



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

*to strengthen teaching in public schools®*

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2010 Volume III: Creating Lives: An Introduction to Biography

---

## **Contando Vidas/Telling Life Stories: The Biographies of Influential Hispanics in Our Community**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.03.11, published September 2010  
by Barbara Prillaman

In this unit, students will become familiar with the genre of biography and how biographies are constructed, learning about the components necessary to "tell" a person's life story. This will be modeled by using a case study on the life of Cesar Chavez, a person who has many things in common with these Hispanic, middle-school English Language Learners (ELLs). In teams, these Hispanic youngsters will interview prominent community members and these members' additional personal and professional sources. Interviewing skills will be modeled and practiced before going out into the community to meet with their community members. Students will also be required to analyze various written documents about these people's lives. Then, they will synthesize the information from their interviews and written document evaluations and write a short biography about their selected person. This unit, although geared toward a particular group of students and community, could easily be adapted to fit the needs of many other groups/communities.

(Developed for English Language Arts for English Language Learners, grades 6-8; recommended for English Language Arts and Social Studies, grades 6-12)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)