



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
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Latino Children's Folk Music: A Series of Thematic Writing Exercises

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As a music educator for pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade, I value the study of music and the opportunities it provides for subject integration. I teach music in a way that embodies the beginning studies of the elements of music and includes interdisciplinary experiences with mathematics, history, science, reading, visual arts, and writing. Consciously or unconsciously, music is usually taught in a way that includes reading song lyrics, using mathematical skills in assigning and counting note values, and exploring the science of vocal and instrumental sounds through the study of vibrations. As a result, students are able to experience music in a variety of ways. My goal is to teach a unit that will use "chocolate" as a motivational theme for writing, a task that is not often favorably approached by elementary students. My theme is inspired by the Latino folk song, "Bate, Bate Chocolate." This song serves as the core of my unit.

Music is a language with universal appeal. It can be written down or passed from one person to another. As songs and chants move orally from one generation to another, they often carry with them cultural traditions and customs. "Bate, Bate Chocolate" embodies a rich cultural history that includes both the historical significance of the Aztec Empire and the history of chocolate. These nuances allow for the integration of both history and writing with music.

I have attempted to address not only the needs of music teachers, but also the needs of second through fifth grade classroom teachers by designing this unit in a way that can be adapted to explore exciting, age-appropriate themes for writing within any subject area. Teachers can select themes from sources within their areas of expertise and create the desire for writing that students seek.

(Developed for General Music and Music, grade 5; recommended for General Music, Music, English, and Writing, grade 5)

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