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2012 Volume II: Storytelling: Fictional Narratives, Imaginary People, and the Reader's Real Life

Development of the Latina Voice in *The House on Mango Street*

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Introduction

She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window. ¹

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros paints a vivid picture of Latino culture in the United States. Cisneros tells the story of her experience growing up and coming of age in the impoverished immigrant communities of Chicago during the 1960's and 70's through the eyes of Esperanza, a young child. The book was written nearly thirty years ago when Cisneros was emerging as a professional author and expresses the cultural barriers she struggled with that many in her community could not overcome in pursuing the American Dream. *The House on Mango Street* describes immigrant communities that have preserved their Chicano and Boricua roots. While there is great beauty to continuing unique traditions, Cisneros highlights how many of the customs and conflicts that arise from them are limiting, with especially harsh consequences to women.

The father decided too much college and too many gringo friends had ruined her. In a way he was right. When she thinks to herself in her father's language, she knows sons and daughters don't leave their parents' house until they marry. When she thinks in English, she knows she should've been on her own since eighteen... What does her mother say about all this? She puts her hands on her hips and boasts, "She gets it from me." When the father is in the room, the mother just shrugs and says, "What can I do?" The mother doesn't object. She knows what it is to live a life filled with regrets, and she doesn't want her daughter to live that life too. ⁱ

In this unit students will read the book *The House on Mango Street*. The book will be read in a thematic manner that looks at the author's own life and how her book tells of her protagonist's journey to personal success, overcoming barriers along the way. This unit asks students to examine the barriers they face to leading a successful life. It seeks for students to define their identities in a way that prohibits these barriers from getting in the way of their goals. The clandestine conflict in *The House on Mango Street* is how Esperanza, or 'Hope' in English, breaks out of that impoverished community which entraps so many others. By reading this book, I am taking a new approach to support my school's push to keep freshmen on track for

graduation and following a plan for college readiness, as well as contributing to our "character counts" curriculum. Aside from developing literacy, the main goal of my unit is to promote essential decision making skills.

We will be examining the themes of family, storytelling, stereotypes and developing identity, the machismo attitude, and the Latina Voice. There will be three summative projects associated with this unit. The first explores changes in the Latino community from the setting of the book to today. The second asks students to set their own goals and identify barriers to achieving them. The last assessment is an interview with a woman in their community.

School and Classroom Background

This unit will be taught to 9th graders at the Air Force Academy High School in Chicago, Illinois. The school is a selective enrollment military academy located on the near south side of Chicago, in-between the historically African American neighborhood of Bronzeville and the increasingly diverse neighborhood of Bridgeport. While the majority of students come from the surrounding neighborhoods, the school is open to students who are accepted from across the city. As in most Chicago Public Schools most students come from low income families with around 85% of the students receiving free or reduced lunch. While the school outperforms the district average on standardized tests and is recognized as a good environment, it lags behind the state average.

The Air Force Academy High School was created three years ago and in 2013 will graduate its first class of students. The school moved to its permanent location only two years ago. While the original class was half African American and half Hispanic, the new location has greatly shifted the student population. There are now a considerable group of first generation Chinese American students and a considerable Caucasian population.

This unit will be taught in a World Studies classroom and follow a unit on the history of Latin America and migration. The unit could also be implemented into a Spanish for Heritage Speakers curriculum using the Spanish language version of the book. For some fluent Spanish speaking students in my classroom who already excel at reading in English, I will have Spanish language copies of the book. With a greater push for literacy across my school, this is the first time reading a book and fiction text will be included in a Social Studies classroom. There is a wide spectrum of readers in the classroom, ranging from students reading at the 6th grade level to students beyond the 9th grade level. The average reading level of my students is around 7th to 8th grade, which matches up with how *The House on Mango Street* is written. If the calendar allows, this unit would be appropriate for the month of March for women's history month.

I have the unique luxury of teaching in the same city that the book is placed in. Many of the students live in the same neighborhoods described in the book and still face the same struggles that Cisneros describes. Having this direct connection to my classroom was part of the reason I decided to write this unit.

Rationale

I find *The House on Mango Street* powerful because I believe it evokes achieving the American Dream for a segment of the United States population that is so often marginalized. As the Latino migration has grown in the United States in the nearly thirty years since the book's publication, its message has only grown more pertinent. Working with a student population that is made up of a plurality of Latinos and many first generation Americans, I find this book to be very relevant and powerful and will use this unit to unlock its message. As Andrea O'Reilly Herrera says, "For Sandra Cisneros the house on Mango Street simultaneously represents all the systems that oppose or challenge her as a woman, a minority, and a writer." ² Despite everything that could hold the main character back, she still succeeds by leaving Mango Street to make a better life and achieve her dreams. We are left with the confidence that she will return and help those who she left behind who could not break out of the constraints around them.

While much has changed in the half century since Cisneros's youth, many of the same conflicts she describes still exist today. In reading *The House on Mango Street*, I hope for students to see how the author has described cultural and sometimes structural barriers that prohibit pursuit of a better life and to connect them with hurdles in their own lives. At the end of the book, Esperanza promises to come back to her old neighborhood for "the ones I left behind." ³ I believe by writing the book, Cisneros did just that but to a much vaster audience of endless readers. My rationale for developing this unit is to help students recognize the barriers that constrain them and inspire them to make the decisions needed to succeed in life. It is my goal for students to see it is possible to break those barriers just as Esperanza did in leaving Mango Street, while at the same time realizing they can do this without compromising their identity. For my students this might mean having the courage to leave their community to attend college or to stay their and pursue their personal interests; to go wherever their dreams lead them.

Objectives

Students will analyze how characters develop through the course of the book: specifically with the changing voice of Esperanza in arriving at womanhood from her collective experiences. As Herrera points out, "In addition to being an exploration into the way in which the Chicano community deters the Chicana's exploration and discovery of selfhood, Cisneros's novel emphatically stresses the role of writing in the process of self-definition," specifically with how Esperanza changes in becoming an "independent self-determining agent." ⁴ This is what enabled Esperanza to break free from the definition her community surrounded her with, and make her own identity; what lead her to leave Mango Street. In seeing this change in Esperanza, I will have students create a roadmap for their own success in life, identifying their goals and the barriers (personal and structural) to achieving them.

Since this follows a unit on Latin America and migration, I will build off of what they have learned previously and have students show how traditions and customs are carried over transnationally and survive assimilation into a new place, specifically within Chicago. With my diverse school, I also hope to build a greater appreciation for Latino culture. Specifically I want to highlight the negative effects of the machismo attitude and how they have been countered by the development of a strong Latina voice. Part of this will require

students to encounter a successful Latina member in their own community and compose a summary of what obstacles that person faced in life and how they overcame them.

Classroom Strategies

The House on Mango Street is told through small vignettes. One of the major challenges I face in teaching this book is that the positive outcome is not revealed until the end of the book. While the vignettes are intertwined and there is a consistency of characters, it is not a typical chapter book that builds on itself. Some of the vignettes, while entertaining, do not have a common theme with others. Structuring the book in terms of lessons around themes ends up being slightly difficult if I were to have the students read *The House on Mango Street* straight through. While I will be having the students read the book in a somewhat linear fashion, it will not be page for page— the book is not structured in a way that requires this.

While the themes of the book can be complex, the language it is written in is relatively straightforward, something struggling readers can still have success with. It is also an easy book to differentiate instruction with; depending on the student group, the book may be read in its entirety while other students may just focus on vignettes necessary to the theme of the unit. Some vignettes will be read and discussed together as a class, while other sections will be split up into groups and presented. I do not anticipate having more than a class set of books, so the majority of reading will take place in the classroom and homework assignments will build off the themes discussed in the class. Supplemental texts are shorter and will be provided as copies.

While reading is the main student activity throughout the unit, the teacher plays the role of the initiator of conversation through the Socratic Method around each of the reading themes. The different themes will each take several days to be addressed and will include conversation with the students. There will be formative assessments within each theme to allow students to express their feelings on the issue or to state what they have learned. The unit will also have three summative assessments discussed later.

Reading Themes

The themes I will address sample vignettes throughout the book, but not always in a linear fashion. I begin and end working on the same theme which is dedicated to Cisneros' personal story and how it is expressed in the book. The Introduction to *The House on Mango Street* highlights Cisneros' background and personal story and then the ultimate lesson of persevering over challenges is revisited after lessons on each of the themes covered. Two of the themes are about challenges themselves: overcoming stereotypes and creating identity and the attitude of machismo. Other themes I cover in the book are the development of the Latina voice, family, and storytelling. These themes are meant to be addressed in chronological order, with the exception that Cisneros' personal story is split between the very beginning and end of the unit.

Cisneros' Personal Story and the House on Mango Street

An introduction for the unit will be the actual life experience of the author and her experience in developing

the book. The Introduction to *The House on Mango Street* details her relationship with her parents and the stories of her former students which she sometimes adapted for her book. Even though the stories in *The House on Mango Street* are not all autobiographical to the author's life, they do contribute to her overall message and what was her own personal struggle. Cisneros says in the introduction to the book:

I cut apart and stitched together events to tailor the story, give it shape so it had a beginning, middle, and end, because real life stories rarely come to us complete. Emotions, though, can't be invented, can't be borrowed. All the emotions my characters feel, good or bad, are mine. ⁵

This introduction provides the reader with an essential understanding to how and why the book was written. It also provides an outline for the themes I will teach in this unit and introduce to the students at this time. Cisneros' conflict and ultimate resolution (in life, not the book) are shown in her relationship with her father. The struggle in developing her voice, and ultimately the struggle of the Latina voice are highlighted. The introduction is wrought with recognizable references to Chicago which should be a hook for my students' interest. I will also provide background information about Cisneros and explain why the book is so notable internationally.

I will ask students to compare their own experience with their parents or guardians to that of Cisneros. Specifically for comprehension I will ask them to articulate her father's hesitations about her life choices to something that the students' parents or guardians are critical of them about. While this is the core conflict of the book, and a major theme to my unit, it is not immediately apparent in the early chapters of *The House on Mango Street*. Through this, I hope for the students to identify with this core conflict and help spark their interest in the book.

Also included with the introduction will be the first vignette: "The House on Mango Street" which will be contrasted to the introduction we read called "A House of My Own." At the conclusion of the unit we will revisit the introduction before closing with "Elenita, Cards Palm and Water," "Bums in the Attic," and the last four vignettes: "The Three Sisters," "Alicia and I talking on Edna's Steps," "A House of my Own [the vignette]" and "Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes." This is where the central theme of identity enters in because so much is based on what home is to a person. I am reminded of the quotation from the movie *The Departed*, which I find applicable here: "don't become a product of your environment; make your environment a product of you." ⁶ I believe this ends up being Cisneros's goal, but with much more positive intentions than Frank Costello.

In this conclusion to the book, I will discuss what Mango Street has begun to symbolize. At first Esperanza is having a hard time identifying with Mango Street, because it is not the home and life that she wants. She wants something supporting and sophisticated compared to what she knows, but then there is a transformation. Cisneros changes her usage from talking about the house on Mango Street to just talking about Mango and personifying it, referring to Mango as "she." It no longer is just a house where she grew up, but the family and community that raised her and this is why she has to go back. Her having the home she wants can still happen, but Mango always will be part of her, and she can help change Mango to be what she wants it to become. This ends up being an important reflection for what the author has achieved.

Last, I want to spend a brief time exploring Cisneros' writing narrative and look at some of her poetry. I will ask students what they thought of how she wrote these stories, knowing their origins from the introduction, and how they liked this book compared to a normal novel with chapters. While this is a social sciences classroom, I think the format is interesting and worth discussing to help students with their writing.

Overcoming Stereotypes and Creating Identity

According to Gloria Anzaldúa, Chicanos live "on the border," the "fault line," the "wound" between two cultures; although they share aspects of each, ultimately they are dispossessed from both. Further complicating the issue is the idea that Chicanos must come to terms with their fractured Mexican past before they can begin to negotiate their present. ⁷ While, as I mentioned, there is great beauty to continuing unique traditions for ethnic groups when assimilating into a new location, reconciling differences in culture can become a source of conflict. This is at the core of the conflict in *The House on Mango Street*.

Within many classrooms, very capable students identify themselves with a group that does not show ambition for growth or live up to their potential because it is contrary to the localized culture in which they have placed themselves. This mindset is on display in *The House on Mango Street*, where characters make choices that are not in their best interest, but instead follow the path that seems natural among their friends and family. The choices Cisneros made in her own life, represented by the growth in Esperanza, will be focused on in instruction.

"*The House on Mango Street* is the individual defined within the context of the larger community; it is an idea that is evidenced by the fact that we gradually acquire a fuller understanding of Esperanza's identity as she acquaints us with the various members of her family and neighborhood," ⁸ and as I believe Gloria Anzaldúa would add, the history of her people. There are many popular stereotypes my students embrace and use as an excuse not to go the extra mile. Through this book and this unit I hope to contribute to the school culture where students are always striving to do their best.

Some vignettes that speak to this are "Cathy Queen of Cats" and "Those Who Don't" where Esperanza is told her neighborhood is scary and depreciating because families like hers are moving in. This makes no sense to Esperanza, but shows an interesting contrast because of how scared she is when she leaves her own neighborhood for a wealthier one. "Four Skinny Trees" highlights how Esperanza feels she and the trees are meant to be in a better place, but that the concrete (a metaphor for other factors) keeps them there. I find these vignettes as a tipping point that made Esperanza see how much she was defined by Mango Street. The institutional differences that Cathy brings up confuses Esperanza, and for the first time she feels inferior.

"No Speak English" is my favorite vignette in the entire book and speaks to how constraining one's identity to their original culture can be if they never seek to assimilate to their surroundings and break out of it. In this vignette "Mamacita," who left Mexico for her husband, is trapped in her home because she cannot speak English and never breaks out of her homesickness to make any changes. I find this to be a great example of what Janita Heredia cites as "Cisneros factoring the migrations between cities in the United States and Mexico as an extended Mexican culture that transcends the national political divide. This is pivotal in the formation of her protagonist's transnational Latina identity." ⁹ Esperanza is the hero in the book because she is able to avoid such traps. Esperanza's sad feelings towards characters like Mamacita foreshadow the ultimate lesson of the book, and determines that Esperanza's destiny will not see such pitfalls. The theme assignment in this section is to write a short essay about how the students define themselves.

Supplemental Texts

With a diverse student population in my classroom I wanted to reach beyond *The House on Mango Street* to include short texts that would share the experiences of other cultures that deal with similar themes. In the middle of teaching this unit, during the theme on identity, I wanted to spend a day reading two other texts. To

tell the story of the African American experience of growing up in New York City, I plan to use the chapter "The Baddest Dog in Harlem" from the book, *145th Street*.¹⁰ I intend to use this story to discuss stereotypes of violence in Chicago and what type of barrier that creates for us here. The other piece I plan to use is a selection from Lawrence Yep's memoir *The Lost Garden*.¹¹ In this selection the author discusses the choice of staying alienated in his own culture and segregated to a part of town or assimilating into American culture against his parents' wishes.

Family

In *The House on Mango Street*, the family is prominently featured in the beginning portion of the book, a focus which later is extended to her entire community. There are fun and child-like contrasts in "Hairs" and somber experiences as in "Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark" dealing with the death of a family member. Overall Esperanza's family is portrayed as rich in spirit even though they are materially poor, even in the eyes of humble nuns as portrayed in "A Rice Sandwich" because the family cannot afford to buy her lunch. There is also the revealing vignette on Esperanza's source of discipline and inspiration in "Born Bad."

There is a great contrast in the book between a functional family like Esperanza's and those that lack parent figures. In vignettes like "Minerva Writes Poems" and "There was a Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What to Do" the patriarchal unit is not present, which results in unfortunate consequences with a toll on the children and the community. I worry about how this will be interpreted, as part of the reason Esperanza ends up being successful is the support of her family, something that is not present for all of my students. While Esperanza's family is not without conflict, the overprotection and refusal to let go of females are not as prominent as in other vignettes. We see this, for example, in the story of "Sally" and "What Sally Said," in which she is beaten by her father for seeking attention from boys at school.

Storytelling

There are a series of other vignettes that do not directly correspond with any of the themes I am teaching, but have a certain romanticism in how they are told. My focus on these vignettes is more for the students to enjoy the story. "Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin" tells the story of the children getting to ride around in a fancy car only to find out it is stolen and the driver gets in a wreck trying to flee the police. "Our Good Day" revolves around kids bargaining to buy their own bike and figuring out how to share it. "Gil's Furniture Bought and Sold" has the children adventuring in a rundown antique shop full of spooky surprises with a curious keeper. "Darius and the Clouds" and "And Some More" are two connected vignettes that show children's innocence and interpretive skills.

The Attitude of Machismo

Michelle Tokarczyk defines machismo as the "code of behavior requiring Latin men to be obviously masculine to demonstrate that they are not womanish. It demands that they control women, especially women's sexuality."¹² Machismo is not so subtly portrayed within *The House on Mango Street*. Although machismo is never explicitly cited for trapping women in the book, it is clear in the vignettes I highlight that the power men have given themselves come at the cost of women's freedom.

In searching for the origins, Tokarczyk goes back to cite the legend of Malinche (a topic covered previously in my class). With much of the Mexican community tracing its roots back to the Aztecs, Malinche is the woman blamed for consorting with the Spanish. Her betrayal and marriage to the Spanish leader Hernán Cortez led to the fall of the Aztec empire. This in turn led to the creation of a mestiza Mexican People who were colonial

submissives to Spain. Malinche's betrayal was "both sexual and cultural" and men carried on the lesson that "women cannot be trusted on any level." ^{iv} While this story is 500 years old, it provides an interesting historical connection to my students that I will have covered in my classroom.

My students are adolescents going through hormonal changes that do not always lead them to make the best decisions. The machismo attitude is not a conscious action on the part of my male students, but it definitely exists; there is no question that sexism still manifests itself in society, particularly among urban youth. I would like to use several vignettes in *The House on Mango Street* to show how a male control over women severely impacted the life of a character. My goal in highlighting machismo culture in this unit is to bring an awareness of it, and to see the consequences of it. The students' assessment would be to cite the specific instance of it in the text.

There is no shortage of vignettes that show examples of machismo in *The House on Mango Street*. "Boys and Girls" hints at the beginnings of machismo at a very young age with boys not willing to communicate with girls at the risk of seeming feminine. "Marin" shows the opposite side of machismo, where a woman has grown to expect and rely on poor treatment from men, and is fatally content with the negative consequences. "Alicia Who Sees Mice" is about a daughter striving to succeed and attend school, but who is forced by her father to take care of the family in the absence of her mother. In "Family of Little Feet" the girls end up dressing up beyond their age and being aggressively seduced by unsavory characters despite their age. "The Earl of Tennessee" portrays a Don Juan of sorts with so many women that Esperanza and the other children are confused about his supposed wife. "Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut and Papaya Juice on Tuesdays" is a more tragic vignette about a girl who gets locked up by her controlling father and is unable to go out and dance like she wants. While the narrator takes pity on Rafaela, she does spare her some respect because those women who go out and dance suffer possibly an even worse fate than her.

The three vignettes of "The Monkey Garden," "Red Clowns," and "Linoleum Roses" together make up a tragic story about the harassment that will be taught later, after the introduction of the character Sally. In standing up for Sally, Esperanza ends up the victim of sexual assault by teenage boys. The account is powerful because of her emotional response. In the next Vignette, you find Sally, an already tragic character, who after meeting a much older man has to move to another state where it is legal to marry at her young age. All of the vignettes I have selected for this theme offer examples in which the machismo attitude has done undue harm to women with long lasting effects.

Development of the Latina Voice

Cisneros's authentic story develops the reader's respect for the power of the Latina voice. I am reminded of when Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor was nominated for the high court, and she was heavily scrutinized for saying "I would hope that a wise Latina woman with the richness of her experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion than a white male who hasn't lived that life." ¹³ While the racial connotation of what was said are obvious, despite being a white male, I understood what Justice Sotomayor meant from my interactions and readings like *The House on Mango Street*.

The development of a strong Latina voice in the United States is partially reaction to the ages of 'Machismo' suppression. This is why we will examine the Latina voice as a theme following my lessons on 'Machismo.' Throughout the book, Cisneros demonstrates a respect for women, constantly referencing family members and neighbors who have never been able to seize on or even have opportunities presented to them. "My Name" tells of Esperanza's great-grandmother being a wild woman, who was nonetheless tamed by a man.

Esperanza shares the same spirit, but the legacy she does not want to repeat. "Smart Cookie" tells the somber story of Esperanza's mother who had so many aspirations but expresses regrets for being constrained by the circumstances around her.

There is a tremendous linear growth of Esperanza when reading through these selected vignettes. There is the young girl's early feminist perspective in "Hips" figuring out what the body part is used for. "Sire" details Esperanza's first 'unrequited' crush which comes with a stern warning from her mother about the motivations of boys. "The First Job" details Esperanza getting a job, but the awkward interaction she has with a man attempting to take advantage of her once she is exposed to the real world. Finally in "Beautiful and Cruel" Esperanza expresses wanting to be a 'femme fatal' to be controlled by no man. By the end Esperanza seems to have grown into Cisneros's own feminist Latina voice.

Miscellaneous

There are also a series of other vignettes that are not tied to any of the themes I am teaching and do not plan to directly discuss in class. While there is still value to these portions of the book, I plan to use them for enrichment for stronger readers, whereas these will be left out for weaker or more reluctant readers. They do not necessarily hold strong significance to the end of the book.

Assessments

The students will be assessed on several different levels. On a primary level, there will be formative structured questions developed for each of the vignettes to assure reading comprehension and understanding of the unit themes. For most of the reading themes there are formative assessments for students to complete. Last, there are three overarching summative assessments that span the unit.

Changes in the Latino Community/Personal Challenges Assignment

The students will be asked to analyze how the changing role of women over the last fifty years (since the period of Cisneros' childhood and adolescence) has affected the machismo attitude in Latino communities. We will consider questions on the role of women in Latino culture. Has the Latina voice curtailed male control over women? What changes to the female role in the family have occurred as Latino families assimilate to United States economic culture?

After the focus on women, we will switch to the Latino community in general. More than at the time of *The House on Mango Street's* publishing, Latinos are the latest victims of American xenophobia. Today's global context and economic reality have caused an influx of migration to the United States from Latin America. As is traditional in American history, there is a large segment of the population that is opposed to this migration, creating even more difficulties for people who are usually coming to the United States already in extreme poverty. Families looking for a better life often enter communities rife with illegal drug and gang activity, which oftentimes might be the easiest or only job opportunity. Access to education and healthcare are often limited. On top of all of this, restricting laws have been put in place, all of which contribute to harder lives. These are all reasons, despite having such a rich culture, that Latinos might have a hard time establishing a positive identity.

In response to this students will analyze a current issue affecting the Latino community. They will identify whether this is an issue that has changed, is the same, or if it is new in the last fifty years. On their selected topic they will research and analyze the effects on people, and make predictions of the future and share their findings with the class.

After hearing presentations on current challenges Latino groups face, students will be asked to analyze if any of these or similar issues create barriers for them in their own lives (even if they are not Latinos). If students cannot identify with any of the barriers discussed in class they will write on what does restrain them from doing their best.

Goal Setting Assignment

Outside of structural barriers, students will also identify intrapersonal hurdles they need to overcome and create a detailed plan of how they are going to graduate from high school and go onto college. This is something to be done in conjunction with class visits from the counselor and dean of the school to stress the importance of making good life choices. This is to address the school goals of keeping freshmen on track for graduation by passing their classes and also beginning an introduction to the What's Next Illinois curriculum which is a plan that follows them through their years in high school, tracking their test scores, goals and interests while providing them with information about college. For my class they will state what their goals are after high school, with a strong emphasis on going to college. After they have made their goals, we will create a roadmap to take them through high school to get there.

Capstone Interview

In the capstone assessment students will be required to interview an adult woman in Chicago whom they view as a leader. This person could be a family member, a person within the school, or a community member, and students will discuss what adversity the individual has faced and how they overcame it. They will show the interviewee their plan for success and ask for advice in reaching their goals. I hope that this assignment will help build professional contacts for the students and perhaps evolve into some mentoring relationships. The students will write up the discourse of their interview and report out on what they experienced with the class.

Sample Lessons

In teaching the different themes and assessments I have discussed, I do consider them to be individual lessons; however fitting them into a traditional class period is difficult. A block schedule would be more accommodating, but there is nothing wrong with splitting up lessons over several days. The format for these themes and assessments is left to the discretion of the teacher. Below are outlines of three specific class days that are more concise and can fit into a traditional class period.

Supplemental Text: "The Baddest Dog in Harlem" from *145th Street*

This lesson begins with the a short discussion around the theme of identity that has just been explored. After discussing how *The House on Mango Street* mainly addresses the Latino community, we will begin a discussion about how identity transcends into other cultural communities.

This will segway into reading "The Baddest Dog in Harlem" from *145th Street*. This is a similar book of stories about the African American experience in New York City. The chapter should take approximately fifteen to twenty minutes to read aloud, which I would facilitate through volunteer readers or popcorn reading, depending on the class level.

The story deals with jittery cops trying to apprehend a supposed gunman that end up opening fire on a lively block. As they investigate, they realize they unintentionally first shot a dog, then a young boy. After some time responding to the story, I begin a discussion where I ask students to compare the community they have read about on Mango Street and compare it to the description of Harlem. For their homework assignment I will ask each student to compare the police treatment of residents in their own community to what they read in the story and for them to say if they think this is a realistic event.

Storytelling Theme:

This is the shortest of all themes that I cover through the book. I have selected five vignettes for this section two of which are paired together ("Darius and the Clouds" plus "And Some More" –see Storytelling above). In a method of jigsawing, I will split students into groups not varied by ability level and have them read one of the vignettes together as a group which should take no more than ten to fifteen minutes.

I will then give the students the task of telling the story themselves with fifteen minutes to prepare a skit acting out the story they read. The four groups have three to five minutes to demonstrate what was told in their vignette.

Challenges to the Latino Community.

The assessment listed as "Changes in the Latino Community/Personal Challenges Assignment" breaks down into three parts. The 'Challenges to the Latino Community' assignment bridges the first part and final part of this assessment. The first part has students demonstrate how obstacles women faced in *The House on Mango Street* and their role have changed in the Latino Community thanks in part to the Latina Voice. The final part of the assessment is identifying personal challenges in the lives of students that get in the way of their personal goals.

I will ask students to group together and research one of the following topics: gang and drug activity, immigration laws, xenophobia, and access to jobs, healthcare, and education. They are to explain why this is a serious topic within the Latino community, show problems that the topic creates, identify whether this is an ongoing problem or something new, and propose a solution on how to fix it. The in-class time will be devoted to research, I will help them with resources for their topics and ensure they are working within the parameters of the assignment. Students must finalize a summary on their own to be handed in and later, in an oral presentation, share the main facts with the class.

Appendix

I will be following the Common Core Reading Standards for Literature and Writing at the 9th /10th grade level, though this can be modified to other grade levels. I will be addressing the following standards:

RL 9/10 1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text

RL 9/10 2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL 9/10 3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting

motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme

RL 9/10 5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order

events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise

W 9/10 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization,

and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 9/10 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden

the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Annotated Bibliography

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1999. *Borderlands La frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books

This book is an account of how Mexican ethnic culture and traditions are upheld for migrants into a new country. Anzaldúa specifically tells this from a woman's point of view and this book is an excellent example of the Latina Voice.

Cisneros, Sandra. 1991. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books.

This book is the basis for this unit and is a semi autobiographical account by the author to tell the stories of the Latino neighborhood she grew up in and how she overcame adversity to find success in her own life.

The Departed. Dir. Martin Scorsese. Warner Brothers, 2006.

I reference this movie because it definitely relates to the theme of how the community you are raised in develops you as a person.

Heredia, Juanita. 2009. *Transnational Latina narratives in the twenty-first century: the politics of gender, race, and migrations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

I focused specifically on a section of this book relating to Cisneros. This discussion is more analytical of Cisneros' book *Carmello*; however it is very revealing about her writing style and motivations and was useful for my research.

Myers, Walter Dean. 2000.145th Street: short stories. New York: Delacorte Press

This is a supplemental book for this unit. I intend to use one of the stories from it to highlight the African American experience in Harlem to parallel *The House on Mango Street*.

Pollack, Harriet. 1995.Having our way: women rewriting tradition in twentieth-century America. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press.

A book highlighting various experiences of women writers in the United States. One of the selected authors was Sandra Cisneros.

Savage, Charlie. "A Judge's View of Judging Is on the Record." *New York Times*, May 14, 2009.

This is a news analysis of the quotation I used in my unit from Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor suggesting a wise Latina women with a wealth of experiences makes decisions others would not make.

Tokarczyk, Michelle M. 2008.Class definitions: on the lives and writings of Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros, and Dorothy Allison. Selinsgrove [Pa.]: Susquehanna University Press.

I specifically examined the section on Sandra Cisneros. The book details her life experiences and the motivations behind many themes Cisneros touches on. I specifically worked with Tokarczyk's ideas on machismo.

Yep, Laurence. 1996.The lost garden. New York: Beech Tree Books.

This is a supplemental text for my unit. I plan to use a selection about Yep's Chinatown experience to parallel stories in *The House on Mango Street* from an Asian American perspective.

Endnotes

1. Cisneros, Sandra. 1991.The house on Mango Street. New York: Vintage Books, 11, xi-xii.
2. Pollack, Harriet. 1995.Having our way: women rewriting tradition in twentieth-century America. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 221
3. Cisneros, 110.
4. Pollack, 223
5. Cisneros, xxiii
6. The Departed. Dir. Martin Scosese. Warner Brothers, 2006.
7. Anzaldu?a, Gloria. 1999.Borderlands La frontera. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 87.
8. Pollack, 225
9. Heredia, Juanita. 2009.Transnational Latina narratives in the twenty-first century: the politics of gender, race, and migrations. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 37.
10. Myers, Walter Dean. 2000.145th Street: short stories. New York: Delacorte Press
11. Yep, Laurence. 1996.The lost garden. New York: Beech Tree Books.
12. Tokarczyk, Michelle M. 2008.Class definitions: on the lives and writings of Maxine Hong Kingston, Sandra Cisneros, and Dorothy Allison. Selinsgrove [Pa.]: Susquehanna University Press, 102, 103
13. Savage, Charlie. "A Judge's View of Judging Is on the Record." *New York Times*, May 14, 2009.

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