have at least five paragraphs to share with the class.

Readings :

Intro to *Manchild in the Promised Land* by Claude Brown

Always Running by Luis Rodriguez

Hat City Rail Running by Anthony Rodriguez

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards: 5D, 8A

Week 7: Personal imperialism: how the choices we make in our intimate lives can imprison us.

Lesson: Ask your students to remember stories that family or older friends told them about marriage, child rearing and choices that have affected their life. Ask them to think about two of those people, one who lives happily and another who does not. Ask them to web the reasons why these people ended up the way they did; what choices in their intimate lives brought them up or down. Have a class discussion about how those closest to you are the largest determiner of how your life will be. Is it reasonable to think that the woman/man you chose can ruin/uplift your life?

Readings: *Woman Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros

The 14 sisters of Emilio Montez O'Brien by Oscar Hijuelos

So Far From God by Ana Castillo

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards: 5D, 8A

Week 8: Self-imposed imperialism: how immigrants to our country feel they need to act, dress, and speak like the American stereotypes to fit in and be "good Americans."

Lesson: How foreign culture is lost in a few generations due to conforming to the American way. Why does the individual need to truly think for himself? What are the consequences for the conformist/non-conformist?

Write an essay about the reasons that you are a conformist/non-conformist. Discuss the gains of being the opposite of what you are and why you are who you are.

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards: 8A

Week 9: Unit conclusion - Experiential education river trip to historic sites in New Mexico

Lesson: In order for true learning to take place, students need to see and be in the places that you are studying. For this to happen, you need to go on a culminating field trip. We have learned all about imperialism/colonialism, now we must see the sites. We will take a two-day trip through a stretch of river which runs from Espanola to Cochiti Lake. Places of interest: White Rock canyon, native lands, acequias, lands of dispute, and the Cochiti Dam (which also houses a great recreation area).

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards: 1A, 1C

New Mexico Social Studies Content Standards Used and Met

1A: Analyze the influences of people, history, economics, and geography in New Mexico, which created opportunities for New Mexico as a state in the 20th century and into the 21st century.

1C: Analyze and explain how nations share commonalities and differences and that influences within nations generate their history's direction and distinction.

2C: Analyze the consequences of particular political, social, and economic conditions.

3B: Evaluate and choose the most persuasive social studies concepts and vocabulary to explore issues and problems.

5B: Investigate and analyze the people, events, problems and ideas that created the pre-history and history of New Mexico and the Southwest.

5C: Investigate and analyze the people, events, problems and ideas that created the pre-history and history of the United States and Western Hemisphere.

5D: Analyze the political, economic, and social developments of various cultural groups in the world to understand the present and prepare for the future.

6A: Analyze and Articulate personal connections to time, place, and social-cultural systems in both historical and contemporary cultures.

8A: Analyze and apply rights and responsible behavior in relation to family, community, state, tribe, country, and other nations.

10F: Analyze and apply influences of economic concepts and reasoning on contemporary issues.

10G: Evaluate the effect of scarcity and abundance on national economies and relate these concepts, to human rights, the environment, and national security.

13A: Analyze the influence of science and technology upon society.

14A: Evaluate how interactions among art, music, language, technology, belief systems, and other cultural elements can impact global understanding.

14B: Examine the complex conditions and motivations, which contribute to conflict, cooperation and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.

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