

# **Spirit of the Rio Grande / Rio Bravo: Culture, Environment, and Bioregionalism**

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## **Lives and Spirits of the Great Río Grande/Río Bravo**

### **Toni Barela**

This unit was designed to enhance the history of the Southwest. It can be used as a literature and cultural component with that part of history that is the Río Grande/Río Bravo. By using legends and fables, this unit will enhance the teaching of history, and will help us to understand how humans explained their environment and nature. Students will be able to discover who they are and how they fit into this world. It is difficult to separate math, science, language arts (in any language), literature, and the other core subjects, and with history as the vehicle to organize lessons, any unit will flow easily. This unit begins with a short synopsis of the three main cultural influences in the Río Grande/ Río Bravo Basin and how each has connected with the other today in the Southwest. Students will be able to write their own explanations of natural phenomenon. They will be able to learn about their own history and that of their family. Hopefully, this will encourage and help them to develop a positive self-concept. Students will also be involved with the learning of technological strategies which will enhance their researching techniques for any topic a teacher presents.

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## **Spirit of the Rio Grande: Protecting Our River**

### **Marlene Wensits Brown**

This curriculum is about the Rio Grande and issues surrounding water usage. It is designed for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school students, but it is meaningful information for anyone who is interested in or concerned about a fresh water supply. Students will learn the history of different cultures living along the Rio Grande, and how each culture viewed and utilized this natural resource. They will learn how industrialization changed the course of the river, and how the bosque, fish and wildlife, and the river itself are in serious danger now and for future generations. Fresh water is a finite resource, and wasting water must be stopped. Students will learn what they can do to become involved in protecting the environment, and what each of us as

individuals can do to conserve water.

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## "Sangre de La Tierra" River Science

### Lesley Casias

The main purpose of this unit is to demonstrate the importance of water in our community. Water is one of the most important renewable resources we have on Earth, yet we contaminate and misuse it. The earth is 70 percent water, but only three percent of the earth's water is a usable source for life. Much of this is frozen. This unit will be a thematic unit on the Rio Grande River integrating math, science and Spanish language arts. The unit will be part of the 6th grade dual language program with all subject areas and themes taught in Spanish. This unit will explain how water is in nature and what happens when humans intervene.

Students will be introduced to life science concepts in the classroom through their science textbooks. They will then apply this knowledge to the Rio Grande region. Students will study various aspects of the Rio Grande. They will focus on the Rio Grande as a biome. A biome is an area of land based on its climate, plants, animals and other characteristics. They will study historical changes made to the Rio Grande by human influences and natural occurrences. They will study the geography of the area. The necessity and demand of the water will be an issue analyzed. Students will be expected to consider and produce efficient ways to use the river's water in our ever growing community. The culture of the people along the Rio Grande will also be studied.

Through hands on experiences with the Rio Grande students will learn the importance of water in nature to plants and animals. They will learn where water is in New Mexico and how it got there. And, they will learn the effects of water in society and culture. At minimum, I expect student to gain an awareness and appreciation for the Rio Grande and the bosque.

This unit will begin by focusing on water and its properties, and rivers. Learning about rivers in general, students will make the connection between the Rio Grande and the people of Albuquerque. Emphasis will be placed on the science of water and rivers and their importance to life. But, throughout the unit, attention will be given to the Rio Grande for its aesthetic and cultural value as well.

This unit will begin with an initial field trip to the Rio Grande. Students will be invited to familiarize themselves with the river and discover the rivers many attributes. Following this field trip, an area

around the river will be adopted to focus their studies. This will be a place to gather information.

The *Bosque Education Guide* provides many activities to help students understand the nature of the Rio Grande and how human intervention has affected the Rio Grande. Instructions are given in this guide to make a model of the river which students can manipulate to show changes in the river. This will be integrated throughout the unit.

As a read aloud title, students will hear *The Mother Ditch* by Oliver La Farge. This will help students understand the importance of the river to Albuquerque communities and culture throughout history. The book gives an explanation of acequias and their management. Speakers from acequia societies will be invited to present to the class.

Students will have an opportunity to see an acequia and meet people from acequia communities on a field trip. Additional field trips will include a field trip to the public works department, so students can see how water is treated and distributed to residential communities.

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## **The Connection of Immigration**

### **Sara Cook**

This curriculum unit focuses on the history of immigration and the connections between the past to the present states of immigration, especially Mexican immigration. Through the use of simulation games, student responses, student research, and novels, the students will begin to form their own opinions about the question of whether or not to open the border between the United States and Mexico. The unit will focus on the economic factors that face Mexico today and how those factors compare to the United States' economy. Students will compare the trail their ancestors took to New Mexico to the trail that leads Mexicans to the United States.

This unit is geared toward an eighth grade U.S. history course. It includes integrated language arts and social studies concepts.

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## **The Nature of Rivers: The Rio Grande**

### **Diane Dykkestén**

This curriculum unit was designed for use in an earth science class at the middle school level. The narrative portion provides background information on the nature of river systems with a follow-up discussion regarding the Rio Grande. The first five lessons introduce the students to the formation, components and mechanics of river systems. Maps,

lecture, discussion, note taking, films, slides, and demonstrations are utilized. In the next portion of the unit, students utilize what they've learned through researching and presenting information regarding a river system of their choice. The last five lessons focus in on the Rio Grande through discussion, demonstration, slides, river models, and a problem solving activity. Current and local issues concerning the river are explored, as well as its impact on the region as a whole. Follow-up activities including field trip and guest speaker options are also included.

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### A Sense of Place:

### Defining and Personalizing the Affective Dimension of History, Culture, and Bioregionalism in American Literature

### Sheri Jett

As students begin their study of American literature, it is key that they understand that the collections of works which create this huge body of literature are not only Anglo in origin, but, rather, are products of centuries of cultural interaction. Moreover, it is also important that students of American literature perceive that the issues and problems of early literature have historical, cultural, and social significance in their lives today. Therefore, a study of the first works of American literature, including those of Native Americans, Spanish explorers, Mexican-Americans, and people of the English colonies, provides an excellent introduction to the idea that American literature is indeed a diverse and dynamic body of literary accomplishments.

This curriculum unit examines the beginnings of American literature in Native American myths, songs, and tales, and links these first works to the folklore of black- Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Anglos. The unit also considers the similarities among the experiences and, therefore, the literature (of the Spanish explorers and English colonists). Students will have the opportunity to study the concepts of imperialism and colonialism in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, and then apply these ideas to the Spanish and English conquest and colonization of North America. Then, students will research the issues of immigration today and their social and economic consequences. Finally, students will participate in a storytelling festival in which they share stories of their own choosing which reflect the cultural diversity of American society today.

The unit is designed to meet the needs of 11<sup>th</sup> grade students of American literature, particularly the enriched population. It may be implemented as a whole in approximately three weeks, or broken down as time constraints and resources demand. Overall, the unit

seeks to discover what characteristics of Americans emerge from the literature of early Americans and how these characteristics have affected the place America is today.

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### **Imperialism and Funny Clothes in the Land of Enchantment**

**Anthony Rodriguez**

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 that brings out many speculators, some with the best intentions, to slowly colonize and disrupt the balance.

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### **Down by the Rio: Ecology Curriculum Unit**

**William A. Siefert**

This curriculum unit is designed for a freshman biology class to introduce the main concepts of ecology. The Middle Rio Grande Valley in New Mexico is the focus and source of examples used to explain the scientific principles of this unit. The narrative provides basic background for general ecological concepts, a brief history of the Middle Rio Grande Valley, and an introduction to the ideas of bioregionalism. The lessons provided include a field trip, indoor and outdoor lab experiences, classroom activities, and a research/computer presentation project. The unit is intended to last two to three weeks. The unit relies on teacher-led discussions and activities to build the foundation of information students will need to carry out their research project. The unit contains references, student and teacher reading lists, and web site links. The knowledge gained from this unit is intended to show students the importance of understanding the ecology of an area in order to minimize the harmful effects that human activity can have on natural systems.

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### **The Spirit of the Rio Grande:**

**The History, Culture, and Environment Del Bosque**

**Shirley Vigil**

This unit is designed for use in a sixth grade special education classroom. The intent is to provide students with a captivating and enjoyable curriculum in order to hold student's interest and make them active learners. It is a nine- week, interdisciplinary unit. The goal is to integrate most subject areas into the curriculum; however, the emphasis is on science and language arts.

Over the years our state has gone through many changes, and many different inhabitants have come to El Rio del Norte. In the past, there has been much hostility and turmoil, but the result today is a unique blending of the three dominant cultures. We have learned to appreciate the contributions of each culture, yet we have managed to preserve our diversity. Each of us value and consider New Mexico home, but the primary reason for that is our natural resource, the Rio Grande. However, we do not always seek to preserve this resource. Our forefathers sought to improve and develop this land, but consideration was not given to the inter-relationship of the entire eco-system. We now know that one factor can cause a domino effect on the whole system. We are presently witnessing the demise of the Rio Grande. The Rio Grande that once reached the Gulf of Mexico, no longer reaches its destination.

The primary focus of this unit is to make students aware of the plight of the Rio Grande, and to familiarize students with the contributions of the three cultures, to encourage students to have pride in their culture, and to respect the language and culture of other people. This curriculum unit seeks to highlight the importance of preserving our water, so future generations may benefit from the richness and beauty of the Rio Grande.