

Exploring Twentieth Century Latin America Through Film

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Overview

The purpose of this unit is to introduce students, of any discipline, to the cultural aspects of various Latin American countries through film. Though designed for use in a Spanish class, the unit is adaptable, as it touches upon other disciplines, namely history, literature, and music. In the unit, students will use films as a tool to further their research of any of the aforementioned areas. The unit includes three films, *La historia oficial (The Official Story)*, *Eréndira*, and *The Buena Vista Social Club*. Each lesson includes watching a film, discussing that film as one group, and in smaller groups, and independent research on the topic covered in the film. The entire curriculum unit can be taught in segments over the course of the year.

In choosing films to use, I decided to select films that would address culture across content areas. History, literature, and music are the three content areas addressed by the films. The three films chosen were *La Historia Oficial (The Official Story, 1984)*, *Eréndira (1985)*, and *Buena Vista Social Club (1998)*. The films were chosen for their ability to give students an inside look to a variety of cultural practices and perspectives. Furthermore, the films represent more than one geographical region. By working around a variety of content areas as well as regions, the unit gives students the opportunity to realize that not all Latin American cultures are homogenous, and to make their own comparative analyses based on what they see and discuss. The information that follows will provide a background on each of the chosen areas for the instructor to review before beginning the unit.

Rationale

Language learning is often difficult for children because it is not always presented in a context, which leads newer language learners to believe that it is not practical knowledge. However, with the changing demographics in the United States over the last ten years, comprehension and production of Spanish are becoming ever so vital. We no longer have to cross geographic borders to encounter lingual and cultural barriers between groups of people. As a result, students really need to have a grasp of at least a basic level of Spanish. They need to realize that this language is spoken by millions of people, some of whom live in their own neighborhoods.

The relevance of a second language is magnified once a student realizes that an entire population speaks the language - a group of people with their own practices, routines, and beliefs. If a student is learning Spanish, or any other language, through conjugating verbs, memorizing vocabulary, and arranging words into sentences, the communicative value of the language loses its significance. Without an understanding of the cultural context in which the language is based, the student might as well be working on multiplication tables. Learning the structure of the language is important, but like any other subject area, it is the application of that knowledge that gives it its value.

Often, language teachers take for granted the value of the incorporation of culture into daily lesson planning. Perhaps the teacher feels that it is the job of the Social Studies department to talk to students about various cultures, or maybe he or she does not feel well-versed enough in the area to speak about it in class. It is for this reason that I chose to work with film to assist in teaching culture. Movies are an excellent instructional tool, as they allow students to see the characters practicing different customs, and hear their target language being spoken. Furthermore, students view movies as a less intensive method of learning, and usually are more receptive to information when they do not feel that they have to work too hard to obtain it.

Latin America is a region with such a rich and varied history that it is extraordinarily difficult to give a broad overview of its heritage. It is for this reason that I have chosen one particular region and event to focus on while addressing history in the curriculum unit – the Argentine Dirty War of the late 1970s, early 1980s. The term "Dirty

War" refers to the period in Argentine history in which the military junta that had come into power inflicted a war on its own population. During this period, kidnappings, torture, and murder were commonplace, and were organized by the government in an effort to eliminate those who opposed the junta. Thousands of Argentine citizens "disappeared" during the period from 1976-1983, leaving loved ones wondering if they are even alive.

Tranquil is not exactly the term to describe the Argentine political sphere during the twentieth century. Turbulence began with the Radical Party rule from 1916 – 1930 under Hipólito Yrigoyen, which saw working-class repression that would result in general strikes, and the Tragic Week of 1919, in which right-wing militants terrorized many representatives of the left-wing. After Yrigoyen's rule came an oligarchic government that saw Argentina through the Great Depression, and finally a military uprising in 1943 would pave the way for Juan Domingo Perón to be elected president of the nation three years later. Perón captured popular support, ranging from the workers to the middle class, and not excluding the army and some entrepreneurs. His presidency saw an increase in manufacturing as well as employment in the nation, which would last into the early fifties. However, Perón lacked total support of elitist industrialists, and when economic strife increased, Peronismo seemed less appealing. Finally, in 1955, he went into exile after a military revolt. The following years would see continuous military regimes, with several attempts at establishing a civilian government. In 1973, Perón would return to power in an effort to halt escalating terrorism and economic strife. His death, one year later, left the presidency to his wife, who was unable to maintain order, and the chaos allowed for the military to fight freely against the guerillas, thus commencing the Dirty War.

The military government asserted that the return to a sound economy was one of its major goals. However, it felt that in order to establish such an economy, it would have to repress, and eventually destroy the left and its labor movements. When this government officially came to power in 1976, with militants filling in most of the ministries, it had profound impacts on the economic scene of Argentina. Real wages fell drastically, inflation fluctuated, and the national debt increased to the point that Argentina could not come up with the payments to its foreign creditors. The effects of the incompetence of military rule left its scar on Argentina, and the restoration of democracy in 1983 was greeted with euphoria.

While the economic ruin brought forth by the military regime of the late 1970s had seemingly insurmountable negative effects, the personal strife inflicted on the nation at this period proved to be the greatest trauma of the century. In their efforts to repress leftist practices and ideals, the militants kidnapped literally thousands of Argentines. The violation of human rights at this time was extremely intensified, to the point where the government made at least 23,000 Argentines disappear, whether they were actually opposed to the regime, or suspected to be. Often, the detained included students, journalists, lawyers, and members of organized labor groups. Without trials, thousands of people were kidnapped from their homes and brought to detention centers or concentration camps. There, brutal torture unto the victims took place, such as electrical shocks in extremely sensitive areas. Many of the victims were murdered, either at the camps, or by being thrown out of airplanes, where their bodies could plunge into the sea. The officials took care to dispose of the bodies, either by hiding them, placing them in mass graves, or tossing them into the sea.

One would assume that this all too recent act of genocide would be cause for waves of mass protest. However, while the government officials were busy denying to foreign governments that it was even happening, the Argentine public was too afraid to speak up, and rightly so. As a result, in April 1977, a group of women began forming in front of the Casa Rosada, in the Plaza de Mayo. The organization, entitled *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (*Mothers of the Plaza of May*), did not rely upon political protest directed at the military to voice their cause. In fact, the motive of this congregation was merely to obtain answers to questions regarding their "disappeared" children. The women, for the most part, steered clear of the political sphere, but used personal motives to work for justice. The *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* congregate in the Plaza each Thursday with posters of their children and loved ones, asking where their children are. These marches began twenty-four years ago, and continue today. The *Madres* have attained international recognition for their part in the struggle against the situation for human rights, and many have suggested that this group of women has played a fundamental role in the restoration of democracy that occurred in 1983.

In his 1984 film *La Historia Oficial (The Official Story)*, Luis Puenzo captures the tragedies of the Argentine conflict of the period, but presents them in a reversed context. Instead of being the victim of this atrocity, the main characters actually represent the conservative upper class, or more plainly stated, the 'other side'.

Alicia, the protagonist, is a teacher at a private high school, and her husband Roberto is a prominent businessman. Together they have an 'adopted' daughter, Gaby. They portray the image of a normal family until the reappearance of Alicia's friend, Anna, at a high school reunion. When Anna and Alicia are reunited, Anna confesses to Alicia that she had been tortured while detained. Anna also relays to Alicia the brutal treatment that the officials used on the victims, including the fact that they took babies from pregnant women, to be sold or given away to people who were willing to accept them, no questions asked. This startling confession is the motivation for Alicia's search into her daughter's past, as she herself had asked no questions. Eventually, Alicia finds out that her daughter is actually the daughter of a *desaparecida*, after Gaby's biological grandmother informs her.

Puenzo does an excellent job of portraying the deeply rooted traumatic effects that the Argentine Dirty War had on its people. What is more impressive is that Puenzo articulates the struggle on either side. Sara, Gaby's grandmother, belongs to the *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo*, a subdivision of *Las Madres*. The audience sees, when Sara and Alicia sit at the café for instance, the heartache and suffering that this woman had endured over the loss of her daughter and son-in-law. Furthermore, Anna's testimonial is an accurate portrayal of the actual horrors that the real-life victims underwent in the detention centers. Also, Puenzo does not present the internal Argentine conflict as one sided. The audience is sympathetic to Alicia and the pain that she is enduring over her ignorance regarding her daughter's origin. Roberto is an excellent representation of the secretiveness and denial that the government held to at this time. It is his refusal to inform Alicia of anything regarding Gaby that results in the end of their marriage. In essence, Puenzo makes it possible for an instructor to use this film to clearly demonstrate the struggle of the people at this point in Argentine history.

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The twentieth century author Gabriel García Márquez (1928 -) is one of the most acclaimed writers of our time, and together with Argentina's José Luis Borges, is perhaps the most celebrated Latin American writer. Columbian-born García Márquez had originally studied law, but soon abandoned it to become a journalist. After working as a reporter in Colombia and writing fiction on the side in the 1950s, he traveled to Paris to live and work, and then returned to Mexico, where he would begin work on his best known œuvre, *Cien años de soledad (One Hundred Years of Solitude)*. The novel is the tale of the fictional town of Macondo, told through the experiences of the Buendía family. It was publication of this work in 1967 that would allow García Márquez to emerge as an acclaimed novelist, and a major figure in Latin American literature.

Among García Márquez's works are a variety of general themes. However, the style remains consistent. His works are considered to belong to the genre of magical realism, a literary genre to which García Márquez was closely linked. Magical realism is a term that refers to works in which the writers "lace elements of the fantastic and surreal into their otherwise realistic prose". Many of his short stories contain obvious examples of this. For instance, in *Un hombre muy viejo con unas alas enormes (A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings, 1972)*, the reader senses the union of the realistic with the fantastic as an ordinary seaside village is swept away by the unusual presence of a feeble angel who washes up on shore. Similarly, in *La increíble y triste historia de la cándida Eréndira y su abuela desalmada (Innocent Eréndira and her Heartless Grandmother, 1972)*, García Márquez describes an incredible relationship between a girl and her grandmother and their adventures in the desert, without letting Eréndira forget to do any of her daily chores.

In this captivating tale of the fourteen-year-old Eréndira and her grandmother, the reader is exposed to a chain of events that mixes a sharp reality with a fantastic unbelievability. The story begins with Eréndira doing her exhausting list of daily chores, while her grandmother relaxes to music on her phonograph and dines. Quickly, everything changes when poor Eréndira falls asleep leaving the candle lit, which results in the destruction of the entire house. Instead of realizing that she is working her granddaughter into exhaustion, however, the grandmother

informs Eréndira that she must work to repay all of the losses caused by the fire. In an effort to 'help' her granddaughter, the grandmother establishes Eréndira as a well-known prostitute in the desert, by setting up a tent in which soldiers and other wanderers can enter and have their way with her, paying the grandmother upon entry. Through her popularity, Eréndira is discovered by Ulises, a young Dutch boy working with his father. Ulises urges her to escape from her grandmother, and eventually they decide that the only real freedom that Eréndira can ever have will be after her grandmother's death. Several unsuccessful attempts to kill the old woman prove that her love of living is can keep her alive through almost anything. However, when Ulises finally succeeds, Eréndira flees, unable to unite with him in the freedom from her grandmother's rule.

Magical realism is ever-present in the story, both subtly and in very obvious ways. For instance, strange winds sweep through the area every time the grandmother is about to exercise her indescribable powers over Eréndira. Ulises and his diamond-filled oranges present another unrealistic aspect of the story. The wicked grandmother personifies many fantastic elements in the story. In her sleep, for instance, she cries and hollers in a way that makes it completely unbelievable to the audience that she could possibly be unconscious. Her signs and omens with regards to everything, coupled with her general demeanor, portray her as being more than human, and characterizing her more as a witch. Another example of this super-human power that she seems to have is her perseverance. She is nearly impossible to kill, and when Ulises finally does succeed, he ends up covered in her green blood, yet another example of her astonishing strangeness. On the other hand, the story has very realistic elements. Eréndira's endless chores situate the pair into a very gloomy reality. The role of the senator in the story, to whom the grandmother sends Eréndira in order to avoid hassle while prostituting her in the desert, places the characters into somewhat of a political reality. Finally, the experience that Eréndira has at the convent shows that there are in fact some rules and regulations for the characters to live by, and again shows that within all that is happening that seems strange, there is still work to be done.

García Márquez explores such themes in the story as solitude, power, and love. It seems that solitude is about the only thing that the grandmother seems to fear, as seen when she struggles to get Eréndira back after she is sent to the convent. Though she is seemingly content in her solitude, the reader can sense that she is reliant upon her granddaughter. Eréndira, however, seems to yearn for solitude. The first time that the reader sees her happy is when she expresses it at the convent, where she has spoken to no one. Though she seems to want to be with Ulises, she flees when they finally have the chance to be together, never to be heard from again. The relationship between the grandmother and Eréndira is definitely one where power plays an important part. In fact, the grandmother has so much power over her granddaughter that Eréndira seems uneasy when away from her, with the exception of being at the convent. Though she is pained by her condition as a whore, Eréndira still does not hesitate to return to her grandmother, as seen when she gets married to the stranger. When the evil woman finally dies at the end, Eréndira disappears, in what seemed to be a display of bewilderment at the loss coupled with a newfound freedom that she did not know how to handle. Finally, García Márquez approaches love in a rather ambiguous manner in this story. The reader can tell that the love that Eréndira has for her grandmother is founded on fear, but still exists. The grandmother, however, seems to love only herself, and the memory of her husband, though she does occasionally show some affection for her granddaughter. She loves wealth and possession more, though, and obviously does not hesitate to go to great lengths to obtain them. Lastly, the love that exists between Ulises and Eréndira is unclear. The reader is at first swept away by the sheer romanticism of their situation, but is left wondering how true their feelings really were when Eréndira turns on him after his failed attempts to murder her grandmother.

In the 1983 adaptation of this work into film, director Ruy Guerra is accurate, and succeeds in following the written work very closely. The actors and actress in the movie do an excellent job of portraying their on-paper counterparts, especially Irene Papas as the grandmother. Her witch-like appearance and threatening demeanor make her very convincing. Claudia Ohana, who played Eréndira, was also very convincing. She remained aloof from the audience, while still managing to obtain their sympathy for her exhaustive efforts to please her grandmother. In all, the film is an excellent accompaniment to the short story, as it gives the visual atmosphere that the reader would expect, and it is not translated, which is definitely an aid to oral comprehension of the Spanish spoken in the movie for students who have already read the English version of the story. Finally, García Márquez commonly writes with the intention of painting a visual image, and many of his works have been turned

into films. This adaptation makes his works more understandable for younger readers, and seeing the image again reinforces ideas and themes discussed in the written work.

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The third and final film chosen to complete the curriculum is director Wim Wenders' 1998 documentary film *Buena Vista Social Club*. This movie shows the reunion of some of Cuba's greatest twentieth century musicians, and outlines the steps that it takes them to produce a successful live performance, as well as several popular musical compilations sold throughout the world. Set in contemporary Havana, the film, though centered on the work of the musicians, also gives the viewer a closer look at the condition of present-day Cuba.

Throughout the film, Cuban music greats such as Compay Segundo, Ibrahim Ferrer, and Reubén González, among others, discuss, rehearse, and present extraordinary sounds. Keys to this successful blending of sounds include the correct mix of piano, guitar, vocals, brass, and above all drums. The omnipresence of various types of drums throughout Cuban music dates back to colonial times, when slaves were being imported from Africa. Though not officially documented, it is said that the first Africans arrived in Cuba very early in the sixteenth century. Since this time, a good majority of the musicians in Cuba have been of African descent, as the musician's guilds did not conform to the racism that excluded Africans from so many other parts of the culture. Over time, Cuban music developed into a synthesis of both African and Spanish elements, blending drums and guitars to form a sound unique to the island.

Composition of "Cuban" music, or that of those who colonized the island, began in the early eighteenth century, with strong European influences. These sounds do not only reflect the impact of Spanish folklore, but also sounds from France, Italy, and even Germany. It was the Spanish, however, which predominated the sound, combined with rhythms from Africa, so that by the twentieth century, Cuban music had come into its own. At this point, Cuban sound began to be the one to influence. During the years between the two world wars, as jazz gained popularity, many American jazz musicians appreciated and adopted Cuban style to make their own music more lively and easier to dance to.

It was the diversity of influence on the development of Cuban music that led to the variety of styles that exist today. Cuban music can be classified into literally hundreds of specific categories. Some of the more popular classifications include Son, Guajira, Bolero, Cha-cha-chá, Rumba, Mambo, and Danzón. Son, a popular dance music, is the foundation of modern salsa, and examples of it range from very traditional to contemporary. Guajira is a slight derivation of Son, just a bit slower, and Bolero is an even slower example, more of a romantic ballad. The others, Cha-cha-chá, Rumba, Mambo, and Danzón are all popular styles of upbeat dance rhythms, mostly characterized by their dominant drum sounds. These examples merely touch upon the wide variety of Cuban music classifications, and instructors who use this curriculum unit may wish to collaborate with a music teacher to further enhance the students' knowledge. In the film, the musicians play mainly Guajira and Bolero, so it may be to the students' advantage to explore different sounds, as noted below in the lesson designed around this movie. However, *Buena Vista Social Club* serves as an excellent starting block for an introduction to a unit on Latin American music or specifically Cuban music.

Objectives of Unit

In this unit, students will be able to identify previously unknown aspects of three different Latin American cultures. Students will also be able to use the knowledge gained on Spanish-speaking cultures to complement their language study. They will obtain a greater understanding of how language study can be combined with other disciplines to analyze aspects of customs and practices that are foreign to them. In other words, they will simultaneously partake in learning about Spanish-speaking cultures while expanding their knowledge in the areas of history, literature, and music.

Other objectives of this unit include the ability on the students' part to engage in research on a specific topic. Furthermore, students will work on discussing various topics based on their own viewpoints and ideas gained from

watching a film. Students will analyze ideas and form their own conclusions, thus reinforcing critical thinking skills. Students will use analyses to prepare further research, and present information to the instructor and fellow classmates.

Strategies

The lessons will take place throughout the course of the school year, so as to remain a novelty to the students. In essence, the curriculum unit is divided into three parts, one for each film being shown. Each section of the unit will be a lesson that will take place over five or six days. Thus, the total length of the unit will be approximately fifteen to eighteen school days over the course of the year. Since roughly ten to fifteen percent of language learning should focus on culture, this is an appropriate length of time to devote to this unit. Furthermore, viewing the movies is an exercise in listening comprehension, so spending this time watching movies is justifiable in that sense.

Each lesson will be presented individually, but will be similar in format. First, students will begin with some background information on the topic being addressed in the film. Then, students will spend approximately three days watching the film, with introductory and closure discussions each day, also allowing for questions and answers. The fourth day will be devoted entirely to discussion of the topic, as guided by specific discussion questions. Finally, students will conduct individual research on the topic, and present it to their classmates. This will be done in groups of no more than four students, based on specific aspects of the topic that students wish to analyze further. Therefore, presentations will not be repetitive, and will allow students to explore a topic that interests them most. The instructor may wish to be flexible with the students and allow them to work on another topic outside of what the film addresses, but relevant to the unit.

While assessment of each section of the unit will come in the form of both participation in classroom discussions through the development and analyses of ideas, as well as a short quiz, students will also be assigned a research project on which they will be assessed. Given the average class of twenty-five students, the students will divide up as equally as possible between the three films. Then, in these divisions, students will form sub-divisions in order to focus on a specific aspect of the film. In other words, there will be approximately six research groups formed – two per film. These groups will research a topic, and prepare a presentation to the class on their topic, which will count for the majority of their grade in the curriculum unit. However, each student will only work to present on one of the three films, and none of the presentations will repeat themselves.

Classroom Activities

Lesson One: *The Official Story*

Using the background information listed above, the teacher will give the students a brief history of Argentine politics and their affect on the people during the course of the twentieth century. Some of the topics that the teacher may wish to include in the presentation of material are:

?Left-wing political ideals vs. Right-wing political ideals

?Peronismo and its affects on Argentina

?Military Rule & Dictatorship vs. Democracy

?Human Rights in Argentina

?The Dirty War

The background presentation should not be more than one class, and can be followed up with a reading (See Bibliography) or a question and answer session.

After a thorough introduction to the material has been made, the students will watch the film. This will take approximately three to four class periods, as the film is 108 minutes in length. Each day, the teacher will summarize the previous day's events, and to conclude each segment will be a short (3-4 minutes) discussion simply to check for understanding. On the fourth day, the students will begin the day by finishing watching the film, and then will be prepared to discuss the following questions with the instructor.

Who were the main characters in the film?

Who is Anna? Where has she been and why?

Why does Alicia get so upset about what Anna tells her when they are in the living room?

What does Roberto know about that he refuses to share with Alicia?

Why does Alicia go to the hospital?

Alicia confesses to the priest at church. What does she tell him about, and how does he react?

There is a lot of talk about truth in the film. Who is concerned about the truth, and where do we see examples of it coming up?

Think back to the scene where Roberto, Alicia, and Gaby go to the picnic. How does this scene affect our perception of Roberto? What ideas do we have about him? Why?

What does Benitez, Alicia's colleague, mean when he says "Nothing more touching than a guilty bourgeois lady."? How does Alicia react to this?

Explain the role of the old woman from the hospital. Why does Alicia get upset when the woman sees her at the day care with Gaby?

The end of the movie leaves us open for speculation. We know that Alicia leaves, but it does not show explicitly what happens to Gaby. What do you think happens?

Based on what we have learned about the situation in Argentina twenty-five years ago, how does this movie reflect the conflicts? Where do we see the opposite sides?

After discussion of the questions in a large group, students will be asked to divide into smaller groups to analyze the movie. The goal of these small group discussions is to depict how the movie portrays aspects of Argentine culture. Much of it will center on history, but the students will also be asked to compare the characters to themselves, as North Americans, and note both similarities and differences. Again, this will be discussed in small groups, and then presented to the class.

Assessment for the entire class will come in the form of a short quiz, which will include three to five of the above discussion questions. However, some members of the class will use this film to base further research around. Under the assumption that the class has approximately twenty-five students, there should be two groups, which will form and research appropriate topics with regards to this film. Students will be given options, as listed below, to base their research on, or they may choose a relevant topic to be approved by the instructor. Students will have approximately two weeks to organize a fifteen to twenty minute presentation. Thus, the final day of the first lesson will take place well after the students watch the film, serving to reinforce the information again, as well as to conclude the unit. Both groups will present on the same day. Possible theses include:

?Some say that *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* are in large part responsible for the restoration of democracy in Argentina. Analyze the role of this group of women to support or reject this idea.

?The most talked about incidence of genocide in the twentieth century was the Holocaust, in which six million Jews died. Compare and contrast that modern atrocity with the Dirty War in Argentina.

? Many of the officials responsible for the disappearance of the Argentines were pardoned. Examine how these officials were treated, and what laws exist in Argentina to give them protection.

Lesson Two: *Eréndira*

The second lesson will actually span over the longest period of time, as it will involve reading the short story *Innocent Eréndira and her Heartless Grandmother*. Unless it is a very advanced Spanish class, this reading can be done in English. (However, if the group has at least four years of Spanish, the instructor might consider trying the story in the target language.)

Before beginning the story, the instructor may wish to provide some insight to the students that will serve as background information. This may include a brief introduction to any of the following topics:

? Biography of Gabriel García Márquez

? Gabriel García Márquez as a leader in Latin American literature

? Magical Realism as a literary genre

I suggest that the instructor provide copies of the story, which is roughly fifty-five pages in length, and the students read part in class, part for homework. Perhaps the instructor might consider reading passages of the story for the last ten minutes of each period until the class has completed the story. Upon finishing the story, the students will then watch the film. Again, as the film is approximately 103 minutes in length, this should take roughly four class periods, with the last devoted to both finishing the film, as well as discussing some of the following questions:

Who are the main characters in the story?

Describe Eréndira as a person.

Describe her grandmother as a person.

Does the author allow us to get very close to any of these characters? In other words, are we as an audience able to know what the characters are thinking?

What effects, in both the book and the movie, are used to magnify the grandmother's power?

In what ways is the story realistic? Unrealistic?

Are Ulises and Eréndira really in love? Why or why not?

At what points in the story do we feel sympathy for Eréndira? For the grandmother?

The grandmother spends a lot of time talking in her sleep. What is the significance of this?

At the end, the author describes her blood as "oily blood, shiny and green, just like mint honey". What significance does the grandmother's green blood have?

Why do you think that Eréndira leaves Ulises at the end?

Do you feel that the book and the movie paralleled one another? In what ways?

The author, García Márquez is closely associated with magical realism. In what ways does this story portray that idea?

Finally, as in Lesson One, a short quiz will serve as the assessment, again with three to five of the above questions. The two (or three, depending on class size) research groups that will have been formed from this part of the unit will be given a variety of research topics, as listed below, and again will be given two weeks to complete the research and prepare a presentation to the class. The presentation of each group will be approximately fifteen to twenty minutes in length, and both groups will complete the presentations in the same day. Topics include:

? Choose two other short stories by Gabriel García Márquez, and illustrate how they are examples of magical realism. Consider, for example *The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World* or *A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings* as possible titles.

? Think of a short story that you may have read in your English class by a North American author. Compare and contrast that story with *Innocent Eréndira and her Heartless Grandmother*.

? This story portrays women in two opposing roles. Explore the situation of women in contemporary Latin America, and compare the real woman's role with respect to that of the female characters in the story.

Lesson Three: Buena Vista Social Club

This portion of the unit will be the final one. The instructor will begin the unit by providing students with background information including some of the topics listed below. A nice addition to this introduction would be to quietly play in the background some of the music that students will be hearing in the movie. (See Appendix Three) Introductory points for students include:

? African and Spanish influences on Cuban music since colonial times

? Themes addressed in Cuban music

? Contemporary Cuban society

The introductory lesson will take approximately one day where teacher input will be followed by question and answers or brief discussion. Next, the film will be shown for approximately three days.

After the film is shown, the students will be taken to the computer lab in order to explore the interactive site dedicated to the group and the movie, www.buenavista-socialclub.com. This site contains information on the director, the musicians, the film itself, and contemporary Cuba. A concise set of directions will guide the students through the site, as listed below.

? Students will begin by clicking on the "Movie" section and reading the sub-section entitled "Making the Movie".

? Then, students will be asked to read briefly about some of the main artists, by clicking on the "Musicians" section.

? Next, they will be asked to review some of the song lyrics, by clicking on "Songs", and if the computer is equipped with speakers, the students may download the mp3 and listen to the music.

? Finally, the students will be asked to explore Cuba, through the interactive slideshow that the site provides as well as external links that are available.

On day five of the lesson, the students will reconvene in the classroom to discuss their results. Some of the discussion questions will be as follows:

Who are the principal artists taking part in this project?

What do you think of the music?

How is this music different from what we listen to here in the United States? What sounds the same? What sounds different?

What are your perceptions of Cuba? After viewing the slides, and learning about the history of the region, how can you compare it to the United States?

This discussion section can also contain listening samples that can be played and discussed. Furthermore, many of the compact discs available have lyrics printed that can be copied and distributed to students for analysis and translation.

In this unit, participation and completion of lab work will count for assessment. There will be no quiz on the material; rather students will be given a handout to take to the computer lab, which they will fill out by obtaining the information from the Internet. There will still be at least two research groups to complete the unit. These groups will be given the standard two weeks to research a topic regarding the unit. Possible topics include, but are not limited to the following:

? Choose one song from the movie and analyze the lyrics within the context of the contemporary Cuban situation.

? Choose another country in Latin America. Research and provide samples of their music, and compare them with what you've heard in the film.

? Further research the history and development of the contemporary Cuban sound. Include details about influences, instruments, and leading musicians.

? Look at various classifications of Cuban music, and choose 3 to research and share with the class.

Resources for Instructors

Chang-Rodriguez, Eugenio. Latinoamérica: su civilización y su cultura. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1991. *This text is a detailed account of the history and culture of Latin America from pre-Colombian times to the twentieth century, written in Spanish, but designed for English-speaking learners.*

Chang-Rodriguez, Raquel; Filer, Malva E. Voces de Hispanoamerica: Antología Literaria. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1996. *This anthology is a sample of short stories, plays, essays, and poetry of notable Latin American authors, including short biographies of each.*

Franco, Jean. An Introduction to Spanish-American Literature Third Edition. New York: University of Cambridge Press, 1994. *Franco's work includes commentary on literary theory as well as detailed studies of notable figures of Latin American literature from the colonial period to the twentieth century.*

García Márquez, Gabriel. Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978. *This work is a sample of García Márquez's short stories.*

Gunther, John. Inside South America. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967.

In this work, Gunther outlines intricate details of history and civilization of Latin America from the pre-Columbian era to the middle of the twentieth century.

King, John. Magical Reels. A History of Cinema in Latin America. London: Verso

and the Latin American Bureau, 1990. *King's work selects notable films and analyzes the making of the films, as well as the social and historical contexts portrayed in the movies.*

Organization of American States Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Argentina. Washington D.C., 1999.

This compilation of data is organized to present the condition of human rights in Argentina, as a result of the Dirty War and military dictatorship.

Pick, Zuzana M. The New Latin American Cinema: A Continental Project. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993. *Pick focuses on Contemporary Latin American film, and chooses a variety of films to illustrate how they relate to social and historical issues on the continent.*

Shrum, Judith L.; Glisan, Eileen W. Teacher's Handbook: Contextualized Language Instruction. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 2000. *This handbook is designed for language teachers, and includes lesson plans, theory of methodology, and content standards.*

Williamson, Edwin. The Penguin History of Latin America. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1992. *This work is an inclusive compilation of historical facts about Latin America.*

Winn, Peter. Americas. Berkley: University of California Press, 1992.

Winn studies the contemporary Latin American situation through cultural studies, as well as social and political issues.

Resources for Students

Text:

García Márquez, Gabriel. Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978.

Films:

Guerra, Ruy. *Eréndira*, 1982.

Puenzo, Luis. *La Historia Oficial*, 1984.

Wenders, Wim. *Buena Vista Social Club*, 1998.

Internet Technology in Curriculum Development

In the unit, I have used a variety of Internet resources to provide background information, as well as activities for students. The following are websites that I have referred to:

<http://www.surdelsur.com/cine>

<http://www.cinecubano.com>

<http://www.themodernword.com/gabo/index.html>

<http://www.yendor.com/vanished/index.html>

<http://europe.cnn.com/32396>

<http://europe.cnn.com/WORLD/98>

<http://www.buonavista-socialclub.com?>

Miscellaneous Sources in Curriculum Development

In the bibliography that follows, one will find a complete listing of the literary texts that I have used to provide information in developing this curriculum unit. Apart from written texts, I have also used the following films:

Guerra, Ruy. *Eréndira*, 1982.

Puenzo, Luis. *La Historia Oficial*, 1984.

Wenders, Wim. *Buena Vista Social Club*, 1998.

Also, I have used the following compact discs:

Cooder, Ry. *Buena Vista Social Club*, 1997.

Ferrer, Ibrahim. *Buena Vista Social Club presents Ibrahim Ferrer*, 1999.

González, Ruebén. *Chanchullo*, 2000.

Appendix: Addressing District and National Standards

The curriculum unit addresses the Pittsburgh Public School District Standards in the following ways:

Best Practices for World Language Instruction:

BP 1: The classroom learning environment promotes world language learning.

Students are engaged in each task as appropriate to their needs & learning styles. Students cooperate with one another. The unit is developed to provide an opportunity for students who normally do not excel in language learning to succeed. Furthermore, students learn how to process knowledge and present in a group.

BP 3: Cultural is infused into world language instruction. Instructional activities and

materials are infused with cultural components. Students demonstrate empathy or show interest in the target culture. Culture is presented without promoting cultural stereotypes and biases. The unit is centered around the presentation of culture through experiences and not isolated instructions. Students witness the experiences of the characters in the movie, and make their own inferences on the culture, which are discussed in class.

BP4: Vocabulary, skills, and grammar are taught in meaningful contexts. Students

listen to the target language and comprehend what they hear. Through listening, and making associations, students are likely to gain greater comprehension of spoken Spanish of native speakers.

Arts & Humanities:

AH2: All students evaluate and respond critically to works from the visual and

performing arts and literature of various individuals and cultures, showing that they understand important features of the works. The main focus of the unit addresses this standard, as students analyze and discuss the performance in the film and relate it to cultural knowledge that they have obtained, thus giving them a greater understanding of the work.

AH3: All students relate various works from the visual and performing arts and literature

to the historical and cultural context within which they were created. As with standard AH2, standard AH3 is addressed throughout the unit. The very purpose of the unit is demonstrated in this standard, as students use the films to

understand historical and cultural contexts of the plots, thus giving them greater overall insight into the target culture.

Science & Technology:

ST9: All students demonstrate basic computer literacy, including word processing, software

applications, and the ability to access the global information infrastructure, using current technology. Through conducting research on their own, as well as within the class (See Lesson Three), students will rely upon technology as an essential source for the information that they are gathering.

Communications:

C1: All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies. Since the primary follow-up activity to the film is the research project, the unit addresses this standard.

C2: All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex tasks. Above all, students will be reading in Lesson Two, thus addressing the standard. However, throughout the unit, students will have the opportunity to read notes, articles, and books on their given research topic.

C3: All students respond orally and in writing to inform and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems. Again, as in Standard C2, students must read through research. The oral presentation is the culmination of their research, and they will use the presentation to inform classmates of their findings.

C4: All students write for a variety of purposes, including narrate, inform, and persuade in all subject areas. Standard C4 will primarily be addressed through written assessments that students will have on the film and discussion. The assessment will be in either short-answer or essay form, thus giving students the opportunity to practice writing skills.

C6: All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications. Since the unit is built around cooperative learning, students will need to establish effective communication within the group, as well as with the instructor.

C7: All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify the purpose, structure, and use. As students watch the films and discuss the significance of specific quotations from the movies, so are they identifying and understanding complex oral messages. Discussion of topics should help to break down the information so that it is more comprehensible to students.

C8: All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study, that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe. Oral presentations prepared through research on the part of the student will be used to inform classmates of a more detailed look at topics discussed in class.

The curriculum unit that I have designed addresses the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, developed primarily by ACTFL, in the following ways:

Standard 2 – Cultures

2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied. This occurs in all three portions of the curriculum unit, as students read, see, analyze, and discuss various aspects of targeted regions and their cultures.

2.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied. This is evident mainly with the literature and music components of the lesson, as students study and familiarize themselves with products of given cultures. Through background information, analysis, and discussion, students will be able to associate the products with the culture.

Standard 3 – Connections

3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language. This is evident in all aspects of the unit, as students will be studying history, literature, and music.

3.2 Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures. Again, the chosen unit introduces material that crosses content areas, while managing to contain information not normally treated in the given classes, and centering on a Spanish-speaking group of subjects.

Standard 4 – Comparisons

4.2 Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own. In both group discussions as well as individual research, students are repeatedly asked to draw comparisons of the target subject, within the context of the target culture, and treatment of that subject in the United States.