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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2006 Volume III: Children's Literature, Infancy to Early Adolescence

From Aztecs to Aztlan: Building Cultural Bridges through Literature

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This unit provides a cultural bridge from Aztec/Hispanic Mexico to Indo/Hispanic New Mexico primarily through reading literature from three historical periods in the development of the Chicano culture, beginning with the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan, through migration to the North of Spanish and Indian peoples and coming to rest in the present time. The focus on the mythical kingdom of Aztlan serves to tie the stories together in a seamless river of time and to evoke a positive interpretation of the people and events that caused this cultural fusion. Students explore these connections through ideas, art and activities gleaned from the literature. They also gain a valuable historical perspective.

The unit is written for bilingual (English/Spanish) fourth grade children, but contains many adaptations suitable for delivery on a third through sixth grade level. By employing the teacher resource texts, the unit would be useful for high school and college students. The duration of the unit is an hour a day for one quarter. The idea of studying connections between any two ethnic groups that grow up side by side is a viable extension activity of this unit.

(Developed for Language Arts, Social Studies, and New Mexico History, grade 4; recommended for English, Language Arts, and Social Studies, grades 4-6 and High School grades)

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