

Putting the Puzzle Together: Art, Literature and History of Latin America

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Overview

The addition of art, literature and particularly poetry infuses the study of history and culture with tangible connections that bring facts and concepts to life. This curriculum unit contains 5 combinations of Latin American art, literature and history/culture which are designed to be presented together. This is less a series of specific lesson plans and more of an open-ended narrative since the intended audience includes more than Spanish teachers. The curriculum is designed to encourage teachers of a variety of courses to adapt the information presented to use in their own classes, either in Spanish or in English. All students, from the most active and curious to the least motivated should find something to excite them when provided the opportunity to explore Latin American art and literature and history as interconnected pieces of a puzzle.

The combinations are as follows:

The life and art of Frida Kahlo with Laura Esquivel's novel Like Water for Chocolate as examples of women in Mexico in the early 1900's.

The art of Fernando Botero with Gabriel Garcia Marquez' One Hundred Years of Solitude as background of Colombian politics.

The surrealism of Roberto Matta with Isabel Allende's The House of the Spirits as expatriate views of the Pinochet military coup.

Diego Rivera's National Palace mural with the poetry of Octavio Paz as reflections of Mexican history.

Wilfredo Lam's Cubo-African art with the poetry of Nicolas Guillen as examples of Afro-Hispanic Culture

It is difficult to limit oneself to these few areas, but important to choose material that students will find interesting, comprehensible and that represents a few of the many important artists and writers in contemporary Latin American culture. This type of approach to teaching culture is grounded in the principles of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines and assists in incorporating the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. It also addresses the Content Standards adopted by the Pittsburgh Board of Education as will be seen in the Appendix.

Rationale

Historical facts do not exist or occur in a vacuum. The tension resulting from the political climate in a particular area and conflicts such as political or economic instability influence the amount and type

of art and literature (as well as music, film, and other creative efforts) which reflect the time and place in which they are produced. In trying to introduce my students to Spanish art and literature I find it very necessary to link the images or words they are studying to the society in which the works were created. For example, it is impossible for students to appreciate Picasso's great painting Guernica without knowing something about the Spanish Civil War, and perhaps reading Garcia-Lorca's poetry.

The textbook which is used for Spanish 4 PSP (Pittsburgh Scholars Program) in the Pittsburgh Public Schools presents art, music and literature in separate chapters and provides almost no historical timeframe or background to illustrate the conditions from which they were created. I have found this to be unsatisfactory and tend to "jump around" in the text so that students can see the correlation between artists and writers who have so much in common, as well as adding a fair amount of historical background to the information provided by the text.

Thus the reason I have for developing the units included in this curriculum is to provide some of the background information necessary to introduce students to the cultural richness of four Latin American areas: Mexico, Colombia, Chile, and the Caribbean. I have chosen these in particular because they represent some of the most important artists and writers in contemporary Latin America, and they are presented, to some degree, in the Ya Veras Nivel 3 textbooks recently adopted by the Pittsburgh Board of Education. At the conclusion of this curriculum I will add ideas for other units which I plan to develop for use in Spanish 5 PSP.

This method is designed to reach students with a variety of learning styles and interests. It will allow all students to express their opinions and be exposed to different points of view than American high school students generally receive. I feel that this offers a much more comprehensive and comprehensible way for students to appreciate the beauty and connections, and thereby remember more of what they have learned.

Although I am writing this in English and perhaps some of it can be used by English, Social Studies or Art teachers, the majority of the information presented here will be communicated in Spanish. This is somewhat difficult since the level of vocabulary in the writings tends to be higher than students normally use. The words and concepts needed to describe, discuss, and analyze the art and literature also need to be learned. However, this provides an excellent "jumping-off" point for student interaction--far better than the standard "what did you do over the weekend?"-type questions we often use to elicit narration in the past, vocabulary practice, and increase oral proficiency.

An exception to the Spanish-only goal is the independent reading section of the unit. Here students will be given a reading list and will choose a piece of Latin American literature to read in its entirety throughout the quarter since only small samples appear in the text in Spanish. (It would be unreasonable to expect most high school students to read the full work of 100-200 pages in Spanish.) However, the students will then write about their reading in Spanish in their journals and also present a short synopsis in Spanish to the rest of the class, or as a discussion in smaller groups, particularly if others in the class have read the same book.

The interdisciplinary potential for this type of teaching should not be underestimated. In the Middle School environment where I taught for five years, teams of students and teachers worked together

on thematically based "units" which gave everyone the sense of the inter-connectedness among various subjects. In the High School model of separate departments, students are actually surprised when they hear or read something that they learned in another class. This is a missed opportunity. I have recently had 2 students incorporate information from my class into a research project for their English classes--one on Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and the other on the Chicano experience in the United States. This was very exciting for the students and teachers alike, but in a way it is unfortunate that it is not more commonplace.

I have taught in the Pittsburgh Public Schools since the mid-1980's and at Taylor Allderdice High School, a national Blue Ribbon School, since fall of 1992. The student body is very diverse both racially and socio-economically. All students are required to take two years of a Foreign Language, now more commonly referred to as World Languages. Although Allderdice also offers French, German and Latin, Spanish is the most popular choice with 5 full-time teachers each with 5 sections per day. Students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools may start learning Spanish as early as first grade in some elementary schools and most begin by at least middle school. Students in the PSP program take Spanish 1 in eighth grade which allows them to be in level 5 as Seniors.

At most levels (Spanish 1 through Spanish 6) there are 3 divisions: "Mainstream", PSP (Pittsburgh Scholars Program), and CAS (Center for Advanced Study, i.e. gifted). Teachers' schedules vary each year, but I generally teach levels 4 PSP and 5 PSP among other classes. Gifted students are taught by other teachers in an AP-level program. The material presented in this curriculum could be adapted to other levels, but it is designed with my Spanish 4 PSP and 5 PSP students in mind. Class sizes are approximately 15-20, with 2 sections of Spanish 4 PSP and one of Spanish 5 PSP. Most of the students in these classes are urban, middle-class, college-bound 16 to 18-year-olds.

I have found that despite the explosion of information available on the Internet and hundreds of cable television channels today, my students do not display the level of cultural sophistication I would expect them to have upon entering college. While some have traveled, visited museums, or have parents who expose them to a variety of opportunities for cultural growth, the majority have very little knowledge of even the most well-known artists and writers such as Picasso and Cervantes, much less any Latin-American ones. The textbooks offer only the most cursory mention of any art or literature until the second half of the third level, and even then, as I stated before, everything is presented in isolation, seemingly unrelated to the world in which it was created.

Objectives

Unfortunately time constraints are a reality, as is grammar, so I have only one overriding objective in an attempt to be realistic:

Students will be able to read and discuss works of Latin American writers and artists in terms of the historical and Cultural climate in which they were produced.

As stated in the Introduction, the textbook for Spanish 4 PSP is Ya Veras, Nivel 3. (The level one textbook is used for two years in our curriculum .) Units 3 and 4, encompassing chapters 7 through 13, focus on art, music and literature in the Spanish-speaking world, including Spain and Latin America. There is also quite a bit of grammar presented including present and past subjunctive. A few of the passages chosen for study incorporate the grammar, but mostly it is studied in parallel. I will present some activities that can elicit use of the subjunctive, but grammar is not a specific objective.

One positive aspect of this method, however, is that students will need higher level vocabulary and grammar constructions to describe and express their feelings about a variety of works. Art can be used for many grammar-oriented activities for greater authenticity than a textbook line drawing, for example. To express themselves using phrases like "it is important that. . .", "I hope that. . .", "I doubt that. . .", "it is possible that. . .", "I'm not sure that. . ." students will be forced to use the subjunctive in a way that is far more meaningful than exercises out of the textbook.

Although this is being developed for use in the Spanish 4 PSP class and to expand upon the current textbook and materials used for that course, my long term goal is to carry this strategy of incorporating culture into the curriculum of Spanish 5 PSP as well since nearly all students in Spanish 5 PSP have taken the Spanish 4 PSP class with rare exceptions. The text for that course is *Enlaces*, which again contains little or no emphasis on art or literature. As a continuation of Spanish 4 PSP, more of these Unit Plans could be included, perhaps one per quarter at least. My Spanish 5 PSP students are already responsible each quarter for reading a piece of Latin American literature independently, writing about it in their weekly Spanish journal, and conducting a class discussion in Spanish about the book they read. The students have been very positive about the assignment and adding connections to art putting it all into historical context will make it that much more significant for them.

Strategies

Gathering examples of Latin American art, literature and events in history and making them available to students are an important consideration. The following will offer information for teachers who wish to implement all or some of the activities without having to do the extra research needed to prepare lesson plans for material not presented in the textbook. It is hoped that these will become a springboard for further development of units along these lines, always with a focus on the connections that can be made. Even using the Internet this is time-consuming to do individually for each of the 20 Spanish-speaking countries and all the art and literature that should be taught in historical context, but I have not yet found a textbook that presents it that way.

Art

Ideally, examples of the art that will be studied should be displayed, however is most feasible. I like the "art gallery" approach on an unused chalkboard or large bulletin board. If enough prints are available, exhibit them with or without the artist or painting's name. An interactive matching game with descriptions in the target language could be one preliminary activity particularly appropriate for kinesthetic learners. Leave the art accessible for students to see even when attention is not directed toward it (the "osmosis" approach). Some art is available to be printed from the Internet at museum or artists web sites, but the images are of uneven quality. Postcards or note cards of the better-known artists are readily available but are small. Calendar art pages or posters are probably the best, but can be expensive. Even T-shirts, jewelry, and magazine ads sometimes contain contemporary Latin American art, and make the "gallery" even more personal and interesting. Try the clearance table in bookstores and museum shops and when traveling always ask for free or teacher-discounted items. Students and their parents are also a resource not to be overlooked.

Pictures in art books are usually of excellent quality but somewhat cumbersome to use in class. A "scavenger hunt" is one way to focus student attention on the art that is being studied, for example a questionnaire that they will need to complete by finding and analyzing various examples of the art contained in the book. Slides are best for the actual classroom discussion of the art and can be obtained from the Carnegie or other large library. If there is an Art or Art History teacher in the school he/she will probably be willing to share resources as well.

Literature

It is satisfying to know that students are reading, either in Spanish or in translation, literature that will teach them so much about Latin American culture and the history surrounding it. Students who have complained loudly about the extra effort of reading outside of English class have later developed an interest in a particular author or genre and even shared this with other students, teachers and parents. Book or poetry discussions, particularly when conducted in Spanish, offer opportunities for critical thinking and higher-level communication. It is important to avoid the reading/translating or reading/do the exercises approach and instead have students focus on the meaning in a more global sense. This can be done by allowing small-group discussion of a few open-ended questions, particularly if they themselves create the questions. Another successful activity is to compare and contrast characters, for example Frida Kahlo and Tita, the protagonist of Like Water for Chocolate.

Although textbooks can offer a starting point, it is unlikely that they will be sufficient. The supplementary materials necessary for this type of curriculum must be readily available to students if it is to be successful. School and local librarians may have a Multicultural Collection. In the case of poetry and short stories, collections may be available from colleagues in the English department. Teacher creativity is essential in obtaining what is needed.

Historical Context

The book and video series Americas by Peter Winn is an excellent resource for an overview of contemporary Latin American history that is not just dry facts and dates. In order to present the relevant historical and political information to students a time line is very helpful, particularly if they have not studied Latin America recently (in the case of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, sixth grade). Students can be directed to assemble the time line, perhaps as a group project. Correlating dates, leaders, and events with artists and writers from a particular area enables students to establish connections. Speakers from the Social Studies department, Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Pittsburgh or other universities, or native speakers from the area being studied, are highly recommended. Be sure to ask students for suggestions of parents or other contacts they might have who are "experts" in a particular field.

Classroom Activities

Frida Kahlo, Like Water for Chocolate, Women in Mexico

The textbook Ya Veras presents a short Lectura Cultural about Frida Kahlo (1910-1953) including two small self-portraits after the section in Chapter 7 about the Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Siqueiros. The reading describes in Spanish her two great "accidents"--the terrible streetcar accident at the age of fifteen, which left her seriously wounded, infertile, and in pain for the rest of her life, and her marriage to Diego Rivera. The self-portraits pictured with the

article are each given a short description, and a final paragraph mentions the Casa Azul/Frida Kahlo Museum near Mexico City. The comprehension exercises that follow focus on dates and events of her life, and a vocabulary study.

Students, especially girls, are fascinated by Frida Kahlo. They always want to know more about her life and particularly her art. We have had discussions about her physical appearance, her stormy relationship with Diego Rivera, and her powerful use of images in her paintings, and her disability and infertility. All of these can be conducted in Spanish for the most part. All stem from students' interest and curiosity about her art. The textbook provides a framework from which to begin these discussions. Due to her current popularity information about Frida Kahlo is readily available on the Internet and in art reference books.

Frida Kahlo's life and art clearly reflect the life of Mexican women in the first half of the twentieth century. Her success as an artist powerfully debunks some of the stereotypical myths of Latin American women as recounted in Chapter 9 of Peter Winn's book Americas: "long-suffering and all-forgiving madonnas, dedicated to lives of self-sacrifice; exotic sexpots. . . powerless wives or companions, subordinated to macho men; or unskilled workers or maids, poor and illiterate. Their passions are the private affairs of the heart, not the public affairs of the nation" (Winn 314). These topics provide starting points for student research, writing, oral debate and conversation.

The book and movie Like Water for Chocolate by Laura Esquivel give another insight into women's lives in Mexico from a slightly earlier time, around the turn of the century into the Mexican Revolution and a few decades later. An excerpt in Spanish is read by students in Ya Veras chapter 12. I feel that it is important that students read much more of the novel, even in English, or at least see the movie version, to be able to gain an understanding of the position of women in rural Mexico during that time period. They can compare the lives of the three sisters from various points of view, discuss the generational changes, or give examples of some of the stereotypes that are portrayed or not by characters in Esquivel's novel.

When taken together, Kahlo's art and Esquivel's writing provide many images of the role of women in Mexico. Students can be encouraged to choose a particular painting, describe it in Spanish, express their feelings about it, and perhaps relate it to a character, scene, or theme in Like Water for Chocolate. They can do research into other women in Mexico (La Catrina, for example, or women from more modern times) and compare and contrast elements of their lives. The traditional clothing in which Frida Kahlo's self-portraits are dressed can be described, researched and discussed. The Mexican tradition depicted in Like Water for Chocolate of the youngest girl staying unmarried and taking care of the mother can be researched and debated. Food and the recipes from Like Water for Chocolate offer a rich area for development as well. Students can even try to prepare them either in conjunction with the Food Technology department or at home as an extension project. The important thing is that the art and literature are studied together within the historical context so that the pieces fit together and make sense.

Diego Rivera's National Palace Mural, Octavio Paz, and Mexican History

The most "in-depth" study of Mexican history in the Pittsburgh Public Schools' Social Studies Curriculum is in the sixth grade. In high school students study Civics, Government, European History, American History and World Cultures. Given their time constraints it is difficult for high

school Social Studies teachers to adequately survey even the high points of Mexican history and culture and often, I would guess, the information is presented as it relates to the United States. As a result, even students in upper level Spanish classes may have almost no working knowledge of Mexican history beyond Cinco de Mayo (and they sometimes do not know what the date commemorates), Pancho Villa, and Day of the Dead.

Since they do study the Aztecs and the Mayas in the sixth grade most students have more information about these two civilizations, which is a good starting point in the study of Diego Rivera's masterful National Palace mural. Octavio Paz, in his Nobel Lecture on December 8, 1990 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, said "the decline of empires and social disturbances sometimes coincide with moments of artistic and literary splendour." The gigantic mural *The History of Mexico: From the Conquest to the Future*, the fresco painted in the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City in 1929-30 by Diego Rivera illustrates this point perfectly.

By studying the various sections of this vibrant "history lesson on a wall" students are carried from the origins of Mexican civilization in the images of Aztecs and Mayans through their conquest by Spanish conquistadores. Episodes from the Colonial period, the wars of Independence and foreign invasions by France and others of the nineteenth century unfold as the mural ascends the grand staircase in the National Palace. In the final panels Rivera depicts his Marxist political leanings in the section entitled "Exploited Mexican People, Roots of Social Evil, Repression of Strikers, Armed Uprising in downtown Mexico City." He then painted Karl Marx pointing to a future where peace, prosperity and progress are ensured by the abolition of private property and class distinctions. Rivera's political leanings are an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary crossover, particularly if students are studying forms of government in Social Studies classes.

A time line can be a successful group project, which is very helpful for students for whom correlating data is difficult. Students can base the time line on the various sections of the mural and connect Rivera's artistic images with the historical events and people that they represent.

Another classroom strategy is a "Where's Waldo?" type of activity in which students or teacher describe a particular person, place or thing in the mural and other students find it. This can be done at many different levels in various disciplines. In Spanish, students can do a TPR (Total Physical Response) based exercise in which they share descriptions and directions in Spanish to enable a partner to find the mystery character. They can research the information or it can be provided, depending on the level and student ability. More rigorous class activities including student presentations or debates about the Spanish conquest, independence and Mexican social problems today also stem from Diego Rivera's historical masterpiece.

Not only did Octavio Paz speak about conflict and disturbance coinciding with growth in art and literature, his body of work is testimony to that belief. Winn states that for him "poetry was a transcendental experience, not a political act. Yet Paz also embraced the responsibility of writers to act as the conscience of their societies" (Winn 411). His poetry and essays search for elements of the elusive Mexican character to explain his country's chronic under development and sense of crisis that regularly besets the region. While Rivera painted the historical events and figures which embody Mexico, the literature of Octavio Paz describes in words the feelings of the Mexican people, and many others who read his work.

Ya Veras contains a short poem by Octavio Paz called El Pajaro (The Bird) along with a 3-sentence introduction and comprehension questions. This poem is deeper than it appears, depicting life and

death in the form of a bird. It is comprehensible to students and elicits discussion about some of the metaphors, tone and relationship between poet and reader. There is also a reading comprehension article about his winning the Nobel Prize as part of the unit exam.

For students to go beyond just these examples of his writing to gain a better understanding the author's deep analysis of the Mexican psyche, they should read excerpts of The Labyrinth of Solitude. This is very dense reading even in English, but paragraphs from the chapter on the Day of the Dead, for example, illustrate not only the Mexican customs associated with this holiday but also make reference to Benito Juarez, Quetzalcoatl the Aztec deity, Capitalism and the working class, and Mexican Independence Day (September 15), all of which are represented in various parts of the Diego Rivera mural in the National Palace. The teacher will need to select the amount of reading based on the ability level of the students, and decide how best to present the material. In addition to traditional reading comprehension strategies, a Venn diagram is useful for visually representing the overlap of concepts in the mural and the essay. Key words or phrases could be used to actually label the areas of the mural to which they apply. The combination of Rivera's artistic interpretation and Paz's literary analysis provides a powerful insight into Mexico that many history lessons lack.

Art of Fernando Botero, One Hundred Years of Solitude by

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Colombian political corruption

Students today automatically connect Colombia with drugs. When asked, they may also mention coffee, (perhaps referring to Juan Valdez the fictitious spokesman) but beyond that they are hard-pressed to relate any other information about the country or its culture. They also know very little background about why Colombia is in such a desperate situation today, or the political elements behind it. Analysis of the writings of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and the art of Fernando Botero can foster a better understanding of Colombia's past which in turn will allow students to better appreciate the current unstable situation. In the book Art in Latin America the author states: "The sense of a society heir to traditions belonging to another world, too remote in time and space any longer to have a clear identity, a legacy of colonialism, is shared by Botero and his fellow Colombian Garcia Marquez, in for example the novel One Hundred Years of Solitude" (Ades 289).

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is one of the best-known authors in Latin America, and one of the most accessible to students. His work has been compared to that of Cervantes, both for its importance, great sense of humor, exaggeration and satire. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982 "*for his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent's life and conflicts*"

Chapter 12 of Ya Veras contains a reading about magical realism, the blending of reality and fantasy so that the distinction between the two is erased. There is also an excerpt from the Garcia Marquez best-selling masterpiece One Hundred Years of Solitude. Students learn about Macondo, the fictitious town created by Garcia Marquez to represent an amalgam of the social, political, geographical and historical aspects of Colombia. By discussing Macondo after having read about it, students can identify some of the elements that Colombian towns have in common, and how they influence the political climate.

One Hundred Years of Solitude tells the story of the Buendia family over six generations, beginning with the story of a little boy whose grandfather takes him to a local fair to see a block of ice for the first time. The townspeople insist that it is an enormous diamond; some say it is the greatest invention in the world, a gypsy charges admission to see it and an additional charge to touch it. In this omen-filled world of remote villages these different, exaggerated characters represent many facets of Colombian society. After reading the story, students will compare and contrast the real with the imagined and draw conclusions about the commentary Garcia Marquez is making.

Fernando Botero's art is also known for its exaggerated forms. In fact, he is known as "the artist who paints fat people." His aim is to make his art accessible to all so that he can reach those at all levels of society and critique them at the same time. The figures in his paintings, portraits almost, are smooth but overblown images of priests and partygoers, saints, loving couples, children and dictators. His paintings and sculpture are rooted in pre-Colombian art and portray essentially Latin American themes.

Students who view Botero's art at first laugh and make comments about the exaggerated fleshy people with tiny facial features, hands and feet. They can then use the paintings for a variety of "jumping-off" points to use Spanish creatively, describing their physical traits, relationships with each other, jobs or aspects of their personality. This can also be done as a creative writing project in Spanish. The painting Night in Colombia has many characters including a miniature couple dancing in the foreground. Students can try to explain why Botero has painted them so much smaller than the other figures and what that might represent. His painting The Presidential Family could be a normal portrait except all of the people and two cats are completely out of proportion. Why? Although the art of Botero is not studied in the textbook Ya Veras, there is a reading comprehension activity linking him with magical reality included in the Chapter 12 test packet.

Botero's art may not seem to be making serious observations about Colombian society, but he has an international reputation as well as popular recognition in his own country for doing so. In Winn's Americas he is quoted as saying, "art is the expression of the people, and when people identify with the voice of an artist, then that art has succeeded in expressing their reality" (409). Botero's art and Marquez' writings can help students identify with the voice of the Colombian people in their difficult and violent political and social environment.

Surrealist art of Roberta Matta, Isabel Allende, Pinochet rule in Chile

The expatriate experience can teach us much about the history and politics of a region, particularly one with dramatic upheavals like Chile has suffered during the twentieth century. The bloody military coup in which Salvador Allende died on September 11, 1973 resulted in his extended family including his niece Isabel taking refuge in Venezuela. The subsequent military dictatorship led by General Augusto Pinochet became synonymous with violent human rights violations including concentration camps, torture of suspected leftists or political opponents, and thousands of "disappeared" similar to the experience in Argentina.

The Pinochet rule lasted until 1990, during which Isabel Allende (1942-) wrote several best-selling novels and short story collections in the style of magical realism to capture the essence of family life in an unnamed Latin American country before and during a military coup. Eva Luna (1987) and The Stories of Eva Luna (1990) are imaginative and unforgettable portrayals of strong women as symbols of the general reforms needed by society. While some excerpts contain sexual references and may

not be appropriate for classroom use, more mature students are drawn to the vividness of her descriptions of both real and imaginary characters.

The selection in Ya Veras for students to read in Spanish is taken from The House of the Spirits (1982). It is an innocuous excerpt about the relationship between a young girl and the stray puppy she nurses back to health. As a follow-up activity students role-play the protagonist Clara and her father in a conversation about keeping the puppy, which allows them to practice using the grammar (imperfect subjunctive) presented in the chapter. This reading is not particularly representative of Allende's use of magical realism, although some things in the excerpt are exaggerated, nor does it shed any light on the political situation in Chile, as so much of her writing does. For students to gain a better understanding of this they should read much more of The House of the Spirits and/or see the film version either in or outside of class. They would then be able to compare the elements of reality in the descriptions of "normal" family life with the surreal reflections of Chilean society under the repressive military dictatorship.

The surrealism of Roberto Matta Echaurren, born in 1911 in Santiago, while somewhat difficult to decipher, reflects life in Chile from the viewpoint of an artist who left Chile with the merchant marine at the age of 22, and lived much of his life in Europe. He became associated with Surrealism just before the Second World War through Salvador Dali and Andre Breton. The author of Art in Latin America states that Matta "has consistently refused to be identified in any sense as a 'Latin American painter'"(233). Indeed it was with a horror of the unresolvable problem of identity that he left Chile as a very young man." However, it is also noted that "Matta is one of the few surrealist artists to confront political themes directly, though always on his own terms and with no concession to 'predatory ideologies' or to social realism, in the lithographs *Per Il Chile* (For Chile), for instance, or the wonderful satirical paintings of Eisenhower and the Cold War"(233). In studying his art one can interpret the mixed feelings the artist has toward his native country as seen from the distance of his self-imposed exile.

Both Matta and Allende left Chile, although under different circumstances, then utilized their talents as painter and storyteller to share with others the historical and political circumstances, as they perceived them. In order to more fully comprehend the horrors of the Pinochet regime, as well as life under earlier leaders in Chile in the twentieth century, students can be guided through excerpts of Allende's writing and Matta's surrealistic art.

Wilfredo Lam, poetry of Nicolas Guillen, Afro-Hispanic culture

In Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic the influence of African culture mixed with indigenous and European has resulted in a rich legacy of art and literature. The history of slavery in these countries, and throughout the Caribbean, becomes more vivid when learned in conjunction with the art of Cuban Wilfredo Lam and some of the poetry, short stories or novels by numerous influential contemporary writers such as the Puerto Rican poet Luis Pales Matos, or Dominican Manuel del Cabral, or the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier or Lydia Cabrera, who incorporates African legends in her short stories.

Nicolas Guillen's Afro-Cuban poetry is especially lyrical and serves to highlight the oppression and inequality of slaves in Cuba. One review of a collection of his works reads: "the Afro-Cuban experience of everyday life and its socio-historical and contemporary political underpinnings are

constants. From slavery on to the natural and urban settings of Cuba, to the international places and communities of poets, politicians and activists shaping contemporary Cuban life, to the twinned invasions of Cuba by soldiers and tourists, and to the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, Guillen portrays a life where everything, including love, is colored by suffering and rebellion."

In Chapter 11 Ya Veras presents a short but informative overview of the Afro-Hispano-American experience and then an excellent poem by Nicolas Guillen entitled "Balada de los dos abuelos" (Ballad of the two Grandfathers). It has rhyme in both consonance and assonance forms, is not very difficult to translate, and uses repetition and dialog very effectively. Students can identify with the poet's descriptions of his two grandfathers, "blanco y negro" (black and white) and the statement "yo los junto" (I join them together) is quite powerful.

While an English translation loses much of the musicality and beauty of the language, the lesson of the mestizo experience remains. In the context of teaching about the African Diaspora, this poem, as well as others by Guillen or the authors cited earlier, merit study by all students, but the original Spanish beautifully highlights the importance of African culture in the Caribbean. This could be presented in conjunction with selections from Langston Hughes, W. E. B. Du Bois, Maya Angelou and others to add to the multi-cultural literary experience.

Wilfredo Lam (1902-1982) was also born in Cuba but lived much of his early life in Europe, studying with Pablo Picasso and the Surrealists. The influence of Matisse, Dali and Picasso, who encouraged his interest in African art and primitive masks, is unmistakable. He also lived in Mexico for a time with Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. During World War II he moved back to the Havana and created his own style by combining Cubism and Surrealism with the forms and spirit of the Caribbean. His involvement with Santeria, a religion rooted in African culture became integral to his work as well. One of his most famous and powerful paintings, The Jungle, explores mythic images and was inspired by the tropical vegetation and Cubo-African culture.

It is always interesting for students to recognize the interactions among artists who were contemporaries, and see their influence on each other. For example, they are usually fascinated by Dali's Surrealism and then surprised to study art by Latin American artists and discover similarities. For Spanish classes this provides an invaluable opportunity to compare and contrast the works by artists from different countries. In other classes as well, students learn to appreciate the communication and connections which are made among artists throughout the world.

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Ades, Dawn, *Art in Latin America*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.

This is an authoritative and wide-ranging book containing information about Latin American art from the years of the Independence movements around the 1820's through the 1980's. It also has many color plates, photographs, and biographical data about the artists.

Winn, Peter, *Americas*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

This book examines the historical, political, social, cultural, economic, and religious trends in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is very readable and has also been made into a video series narrated by Raul Julia in English, suitable for classroom use.

STUDENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Esquivel, Laura, *Like Water for Chocolate*, New York: Doubleday, 1989.

The textbooks give students only a small excerpt of this novel. It is worth having students read the book in its entirety as it is beautifully written and gives an excellent view of life in Mexico in the early 1900's.

Glisan, Eileen and Schrum, Judith, *Enlaces*, Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 2000.

This is an intro-level college textbook that is used in Spanish 5 PSP. It contains a selection from Like Water for Chocolate with student comprehension activities.

Gutierrez, John R. and Rossner, Harry, *Ya Veras Gold Nivel 3*, Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999.

This is the textbook used in Spanish 4 PSP. Unit 4 contains much of the literature and art that I incorporated into this curriculum.

INTERNET SITES

Garcia Marquez, Gabriel, <http://www.proseworld.com/marquez.html>

This site has information as well as a picture of Garcia Marquez.

Guillen, Nicolas, <http://mchip00.nyu.edu/lit-med-db/webdocs/webdescrips/guillen855-des-.html>

This site has quite a bit of background as well as examples of his work.

Paz, Octavio, <http://www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1990/paz-lecture.html>.

This site not only has information about Octavio Paz but also his entire 12-page Nobel acceptance speech in English. It is beautiful and profound.

Pittsburgh Public Schools Curriculum Standards

Arts and Humanities

1. All students describe meanings they find in various works from the visual and performing arts and literature on the basis of aesthetic understanding of the art form.

2. 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 the important features of the works.

3. All students relate various works from the visual and performing arts and literature to the historical and cultural context within which they were created.

The key the this curriculum is to enable students to describe, evaluate and respond critically to works by Latin American artists and writers, as well as to relate them to the historical context. In Spanish classes this should, of course, be done in Spanish as much as possible, both in writing and speaking.

Communications

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.

2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.

3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.

4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.

5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.

6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.

7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify the purpose, structure and use.

8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that is designed to persuade, inform, or describe.

9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

This curriculum will focus on the Communications Standard in addition to the Arts and Humanities Standard. Particularly in Spanish classes, emphasis is on #9. Students are expected to speak and write at or above the ACTFL Intermediate Low level. This can be achieved in conjunction with #3,4,6 and 8. As students read various texts they will be addressing #2. When they write to describe or to give their reactions to a piece of art they will address #3, 4 and 8. When they make a time line or research additional information about various historical, literary figures or artists, they will address #1. Discussions about writings or paintings will address #5, 6, 7 and 8.