Sight, Sound, and Satire: Exploring Calaveras Literarias

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Introduction

"Para qué tanto llorar dijo la muerte si tarde o temprano a todos me los voy a llevar."[1]   – Calaverita Mexicanas

"First you have fun, then you die."[2] – Helena Madrid

In this multimodal unit designed for my eighth-grade Spanish classes, I will create an engaging and culturally enriching learning experience in which my students will explore the captivating world of Calaveras Literarias. Rooted in Mexican tradition, these poetic epitaphs humorously depict death while offering poignant social commentary. Employing a comprehensive approach encompassing auditory, visual, and critical analysis elements, students will delve into the history, cultural significance, and creative process behind Calaveras Literarias.

This four-week unit facilitates an exploration of the origins and cultural significance of Calaveras Literarias through readings, videos, and class discussions, and examines prominent themes, including death, satire, and social commentary. My students will analyze the linguistic and poetic devices used in Calaveras Literarias to create rhythm, rhyme, and satire. In this unit, my students will explore sound in poetry while listening to recorded performances of Calaveras Literarias and they will identify key auditory elements that enhance their impact on the poetry. They will also be asked to employ visual interpretation by studying visual representations of Calaveras Literarias in artwork and illustrations. It is my plan to lead a class discussion on the role of imagery and symbolism in expressing satire and social critique in these poems. This unit will culminate with a writing workshop in which my students will craft their very own Calaveras Literarias. In this workshop, students will be instructed on the structural elements of these poems, including rhyme scheme, meter, and stanza organization. It is my plan for them to then engage in guided writing exercises to practice composing Calaveras Literarias focused on various themes and subjects.

It is my goal that at the end of this unit my students will not only have honed their linguistic and literacy skills in the target language but also gained a deeper understanding and appreciation for the rich cultural heritage encapsulated within Calaveras Literarias. It is my hope that through creative expression and critical analysis my students will emerge with a new found ability to engage with complex themes and social issues in a culturally sensitive and impactful manner. By exploring the sight, sound, and satire of Calaveras Literarias in

this unit, my students will engage in a rich interdisciplinary study that addresses all of the World- Readiness Standards for Language Learning established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and will enhance their understanding of the Spanish language and of Mexican culture.

Background

I currently teach at The Joh class="center"n Dickinson School in Wilmington, Delaware in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme, which has been in existence for nine years. The middle school is located within the high school building in a wing of its own and was created as an extension to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme for grades 11 and 12. The Diploma Programme was initiated at Dickinson five years prior to the inception of the Middle Years Programme (MYP). MYP was implemented to encourage more students to participate in the Diploma Programme. In its first year, MYP included grades six, seven, eight and has recently expanded to include grades nine and ten. A continuous sixth through twelfth grade International Baccalaureate Programme will be established at Dickinson in the near future. Our Middle Years Programme is made up of just over 300 students.

Students must apply to participate in MYP. To be eligible, students must be motivated to learn. I am currently the only Spanish teacher in MYP teaching Spanish 1A (Grade 6), Spanish 1B (Grade 7), and Spanish 2 (Grade 8), meeting with my classes for ninety minutes every other day.

Inquiry is one of the ten attributes included in the IB Learner Profile. To be considered inquirers, "We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently, and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life."[3] In order to be successful inquirers, my students need opportunities to immerse themselves in meaningful experiences. As learners, we rarely experience with a single sense, our senses work together to give us a total picture of our experiences.

Unit Overview and Rationale

It is my goal in this unit to employ multimodal learning, which teaches concepts with a variety of modalities or methods. This type of learning utilizes materials for different learning styles; visual, auditory, reading, writing, and kinesthetic. In addition, I plan to incorporate collaborative learning, literary analysis, cultural projects, creative expression, and technology integration to create a rich and engaging learning environment that provides my students the opportunity to explore the sight, sound, and satire of Calaveras Literarias. Implementing these teaching strategies ensures that I am meeting the diverse learning needs of my students and fostering a deeper appreciation of Mexican culture and literature. As they are engaging in these activities, my students will be simultaneously developing their Spanish language skills and vocabulary.

Further, I plan to use authentic Spanish-language texts in this unit in order to present students with opportunities to immerse themselves in the Spanish language, such as web pages, social media, infographics, and poems and books, accompanied by culture-rich realia such as infographics, audio and video recordings, and visual art all related to Calaveras Literarias. Authentic text exposes students to culture because it is

written for native speakers, by native speakers, and has clear context. Some authentic texts and realia have built-in support for language learners like pictures, infographics, and visual art. Both offer language in small chunks making it more manageable for students. The language included in such realia as infographics is highly contextualized, making it easy for students to acquire new vocabulary quickly. According to Claire Kramsch, the current President of the International Association of Applied Linguistics and author of *Language and Culture,* "Language expresses cultural reality."[4]

Incorporating authentic text and realia not only enriches students' vocabulary in the target language but also increases their understanding of the target language culture(s). Realia involves the senses in the learning process, therefore fostering creativity and stimulating the mind. Through realia, students are exposed to real discourses, which in turn engages and motivates them in the process of language learning and ensures they learn to use the target language in various contexts. Authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world while increasing their global awareness. Bringing realia and authentic text into the World Language classroom creates opportunities for students to be active, independent learners and teachers to be interactive facilitators, allowing lessons to be more interactive and students more independent. Students feel more comfortable with authentic materials and realia, which increases student motivation. Increased motivation leads to increased language use which leads to improved proficiency.[5]

Content Objectives

I am focused on three goals in the creation of this unit. First, I would like for my students to successfully identify and analyze the use of visual imagery in various Calaveras Literarias, exploring how the imagery contributes to the overall impact and meaning of each of the poems. In order to achieve this first goal, I will prompt my students to examine specific examples of Calaveras Literarias and guide them to highlight instances of visual imagery in each of the examples. Then, I will encourage my students to create visual representations, either drawings or digital art, based on the imagery they highlighted in each poem which they will present to their classmates.

Analyzing imagery in poetry in the target language for second-year students of the language will seem quite daunting and almost impossible initially. Hence incorporating visuals, such as drawings or digital art, can be a useful tool for teaching beginning language students, especially those who are visual learners. A picture can clarify meaning and may be a tension diffuser. It is my hope that, with the use of a visual, the students will observe and explore the imagery in poetry, specifically Calaveras Literarias.

Second, I would like my students to investigate the role of sound and rhythm in Calaveras Literarias in creating a humorous and engaging narrative while focusing on poetic devices such as rhyme, meter, and alliteration. I will provide my students with both auditory and oral experiences listening to authentic audio recordings of Calaveras Literarias and reading the texts aloud. These activities will provide my students the opportunity to focus on the rhythmic and phonetic elements of these poems. Using similar sound patterns, my students will write their own Calaveras poems, in the target language, and perform their original poems in small groups. Employing the teaching strategy of peer feedback, my students will focus on how effectively the sound elements of each original poem enhance the satire. Experiential learning such as this motivates language learners. The more ways another language is learned, the more memory pathways are built. Motivated students are more interested which can powerfully influence their learning outcomes.

Lastly, my goal for my students is to interpret and create satirical content, in the target language. Using selected Calaveras poems, students will determine the satirical content within each of the poems. I will facilitate a whole class discussion to guide my students to an understanding of how satire is used in Calaveras Literarias to comment on societal norms, behaviors, and attitudes towards death. In groups, my students will analyze various Calaveras Literarias identifying the satirical elements and the societal commentary emphasized in each poem. Then they will collaborate within their groups to author original poetry, in the target language, containing satirical elements that addresses a contemporary issue such as immigration, inflation, discrimination, or climate justice. It is my goal for each group to present to the class their Calaveras Literarias, explaining the satirical elements and the contemporary issue they chose to address. This type of collaborative learning in a world language classroom fosters the development of higher-level thinking skills, encourages oral communications, promotes self-management, and cultivates leadership skills. These are all skills I desire for my students to develop in preparation of using the target language in real life social and employment situations.[6]

My three content objectives align with several World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning, including Communication, Cultures, and Comparisons, ensuring a comprehensive approach to teaching the cultural and literary aspects of Calaveras Literarias.

Student Background Knowledge

The year prior to this unit, students completed a nine-week unit of study on El Dia de los Muertos, The Day of the Dead, while reading the TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) novel *Tumba*. In this unit, my students were exposed to aspects of this holiday such as music, dance, Calaveras Literarias, and ofrendas or altars honoring their dearly departed. through literature in the target language, documentaries in both English and the target language, infographics and maps written in Spanish. Many of my students then took advantage of the opportunity to design and create an ofrenda honoring a family member or pet who has passed. In addition, they wrote a tribute, in the target language, about the person or pet honored.

My students will approach this new unit having the following target language vocabulary already in their Spanish toolkits from their previous year; sweet 16 verbs which are high frequency verbs, connector and transitional words, colloquial phrases and expressions, elements of the Day of the Dead, and vocabulary specific to ofrendas. All of this vocabulary is necessary for them when reading and analyzing Calaveras Literarias, and when authoring their own poems.

Multimodal Learning

According to Yangxue Zang, author of the article *The Application of Multimodal Learning to Enhance Language Proficiency in Oral English Teaching,* "Multimodal learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates multiple sensory modalities such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile, into the teaching and learning process."[7] The employment of multimodal learning in the world language classroom significantly impacts the students' learning experience in a number of ways, such as improved comprehension, greater retention and recall, accommodation of diverse learning styles, promotion of higher-order thinking skills, and real-world relevance.

Research in cognitive development has evidenced that utilizing multiple senses in the process of learning can lead to improved retention, recall and comprehension. Interacting with content through multiple modalities, students are able to reinforce their understanding of the information through various channels and are thus more likely to remember and internalize the information presented.[8]

Multimodal learning keeps learners engaged by incorporating multiple methodologies allowing learners to absorb and retain content regardless of their learning styles. This pedagogical approach promotes variety in learning providing opportunities for educators to be creative with course content. It also provides students the opportunity to engage with multiple content types rather than being stuck with one mode of learning. In turn, this inspires creativity in the students as they apply what is being learned to their work. By integrating various modes of learning, educators can create a more dynamic, inclusive, and engaging classroom environment, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience for students.[9]

Integrating multiple learning modes ignites critical thinking and problem-solving skills. For example, a project that incorporates visual presentation, written analysis, and oral communication compels students to synthesize information and demonstrate their understanding across multiple formats, thus engaging higher-order thinking processes.[10]

The real world presents information in multiple formats simultaneously. Multimodal learning reflects this complexity, equipping students to process and analyze information from various sources. This preparedness is essential for success in academic and professional environments in which the ability to navigate multiple communication modes is a valuable skill thus preparing students for real-world scenarios. Our world is ever evolving and our ability to adapt and learn is vital. Employing multimodal learning prepares students with adaptable learning skills that are applicable throughout their lives.

Teaching multimodally in a world language classroom provides numerous benefits that strengthen the students' overall language proficiency and communication. These benefits include, but are not limited to, enhanced vocabulary acquisition, improved pronunciation and listening skills, increased engagement, real-world application and cultural understanding. Multimodal teaching has been shown to enhance learner experience and improve learner outcomes.

Enhanced vocabulary acquisition is achieved through the use of target language materials such as visual aids, multimedia resources, and interactive activities, which provide context and reinforcement. This method simplifies for the learner the process of remembering and effectively employing the new vocabulary in the target language.

Implementing the multimodal learning strategy in the world language classroom leads to improved target language pronunciation and listening skills. Audiovisual aids enable students to listen to and replicate native speakers' pronunciation and intonation which is essential for clear and accurate verbal communication. Additionally, exposure to a variety of accents and speech patterns enhances listening comprehension skills.[11]

Utilizing multimodal learning techniques such as multimedia presentations, interactive apps, role-playing, and immersive target language experiences can lead to increased student engagement. The implementation of these techniques allows for more engaging and enjoyable learning experiences. This heightened engagement boosts student motivation and participation.

Achieving proficiency in the target language extends beyond the mastery of vocabulary and grammar to effective communication in real-world contexts. Multimodal learning immerses students in authentic language use, bridging classroom activities with practical communication scenarios they may encounter in their personal and professional lives. By integrating real-life situations and practical applications, multimodal learning reveals to learners the importance of language studies, making the learning process more meaningful while equipping students for real-world language use.

Authentic target language multimedia materials such as infographics, videos, films, documentaries, audio recordings, and podcasts can expose learners to cultural subtleties of target language countries ensuring they gain a deeper insight into the cultural context of the language. This cultural awareness is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication.[12]

In the world language classroom, multimodal learning increases comprehension, retention, engagement, and communication skills. It supports diverse learning styles, fosters cultural understanding, and equips students with the skills they need in a globalized, digital world. This productive and practical teaching approach promotes self-directed learning, valuable throughout one's life and career. In addition, multimodal learning exposes students to authentic target language materials and situations, preparing them for real-world communication.[13]

Calaveras Literarias

Definition

Simply put, the literal meaning of "calavera literaria" is literary skull. According to numerous sources such as *National Geographic*, the Smithsonian, and the Mexican newspaper *El Universal*, the Calavera Literaria is a poetic genre that serves as a sort of humorous or sarcastic epitaph. These poems are meant to poke fun at the living as if they are already dead. They are usually written around the time of the celebration of the Day of the Dead, October 31st through November 2nd . The reader of a Calavera Literaria will find it riddled with irony attacking the faults and vices of a specific person, usually a political figure or someone in the public eye. The person's death is typically narrated in an amusing manner, often involving an unforeseen visit by Death herself. It should be noted here that in Mexican culture death is usually represented as a woman because the Spanish word for death *la muerte* is feminine.

History of Calavera Literarias

The origins of Calaveras Literarias are somewhat unclear. Some experts believe that this poetic genre emerged during the Viceroyalty of New Spain, with Fray Joaquin Bolaños as its creator. What we do know is that in the eighteenth century criollos and mestizos would anonymously create humorous and satirical texts, sometimes referred to as pantheons, to express discontent or nonconformity with the Spanish authorities. These writings were frequently confiscated and destroyed by the Spanish officials who found them offensive.[14]

The first official Calaveras Literarias were published in the newspaper *El Socialista* in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico in 1849. Shortly thereafter, these poems were accompanied by etchings and drawings *La Calavera Garbancera.* Garbancera "was a derogatory term used for Mexicans who denied their indigenous roots and passed themselves off as hailing solely from European pedigree."[15]*La Calavera Garbancera* is an ironic and amusing personification of Death created by José Guadalupe Posada. This character was later renamed *La Catrina* by the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera who included her in several of his works. Subsequently, these verses were penned to ridicule the lengthy and ostentatious epitaphs employed by the clergy and noblemen of the time period.[16]

In modern Mexico, Calaveras Literarias serve as a means of social and political commentary, frequently appearing in magazines and newspapers offering satirical perspectives on public figures and societal issues. This tradition affords people the opportunity to critique and find humor in life's complexities and political situations.[17] Additionally, this tradition has spread beyond Mexico. For instance, they are popular in schools as

a creative writing exercise, helping students improve their writing, research, and critical thinking skills while developing an appreciation of Mexican cultural heritage.[18] In many cities across the United States public readings and events celebrate Calaveras Literarias during Day of the Dead festivities, highlighting their cultural significance and role in community building. Eduardo Diaz, the director of the Smithsonian Latino Center in Washington, D.C. values the use of this poetic expression to unify people in an increasingly divided world. Diaz says the following about the power and significance of this Mexican poetic tradition, "This is a spirituality-based cultural practice, and if culture can do anything, it can create a space where people of diverse groups can come together. That's something politics, religion and economics can never do. Even if these poems address hot-button political issues, the arts create a common table where people can pull up a chair and check their baggage at the door."[19]

Structure of a Calavera Literaria

Calaveras Literarias are typically written in verse, often composed of short stanzas. They usually follow a specific scheme, either ABAB or AABB, creating a rhythmic and musical quality. The meter can vary, but usually follows a consistent syllable count per line, like eight syllables, contributing to the flow and rhythm of the poem. As stated previously, the content is humorous and satirical intending to mock or critique individuals or societal issues in a light-hearted way. They often speak of the subject as if they were dead, using humor and irony to highlight their traits and actions. Together, these elements create a playfully satirical reflection on life and death, characteristic of the Mexican celebration of the Day of the Dead.[20]

Examples of Calaveras Literarias

As a fellow in Feisal Mohamed's seminar, "Poetry as Sound and Object," I had the opportunity to visit the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. There I had access to view firsthand original, authentic text Calaveras Literarias written and published in the years 1888 and 1891 in the Mexican periodicals *El Monitor Del Pueblo Antes La Politica* and *Calaveritas y Calavones.* I selected one poem from each of these publications to share with my students. Because these works are written by native speakers for native speakers, I was careful to take into consideration the target language proficiency levels of my student and their prior knowledge of this genre. Additionally, I considered the level of difficulty of each work, the topic addressed, and the relevance of the poem to the lesson.

The first poem I selected is from *Calaveritas y Calavones* and is an example of a traditional Calavera Literaria. This work exhibits a flexible structure with an emphasis on maintaining rhyme, and a somewhat consistent, though irregular, rhythm. It is written in the form of a quatrain, a four-line rhyming poem. The rhyme scheme of this poem is ABBA.

Las E.y Cervantes

"De su padre la conciencia,

La de estas ninas atrajo

A ser nobles por trabajo

Lo mismo que por herencia."[21]

"From their father's conscience,

The conscience of these girls was drawn

To be noble through work

As well as inheritance."

In his work, the poet broaches the topic of nobility, a complex and multifaceted hierarchy, a common subject of traditional Calaveras Literarias. He discusses nobility as a source of inheritance. The girls are noble by birth or lineage, "por herencia". He also addresses nobility as source of effort; they achieve nobility through their own hard work, "por trabajo". This dual source of nobility highlights the importance of both nature, inheritance, and nurture, effort and hard work, in shaping one's character.

My second selection, a political Calavera Literaria also written in the form of a quatrain, was published in *El Monitor Del Pueblo Antes La Politica*. The rhyme scheme in this example is ABAB, which is typical for this genre. While the syllable count per line in this poem is not consistent, there does exist a definite pattern. Lines one and four of the poem are each made up of nine syllables while lines two and three are made up of ten syllables each creating a 9 10,10,9 pattern. This meter pattern along with the ABAB rhyme scheme contribute to the poem's musical quality.

Daniel Cabrera.

"En un calabozo oscuro

Y en medio de noche fria

Murio comiendo pan duro,

De infernal hipocondria."[22]

Daniel Cabrera.

"In his dark dungeon

And in the middle of a cold night

He died eating stale bread,

From infernal hypochondria."

To better understand the irony of this poem, I believe that it is important to know its subject. Daniel Cabrera was a notable political figure in nineteenth-century Mexico. He was a prominent lawyer, politician, and writer who played a significant role in Mexican politics during a time of major upheaval and reform. Cabrera was a supporter of the Mexican Independence movement and was involved in the drafting of many legal reforms. He was a respected legal scholar and a critic of colonial administration. Late in his life, Cabrera experienced deep

personal and professional difficulties, including poverty and chronic health issues.

The poet employs dramatic irony to reflect on the harsh reality of Cabrera's later years and death in the form of a Calavera Literaria. Through the use of satire and dark imagery the writer reflects on Cabrera's fall from prominence and how he suffered at the end of his life. "En un calabozo oscuro" refers to suffering that Cabrera faced when he fell from prominence. The desolation and loneliness that he experienced at the end of his life is emphasized in "Y en el medio de noche fria". "Murio comiendo pan duro" symbolizes the loss and severe circumstances he endured due to his fall from societal grace. Finally, "De infernal hiocondria" implies that Cabrera suffered emotionally and/or mentally during the end of his life. The word "infernal" adds a tragic element to his condition. The author uses this Calavera Literaria to mock and mourn Cabrera, demonstrating how even the most prominent figures can fall from grace and suffer obscurity.[23]

As previously mentioned, the practice of this poetic Mexican tradition has recently spilled over into the United States, as well as other countries. I would be remiss if I did not include an example of a modern Calavera Literaria. The poem I selected is from a collection titled *16 Poemas Despues de la Muerte* written by poet Hector Gonzalez, pen name, Abuelita (grandma) Hector. Like the previous two poems, this is written in the form of a quatrain with an ABAB rhyme scheme. This rhyme scheme provides a rhythmic flow and creates an engaging and playful tone. The meter of this work is slightly varied which contributes to its humorous and conversational nature. The inclusion of a familiar cultural reference, Pat Benatar, adds to the satirical and contemporary feel of the poem.

"Solo aprendi la guitarra

después de mi deceso.

¿Mi favorita? Pat Benatar.

Su catálogo está grueso."[24]

"I only learned the guitar

after my death.

My favorite? Pat Benatar.

Her catalog is dope."

Teaching Strategies

Authentic Text

An authentic text is defined as one that was created to serve a specific social function within the language

community it was produced.[25] The concept of authenticity emerged as a counter to the formulaic structures found in textbooks, with authentic genuine, non-pedagogical materials used to enhance learners' communicative and cultural skills. These authentic materials encompass text originally created by native speakers for native speakers and can be repurposed for teaching. These materials are now understood to include ideas, words, phrases and expressions encountered in everyday life.[26]

Authentic texts are naturally attractive to students and teachers of world languages. The experience of reading material created for native speakers can be motivating, and developing skills to handle these real-world texts allows students to read authentic target language texts more confidently outside of the classroom.[27]

At any level of target language learning, authentic texts can be useful. Beginners need simpler texts compared to more advanced students with prior knowledge. Therefore, teachers should be very discerning, considering factors such a level of difficulty, relevance, and topics. Many aspects of authentic texts can be more complex than they first appear.

It is widely accepted academically that the use of authentic texts in the world language classroom greatly benefits student target language acquisition. First, these materials provide students with accurate examples of how native speakers or most speakers of the target language use the language. Second, authentic texts help support student confidence by showing them what is expected in real-life language use. By encountering words and expressions used in everyday contexts, students become better equipped for informal communication in the target language. Third, authentic materials are often more informal, socially relevant and widely utilized. They serve as valuable complements to the formal rules and patterns of the target language. Last, authentic texts offer insights into the target culture and present that culture's viewpoints on various issues and events. The rich, genuine language used in these materials serves as a valuable source of input for target language learners to aid in their acquisition process.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative Learning is a teaching strategy where students work in small groups to achieve shared academic objectives. This approach encourages student interaction, improves target language communication skills, and deepens their understanding of the material through mutual engagement. Employing this strategy in the World Language classroom enhances student communication skills by providing practice in speaking and writing in the target language. Collaborative activities often involve cultural elements, helping students appreciate and understand the context and nuances of the language they are learning. Students learn from each others' strengths, offer support, and provide feedback creating a dynamic learning environment. Working on projects collaboratively like writing Calaveras Literarias encourages students to think critically and creatively.[28]   Implementing collaborative learning for writing Calaveras Literarias not only enhances language skills but also deepens students' cultural understanding and appreciation for the rich traditions of the target language.

Literary Analysis

Literary analysis involves examining and interpreting the elements of a literary work such as its theme, structure, language, and cultural context. Implementing this strategy in the World Language classroom strengthens student comprehension by encouraging them to delve deeper into the text, leading to a better understanding of the language and nuances of Calaveras Literarias. Analyzing the cultural context of these

poems encourages students to appreciate Mexican tradition and the significance of the Day of the Dead. Learners develop critical thinking skills as they interpret themes, symbols, and poetic devices included in these poems. Through literary analysis, target language vocabulary, grammar, and overall language proficiency is improved. Including literary analysis as a teaching strategy in this unit, I am providing my students with a comprehensive understanding of these traditional poems, enhancing their language skills and cultural knowledge.

Modeling

Modeling demonstrates to the students what is expected of them. The teacher provides a framework by describing the skill or strategy, clearly describing features of the strategy or steps in performing the skill, chunking the skill into learnable parts, modeling using a variety of techniques, engaging students in learning through expressing enthusiasm, keeping a steady pace, asking good questions, and checking for student understanding. The teacher makes sure to clearly describe the concept, and then models the desired outcome by using visual, auditory, tactile, and/or kinesthetic instructional techniques while thinking aloud. The teacher can provide examples and non-examples (work that does not meet expectations) to show students the expectations and stop frequently to get student input or ask questions. This technique of modeling provides high levels of student-teacher interaction.[29] With teacher modeling, the students have a better understanding of the thought processes required for completing a task.

Realia

Realia is a term for concrete objects, real things, that are used in teaching to build vocabulary and background knowledge. It provides experiences on which to build along with providing opportunities for students to engage all of their senses in learning. Realia allows the student to feel, hear, see, smell, and even taste the object that is being investigated. If the actual object is unavailable then a replica of that object can be used such as a model, illustration, or photograph; however, more sensory engagement enhances the experience.[30]

Technology Integration

The integration of technology in the World Language classroom incorporates the use of digital tools and resources to enhance the teaching and learning in and of the target language. When teaching Calaveras Literarias, technology can make the learning process engaging, interactive, and effective by utilizing various platforms and resources for learners to explore, create, collaborate, and share their work. Digital tools engage students through interactive and multimedia sources. Technology facilitates collaborative learning so that students are able to work together in real time, share ideas, and provide feedback. Digital resources are easily accessible, thus allowing students to learn at their own pace and revisit the materials as needed. Various platforms for creative expression are available, providing learners opportunities to create and share their own Calaverias Literarias using multimedia elements[31] .

Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Introduction

The first activity is designed as a hook to get the students to engage with the unit's theme. As described in the Student Background Knowledge section of this unit, my students are coming to this unit having completed a nine-week unit of study on the Day of the Dead in which they learned in detail about the Mexican celebration of remembering deceased loved ones. Many of these students then took advantage of the opportunity to design and create an ofrenda honoring a family member or pet who has passed. In addition, they wrote a tribute, in the target language, about the person or pet honored. This activity consists of three parts: Access Prior Knowledge, Review of Calaveras Literarias in previously read literature, and the KWL Inventory.

Access Prior Knowledge – Día de los Muertos

To assess what the students already know I will present the students with questions in the target language like "What do you remember about the Day of the Dead?" "Name some elements of the celebration of the Day of the Dead." "Describe the significance of the elements you mentioned." "Why is the Day of the Dead important?" "How is the Day of the Dead different from Halloween?" Students will record their responses on paper. I anticipate that some students will mention calaveras (sugar skulls), papel picado, calacas (dressed skeleton figures), pan de muerto (bread of the dead), cempasúchiles (marigolds), velas or candelas (candles), ofrendas or altares (altars), música, decoraciones, flores, and the novel *Tumba*. Some students will express the celebration of this holiday in terms of Alex, a character in the book *Tumba,* fearing the Day of the Dead but later learning to appreciate it because through the celebration he learned more about his grandfather. A few students who created an ofrenda and wrote a tribute honoring a loved one will be able to share the significance of the items and information they included.

Students then share their responses with a shoulder partner. Then I will direct a whole class discussion related to the questions. I suggest conducting a class poll related to the questions having the students create a bar graph or pie chart of the results. This will give students visual data indicating the similar opinions and experiences of classmates.

Review of Calaveras Literarias

In the previous year's unit of study on the Day of the Dead my students were introduced to a Calavera Literaria in the novel *Tumba.* Before delving more deeply into this type of poetry, I will present my students with the work they read last year. Reviewing this Calavera Literaria from a previous unit of instruction will provide context for my students. Being familiar with the text allows for better understanding which makes working with it more manageable for learners of another language. Language learners have a greater level of comfort working with text to which they have been previously exposed.

> "La abuela de Alex es una bruja agresiva.
>
> Por la noche se transforma en gata.
>
> Habla con una chica loca y explosiva.

La chica ataca a Alex y lo mató."[32]

"Alex's grandmother is an aggressive witch.

At night she transforms into a cat.

She speaks with a crazy and explosive girl.

The girl attacks Alex and kills him."

After reading the poem to themselves, I will ask my students to complete these sentences in the target language, "I notice . . ." "I wonder . . ." I will explain that when you notice something, it is something that you are able to prove. Eliciting answers from my students, I anticipate some of them will mention that a crazy girl kills Alex, Alex's grandma turns into a cat, the grandma is a witch, agresiva, gata, and explosiva all end in the letter "a", and the poem has four lines. In addition, I will communicate that wondering is identifying curiosities and questions you have about the poem. My students might respond asking why the poem only has four lines, why the crazy girl kills Alex, or why three out of the four last words of each line end in the letter "a". Students will record their responses using a Google Form.

Students then share their responses with a shoulder partner. I will direct a whole class discussion related to the sentence starters. Using the answers recorded on the Google Form, I can share the class results in the form of a graph or chart. It will be interesting to note similar and differing notices and wonders.

KWL Inventory

Before we begin our in-depth study of Calaveras Literarias, I will provide my students with a KWL Chart which they will use to support their learning throughout the unit. A KWL Chart is a visual graphic organizer used to determine what student already Know about the topic, what they Want to know, and throughout the unit what they have Learned.

Prior to introducing any new Calavera Literaria poetry to my students, I will ask my students to activate their prior knowledge of this type of poetry in order to complete the K column of the KWL Chart. In introducing this chart, I will explain to the class that when beginning to study new material it is important to determine what we already know about it. As a prompt, my students may use the information we gathered individually and as a class in the previous activity *Review of Calaveras Literarias* to aid them in completing this section of the chart. Learners will complete the K column individually.

Next, I will employ Think, Pair, Share to assist my students with filling in the W column of the KWL Chart. First, I will direct students to think about what they want to learn about Calaveras Literarias. Once they have had ample opportunity to think about what they want to learn, learners will share this information with a shoulder partner comparing and contrasting their responses. Pairing provides language learners with the opportunity to discuss their thoughts with a partner. Each pair will share what they want to learn with the entire class. Once every pair has shared each student will record their want to learn items in the W column of the chart. The information shared by my students with the class will aid me in which direction to go with this unit. I want to be sure to include information they want to learn.

Throughout this unit, my students continue to add to their KWL Charts with relevant learned information. Doing this assists them in organizing thoughts and information. Periodically, I will refer learners to the W column to note if any of their questions have been answered and I will then direct them to add those answers to the L column.

Activity 2: Analyze Visual Imagery in Calaveras Literarias

Building upon my students' previous knowledge of Calaveras Literarias, we will examine the use of visual imagery in these poems. Providing learners with various Calaveras Literarias, I will prepare them to identify and analyze the use of visual imagery in these works. I want my students to explore how imagery contributes to the overall impact and meaning of each poem.

Examination of Texts

As previously stated, I will provide learners with various Calaveras Literarias to examine. Here is an example of a poem that I will supply to my students to analyze.

> "La calavera de maestro estricto:
>
> Con regala en mano y mirada severa,
>
> el maestro infunde temor. Sus alumnos,
>
> con huesos temblorosos,
>
> aprenden con sudor."[33]

> "The calavera of a strict teacher:
>
> With ruler in hand and a severe look,
>
> The teacher instills fear, His students,
>
> With trembling bones,
>
> They learn with sweat."

In choosing Calaveras Literarias in the target language for my language learners, I will be deliberate in my choices, being sure to include authentic texts with vocabulary familiar to my students. This will allow for easy comprehension of the text and facilitate the examination process. The subject of this chosen text, school, as well as the vocabulary will aid my students in identifying and analyzing the use of visual imagery in this poem.

To get started, I will explain to the students that they will be reading the text a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. The first read is read aloud by the teacher. Students follow along circling any words they do not know and annotating any text they do not understand with a question mark. After this first read students use a graphic organizer, a one-page paper divided in half with the first half labeled

Learning and the other half labeled *Reflection*, to write a Learning/About statement and a brief summary. This is very similar to the "I notice . . ." "I wonder . . ." activity completed earlier in Activity 1.

The second reading is reading with purpose. Students read independently, highlighting details in the poem that evoke visual images. Using the above graphic organizer, students reflect upon what they just read and highlighted. I will explain that the reflection can be questions they still have related to the poem. With a shoulder partner, each student will discuss the details they selected from the text and how they conjure visual imagery. Reflections are also shared. I will then conduct a whole-class discussion regarding the details of the text in order to check for understanding. In addition, I will address student questions about the poem.

Creating a Visual Representation

Using the information gathered and shared in the previous reads of the Calavera Literaria, my students will illustrate the scene described in the poem. I will make available art supplies such as paper, drawing materials, and watercolors. Students may also choose to create a digital representation using online drawing platforms like Canva, Sketchpad, and Charlala, or utilize animation tools such as Toon Boom Harmony and Adobe Animate. I anticipate that my students will include in their illustrations the teacher as a skeleton dressed in proper teaching attire representing authority. The skeleton will likely appear severe and stern with an intense stare holding a ruler that emphasizes his control. The students, possibly depicted as skeletons, are visibly trembling, expressing fear on their faces. They may appear exhausted or nervous, perhaps portrayed with beads of sweat.

Check for Understanding

To assess the students' understanding of the use of visual imagery in Calaveras Literarias I will have students shared their illustrations of the poem with a shoulder partner explaining how they interpreted and how they chose to represent that in the artwork. Once students have shared, I will encourage them to review and reflect upon their learning statements and reflections from the previous readings to help them with their presentations. I will then ask students to present their artwork to the class justifying it with evidence from the poem. I will assess their understanding of the visual imagery used in the poem by looking at the evidence from the poem that they provided to justify their illustration.

Activity 3: Examine Sound and Rhythm in Calaveras Literarias

In order to maintain consistency, I will employ strategies previously used in *Review of Calaveras Literarias* and *Examination of Texts*. Below is an example of a poem in the target language that I will supply to my students to analyze. I chose this poem and will provide others like it because it is an authentic text written by a native speaker for native speakers. In addition, this work is accompanied by an audio recording of the author, Abuelita Hector, reading it in the target language.

"¡Qué belleza es el tamal!

     Historia envuelta en hojas.

     Deliciosa nube de nixtamal,

     manjar para todas las bocas."[34]

"What beauty is the tamale!

History wrapped in leaves.

Delicious cloud of dough,

delicacy for all mouths."

To get started, I will explain to the students that they will be reading the text a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. The first read is read aloud by the author, an audio recording. It is important for my students to listen to the Calavera Literaria read by a native speaker. This will provide my students the opportunity to focus on the rhythmic and phonetic elements of these poems.

Initially, my students will just listen to the audio recording. Then students are provided with a copy of the poem. I will direct them to follow along as they listen, circling any words they do not know and annotating any text they do not understand with a question mark. My plan is to play the audio recording twice, pausing as needed, allowing time for learners to make their annotations.

After listening to and annotating the poem, I will ask my students to complete these sentences in the target language, "I notice . . ." "I wonder . . ." I will remind them that when you notice something, it is something that you are able to prove. Eliciting answers from my students, I anticipate some of them will mention that the poem is about tamales, lines one and three rhyme, lines two and four rhyme, and the poem has four lines. In addition, I will reiterate that wondering is identifying curiosities and questions you have about the poem. My students might respond asking what nixtamal means, why tamale is spelled tamal, what the meaning of nixtamal is. Students will record their responses using a Google Form.

Students then share their responses with a shoulder partner. I will direct a whole class discussion related to the sentence starters. Using the answers recorded on the Google Form, I can share the class results in the form of a graph or chart. It will be useful to note similar and differing notices and wonders.

The second reading and listening is with purpose. Students will read the poem aloud with a shoulder partner each taking a turn. As they read, learners will highlight details in the poem relating to sound, rhythm, or rhyme. Using a graphic organizer, students reflect upon what they just read and highlighted. I will explain that "I wonder . . ." can be questions they still have related to the poem. With the opposite shoulder partner, each student will discuss the details they selected from the text and how they add to the overall sound of the work. The recently added "I wonder . . ." statements are also shared. I will then conduct a whole class discussion regarding the details of the text focusing on meter, rhythm, and rhyme scheme in order to check for understanding. In addition, I will address student questions about the poem.

Check for Understanding

I will assess students' understanding throughout the entire activity. As the students share in pairs, I will circulate around the room evaluating student engagement, looking for on topic conversations in the target language. Reviewing my students' Google Form responses to "I notice . . ." and "I wonder . . ." I will provide feedback. In addition, I will assess the completeness and depth of analysis in the graphic organizer completed during the second reading and listening of the poem. I will assess their understanding of the sound and rhythm in the poem by looking at the evidence from the poem that they provided to justify their annotations. The final class discussion will provide me with the opportunity for one final check of student understanding via

their contributions to the discussion. This will also allow me to address any misconceptions or unanswered questions.

Activity 4: Interpret Satire in Calaveras Literarias

To conclude the unit, my students will investigate the role of satire in Calaveras Literarias. Providing learners with various Calaveras Literarias, I will prepare them to identify and analyze the use of satire in these works. My students will determine the satirical content within each of the poems. I will facilitate a whole class discussion that will guide my students to an understanding of how satire is used in Calaveras Literarias to comment on societal norms, behaviors, and attitudes towards death. In groups, my students will analyze various Calaveras Literarias identifying the satirical elements and the societal commentary emphasized in each poem. I desire for my students to explore how satire contributes to the overall impact and meaning of each poem.

Explanation of Satire

To ensure that my students possess a solid of understanding of satire, I will lead a class discussion on the topic. I will divide the class into groups of four students and ask them to define satire. They will have about eight minutes to develop their definition, recording it on a sheet of chart paper. Group definitions will be posted around the classroom. I anticipate that some groups will respond, "Satire is making fun of important people and issues"; "It is joking about a serious topic"; or "Satire makes people laugh at something that is not really funny." As a whole class, we will view each groups' definition making note of the similar explanations across the class. Using those similarities, we will attempt to create our own definition of satire.

Then I will introduce to the class definitions of satire taken from various literary sources that explain it as a genre that uses humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to criticize or highlight the flaws or shortcomings of individuals, societies, institutions, or humanity in general. The goal of satire is to provoke thought, promote change, or entertain through its critical observations.[35] Humor makes the audience laugh while delivering a critical message. Irony expresses the opposite of what is meant, pointing out the absurdity of the subject. Exaggeration overstates certain aspects to point out their flaws. Ridicule mocks the subject to demonstrate its weakness or failings. In Calaveras Literarias, satire serves a mirror to society, reflecting its corruption and absurdities in a manner that urges readers to think critically about their own world.[36]

After providing my students with the above explanations of satire, I will direct students to work with a shoulder partner. I will ask each pair to create a list of examples of satire, advising them that satire can be found in other forms of media in addition to literature. After about seven minutes, pairs will share their lists in a whole class discussion. I anticipate that some of my students will share the following examples of satire, *Shrek* as a satire of fairy tales, *Scream* as a satire of horror movies, *Deadpool* satirizes super heroes, *Family Guy* and/or *The Simpsons* that satirize American middle-class society, and political cartoons which satirize political events and/or politicians. I believe it is essential to provide these contemporary examples for my students because they are more likely to be relatable to their lives. Seeing satire in a modern context facilitates students' grasp of how satire works and why it is used. Understanding how satire is applied in their own culture and contemporary context, my students are able to more fully appreciate and understand its use in Calaveras Literarias.

Identification and Analysis of Satire in Calaveras Literarias

I will employ strategies previously used in *Examination of Texts*. Below is an example of a poem I will supply to

my students to analyze. I chose this poem and will provide similar works because it is an authentic text written in 1910 by José Guadalupe Posada. In addition, this work is about the cholera epidemic.

"La terrible calavera del cólera,

está en combate;

Esa le dice a cualquiera

¡Tres piedras y un tepetate!"37

"The terrible calavera of cholera

Is in combat;

It says to anyone

Three stones and a tepepate (a piece of limestone)!"

To begin, I will explain to the students that they will be reading the text a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. The first reading is a read aloud by the teacher. Students follow along, circling any words they do not know and annotating any text they do not understand with a question mark. After this first reading students use a graphic organizer, a one-page paper divided in half with the first half labeled *Learning* and the other half labeled *Reflection*, to write a Learning/About statement and a brief summary. This is very similar to the "I notice . . ." "I wonder . . ." activity completed earlier in Activities 1and 3.

The second reading is reading with purpose. Students read independently highlighting satirical elements in the poem as well as social commentary. Using the organizer, students reflect upon what they just read and highlighted. I will explain that the reflection can be questions they still have related to the poem. With a shoulder partner, each student will discuss the details they selected from the text and how they are satirical. Do these details display humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule? They will also discuss any social commentary identified in the work.

I will direct the students to come back together as a class at which time I will conduct a whole class discussion regarding the satirical elements and societal commentary of the poem. For example, we will discuss how the poem uses satire to comment on the impact of cholera and the minimal efforts to combat it. "Three stones and a tepepate" could imply that insufficient action was being taken to combat the illness. Then together, we will review the details of the text in order to check for understanding and I will address any unanswered student questions about the poem.

Activity 5: Create an Original Calavera Literaria

The culminating activity of this unit will require my students to collaborate within groups to author original poetry, in the target language, containing satirical elements that address a contemporary issue such as immigration, inflation, discrimination, or climate justice. It is my goal for each group to present to the class their Calaveras Literarias, explaining the satirical elements and the contemporary issue they chose to address.

I will provide students with a packet containing the following information about this project; a letter addressed to both the student and their parent(s), a detailed explanation of the project requirements along with helpful vocabulary and phrases in the target language, explanations and examples of poetic forms available for the students to use, and the rubric that will be used to assess their work. Students will share their original poetic work with their classmates digitally using a learning management system like Schoology.

To aid my students in creating their Calavera Literaria I will employ the teaching strategy of realia. I will provide them with the infographic titled *Calavera Literaria Cómo Hace Una Y No Morir En El Intento* (Calavera Literaria How To Make One And Not Die Trying).[38] According to The Best Practices Foundation, using infographics in the classroom may improve students' learning up to 400%. Vision trumps all other human senses when it comes to learning, as the average learner can recall 65% of visual information 10 days later but only 10% of what they heard. The majority of students (close to 65%) are visual learners.[39] Incorporating visual media into my lessons has proven to increase student engagement with the material being taught and student motivation to learn. In addition, in the World Language classroom infographs provide clarification of content being taught as well as enhance vocabulary comprehension due to the visual clues included in the infographic. As previously stated, the use of visuals is especially helpful for students with special needs as they assist these students in acquiring background knowledge and putting the elements of the lesson into context.

The infographic *Calavera Literaria Cómo Hace Una Y No Morir En El Intento* is divided into the following sections: The definition of a Calavera Literaria; The process of writing a Calavera Literaria; and Examples of Calavera Literarias written using the outlined process. As the students prepare to view the infographic, I will explain to them that they will read it, both independently and collaboratively to closely analyze it. I will further explain that they will read the infographic a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. I suggest that the infographic to be studied be divided into three separate viewings. In the first reading, I will ask the students to view the infographic in silence for a minute or two and think about what they see. After a minute or two I will ask the entire class, in the target language, "What do you observe in the infographic?" I anticipate the students to respond with the obvious — "There are a lot of images from the Day of the Dead. There is information about Calaveras Literarias. The infographic is divided into 3 sections." When a student provides an answer, I will ask her/him to supply more information. "You said it has information about Calaveras Literarias. What makes you say that?" The students will justify their answers by providing evidence from the work. They may say, "Calavera Literaria is mentioned in the title." Next, I will encourage the students to share differing opinions and provide justification for their opinions. This will deepen the conversation and allow for a wider variety in the student interpretations of the various elements of the infographic. One student may say, "This infographic is about the elements that make up a Calavera Literaria because the focal point of the infographic is a list of literary elements." I would then ask if everyone agrees with the statement. Another student might say that s/he doesn't agree because even though the focal point of the infographic is a list of literary elements there are graphics that are numbered which implies an order or a process. I will summarize what the students said. After the discussion, the students will use a graphic organizer; a one-page paper divided in half with the first half labeled *Learning* and the other half labeled *Reflection*, to write a Learning/About statement and a brief summary.

The second reading is reading with purpose. Students will study the infographic independently, noting in writing details of the infographic that support their learning statements. Using the above graphic organizer, students reflect upon what they just read. I will explain to the students that the reflection can include questions they still have about the work, observations, or a personal connection that they have to a particular part of the infographic. With a shoulder partner, each student will discuss the details they selected from the

infographic and how they support their Learning/About statement. Reflections are also shared. I will then conduct a whole class discussion regarding the details of the text in order to check for understanding. In addition, I will address student questions about the infographic.

The next step in the reading process is a series of text-dependent questions. I will model for the students the process of answering these questions by working through the first question with them. The process requires the students to begin by reviewing the infographic. Next, they will review the completed graphic organizer. Then they will seek the answer to the question and discuss the question with a partner checking for accuracy and clarification. The final step is where the students write their best possible answer using all of the information that they have gathered to adequately answer the question.

To end the close reading process, I will lead a whole class discussion of the questions and the work in order to check for accuracy and address any inaccurate responses. Then I will encourage my students to employ the information they gained from this activity in the writing of their Calaveras Literarias.

Appendix on Implementing District Standards

This unit will be based on one IB MYP Objective, two Delaware World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages and two Common Core State Standards. I will focus on IB Language Acquisition Objective Criterion D: Communicating in Written Form which expects the student to organize and express thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information in writing, write for specific purposes, and develop accuracy when writing in the target language. The Delaware World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages are Standard 1.3 Presentational Communication: Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers or viewers; and Standard 2.1 Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives: Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied. I will focus on the Common Core Standards CCSSELA – Literacy w.5.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences; and CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meaning.

Teacher Resources

"Calaveras Literarias Para Secundaria: Versos y Creatividad En El Día de Los Muertos." Reporte de Lectura, April 21, 2024. https://reportedelectura.org/calaveras-literarias/secundaria/.

This target language website provides written example of short Calaveras Literarias appropriate for school. It also includes a step-by-step guide describing how to write a Calavera Literaria. In addition, it discusses and provided examples of the different types of Calaveras Literarias.

Cavezones, Autor. "Infografía: Calavera Literaria." Este é o noso blog de traballo para Documentación Audiovisual. Debaixo, os blogs dos nosos compañeiros:, April 23, 2019. https://cavezones.wordpress.com/2019/04/08/infografia-calavera-literaria/.

This infographic is a piece of Spanish realia that provides a definition of a Calavera Literarias as well as a step-by-step guide to writing one. It also provides examples of Calaverias Literarias written using the included guide.

Hernández, Sofía García. "¡Diviértete Con Calaveras Literarias Para Tus Amigos de Clase!: Actualizado Agosto 2024." iEducaciones.com, May 30, 2023. https://ieducaciones.com/otros/calaveras-literarias-para-companeros-de-clase/.

This Spanish language website describes Calaveras Literarias in the context of school, provides examples, and explains how to write them for your classmates. It also includes videos containing examples of Calaveras Literarias.

Rios, Julia. "16 Poemas Después de La Muerte -- Poems by Héctor González." OMG Julia!, June 27, 2022. https://www.juliarios.com/16-poemas-despues-de-la-muerte-poems-by-hector-gonzalez/.

This site contains an audio recording of the author reading his works. It also includes written versions of the poems in both Spanish and English accompanied by images.

Ruiz, Tania. "Calaveritas Cortas Para Primaria ⋆ Padres En La Escuela." Padres en la escuela, January 29, 2023. https://www.padresenlaescuela.com/calaveritas-cortas-para-primaria/#google_vignette.

This site contains Calaveras Literararias, some in writing and others presented in a video format. All of the poems are in Spanish and appropriate for school.

"Satire - Examples and Definition of Satire." Literary Devices, February 2, 2022. https://literarydevices.net/satire/.

This English language website provides a detailed definition of satire, explains the elements of this literary device, and provides both contemporary and classic examples.

Staff, Hallmark. "How to Write Literary Calaveras for Día de Muertos." Hallmark Ideas & Inspiration, February 6, 2024. https://ideas.hallmark.com/articles/fall-ideas/how-to-write-literary-calaveras-for-dia-de-muertos/.

This website provides a step-by-step explanation in English on how to write a Calavera Literaria. It includes lists of vocabulary in Spanish that can be used, along with written examples of Calaveras Literarias in both Spanish and English.

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