



We Are a Symphony

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
7th Grade Language Arts

Keywords and Phrases: *House on Mango Street* Activities, Culture, Tradition, Expectations, “The Lesson” Activities, African American and Hispanic Literature, Urban Literature

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit

Synopsis: Everyone has their own ideas that define their culture, shape their traditions, and set the expectations for their life. This unit will look at those varying perspectives within the Hispanic/Latino and African American communities. Specifically, the texts in this unit will explore characters who live in urban environments. Students will have a chance to read texts that do not take place in an urban setting but those texts will serve as a way to show which traditions transcend environment in those communities. In order to complete this unit successfully, students will need to have a firm grasp on how to find theme in a text. The activities in the unit will push students past just finding one theme for one text and ask them to find several themes that stretch across multiple texts. The unit implements several strategies that will help students gain or strengthen this ability. “We Are a Symphony” is filled with many opportunities for writing. And as an added bonus, each writing activity can function as a formal writing assessment or quick daily exercise. Writing serves as an irreplaceable tool for this unit from beginning to end. Students use writing as a means to work out their thoughts on each of the concepts explored in the unit. Much of the unit’s content will challenge preconceived notions made about both Hispanic and African American cultures. By looking at those cultures, students will in turn be able to work out their own ideologies about their traditions, cultures, and expectations. At the start of the unit, students will study picture books: illustrations, content, and diction. Though the stories are very simple, the themes are quite complex and will challenge students’ ability to assess theme as well as their ability to recognize significant patterns in various texts. By the end of the unit, students will have read a wide variety of short stories and poems that all connect back to the topic of culture. Lastly, the culminating activity will allow students to delve into their own personal legacy and produce and share a food product that is traditional in their culture. If you are looking for a unit that challenges your student’s perspectives on expected stereotypes as well as enhance their ability to think critically about a text, this is the perfect unit.

I plan to teach this unit to 85 students in 7th grade ELA

I give permission for the Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

We Are a Symphony

Melissa Pratt

Introduction: Being an Insider and an Outsider

Growing up, I never felt like I fit in anywhere. At the beginning of my elementary career, I was one of only three black students at Paper Mill Elementary in Westchester, MA. And by the end of that career in a school in Atlanta, GA, I was lost in a sea of colorful variation of my dark skin tone. The change had a significant effect on how I process and perceive a lot of information today, especially when it comes to defining culture. At Paper Mill, all three of us black students were very aware of each other. Not just because the other two were siblings, but because we experienced a natural gravitation toward one another; the need for familiarity is powerful. Outside of my aunt's house and my cousin's house, no one looked like me. It was nice to see people who I was not related to and barely even knew who looked like me. It was not that we did not love our individual friends or that we wished to be separated; it was actually quite the opposite. I believe we wanted to be celebrated. We wanted to see ourselves reflected in other places outside of our bathroom mirrors and our families. For example, we liked seeing ourselves in the hallways of our school when we passed each other by and in the pages of our texts as we engaged in class discussions even though the discussions were limited to Martin Luther King Grand Fredrick Douglas. Today, as we attempt to move more toward absolute racial unity, it is a fear of mine that we will move away from purposely celebrating and reflecting individual cultures and races in every area possible, especially in school.

On the complete other end of the spectrum was Woodridge Elementary which is located in Atlanta, Georgia. Everyone there looked like me, but no one acted like me. I liked Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, N*Sync, and the Backstreet Boys. They were into The Hot Boys and Destiny's Child. My mother wasn't a fan of my listening to rap music so she did her best to keep it away from my ears. That had always been fine with me because I didn't need rap music in Westchester. But in Georgia, the need for that knowledge was never greater. I was thrown into a completely different culture than what I was used to. More than ever, I felt like I stuck out. I didn't speak like them nor did I act like them.

My time at both schools gave me a different perspective on all the factors that make up one's culture. Although I saw countless carbon copies of "black culture" all around me at Woodridge, I still was burdened with the same question I had at Paper Mill; where was I? I didn't see my kind of black anywhere. This thought empowers my belief that there are countless variations that make up each races' cultures. No one is bound by expectations: cultural, racial, environmental, or social.

This unit will look at culture as being an ever growing journey that may find its roots in tradition and heritage, but can be greatly influenced by an individual's personal experiences. Most

importantly, I want to create a symphony of cultures. Each individual brings something unique to the table and that should be celebrated then brought together to make a beautiful sound.

There are two very distinct reasons for me writing this unit but they both serve one goal. The first reason which is a direct result of both of the aforementioned experiences is to have each of my students reflected and celebrated in my class. I want each one of my students to see themselves in some way shape or form in the material I present in class. Maybe they will see their culture reflected, or their heritage, their hobbies, their ways of thinking, or the tastes in music. Somewhere along our 7th grade journey I want my students to feel encouraged and proud of the “self” they are creating. My second reason for this unit is to challenge students to look at their own stereotypes and perceptions and explore why they have them. The goal isn’t for them to deem something wrong or right but to look at the why behind the belief. And if that results in them changing their minds about something than that’s just a natural consequence. Ultimately, the purpose of this unit is for students to have a chance to celebrate who they are but put no limits on who they can become because defining “self” can take a life time of experiences.

Rationale

The primary texts for this unit will be literature from both African American and Hispanic authors. Majority of the texts will be based on each races’ experiences within a major city. I will be using other texts that are not based on city life to show the contrast and give a wider perspective of the respective culture. In this unit on theme, we will be exploring tradition and culture to see how much each one impacts our lives: how we think, what we believe, our values. Students will also be looking at the role these two themes play in the expectations we put on our lives. Since a goal of this unit is to look at varying perspectives across cultures, students will need to actively engage in discussions: both whole group and partners. Therefore, it is important to have your class room set-up in a way that allows students to easily engage in discussions.

Even though it is very important to have class or group discussions in every subject area, discussions hold a very special value in literature because texts can be interpreted in so many ways. In order for students to see the themes intersect across texts and cultures, they need to hear different viewpoints, and perspectives. That is why one of my openings to this unit will be one of my favorite quotes by Aristotle, “*It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.*” As we move through the unit, I hope to unpack this quote as it pertains to accepting preconceived notions about ourselves based on forced expectations. This unit is meant to show many different sides to the very complicated topic of culture and each person’s relation to it.

It should also be noted that this unit is predicated on the fact that students already know what theme is and how it can be found in a text. You should either teach this unit in conjunctions to teaching theme or teach it after you have already went through your theme unit thoroughly.

Demographic Background

The School

Francis Bradley Middle school is a Charlotte Mecklenburg School that is located in the Huntersville section of Charlotte’s Beatties Ford Road. The school has a very diverse population

despite its location. Currently we have 1153 students enrolled: 56% are Caucasian students, 31% are African-American students, 9% Hispanic students, 2% Asian and approximately 2% of our students come from other races and ethnicities. Between our sixth seventh, and eighth grade, 16.5% of our students are in our gifted program. There are also five classes of self-contained exceptional children (three Autistic classrooms, and two SAC classrooms). Furthermore, there are approximately 120 total exceptional children serviced by our impeccable inclusion teachers. Many of our inclusion teachers also service about 35 LEP students that are accommodated by our ever improving ESL program. These students are often enrolled in inclusion classes in order to help compensate for their English language deficiency without losing the integrity of the work. Once they have achieved proficiency, they are mainstreamed into standard education courses to further their growing education.

The school as a whole has also been very successful academically in all subject areas. For the 2012-2013 school year, Bradley Middle was recognized as a North Carolina School of Distinction because of the continual high growth percentages and the positive growth achieved in every tested subject area. In four out of seven tested subject areas and eleven out of thirteen subgroups, high growth was achieved. All of the school's AMO targets were met and 85.3% of our students performed at a proficient level, which is an increase of 1.7%.

Overall, 87.6% of our students tested scored on/above grade level in Math and 80.8% in Reading. The increase has built a sense of pride among students, parents, teachers, and staff. Our students are either at or above grade level in 6th grade Reading, 6th grade Math, 7th grade Reading, 8th grade Reading and Math. As anyone can see, the nurturing environment that was created here at Francis Bradley Middle has had positive effects on our students academically. With the switch to the new Common Core Standards and testing system, we strive to keep our scores on a constant increase.

My Classroom and the Curriculum

The demographics of my classes have shifted significantly from last year. Last year, I had a more diverse population, but this year the majority of my students are Caucasian. My student population also shifted academically even though I had the same set-up (two standard classes and one Honors). My previous students had a wider gap between their learning abilities. My Honor's class was very high and needed to be challenged well above my other two classes. And last year's fourth block was borderline inclusion with many 504s and behavioral issues. Toward the end of the year, all three of my classes had a completely different lesson plan from one another. This year, however, all three of my classes are fairly close academically. My first block class and my fourth block class are my standard students and my second block is an Honor's class. Although I have 29 students in my Honor's class many of them have never previously been honors and were not in the TD program in elementary school. All of these factors play a role in how I structured the unit plan. Since my students are fairly even academically, I wanted to design a curriculum unit that would be challenging to both my honors class and my standard but also have the flexibility to be scaled back or pushed higher to meet the needs of every student.

That leads me into the curriculum for seventh grade Language Arts as well as for my classroom. During seventh grade, students are expected to engage in text analysis that encourages them to

probe deeper into the “why” behind everything in a text. They are also expected to use immense amounts of text evidence to support every conclusion they come to about the “why.” In order to appease that standard in my classroom, I have implemented a strategy developed by Kylene Beers that encourages students to “*bring it back to the text*” or B.I.B It. Dr. Beer’s strategies can be seen all throughout my classroom curriculum and that of the seventh grade Language Arts department at Francis Bradley Middle School. I will be utilizing Dr. Beer’s “Stop and Notice and Note” strategy throughout this year. Comprehension of this strategy will serve as the base for which this curriculum unit is written. By the time I teach this unit in my class, the expectation for their group discussions will be tremendously high because we would have been using the “Stop and Notice and Note” strategy in the semester prior to build our discussion skills.

Objectives

This unit is designed to last for approximately 7-9 days. I have shaped each activity to have the flexibility to take place over one or two days. If you know your class takes more guidance and time to grasp a concept, then the unit would be more effective over the course of seven days. But more importantly than the time frame are the objectives that this unit intends to meet. No matter the time length, by the end of the unit, students should be able to perform the Common Core Objectives and 21st Century Skills stated in Appendix 1.

Texts

Picture Books

I will start the unit off by using picture books so I can introduce the idea of looking at what makes up culture from different perspectives. For example, Pat Mora and Gary Soto are both Mexican Americans but they grew up in very different places. Pat Mora’s children’s books are almost always set in a more rural background, reflective of her upbringing in El Paso, Texas. On the other hand, Gary Soto’s children’s books and short stories have very urban settings and use a lot of Hispanic colloquialisms found in his old neighborhood of Fresno, California. I will use both authors’ children’s books to compare the wide scope that makes up culture even among same ethnicities groups. And as an added bonus, I will have students read a book by half black half Puerto Rican author Eric Velasquez who writes about his time spent growing up in the streets of Harlem, New York. His work will pair well when discussing cultural complexity. In the work I have chosen, students will see what it is like for a first or second generation American to deal with being all American, but also dealing with being everything their heritage calls for.

Chato and the Party Animals by Gary Soto

This is an amazing miniseries from Gary Soto. Like many of the other children’s books in this series, it places an importance on family, food (which I relate to a reason to come together), and community. Though there are other books in the series, I wanted to use this particular text because repeatedly throughout the story’s illustrations is the statement “we are not a minority.” This statement plays beautifully into the unit’s overall theme. This book’s other features serve as a great contrast to Pat Mora’s *Dona Flora*.

Dona Flora: A Tale about a Giant Woman with a Big Heart and *Tomas and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora

Both of these works are set in rural areas and serve as an excellent contrast to both Velazquez and Soto's inner city depiction of Hispanic/Latino heritage. Mostly, I plan to use these works to show what cultural values transcend environment.

Grandma's Gifts by Eric Velazquez

Velazquez's work depicts a young boy spending school vacations with his grandmother in Spanish Harlem. He also shows the cultural divide his grandmother experiences when they are forced to go beyond the comfort of Spanish Harlem and down to Manhattan where she is barely understood. His grandmother's struggle serves as an excellent topic for those whose older generations experienced the same cultural gap when they came to America. In a generalization, this same frustration can be seen in Tony Cade Bambara's "The Lesson" which is another one of the text for this unit.

Short Story

"The Lesson" by Tony Cade Bambara

At the heart of this unit is Tony Cade Bambara's short story, "The Lesson." In this story, a well-meaning teacher takes her inner city urban students to the biggest toy store in the world so they could experience how the other half lives. The plan backfires horribly, leaving the students in the story frustrated by the fact that they don't have and probably never will have the luxuries that they have seen. For the purpose of this unit, the concentration will be focused on the frustration felt by the students. Students should look at different characters' perceptions about life and the impact environment has on those perceptions. Students will look at the question: *Does environment affect culture: the way you think, how you act, who you are.*

Excerpts

The House on Mango Street

The lesson is written about black students and their frustration to get to the other side, but I also want to incorporate the cultural expectations that many Hispanic/Latino Americans face while growing up. I will use excerpts from *The House on Mango Street* that most emphasize the main character's perception of the expectations put on her as a Hispanic person and as a Hispanic woman. Again, we will look at the character's frustrations and reactions to the world around her.

from the novel *House on Mango Street*

"The House on Mango Street"

This is a very powerful introduction that introduced the gap between expectation and reality. In many cases, this gap is what motivates people to want more.

"Geraldo, No Last Name"

This chapter deals with what one does when your hopes end in disappoint. In this chapter, you can talk about what it means to fall in between the cracks like Geraldo did. No one in America knows or cares that he is gone because he is one of many nameless hopefuls who comes to America and doesn't make it.

“The Three Sisters”

Those who can get out easily have a responsibility for those who can't?

“Mango Street Says Goodbye Sometimes”

The main character faces the fact that she lives in a world but is not of it. But she still has the desire to come back for those who can't leave (note the word “sometimes” in the title). The title serves as a great topic of discussion for it is both hopeful and depressing.

Poem(s)

“*Legacies*” by Nikki Giovanni

This poem really speaks to the whole unit, especially the culminating activity. Giovanni looks at cooking as a connection between generations that is made every time a recipe is passed down. Students will look at what tradition means from the grandmother's perspective and the granddaughter's perspective. This poem is great for assessing how tradition impacts people in different ways as well as the weight it bears on peoples' lives.

Strategies

ABC Squares Chart:

- Students will receive a chart filled with 26 squares labeled from A-Z. Then, the students are required to fill in the chart with as many words as possible based on the three words that are written on the board.

Chapter Notes

- For every short story or novel we read in class, I ask students to keep chapter notes. I also refer to this as “interacting with the text.” Students are allowed to highlight, ask questions, and make comparisons, notice trends, or point out something interesting they see in the text. Whatever they feel compelled to write down that helps them understand the text better or related to the text.

Literacy Circles

- You are probably familiar with this strategy. Every student in a group is assigned a task as students work together to analyze a book. There are typically five students in each literary circle but feel free to have more than that in a group. Sometimes I find it better to have two students work on a particular task so that there is a wider range of material covered.

Pre-Reading Sentences

- This is another Kylene Beers strategy in which students are given a word bank full of important words and phrases that show up repeatedly in a text the students will read. Students are to take those words and use them in five sentences that predict what the story will be about. After students have read the text, they will rewrite their five previous sentences so that it reads true about the story.

Quick Writes

- Sometimes students need time to gather their thoughts on a subject, topic, or idea before they can provide a well put together explanation. Therefore, students are able to do a quick write in order to gather their thoughts on a particular topic before a classroom discussion is held.

Read Aloud

- The teacher reads a book to the class (mainly a picture book) and holds a class discussion based on what is being read. During the first Read Aloud, I like to perform a Think Aloud so students can have an example of the thinking that goes into reading each book.

Sentence Stems

- Though this strategy is used predominately in elementary classes. I still find it to be an excellent strategy especially when introducing a text because it gives students a guideline for what they should be asking themselves as they read or what they should be looking for as they read.

Think Aloud

- The teacher reads through a text, stops, and voices the thoughts they have as they read. This gives students an idea of how they should go through a text and some questions they may want to ask themselves as they read.

Turn and Talk

- Another one of Colleen Beers' strategies that is implemented in my classroom is the "turn and talk." This is where students turn and talk to their nearest neighbor about the ideas that they have written. Using Turn and Talk will also force those students who do not typically raise their hand to share their opinions. Sometimes, I have them choose 2-3 of the most interesting things that came out of their small group discussions to have one person share with the class. I find that this allows for more students' answers to be heard then just your faithful hand raiser. This strategy is most effective if you hold a group discussion afterwards with 5-6 people sharing their discussion. As with many class discussions, many want to share, but be mindful of time.

Timer

- I consider using a timer a strategy especially when you hold many classroom discussions. Most all their activities will be timed. I will even time how long we stay on a question. You will see references to this in my daily activities

Wrap-up

- I use wrap-up questions as a way to assess what the students have taken away from prior activities or stories that we have read in class. Wrap-up questions also give students a chance to stretch their writing muscles. Typically, I assign them for homework and are no longer than two paragraphs.

- I check wrap-ups more for content and understanding than grammar so I will do a quick read through of what each student has written. I do take more time to look closer at my struggling readers and writer's wrap-ups than my higher end students so I know if that topic is something I will have to pull them for in small group.

Daily Activity Plan

Day 1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1d

21st Century:

Communication and Collaboration

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”

- *Activity 1: Quick Write*
As the guiding quote for this unit, students will start the unit writing about the aforementioned quote since this quote will be referred back to over the course of the unit. Students will do a quick write in which they will write their thoughts down about the quote. They will have no instruction except to just write whatever comes to mind whenever they read this quote.
Students should receive anywhere from 5-8 minutes for this quick write. Typically I will not let students put their pencil down until I call time. They must keep writing the whole time. Once time is call, I implement the Turn and Talk strategy

Activity 2: ABC Chart

- Hand out the ABC chart to your students or in an effort to save your paper, you can have them use their own paper to create the chart.
- Three words will be written on the board: Tradition, Culture, and Expectation
These words will start students thinking about the associations they have with these words. All three of these words play out in students' lives differently and their answers will expose just how diverse each person's back ground is. This knowledge will be great for you as the teacher to play off of throughout the unit. It is good to jot down interesting facts, ideas, or comments that you hear. It may be useful to you to comeback to throughout the unit.
Students will complete this chart by themselves for 3 minutes and then they will have 2 minutes to discuss with a partner and add more words. After partner discussions, we will hold a class discussion going through each letter. The activity shouldn't take more than 10 minutes to complete.

Activity 3: Quick Write

How can Aristotle's quote play a role in culture, tradition, and expectations?

- Students will perform another quick write, but this time they will be asked to apply the meaning behind Aristotle's quote to what they had previously wrote down on their ABC chart.

- You can place the question above on the board to help guide students to their answer.
- After your discussion of this quick write, allow your students to come up with a working definition for culture, tradition, and expectation. I would let them use a dictionary, but only after they have played around with their own ideas.
 - This can be done individually or in groups depending on how much time you want to spend on it.
 - Students will probably be able to come up with better definitions if they could bounce ideas off of each other.

Activity 4: Sentence Stems

- Explain to students that during this unit we will be discussing different cultures and what factors make-up culture and what expectations culture leaves on us. I save this explanation for after the aforementioned activities because I want students to be focused on their own opinions more so than what they think I want as answer. My students are used to my impromptu teaching sessions and periodic teachable moments.
- Read Gary Soto's *Chato and the Party Animals* while using the sentence stems: "I began to think," "I wonder why," "I'm not sure," "I noticed," "I observed," "It seems like," and "This story teaches that"
 - Feel free to use different sentence stems from the list provided or add to this list (ii)
 - With a higher class, I would read through the whole story first and then discuss what they have written. If the students do not point it out, I would point out the "we are not minorities" signs in two of the illustrations.
- Homework: Picture books Comparison Chart (iii)
For homework, students should write down things from the story that fit into these categories: culture, tradition, expectations. Students are also prompted by the handout to note one thing that is significant or unique to that text. I will encourage to stick to pointing out features surrounding content, diction, and illustrations.

Day 2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1d

21st Century:

Communication and Collaboration

The main focus of this day will be literary circles. Students will look at reoccurring themes that stretch across each text. This activity will take up majority if not all of the day. Depending on how comfortable your students are with literary circles, this activity may also extend to a second day.

Activity 1: Review Homework

Discuss what students wrote down for their homework: either using whole group or Turn and Talk

Activity 2: Literacy Circles

- Using literary circles, students will go through the three remaining picture books. Since there probably will not be enough picture books for everyone to have an individual copy then you can either make run off individual copies of the story, ask students to bring in copies of the books from the public library (or you can get them from various public library), or you can use the option I will use for this unit, have one student in the literary circle be the reader.
 - That student's sole responsibility to the group will be to read the text loud and clear. I will suggest that this be one of your higher end students who do not struggle with reading or reading comprehension.
- Assign each student a role in the circle and then have them rotate out the three remaining books.
- If you have too many students in your class to only have three groups then you can: Have a 4th group in which students review Chato and the Party Animals by completing the same tasks as the other groups with this story. This will be very beneficial because students will take a closer look at the book by using it in a literary circle. It will also help when it is time to compare all the stories.

Activity 3: Wrap-up

- Homework: Choose the picture book that most closely spoke to your idea of Hispanic/Latino heritage. Then write two paragraphs detailing how different aspect of the book (illustrations, events, characters) represented Hispanic culture and tradition to you.

Day 3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1d

Activity 1: Wrap-up

- You may want to do a whole group discussion on your wrap-up. That is left up to your discretion. If you feel the class will benefit from sharing out their answers then you may want to devote 5-10 minutes to a discussion

Activity 2: Reviewing Literary Circles

- Have students get back into their original literary circles
- Then, mix students up so that they are not with the same group members. Try to have all literary circle roles represented in each group.
- Then have students complete the discussion questions created by the Discussion Director.
- You may also choose to have students share one key point they wrote down in their wrap-up if you do not want to have a whole group discussion surrounding just the wrap-up

Activity 3: Picture books Culture Chart

- Students should complete their comparison chart on each of the stories that they have read.
- You could have students complete this in their group or individually.

- If there is not enough time in class, this can also be homework.

Activity 4: Sticky Note Comparison

- On the board or on 3 separate sheets of butcher paper, write the three words: culture, tradition, and expectation
- Give students 6 separate sticky notes (two for each word)
- Have students write down two things about Hispanic culture that they noticed occurred in more than one book
- Do the same for the tradition and expectation
- Review the most common answers and have the students make note of those answers

Day 4

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1d

Activity 1: Pre-Reading Sentences

- Students will complete pre-reading sentences based on the short stories “House on Mango Street” and “The Lesson”
- If you have an electronic copy of those short stories, you can copy and paste the stories individually into Wordle so you can pick out which words you would like to put into the word bank
- Be sure to choose words that stretch across both stories. Because your word bank will address more than text, you may want to look at words that address concepts seen throughout each text instead of copying words verbatim from each story. Then for their post-reading sentences, their sentences redo can tell how the concepts were addressed in each of the stories.
- If you are not comfortable with the using words that address concepts, then you can do pre-reading sentences for each text separately and then you will be able to pull words straight from each text.

Activity 2: Reading “House on Mango Street” and “The Lesson”/Chapter Notes

There are two reading options listed below. You can perform either or with each of the texts. I will complete the first option with “House on Mango Street” then I will complete the 2nd option with “The Lesson”

1st Option for reading the text:

- You may choose to do an introduction to each story, but I will not. I do not want my students to have any preconceived notions about the authors or the reasons why they chose to write these stories.
- Students will read the excerpt “House on Mango Street” first and then “The Lesson”
 - We will read this together as a class while students take chapter notes on their printed copy

- I will mention to students that they should keep the words culture, tradition, and expectation at the forefront of their minds as we go through the text.
- I pair this with Bambara's "The Lesson" because they both speak to the frustration felt by many (especially coming from the inner cities) who want to get out of their circumstance, but aren't exactly sure how.

2nd Option for reading the text:

- Small Group/Guided Reading
 - As a means for differentiation, you can split your students up into small groups while you work with your struggling readers during the reading of this text.
 - *Higher Students:* You can have them come up with comprehension questions based on the text. You can also tell them to highlight parts of the text that serve as great discussion pieces or parts that speak to the theme of the text
 - *Standard Students:* You can give them a set of questions that you want them to answer as well as a particular paragraph you think speaks to the theme of the text. They can also find paragraphs of their own that speak to the theme
 - *Struggling Readers:* You can pull this group into a corner with you to read the text. You can go through the question you prepared as well as highlight and take chapter notes that speak to the theme of the text.

Activity 3: Post Reading Sentences

- After students complete their reading of these two texts have them complete their post reading sentences by sharing their pre-reading sentences with each other and assisting each other with forming their post reading sentences
- As a way for students to cite textual evidence for each sentence, have students cite something from the text that supports each one of their post reading sentences

Day 5

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2

Activity 1: Quick Write

Have students complete a 5-10 minute Quick Write that answers this question:

Based on what you read so far in this unit, *Does environment affect culture: the way you think, how you act, who you are?*

Activity 2: Turn and Talk

- Students should turn and talk to their neighbors about the answers they received for the quick writes (I would have students talk to at least 2 students).
- Encourage students to write down any interesting comments they hear from their neighbors

Activity 3: Wrap-up

What character traits do each of the main characters in “The Lesson” and “House on Mango Street” share? Determine what theme each of the stories share and tell how the theme plays out throughout each story.

Activity 4: Read Aloud/ Theme Chart Activity (iv)

- Read “Geraldo, No Last Name” for guided practice
- Complete the theme worksheet with the students
 - You may want to go step by step with your students so that they can understand what each question is asking them to answer. Some questions may not be relevant to the chapter, but if it isn’t you should take the time to explain why it isn’t.

Activity 5: Theme Chart Activity

- Students choose one of the two remaining excerpts from *House on Mango Street*
 - You may also decide to choose their groups based on text complexity. “Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes” is shorter than “Three Sisters” and is less complex so you may want to assign this to your lower end readers.
- Students complete Theme Activity within their group

Activity 6: Group Discussion Questions

- Homework: Students should read the one excerpt that you did not read in class. Instead of completing a theme worksheet on the chapter, students are asked to come up with 5 discussion questions that they can pose to their small group.
 - The questions can be based solely on the excerpt that they are reading or it can ask a question about the excerpts contribution to the book overall.
 - If students are not use to coming up with discussion questions on their own then you should give them some examples or sentences starters.

Day 6

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1a

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1d

21st Century Skills:

Life and Career Skills: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills: *Work Effectively in Diverse Teams*

Activity 1: Group Discussions

I will time this activity. Students have to discuss the answer to each question for three minutes and when the timer goes off, they start the next question.

- Divide students into groups of 3-5 people
- Have each student chose their best question to pose to their group members
- Students discuss the answers to each group member’s question
- You can either have students just discuss these answers while you monitor or you can have students write down some notes from the discussion for each question discussed.

Activity 2: ABC Chart

- Write the words: Culture, Tradition, and Expectation on the board.
- Have students complete another ABC chart, but this time give them 30 seconds to fill in the boxes.
- Then have students switch papers with someone and give that person 45 seconds to fill in the chart
- For the final switch, give the students 1 minute to fill in the blanks.
- All ABC Charts should be returned to their original owners

Activity 3: Quick Write

- Have students retrieve their original ABC chart to use as a base of comparison for their new chart
- In 5-10 minutes, have students complete a quick write that answers: *What role does culture, tradition, and expectation play in our lives.*
- I will let students Turn and Talk for a 5-6 minutes with the requirement that when we come back to whole group, the student must share two key points their partner wrote in their quick write.

Day 7

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.4

21st Century Skills

Media Literacy: *Create Media Products*

Since this is the final day, I will wrap-up the unit as well as introduce their project.

Activity 1: Either a Quick Write or a Wrap-up

Depending on how much time you want to use in class, this activity can be either a quick write or a wrap-up.

- Place Aristotle's quote back on the board
- Give each student one index card
- On the front of the index card, they must write a comment on their index card that either associates the quote with the word tradition, culture, or expectation. The comment must explain why they think the quote works better for that word
 - Example Answer: *This quote speaks more to the word "expectation." Just because the culture places certain expectation on you doesn't mean you have to place them on yourself. Your culture is a part of you, but does not have to define everything you do.*

Activity 2: Think Aloud

- Use "Legacies" by Nikki Giovanni to complete this activity.
- Complete the first stanza by for them and then complete the second stanza with their assistance

- Discuss how the author’s view of what a legacy is and how the characters in the poem view legacy, tradition, culture, and expectation.

Activity 3: Introduce the Cultural Symphony Project

Teacher Resources

(i.) Reading Response Starters

Sample Sentence Starters

I began to think...
 I love the way...
 I can't believe...
 I wonder why...
 I noticed...
 I think...
 I observed...
 I wonder...
 If I were...
 I'm not sure...
 I felt sad when...
 I like the way the author...
 I wish that...
 This made me think of...
 I was surprised...
 It seems like...
 I'm not sure...
 This story teaches...
 I began to think of ...

Idea Starters

What you liked or disliked and why
 What you wish had happened
 What you wish the author had included
 Your opinion of the characters
 What you felt as you read
 What you noticed when you read
 Questions you have after reading

I wonder what this means...
 I really don't understand this part...
 I really like/dislike this idea because...
 This character reminds me of somebody I know because...
 This character reminds me of me because...
 This character is like (name of the character) in (title of book) because...
 I think this setting is important because...
 This scene reminds me of a similar scene in (title of book) because...
 I like/dislike this writing because... I wonder what this means...
 I really don't understand this part...
 I really like/dislike this idea because...
 This character reminds me of somebody I know because...
 This character reminds me of me because...
 This character is like (name of the character) in (title of book) because...
 I think this setting is important because...
 This scene reminds me of a similar scene in (title of book) because...
 I like/dislike this writing because...
 This part is very realistic/unrealistic because...
 I think the relationship between _____ and _____ is interesting because...
 I like/dislike (name of character) because...
 This situation reminds me of one in my own life. It happened when...
 The character I most admire is _____ because...

(ii.) **Project Explanation:**

I choose to have the final activity for this unit be something that allows students to exercise some of their creativity, especially since this unit is taught toward the end of the year. We all have a close tie to food; it nourishes us, connects us, brings us together, and even helps us remember where we come from. All of those things help make up culture. Since food and culture are so

deeply intertwined, the culminating activity is something that reinforces the importance of culture as well as gives students a chance to share their culture with each other.

A huge part of this unit has been looking at different characters' backgrounds and assessing how their backgrounds have shaped their life. Therefore, students will need to choose recipes that are closely connected to their family's history or traditions. With the right execution, this project will cause students to look very closely at their culture and how it has impacted their life.

Execution

In order to avoid mass confusion and get the product that you want, you should probably take it step by step. Have students complete the recipe; then have them complete the video where they film their explanations. After those two are done, then you can focus on the students creating a cooking show poster at home as well as bringing the dish on the day that works best for your schedule.

This project will be distributed at the end of the unit so they can focus on the content of the unit before they spend all their energy worrying about their final cooking product.

Cultural Symphony Project

In this project, students will be required to do three things: create or write down a recipe that is representative of their family, culture, or heritage, then they will bring their final cooking product to share with the class. Then, students will make individual displays of their cooking session. Ultimately, students will combine their recipes into one huge cook book for the class. The beginning of each cook book's title will be "We are a Symphony" and each class of students will get a chance to vote on the subtitle.

Step 1: The Recipe

Think back on all of the different texts that we have read for this unit, all of them were rich with cultural heritage that ultimately helped shape the main character into who they are.

1. Decide on a recipe you want to make for this project: remember you have to be able to make this meal and bring it in. The dish doesn't have to be complicated, it just has to be something that connects you to your history, family, heritage, or traditions.
2. Write down the recipe: ingredients, measurements, and cooking directions.
3. You will also need to make a display card to go next to your dish. You may use an index card as long as it can fit the name of your dish as well as 3-4 sentences explaining why you chose to make that particular dish: connection to heritage, was it passed down, and its significance to your family.

Step 2: Recipe meets heritage

1. In the video you will explain your dish and how it represents your culture. You will use the school iPads to film each other.
2. You will need to organize how you want your video to go. Everyone in the video has only 30-45 seconds for their explanations. There will be approximately 5 people in each group and everyone must have a turn being in front of the camera and behind it.

Step 3: Cooking Show Posters

1. Take pictures of yourself making the dish: either with your parents, a sibling, or by yourself if you want.
2. There needs to be 5-10 pictures on your board that display the chronicle your cooking session
3. Once you have printed your photos, you will need to make a display for them. Each picture needs to have a sentence long caption underneath to tell the reader what you are doing.
 - a. Scrape Book
 - b. Poster board (Not a tri-fold!)
 - c. Booklet
 - d. Other option (see me for approval)
4. If you are unable to do the print photo graphs, then you need to have your parents email me and then see me for the substitution options

Step 4: The Samples

1. On the day we share our food, you will also share the class collective video on the iPad and share our cooking show displays. So you will need to bring in your dish to share with the class. Bring enough for everyone!
2. If you cannot bring in a dish for whatever reason, please have your parents email me and then see me for the substitution options.

At the end of the feast, once everyone has shared their dishes, students will answer this wrap-up questions: *What factors make-up someone's culture? And how much of an impact does tradition, heritage, and culture have on a person's values and beliefs?*

Social Studies Connection Extension:

If you choose to, you can have your students research the history of their dish. You can have them provide you with the origins of the dish and how it made its way to America. Even if the dish is specific to their family, they can still talk to their parents about why it's been so important to pass the dish down through their family (This relates really well to Nikki Giovanni's "Legacy").

Questions for the Heritage Video

You can arrange the question in any order you may like or even add questions as long as everyone in your group answers each question in their 30-45 second time frame.

1. How does this dish represent your heritage/culture?
2. Who taught you how to make the dish?
3. Is this a dish that you would pass down to future generations in your family? Why?

Substitutions

Many aspects of this project require students to have access to technology as well as funds to purchase ingredients for their food. That may be a challenge for some students so if that circumstance occurs, there are other options.

Option 1: No access to a camera or cannot print pictures

If students do not have a device that will allow them to take pictures or print pictures, then the student can complete an 8-10 slide comic strip. Each picture drawn needs to be representative of the steps they took to make their dish. Students are still required to have a one sentence caption detailing exactly what is coming on in the picture.

Option 2: Cannot bring in food

If a student is unable to bring in food, then they can still participate in the tastings; I would suggest asking if they can bring in plastic ware.

Option 3: Complete Supplement

If the whole project proves to be an issue for a student then the student will have to complete an essay. The essay wouldn't be longer than 4 paragraphs, but it still can assess the points of the projects. Students will just have to thoroughly explain the following:

- A. Why they chose that dish
- B. Significance to their family heritage, culture, or tradition
- C. If they could make the dish, who would they have made it with and why

(iii.) Picture books Culture Chart

Title	
Chato and the Party Animals Unique feature:	Culture: Tradition: Expectation:
Dona Flora Unique feature:	Culture: Tradition: Expectation:
Thomas and The Library Lady Unique feature:	Culture: Tradition:

	Expectation:
Grandmother's Gift Unique feature:	Culture: Tradition: Expectation:

(iv) A Closer look at Theme

Instructions: Answer the following questions based on the story that you have read. Try to be as detailed as possible with your answers. Once you are finished, use the answers you wrote down to determine the topic and the theme of the story.

1) Title	<p>a. What does each title in the word mean?</p> <p>b. What ideas does the title emphasize?</p>
2) Plot	<p>a. What conflicts do the characters face? (Man vs. ___) Describe the conflict in detail.</p> <p>b. How is the conflict(s) resolved? What is the final outcome of those conflicts?</p>

3) Characters	<p>a. How do characters respond to the conflicts in the story?</p> <p>b. Did any characters change? If so, how did they change?</p> <p>c. Do the characters learn a lesson? If so, what is it?</p> <p>d. What happens in the story that lets you know the character(s) have learned something?</p>
4) Setting	<p>a. How does the setting influence the character?</p> <p>b. How does the setting affect the conflict?</p>

	c. Think of symbolism. What might the setting represent?
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Instructions: Based on all the clues you just wrote down, what is the topic of the story and what is the theme? Be sure to explain why that theme fits?

Topic:
Theme:

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- Since this unit's focus is theme, when a student has determined the central theme of a text, they will need to support that theme with text evidence. This includes citing exactly which events, words, conversations, pictures, etc. led to the student determining that theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Students should know the different elements of a story that create its theme. This involves looking at all of the important events and characters' interactions that occur in the text and letting those lead to the reoccurring theme.
- Once the theme is determined, students can summarize how it is shown in different events throughout the story. Students should also be able to show if each character or the main character did or did not support the theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

- In this unit, we will be utilizing poetry so it is imperative that students understand how strategic each word choice and its placement are to the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1a Come to discussions prepared having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.1d Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modifies their own views.

- During this unit, students will be expected to participate in many class discussions; most in which they will have to come to class prepared for. These two standards (SL 7.1a and SL7.1d) will be exercised mainly through Literary Circles and small group discussions.

21st Century Skills

Communication and Collaboration

Collaborate with Others

- Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams

- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member

Media Literacy

Create Media Products

- Understand and utilize the most appropriate media creation tools, characteristics and conventions

Life and Career Skills

Social and Cross-Cultural Skills

Work Effectively in Diverse Teams

- Respect cultural differences and work effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds
- Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values
- Leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work

Annotated Bibliography

Bambara, Tony. "The Lesson." Bambara's. Np. n.d. Web. 18 Oct. 2013. <<http://cai.ucdavis.edu/gender/thelesson.html>>.

In a struggle to see life differently, Bambara's main character deals with frustration caused by the gap between what one wants and what one has.

Beers, G. Kylene. *Notice & Note: Strategies for Close Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2013. Print.

Dr. Beers details several strategies that give students base line questions that can be asked while reading different pieces of texts. These questions are meant to be used to assess the meaning behind each text.

Cisneros, Sandra. *House on Mango Street*. N.p.: Vintage, 1991. Print.

This text has several short stories that all serve as incite to Hispanic/Latino culture. Many topics deal with stereotypes, traditions, expectations, and the gap between the American dream and the reality of coming to America.

Giovanni, Nikki. "Legacies." *By Nikki Giovanni: The Poetry Foundation*. N.p., 2003. Web. 10 Oct. 2013. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/177836>

Giovanni explores topic of legacies: what one generation leaves behind for another and what each passing legacy means for the successor.

Holt McDougal Literature: Grade 7. [sl.]: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012. Print.

The 7th Grade Common Core textbook as several texts as well as resources to help each concepts that give students the ability to summarize, analyze, and synthesize texts. The theme worksheet was created based upon the unit 3 model of notes on theme.

Lawson. "Lawson Homepage." *Lawson Homepage*. Seattle Hill Elementary, 2013. Web. 29 Oct. 2013. <<http://seattlehill.sno.wednet.edu/Lawson/>>.

This website provides many sentence stems that you can use to get students moving in the right direction for a discussion. This is also very helpful English language learners.

Mora, Pat. *Dona Flora: A Tale about a Giant Woman with a Big Heart*. N.p.: Knopf for Young Readers, 2005. Print.

Mora uses a guardian that watches over community and friendship in her small village; reflective of the close relationships ad by many Hispanic/Latino families

Mora, Pat. *Tomas and the Library Lady*. N.p.: Turtleback, 2000. Print

Stemming from Pat Mora's love of reading, *Tomas and the Library Lady* tells the story of young Tomas, the migrant worker's son who falls in love with books during one of his stays at his various homes.

Soto, Gary. *Chato and the Party Animals*. N.p.: Putnam Juvenile, 2000. Print.

This picture book is about the importance of community and family in Hispanic cultures. There are also subliminal messages that the author send to the read through the illustrations. Students can discuss why the author found it important to include this message in a book that is typically read to elementary age students.

Velasquez, Eric. *Grandma's Gifts*. N.p.: Walker Childrens, 2010. Print.

Born apart of two cultures, half black half Puerto Rican Velasquez relives his childhood visiting his grandmother in Spanish Harlem. He also details the gap many nonnative English speakers feel when they step outside of their established communities where people do not appear to "speak their language."