



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2026 Volume II: Latinx Histories, Cultures, and Communities

Beyond Borders: Where Roots Shape Identity

Guide for Curriculum Unit 26.02.03, published September 2026
by Virginia Pinzón Atkins

This unit explores Latinx identities through a diverse collection of cultural texts, poetry, and visual art. Students begin by examining the concept of borders as both physical and symbolic. They explore how borders influence identity through family, culture, and lived experiences. The roots of the unit shift by examining how family histories, cultural traditions, and personal memories shape a sense of identity and belonging. Through the works of Sandra Cisneros, Rudolfo Anaya, Esmeralda Santiago, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Carmen Lomas Garza, and others, students discover that identity is grounded in the people, places, and experiences that define who we are.

Throughout the unit, students read and analyze real-world resources in Spanish. Students discuss ideas with their classmates as they analyze each reading from different perspectives. Students also explore how symbolism and cultural representation deepen their meaning of identity. Connecting literature to their own lives, students engage learning strategies through close reading, reflective writing, and visual analysis. The goal of the unit is to help students engage with language as a living expression of identity rather than simply an academic skill. Guided by the principles of culturally responsive teaching, students strengthen their interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication skills while reflecting on their own identities. By the end of the unit, students will know that identity is shaped not only by the borders people encounter but also by the roots that continue to connect them to family, culture, and community.

(Developed for Spanish II, Spanish Honors II, and Spanish AP, grades 9-12; and UD 306 Latin American Civilization, grade 11; recommended for Spanish I, III, IV, and V, grades 9-12)

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