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From Aztecs to Aztlan: Building Cultural Bridges through Literature

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Introduction and Personal Goals

Recently, while I was having coffee with a friend at an outdoor café in downtown Santa Fe, out of nowhere a band of about twenty brightly costumed dancers appeared and started dancing in the street below. Rhythmic footwork pulsed to the beat of a steady drum while a Spanish soldier and an Aztec slave tussled for supremacy. It was the Baile de los Matachines, the story of the Aztec conquest by Imperial Spain and the Aztec people's resistance to it. This story, retold countless times, came alive again in mythic guise for me right there on Burro Alley, reminding me that the kingdom of Aztlan lives on in the daily lives of all of us who inhabit the Indo-Hispanic Southwest. The dancers melted away, as mysteriously as they had appeared, and I was left with only the vibrating air and the myth surrounding it.

Living in Santa Fe, New Mexico is living in antiquity and possibility. My students and I dwell where magical experiences can happen on the streets and frequently do. However, the majority of my students also live in a land of poverty and oppression. It's a landscape of subsistence living, toil, yearning for family and country (Oh! How they yearn!) and crossing borders. Literal and figurative borders. Or it's the reality of a low-pay job with little room for advancement and going to the *rancho* to visit family and to touch and be touched by the land. *La Tierra*. These are my students, the present-day people of Aztlan, and it is my privilege and sometimes my despair to live and teach among them.

How to reconcile these two opposite faces of the people of Aztlan and, as a language arts bilingual secondary teacher, gently guide these sons and daughters of Aztec ancestry and Spanish heredity to recognition of their cultural unity? Although "Aztlan" is defined variously as "the northern kingdom," "the white kingdom," or "the place of the white heron," to me *cultural unity* is the modern definition of Aztlan because it describes the intermarriage of two cultures. Some historians believe that Aztlan was the original northern kingdom of the Aztecs, much glorified in the oral histories of the people, and much sought after when they left this paradise and made the journey to Tenochtitlan about 1000 C.E. About 500 years later, when Spanish conquistadors brought their Aztec captives to Santa Fe, these conquered people settled in Barrio Analco and this location metaphorically became one of the new locations of the kingdom of Aztlan. In the 1970's the Chicano movement seized on the concept of Aztlan as a focal point for positive growth and as an explanation for the new race created by the intermingling of Spanish and Indian peoples. Hence, Aztlan has existed for at least 1000 years as at the very least a symbolic concept, if not a literal one, and so it continues today.

I believe that by reading the literature of both cultures, from past to present, by recognizing and honoring their heroes and their everyday folk, and by sharing their own personal stories of their life journeys and those of their families, we may begin to accomplish this reconciliation. It's a delicate undertaking, for many of the stories of crossing borders are of necessity secret tales. But there are the stories of whys and wherefores that bypass the hows and lead to understanding and truth. It is these stories we will pursue.

My intention is to build, through reading narrative, biography and fiction, a cultural bridge between Aztec/Spanish Mexico and Indo/Spanish New Mexico. This is the literature that captivates and motivates my students. They will then build on their reading by writing and recounting their own personal biographical and autobiographical narratives. My bridge-building goal is driven by a compelling vision to transcend cultural misunderstandings and misinformation and above all racial and cultural arrogance and prejudice, and to promote peace and harmony in the lives of my students in our classroom and in the world.

We will achieve this unity by employing the symbol of "mirrors" as a unifying theme. Mirror images abound in the literature of preconquest Mexico and they persist to this day. I wish to examine the literature of Mexico and Hispanic America through the mirrored lens, thereby linking *los tiempos antiguos* to modern times. I want my students to use the mirror images to see themselves and each other with a view to comprehending their own histories and the interdependencies that resulted from that famous and infamous encounter between Moctezuma and Cortes. Ultimately, my goal is to introduce the cultural faces of indigenous and Hispanic Mexico to their counterparts in the American Southwest and vice versa, with a view to recognition of self-in-other, and finally, looking squarely in the mirror themselves, to seeing Self with new eyes and with increased self-esteem. *Con orgullo y con gusto*. With pride and pleasure.

I wish to recreate, with the help and consensus of my students, a new kingdom of Aztlan in our classroom where students are safe, respected, valued, encouraged and loved—a "coming home" place—Aztlan!

Rationale and Objectives

I am writing this unit specifically for a fourth-grade Spanish/English Dual Immersion class. However, the reading material will span many reading levels in both languages, due to the fact that many students enter the class reading two or three grade levels below standard, some students test on a pre-kindergarten level, some read on grade level and a few read above it. Hence, because the material is graduated, the curriculum could easily be adapted to primary level. In fact, it could be used on the high school or even college level simply by substituting much of the bibliographical reference material for classroom use, as the unit contains numerous simplified books that directly mirror the more sophisticated source material in the bibliography. Some of the exemplary activities cited later will work on any level, by merely increasing the level of expectation.

My overarching goal for this unit is to inspire my students to make the leap into being first successful thinkers and then successful speakers, readers and writers. My broad objective is to produce bilingual, biliterate and bicultural individuals who are able to move at will through society speaking, reading, writing and perceiving in English and Spanish. This objective will be achieved by my instructional delivery in both languages, by student speaking, reading and writing in both languages and by providing, through discussion, interviews and literature, myriad examples of cultural ideation and its expression as represented by both cultural groups.

Although I teach in a 50/50 Dual Language Immersion program, my reasons for supporting this delivery system go far beyond my attachment to any particular program. Research has shown, time and again, that teaching a child to think, read and write first and well in his or her own native language, Language 1, provides the needed infrastructure to be able to acquire Language 2 with facility and relative ease. A brain-compatible second language teaching model requires that I provide, first of all, a "silent stage" of learning during which time my Spanish-speaking students are absorbing English and the English-speaking students Spanish, and secondly, that I teach language to children by immersion in a rich language "soup," rather than through an always-systematic program of learning.

This unit lends itself beautifully to the above-mentioned second language acquisition model. I will present the material in three sections that will mirror the process the human brain uses to acquire language. In the first section, students will listen to their target language being spoken and read. They will read literature primarily in their native language, be it English or Spanish. As well, there will be a wide variety of choices of literature available on various reading levels. Students will recount what they have read and discuss it in their primary language.

In the second section or phase, students will continue to read, write and speak in their primary language, but will enter discussion groups in L2 and attempt some speaking in L2, along with listening. This strategy will continue in the third phase with students taking on more speaking responsibility in Language 2, while beginning to read in L2. Students who are already bilingual will speak, read and write in both languages, continuing to strengthen their speaking and reading skills in their first language while increasing their usage of the second one.

Above and beyond my primary goal of inspiring struggling readers to make the leap into being successful thinkers, speakers, readers and writers, my objectives for this unit are threefold: 1) to bring an awareness and love on the part of my students for their rich cultural and literary heritage, 2) to foster an understanding and appreciation for the common roots and cultural influences that they share, thereby cultivating solidarity among them, and 3) to nurture the struggling seeds of self-esteem and bring them to rich flower, and in the process begin to generate metacognitive skills that will continue to serve them throughout their lives.

A word here to teachers who teach in any situation where there exist two cultures living side-by-side that share common roots: the ideas presented in this unit could be well-adapted to fit any bicultural situation. The goals and strategies would remain the same, and it would be only the culture-specific literature that would change.

My primary objective, to promote metacognitive thinking skills first and then produce speakers, readers and writers, hearkens back to the seminal work of Piaget, since his developmental learning theory is biologically based and therefore transcends cultural restrictions and conventions.

While respecting the need to hold students (and teachers) accountable to a given set of curricular standards in order to raise the achievement levels of students, I submit that this must be accomplished within a range of biologically-driven achievement criteria, particularly in cases where the educational delivery system is dealing with English Language Learners. Research has shown that it takes children, indeed anyone, from five to seven years to become fully fluent in L2. It is my belief that the current emphasis on testing and teaching exclusively to standards contained in a year-end assessment examination is leading teachers away from a developmental view of learning that takes into account children's cognitive abilities at any given age.

Piaget's theory of knowledge acquisition reminds us that *intelligence* is a growing phenomenon. As children

grow, they get smarter. Similarly, as children grow in language acquisition, they get smarter. Hans Furth, in his book *Piaget for Teachers*, advises teachers that "the first job of our elementary schools today should be to strengthen the thinking foundations on which any particular learning is founded"(1). He goes on to say that it is "motivation that really counts in the business of learning to read" (2). And finally, that it is symbols that tie language to thinking. Hence, a "differentiated sign" refers directly to a form of knowing.

This curriculum unit will follow these developmental guidelines by stimulating thinking and motivating students to read by providing a rich menu of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities. In line with Piaget's philosophy of linking language to thinking through the use of symbols, I'll begin the unit by introducing Aztec pictograph writing. In the pre-conquest Aztec kingdom, pictographs were drawn by artists and then presented by singing/chanting historians who used the pictographs to illustrate the story chronicles. Since that was their purpose, these symbols can lead us smoothly into our investigation, reading and writing about the historical subject matter, and students will be provided with listening and speaking activities. From this basis students will proceed to higher order language skills.

The integrative theme, the warp of my unit, is a work of fiction entitled *Esperanza Rising/Esperanza Renace* by Pam Munoz Ryan. This is a triumphant tale of a young girl, born into a wealthy ranching family in Mexico, who emigrates to California with her mother upon the death of her father to become a migrant farm worker. Experience has shown me that my students love this thoughtful, thought-provoking and well-crafted story because there is much in it with which they identify. As well, they take great pleasure in listening to me read it. I plan to alternate reading a chapter at a time, one day in Spanish and the next day in English. In line with current biologically based language acquisition theory, students will listen to me read in order to obtain the deep structure of L2; however, and perhaps more importantly, they will listen for the sheer pleasure of being read to in their mother tongue. Sometimes I'll require them to follow along in their own copies of the text, and occasionally I'll invite student readers who enjoy reading aloud to read to the class. At no time will any student be required to read aloud from this book.

I will use this story to chart character development, discuss fictional plot and structure elements and make predictions. After about a week of reading this book aloud and discussing it whole-class, I will segue into the unit formally by inviting students to journey with me on a discovery of where Esperanza's family, and her "helper," Miguel, whose family served Esperanza's family, came from and why they emigrated to the United States. I will enjoin them to take a journey backwards in time to uncover the early ancestors of Esperanza and perhaps discover something about their own roots in Spain and Mexico as well. I will continue to read aloud from *Esperanza Rising* throughout the entire unit, thus returning always to the spoken word, reinforcing listening skills and simply providing a resting place from the sometimes arduous work of learning a new language.

The three stages or sections of this unit will be chronological, thematic and metaphoric. We will begin by making text-to-self connections in the first section, then move to text-to-world connections in the second, and return to text-to-self connections in the third. I will encourage students to make text-to-text connections as the unit unfolds.

I plan to spend an hour a day for an entire semester in covering this unit. If I need to spill over into the second semester I will, because the unit covers most of the New Mexico fourth grade Language Arts standards as well as some of the Social Studies standards.

It is important to note that I have selected many reading levels of text to reflect the varied reading levels of my student population. Also, since I'm teaching in a bilingual immersion program, the books are in either

English or Spanish, but they mirror each other in content, so that students are learning primarily the same information. (Of course, Literature Circles, composed of typically four to six children, may focus on one topic while another group studies a slightly different, but related, topic.) A few of the books have side-by-side text in translation.

Since I always have students who speak, read and write primarily in Spanish, primarily in English or, more rarely, glide easily back and forth between the two languages, I assign more complicated Spanish texts to the native Spanish readers and lead them along with gradually more challenging texts in English, and vice versa for the native English readers. Literature Circles begin with monolingual readers and gradually branch out to include text to be read in L2 and native speakers of both languages. Ability levels are varied and the configuration of the groups changes according to what is needed by individual students at any given time. Again, my goal is to produce bilingual, biliterate children.

However, it is to the third objective, that of producing bicultural students, capable of sympathetic identification with the non-dominant culture (according to their understanding of this at age 10), that I turn now in order to invoke the unit curriculum's substantive learning.

Strategies—Section 1: Spain meets Mexico and a new race is born.

Students will begin their unit study with an historic perspective by studying examples of Aztec pictographs and their meanings. First they will view and study the 20-day Aztec calendar and choose one day they wish to reproduce. Classroom activities will be for children to draw or paint their chosen pictograph, and we will assemble them into a calendar to be used for the classroom. Later, I will bring in a sample of *amate*, the paper made out of fig tree bark, upon which the Mexican people drew their pictographs. Then students will draw or paint an example of a pictograph taken either from a real example or by inventing their own. I hope to be able to obtain enough *amate* for students to use it for their pictographs. They will match the pictograph with its meaning and the class will assemble the various individual examples into a simple coherent story. They will take turns "reading" the story by naming the words represented by the symbols. This activity will take up to two weeks to complete. As noted previously, this exercise employing pictures as symbols standing in for words mirrors for students the early reading and writing of the Aztec people as well as affording them the opportunity to employ pre-reading decoding strategies prior to beginning to read text. This method is particularly helpful to those students who are basically recognizing only a few words and those who are reading below grade level. However, it is also a useful strategy for successful grade-appropriate readers as it serves as a reinforcing girder for the very foundation of language acquisition.

Upon completion of the above activities, students will begin in earnest to investigate through literature the historical milieu of the time of the Spanish conquest of the people of Tenochtitlan and the events and people who stand out from that time period and whose shadows continue to walk among us. Since the conquest (which took place in less than two years, from November, 8, 1519 to August 13, 1521 when the Aztec/Mexican capital surrendered) is an extraordinarily gruesome tale, I plan to approach it obliquely, employing the vehicles of myth and folktales to study the lives of its three main characters and some of the gods and goddesses of Aztec/Mexican culture at that time.

While not denying the authenticity of the events that transpired and the people who participated in them, I

wish to say a word about why I will emphasize the mythological perspective of the main characters in that fateful encounter between Spain and Mexico. Bruno Bettelheim, in his book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, points out that myths are pessimistic and tragic tales, concerned with heroes rather than ordinary people (3). Thus, I feel that by employing this fantasy genre, I am able to maintain the integrity of the major players while somewhat softening the impact of the events orchestrated by them and their heinous results. By transforming especially Cortes, and to a lesser extent Moctezuma and Malinche, to heroic status I provide an emotional outlet for the children through which to channel an understanding of their deeds and somewhat mitigate the horror.

Conversely, folktales, which students will also read, are stories about everyday people performing everyday tasks. These tales should have a leavening effect on the emotional trauma produced by the reality of the wholesale slaughter and mutilation of thousands of human beings during the conquest.

Taken together, it is to be hoped that the myths and folktales will provide emotional projections of gods, goddesses and superheroes that allow the children to feel safe. Bettelheim reminds us that children need to believe in superior powers if their familial environments are not secure—and so many of my students' environments are not!

The three main figures we will study in this part of the unit are as follows. Don Hernando Cortes of Spain, leader of the Spanish troops, who is the key figure, along with Pedro de Alvarado, responsible for the conquering of Tenochtitlan. He was a man on a mission for gold who pursued this endeavor relentlessly, making judgments against the Aztecs for their practice of human sacrifice but seemingly with no comprehension of his own willingness to sacrifice thousands of human lives for the sake of golden ore. Another luminary was Moctecuhzoma (frequently translated as Moctezuma and called Montezuma by the Spanish), who was the reigning Aztec king of Tenochtitlan, a deeply conflicted man and arguably a sagacious person who relied heavily on signs and symbols to forecast events and guide his decisions. He counseled restraint on the part of his people when faced with decisions as to whether or not to aggressively pursue and attack the Spanish troops. His cautious approach had many motives, not the least of which was his suspicion that Cortes and his entourage were the gods foretold in the legends and foreshadowed by the "eight bad omens," or the "eight wonders," depending on the codex, that preceded the Spanish *entrada*.

Finally, the matrix figure, whose presence is still invoked in present day Mexican and New Mexican story and myth, is Malintzin, named La Malinche by the Spaniards, who has evolved into the mythological figure of *La Llorona*. She will be the unifying character whom we meet in the beginning and to whom we return at the end of the unit. She was an Aztec princess, sold into slavery by her mother upon the death of her mother's husband and her mother's remarriage to another, whom she wished to inherit the family wealth. Malinche was purchased by a Mayan chief whose people were kind to her. She learned the Mayan tongue in addition to her native Nahuatl and eventually was given as a gift to Cortes as a gesture of appeasement on the part of the Mayan chief who was known to be skeptical about the white men being the children of the god Quetzalcoatl, foretold in legend. Malinche turned out to be a boon to Cortes. In addition to bearing him two children, she was able to translate whatever he wanted to know from Nahuatl into the Mayan tongue, at which point the translation was picked up by a former Spanish soldier who had also been in captivity with the Mayans. He translated into Spanish from Mayan, and Cortes was able to learn much military strategy and something of the Mexican way of thinking. Without a doubt, Malintzin was one of the reasons Cortes was able to conquer Tenochtitlan and the Aztec people in so short a period of time. Equally importantly, she stood in the paradoxical position of being the betrayer of her people (probably unwittingly) and the mother of the new race produced by that very betrayal.

I will introduce the idea that cultural myths and historical facts often have points of overlap, as in the case of La Malinche/La Llorona and I will develop this in the last phase of the unit. La Malinche will be for this unit a grounding influence as well as a river carrying us across time into the present day.

At the same time, students will read folktales from this time period, and I will teach the difference between myth and folktales from the point of view of what constitutes each subgenre. Reading assignments will be accomplished in Literature Circles with books assigned to each group according to ability level, language proficiency and interest. From the reading assignments students will present an oral retelling of one of the stories associated with a character they have chosen to follow, i.e. one of the superheroes, gods or goddesses from this historical period.

Class discussion will center on characterization, examining characters' motives and actions and considering their actions from various points of view. We'll be making text-to-self connections. Another classroom activity will introduce and model Venn Diagrams. Students will construct them using a character they meet in literature and comparing that character's traits to her/his own. Where do those traits overlap? will be the question applied to the intertwined circles of the Venn Diagram.

Throughout all three of the sections of the unit students will be encouraged to make text-to-text connections; however, this section particularly lends itself to this pursuit, because students will be reading different selections of stories, myths and folktales that concern the same characters and events, told from different cultural points of view. Hence, this is an ideal time not only to introduce point-of-view, but to have students uncover the places where the stories are the same and the points of view differ. Again, Venn Diagrams will be a perfect medium for these discoveries.

From the discussions of the events and characters of this momentous era in Mexican American history and from their reading, students will present an oral retelling of one of the stories/folktales/myths they have read. In this manner, students will gain a perspective on the stories and their major players from this historical era as well as various points of view toward the events and their protagonists.

It is in this first section of the study that students will be brainstorming and mapping ideas for a work that will span the entire unit: writing and illustrating a story of a significant journey in their lives, entitled: My Personal Journey. This journey need not be geographical, although for many I suspect it will be, but it must be a journey in time, space and/or growth and maturation that produced a long-lasting change. Their stories will name and describe the changes they experienced as well as the events that produced them. Many examples of "journeys" to use as models will be provided throughout the span of the unit, through literature, interviews and class discussion.

Some Important Literature

The two most important books I will use in this first section are *Broken Shields* and *The Sad Night*. Both books are short, relatively easy reading with, however, some challenging vocabulary and stimulating historical material. Both contain colorful and graphic illustrations and small appendices of terms and definitions. Both books recount, in narrative style, the events of the war between the Spanish and the Mexicans. Both of these books are in English.

Broken Shields is a child's version of some of the Aztec codices, collected by Friar Bernardino de Sahagun in his 16th century publication *A General History of the Things of New Spain*. The illustrations are from *The History of the New Spanish Indies and Mainland Islands* by Friar Diego Duran and are thought to have been

painted by the indigenous people. The book laments the fall of the Aztec kingdom and in so doing is not only historically accurate, but true to the song/chant style of narration used by the Mexican people, which is still evident in the musical genre called *corridos*.

The Sad Night: The Story of an Aztec Victory and a Spanish Loss tells the story of the one victorious battle of the Aztecs over their invaders. Also historically accurate and told in a mythological style, this book uses highly colored illustrations based on the few codices not destroyed by the Spanish. As well, it contains a short narrative appendix describing the city of Tenochtitlan, a map of Cortes' route to the Aztec capital and an illustrated, informative description of the Aztec calendar system that I will use as reference for our study of pictographs and the 20-day calendar system, along with other texts listed in the bibliography.

From an anthology entitled *Antologia de la literatura infantil en lengua Espanola* I have chosen two narrative tales: *Hernan Cortes y sus hazanas* and *Moctezuma*. These stories are cast in an adventure mode and give descriptions of customs of the times as well as psychological portraits of the two men. The stories are not only written in Spanish, they have a decidedly Spanish point of view, in contrast to the English stories; hence both views are covered without losing the mythological storytelling tone or historical fidelity. These two stories are on a more difficult reading level than some others, so I will assign them to fairly advanced Spanish readers.

From a book entitled *Stories from Mexico: Folklore of the World*, I've selected three that deal with the major actors in the drama of this time period: "An Eagle on a Cactus," "The Little Slave Girl" and "The Chief of the White Men." I chose this volume of folklore because it was written for American children to give a sampling of Mexican folktales, and again because it provides an historical perspective through the use of the fantasy genre. "An Eagle on a Cactus" is the tale of how the Aztecs came to settle Tenochtitlan. "The Little Slave Girl" introduces students to the character of La Malinche and begins her story, and "The Chief of the White Men" continues weaving her story through the lives of Cortes and Moctezuma. As well, students will read other folktales of the Mexican people such as "Rabbit in the Moon," a story of "good" and "bad" gods and how their sparring produced the sun and the moon. The text is grade level and the illustrations are presented in a pleasing, engaging style reminiscent of Diego Rivera and the muralist school.

Finally, another book about the conquest and its events, *La Conquista*, is written in grade-level Spanish with full-page color illustrations and appendices that list *los conquistadores y los conquistados* as well as giving a useful timeline listing the major historical events from 1519 to 1521.

Strategies—Section 2: From Aztecs to Aztlan: you are my cousin, aren't you?

In this second section students will be reading about and discussing the evolution of the Spanish and Mexican people in the United States, particularly the Southwest and California. How did they get here? Why did they come? What struggles and obstacles did they have to overcome, and how did the people succeed? How did our family members succeed? How are we succeeding?

This is the biography/autobiography section of the unit. Students will read a children's biography of Cesar Chavez entitled *Cosechando Esperanza/Harvesting Hope*, which will be offered in both languages. A strategy I will employ here is to encourage native readers of Spanish to read this book first in English, talk about it in their literature circle, again in English, and then read it in Spanish to gain insight about their own achievement

in reading and comprehending L2, as well as to awaken their own metacognitive thinking strategies and processes about their second language acquisition. Of course, the reverse process will be employed by the native English readers. The reading level of the book is grade appropriate.

The other literature selection in this segment of the unit will be selected autobiographical narratives read aloud from the book entitled *Mexican Voices/ American Dreams*. Although this is an adult work, the prose is clean and direct and I feel most students will be able to negotiate the English text by this point. I will direct read-alouds in various configurations from the literature circles, to paired readings, to "teacher reads aloud," thereby facilitating the early English readers in their speed and comprehension. In some cases children will choose a story to read silently and retell it to a classmate or to me. Class discussions around this book will focus on the immigrant experience and how it relates to experiences the children have had in their own lives. As well, this reading and discussion should stimulate thinking about students' own "personal journey" stories.

Another example of a lesson plan will involve teaching students about the interview process, with the objective of later doing their own interviews to convert into a class book of biographies. I will begin modeling the interview process by first spending one class period engaged in a whole-class activity in which I lead students in a discussion about the immigrant experience and then help them to formulate 10 to 12 questions they would like to ask of someone who has emigrated from another country to the United States. Students will practice asking the prepared questions to one another and thinking about answers they would give. From here we will select 10 to 12 children to ask the interview questions.

Another class session will be devoted to conducting the interview with a person from the community whom I will have invited to visit our class. Each student will have a copy of the prepared questions, and those who don't ask the interview questions will be responsible for recording the interviewee's answers. Class discussion post-interview will center on our procedure—what worked and what did not work—and what we learned about doing an interview and about the immigrant experience of our interviewee.

Next, each child will choose a family or community member he or she wishes to interview and repeat the same process, formulating a set of questions and interviewing their candidate as a homework assignment. Using these interviews as a basis, the children will write their own biographies in another class period. Later, they will read them aloud to the class, after which the biographies will be collated and stored as a book to be displayed in the school library where others may read it. This sub-unit will take about two weeks, allowing time for children to set up and deliver home interviews.

In class discussions students will uncover mirrors between various life histories they have encountered and the literary characters we have been reading about. Students will discuss, interpret and evaluate non-fiction, especially biography, in their literature circles. They will focus on making text-to-world as well as text-to-self connections. Discussion questions will focus on contributions the person they interviewed is making to our world. Also, how am I like this person? How am I different? What contributions am I making to the world right now and what are some contributions I hope to make?

Students will write their first rough draft of their "personal journey" stories, incorporating ideas they have gleaned from their biographical reading, from their interviews, and from class discussions they will have in Literature Circle about their thinking at this point. I will be conferencing with them individually as well helping to focus their thinking, answering questions, and working with them to edit and revise.

They will move directly to writing a second draft after their conference with me, while our discussion is still fresh in their minds. I will teach peer-editing to the class, introducing editing marks and modeling how to use

them. At this juncture students will begin to try out peer-editing techniques in paired reading situations where they read and attempt to edit each other's work. The children will rewrite their drafts and once again conference with me; on this occasion we will discuss not only the writing and its content but also the peer-editing process and how it went for them. I will assist them in further refining their self-editing techniques. By now their stories should be fairly polished with only minor revisions left to be made.

Lastly, through the mirrored lens, I will introduce the topic of the migration and settlement of Spanish descendents from Mexico, traveling *El Camino Real* from Mexico City to *el norte*. I will arrange a field trip to a local "living museum" that presents ranch life as it was in Colonial New Mexico in the 17th and 18th centuries. Prior to our visit, I will show a video made by the museum that presents historical data on life of the early Spanish colonists and presents a timeline of Spanish settlement in what is now the American Southwest. Class discussion will take place prior to the trip, emphasizing the journey the colonists took in covered wagons to get from Mexico City to Santa Fe. We will talk about some of the hardships the colonists faced in making that long trek, and what provisions and tools they needed. Students will then construct maps to scale of the Camino Real in order to figure out the length of the journey from Mexico City to *El Rancho de las Golondrinas*, an actual journey made by many people over the course of two centuries.

I will be continuing my oral reading of *Esperanza Rising* and we will be about two-thirds of the way through the book by the end of the second phase of the unit.

Strategies—Section 3: New Mexico meet Mexico: When I look at you I see me.

The third and final stage of the unit will focus on contemporary life in New Mexico, especially as it is influenced by our connection to Mexico. I will provide a small selection of literature from which to choose, dealing with life in the United States as an immigrant or as a native Spanish many-generational inhabitant whose family has retained many of the cultural traditions of either Spain or the Spanish colonial period. The four books I have selected have themes of family connections and self-discovery. They are all set in modern times. Students will be making text-to-self connections. Discussions as a class or in literature circles will center on the themes of what makes a home. How does place make us feel at home or not at home? Who am I in relation to my family? How does my family and my personal history influence who I am? How do they influence my likes and dislikes and talents?

Students will read one of four literature selections in their literature circles. *Border Crossing* is the story of a twelve year old American girl of mixed racial background who journeys to Mexico by herself to discover her Mexican family. It is on a fourth to sixth grade reading level and will be assigned to the advanced English readers. A mirror story, *Going Home*, shares the theme of returning to family in Mexico from the United States and the feelings of home and also estrangement that this return evokes. Also in English, it is written on a second/third grade level, so I will assign it to L2 readers and English reading students who are struggling readers.

The other two stories are in side-by-side text. *In My Family/En mi familia* is a heartwarming tale about customs brought from Mexico and practiced in the new land. Among other stories, it contains a La Llorona tale. An easy reader, it will be assigned to students who need simple vocabulary. Another second/third grade level text is

the story *Magda's Tortillas/Las tortillas de Magda*. Students will sense a personal connection in both these stories, as they deal with familiar customs and family interactions, thus stimulating a sense of comfort and safety.

I will finish reading aloud the story of Esperanza's journey from *Esperanza Rising* preparatory to the children finishing the writing of their own stories. Class discussions will focus on how students identify with Esperanza and her mirror, Miguel. How is my story like theirs?

Students will write a final draft of their personal journey stories, working closely with a partner in order to share ideas or questions about content and/or grammar and structure. They will apply their learning about peer and self-editing, and my expectation will be that the final copy will hang together structurally, ideas will be developed and flow smoothly and that there will be very few grammatical, spelling or structural errors. I will pair native speakers of Spanish with English native speakers as much as possible because by this point students should be fluent enough in each language to move back and forth between them in conversation. From here on, the literature circles will meet to share stories and fine-tune them, checking for sequencing and flow.

Children will illustrate their stories. They may paint or draw the illustrations. Upon completion of both text and drawings, they will read their stories aloud to the class and exhibit the illustrations. Later all the stories and drawings will be strung together in the accordion-like form of Aztec codices. These codices will be our class histories and the mirrors in which to see ourselves.

Another project that will tie the unit together will be a gathering of "La Llorona" stories. We will read a short story entitled "La Llorona/The Weeping Woman," written in Spanish and English side-by-side text. These "Weeping Woman" stories abound in New Mexico as well as in Mexico, often as cautionary tales warning children to stay away from rivers and arroyos. The plot is frequently concerned with a mother who has either lost or killed her own children and now haunts the rivers and arroyos weeping, wailing and seeking those children. She is La Malinche, but this knowledge is becoming lost or obscured as the La Llorona stories become more stylized and farther removed from the original source.

I will ask students to collect these tales and bring them to class, either written down or retold *en voz alto*. It will be fun to share them and most children enjoy the thrill of being frightened as long as they are in a safe environment. Also, I think the children will be surprised when they realize these stories are told in Mexico as well as New Mexico and that they originated with La Malinche.

As a final wrap-up to the unit, we will review all the children's products and briefly review the books they have read. We will discuss the long journey we have traveled from the time of the Spanish conquest of the Aztec people to today in our classroom, in our families and in our world. In what ways have we learned that we are similar to one another? In what ways have our feelings about each other changed?

In the academic realm, we will discuss what we learned about our history. How has each child's language skills improved? Is it easier than it was at the beginning of the unit to speak English? Spanish? Are you a better reader and writer than you were? In what way?

What was the easiest thing for you to learn? What was the most difficult? What was your favorite book? Why? Who was your favorite character? Why? What activity did you enjoy the most and why? What character or subject we studied would you like to know more about?

And finally, the most important question: What did you learn about yourself?

It is to be hoped that students will have gained a deep and abiding appreciation for their shared cultural roots, that they are able to see the mirror image of themselves in each other and that they are, therefore, well on their way to becoming bicultural as well as bilingual and biliterate. Moreover, I anticipate that a spirit of home, a spark from the sun of the lost kingdom of Aztlan, will have been rekindled in our classroom and that the spark will continue to grow and produce the heat and light of friendship and good will throughout the year, not only in our classroom but in our everyday world.

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