



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2011 Volume IV: The Big Easy: Literary New Orleans and Intangible Heritage

The Scene of the Crime, Mexico City: Performing History in the Language Classroom

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by Matthew Kelly

In this unit aimed at upper and intermediate learners of Spanish, students will investigate two massacres committed in Mexico City 448 years apart: the 1968 massacre at the Plaza de las Tres Culturas at Tlatelolco and the 1520 Toxcatl massacre at the Main Temple of Tenochtitlán. In each case, they will work back through successive layers of the historical record to get back to the primary sources. Once they have read and interpreted primary sources for these events, they will interpret primary source documents through performance in the target language.

Through performance students will have an opportunity to engage with and experience culture in the target language with an emotional immediacy and sense of communal participation very often absent in the upper grades. Grammar and vocabulary, rather than ends in themselves, become tools for the students to access and express the literal meaning and emotional content of the texts. Students will develop a more dynamic sense of culture by exploring the ways in which watershed historical events shape societies. Working backwards through the historical record, working with primary texts, students will see how the historical interpretation of events is dynamic, shifting as evidence is brought to light or discredited.

(Developed for Spanish IV/World Languages, grades 11-12; and Spanish III/World Languages [portions, with modification], grades 10-12; recommended for Spanish IV/World Languages, Spanish V/World Languages, and Advanced Placement Spanish, grades 11-12)

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