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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2005 Volume II: Art and Identity in Mexico, from Olmec Times to the Present

Representations of Family in Mexican Art

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by Alexandra Reyes

I teach 7th and 8th grade Spanish in an inter-district communications and technology magnet school in New Haven. The World Language program in the middle schools is a two-year course, which is the equivalent of the Spanish I course in the high schools. I see my students five days per week, in 47-minute periods.

Because family is part of one's identity, it is something each and every one of my students can relate to in some way. When learning a language, family is always a major topic. While its practical definition varies from culture to culture, and from situation to situation, the concept of 'family' is universal. This important theme of 'family' is often seen in art, literature, film, music, and other media, and offers much insight into the values and cultures of the people portrayed, as well as into those of the artists. Incorporating the 5 Cs with Mexican and Mexican-American art will help students learn Spanish in a cultural context by keeping them engaged in a culturally authentic setting. Using visual aids lessens the need for English translation and encourages vocabulary and language retention in an interesting and meaningful way.

(Developed for Spanish, grades 7-8; recommended for Spanish, grades 7-12)

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