"The Largest Versions of Ourselves": Interrogating and Expanding Latina/o Identity In the Middle School English Language Arts Classroom Through Julia Alvarez's How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents

by Kenan Brett Kerr, 2018 CTI Fellow
Whitewater Middle School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
English language arts, grades 6-9

Keywords: Latina/o, Culture, Identity, Día de Muertos, Traditions, Immigrant, Borders

Teaching Standards: See Appendix 1 for teaching standards addressed in this unit. (Insert a hyperlink to Appendix 1 where you've stated your unit's main standards. For directions on how to insert a hyperlink, see Fellows Handbook, p. 24.)

Synopsis: This unit utilizes Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* as a "window and mirror" into Latino/a culture more broadly, integrating "The Five Cs of Foreign Language Educations—cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities—into the English language arts curriculum. A principal goal of this unit is ensuring our school's curriculum is representative of the Latino/a students we serve—that their Latinidad is recognized, respected, and celebrated. This unit asks students to consider their own identity, as well as their own experiences of migration. Emphasis is placed on collaboration, storytelling, social-emotional learning, and cultural competency. Instructional strategies used throughout the unit are intended to elevate student inquiry and critical thinking. To execute this unit successfully, teachers must themselves be both culturally aware and culturally sensitive. The unit culminates in the creation of a community ofrenda. It is suggested that this unit is presented during National Hispanic Heritage Month, which occurs annually from September 15th to October 15th.

I taught this unit during this year to 60 students in English language arts, grade 8.

For my students, past, present, and future, may you always do work that matters. Always remember: you are loved because *of who you are, not in spite of it.*

Introduction

Emily Style, a teacher educator and scholar, asserts that:

> "All students deserve a curriculum which mirrors their own experience back to them, upon occasion — thus validating it in the public world of the school. But curriculum must also insist upon the fresh air of windows into the experience of others — who also need and deserve the public validation of the school curriculum."[1]

In reviewing our school's literary canon at the beginning of my Charlotte Teachers Institute journey, I found that men wrote four out of the six novels we read and study with our eighth-graders. Further, authors of color wrote only two of the six novels. Likewise, women wrote only two of the six novels read. Thus, our curriculum, to borrow Style's metaphor, was more window than mirror. I resolved to address this disparity through the design of a new unit of study using Julia Alvarez's bildungsroman, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*.

Rationale

Alvarez, celebrated Dominican-American writer and teacher, reflects:

"As a young writer, I was on guard against the Latina in me, the Spanish in me, because as far as I could see the models that were presented to me did not include my world… Everyone needs a strong sense of self. It is our base of operations for everything that we do in life. Each of us will have to make the choices that allow us to be the largest versions of ourselves."[2]

My curriculum unit is imagined and designed in this spirit. Our school community currently includes approximately 194 Latino/a students, nearly 30 percent of our student body, and three Latino/a faculty or staff. Nonetheless, this diversity is not represented or reflected in our curriculum. Introducing texts and academic tasks that honor, celebrate, and reflect the racial and cultural identities of the Latino/a students we educate will not only serve to affirm those young people, but all of our scholars. In a society that is becoming increasingly insular and xenophobic, I believe our best hope in combatting these ills is in educating children who embrace diversity, recognizing it as a strength and social good.

Alvarez's novel, set in the Dominican Republic and the state of New York, explores the perspectives of four sisters as they seek to assimilate to the United States while maintaining their Dominican culture and family ties. The novel explores universal themes of values, beliefs, family, identity, and culture, as well as the particular theme of migration.

School and Student Demographics

I teach eighth-grade English language arts at Whitewater Middle School. Whitewater is located in West Charlotte and serves 738 students total. Our school is deemed a high poverty school with 62 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. [3] Racially, our student population is comprised of 423 African-American students (57.3 percent), 214 Hispanic students

(29 percent), 63 Asian students (8.5 percent), 31 white students (4.2 percent), and 6 bi-or multi-racial students (0.8 percent). Additional significant metrics include our 98 students with disabilities (13.3 percent) and our 88 English learners (11.9 percent).

In addition, our school is a Title I school and we have spent the past three years engaged in "turnaround work" after years of being low-performing per growth and grade-level proficiency measures using the state's end-of-grade tests as the primary metric. From my vantage point, I believe that this "deficit" is more reflective of our students, their families, and communities being both underserved and under-resourced. As Diane Ravitch, educational policy analyst and historian of education, writes: "segregation [and] poverty… are root causes of poor academic performance."[4] Despite these obstacles, we possess a student body that is dynamic, engaged, and eager to engage in deep thinking.

We recently began a new journey, being named a Digital Promise Verizon Innovative Learning School in 2016. This initiative equipped every student and teacher in our school with an iPad and a data plan. We also received extensive teacher training and support to leverage the impact of this technology in our classrooms. This academic year, we introduced a partial magnet program focusing on environmental sustainability and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) topics.

I teach three ninety-minute blocks of English language arts for eighth graders. One class is a resource block, co-taught with a special education teacher. Among the racial and ethnic diversity of this class, our students are also neurodiverse, having mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, giftedness, and other non-specified learning disabilities. Additionally, I co-teach a class composed entirely of newcomer English Learners, hailing from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam. Lastly, I also teach a specially designed environmental literature seminar for honors students.

Family and parent involvement in our school community is minimal at present. Many events are not advertised to families in their native language or interpreters are not obtained for special programs. A lack of administrative support, and thus funding, for family outreach acts as an additional barrier. This is a challenge that concerns me and that I hope to address through the implementation of my curriculum unit.

Unit Goals

This unit is designed to be interdisciplinary, blending both English language arts and elements of social studies. Furthermore, I seek to embed elements of inquiry-based learning and culturally responsive teaching, two pedagogical foci for our school community for the 2018-2019 academic year.

A principle goal of this unit is that students explore the following essential questions, using Garcia's novel, the selected supplementary texts, and their own experiences to inform their thinking: Who am I? What is the connection between one's name and one's identity? One's name and one's family? One's name and one's culture? How does one's family, heritage, and culture shape their behaviors, values, and beliefs? Why do humans migrate? When do people migrate by choice and when is it determined by circumstances? What are gender role expectations? How are you treated when you go against the expectation? How are gender roles

shaped by culture and tradition? How is belonging a "basic need"? Why do we go to great lengths to fit in or assimilate? What is the effect of not fitting in or assimilating? Do you have a greater chance of success by fitting in or not fitting in? Why? What does it mean to "belong"? How do families and individuals honor and celebrate their own heritage? How do families share their stories? Why are family and cultural traditions important? Is the United States still a land of opportunity for immigrants? What challenges do migrants face in their new homes? How can migration lead to conflict? After all, a mark of intelligence is a mind that possesses more questions than resolute answers.

Additional unit goals include are that students create an altar commemorating a hero of the Latina/o community and/or a migrant who died via border crossing, in the tradition of Día de Muertos. Students will also craft an artistic statement to accompany their creative piece. I also intend for students to engage actively in a panel on immigration comprised of members of the local immigrant community, including some family members of our students. Students will help to plan this panel and will be responsible for producing, in advance, the questions to be asked of the panel members. Finally, an aspirational objective for this unit is that students are exposed and introduced to Dominican culture (including food, music, traditions, geography, and politics), as well as to a wide survey of Latina/o culture more broadly.

The standards for this curriculum unit are drawn from North Carolina's Standard Course of Study to ensure alignment (see Appendix 1).[6]

After our seven weeks of study, I hope that the exhortation of Sandra Cisneros, Mexican-American writer and self-proclaimed "chingona," will be imprinted on my students' minds and hearts: "You can't erase what you know. You can't forget who you are."[5]

Content Research

Lev Vygotsky's social development theory and later theorizing on funds of knowledge from Luis Moll were central to the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks of my curriculum unit. Moll distinguishes between the dominant (largely Eurocentric, white, and male) culture espoused by the school, faculty, and curriculum, and the non-dominant, that is to say, marginalized, cultural identities of students.[6] Moll uses the Spanish language term "vivencias" to describe a student's lived experience. Vivencias according to Moll "convey... the dialectical connections between affect and cognition in relation to living in a social situation, " like school. He argues that, through acknowledging and capitalizing on students' vivencias, or funds of knowledge, teachers can act to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for students from marginalized groups, like students of color or English learners.

In my school setting, I see the dominant culture expressed through the curriculum at large, as well as the "hidden curriculum," or what Paolo Freire called "mythicizing the world," like our school dress code and punitive disciplinary practices.[7] Notably, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools superintendent Clayton Wilcox also recently expressed concern about the "hidden curriculum," saying: "[We have] to make sure that our black and brown kids can see the contributions that their culture has made in our curriculum. We are no longer a community that can afford a Eurocentric curriculum, where kids can't aspire to jobs and industries because they can't see people like them in them."[8]

Freire further develops the concept of the hidden curriculum, writing: "In order to present for the consideration of the oppressed and subjugated a world of deceit designed to increase their alienation and passivity, the oppressors develop a series of methods precluding any presentation of the world as a problem and showing it rather as a fixed entity, as something given—something to which people, as mere spectators, must adapt."[9] In my schooling experiences, both as a student and a teacher, I see this expressed, in particular, through the reading of canonical literature, alluded to earlier in this narrative. As a student, I did not read a book by an author of color until my eleventh grade year. Even then, that book, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was treated as a novelty, a token—derided for its use of the African-American vernacular. Thus, half-hearted attempts at being culturally relevant can be even more damaging than outright exclusion. This observation is reiterated by my former student, Jipsy, who expressed: "I feel like some cultural representation [in schools] is mainly just a way to say: 'Oh, we're not racist!'…and it's the only reason it's there."[10]

Assuredly, the most compelling and impactful element of my content research was my interviews with current and former Latina/o students. A common thread that ran through these conversations was a frustration and resentment with Latina/o students being treated as a homogenous bloc. When asked what she wished teachers knew about Latina/o students, Michelle, a current ninth-grader, replied: "Don't assume we're all Mexican. And not all of us speak perfect Spanish or look Hispanic. I mean, I'm living proof of that."[11] Similarly, Jipsy, the student referenced earlier in this section, cautioned teachers of Latina/o students, and underrepresented students more broadly, to remember: "I can't speak for everyone [in my community]. Everyone is different."[12]

These students' words echoed in my mind as I shaped and reshaped my curriculum. I wanted to honor their advice, pointed and poignant as it was, by selecting texts and tasks that complicated our definitions and conceptions of Latinidad, rather than making a caricature of their culture by minimizing it to tacos, piñatas, and serapes. I was intentional about including supplementary texts from Dominican authors, consistent with the setting of the novel. However, I also wanted to give voice to the diversity within Dominicana/o cultural identity. Julia Alvarez's family, and the characters represented in the vast majority of her novels are Dominican gentry—upper-class Dominicanos who enjoyed the service of Haitian maids and drivers and opposed the Trujillo regime. Alvarez herself acknowledges this, elaborating: "The bad part of being a 'Latina Writer' is that people want to make me into a spokesperson. There is no spokesperson! There are many realities, different shades, and classes."[13] Thus, I also included writings from Dominican-American authors like Junot Diaz, who grew up poor in the barrios of Santo Domingo with his mother and grandparents. Other central texts include a detailed history of bachata, a musical form that was once regarded as rural and backward by upper class Dominicans, song lyrics from famed Dominican singer, Juan Luis Guerra, and poems on exodus and immigration written by newcomer students, having recently arrived to the United States, by way of the Bronx.

This unit also includes texts and tasks that are reflective of the diversity of countries like Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, as well as a sizeable amount of material that discusses Latina/o immigrant communities in the United States. Moreover, students are encouraged to share their own stories of migration, family, culture, and traditions through material culled from Reimagining Migration's Moving Stories initiative, a program which seeks to "ensure that all young people grow up understanding migration as a fundamental characteristic of the human

condition, in order to develop the knowledge, empathy, and mindset that sustains inclusive and welcoming communities."[14]

While engaged in text selection for this unit of study, I discovered what I call "a canon outside the canon" or "a canon of the marginalized." Schools seeking to diversify their English language arts curriculum seem to resort to a standard set of novels. For instance, school communities that wish to include a text on Latina identity, more often than not, select one of the following: *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, or like me, a novel by Julia Alvarez. This is not problematic in and of itself, but I began to wonder at the cause of this "canon of the marginalized"—and the effect. A similar "canon outside the canon" exists within African-American literature for young adults. Teachers often choose to read texts like *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis, or *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee—the last novel not even being written by an African American author, but purportedly (and I write this ironically) being the best representation of being black in the South during the Jim Crow era. In seeking to interrogate and expand the canon, are we actually limiting it further? In other words, does it matter that students read a novel written by an author of color, if the portrayals they see of themselves are trite, stereotypical, or otherwise foreign?

In beginning to implement by curriculum unit, I have noticed a disconnect between my students identities as Latina/os and the Latina identities represented in Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*. The disconnect is *not* about place, although the novel *is* set in the Dominican Republic and most of my students are from Mexico and Central America. The disconnect I see is more about time and class. The Garcia family in Alvarez's novel, as mentioned previously, are upper-class Dominicans with deep connections in politics and government—and the money that comes with that level of privilege. My students, however, do not come from families of means and privilege. In their homelands and in the United States, they have known struggle and hard work. Another pronounced difference between the fiction of the novel and the reality of my students' lives is time. The novel is set from 1956 to 1989. My students are coming of age as members of Generation Z. Alvarez's *Garcia Girls* have yet to encounter the first iteration of the cellular phone. Nearly all of my students have an iPhone or Android, which is like a third appendage. This difference in time, too, presents as a disconnect in terms of motivations for immigration. The Garcia family immigrated to the United States with assistance from the United States Central Intelligence Agency because the father had participated in a failed coup attempt against Dominican dictator, Rafael Trujillo. My students are coming to the United States at a time when the current United States president has said of undocumented immigrants: "These aren't people. These are animals."[15]

Nonetheless, there are some elements of the novel that my Latina/o students identify with. Though these linkages are, admittedly, at a more superficial level. Many students are familiar with the foods mentioned admiringly in the novel, like guavas and sancocho. Students relate also to the Spanish interspersed throughout the text and love explaining to me what the words and phrases mean. In this sense, this does provide them with an opportunity to activate and share their "funds of knowledge."

As student growth flattens in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district overall, CMS has nearly 15,900 more Hispanic students than it did in 2007.[16] This data represents population trends in large urban school districts nation-wide. Nonetheless, a diversity gap in children's

literature persists. In fact, " in 2016, Black, Latinx , and Native authors wrote just 6 percent of new children's books published."[17] While publishing is still largely white, a number of celebrated young adults novels focusing on Latina/o characters were released in the last few years, including: *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sánchez, *The Education of Margot Sanchez* by Lilliam Rivera, *The Revolution of Evelyn Serranno* by Sonia Manzano, and *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina. These are the books that fly off the shelves of my classroom library, the books that are passed around among my students with a whispered, "You've got to read this." So why aren't these the novels that we are reading and studying in our schools? I think our hesitancy is representative of our stubborn biases about what is—and isn't—literature.

Teaching Strategies

Teaching strategies for this curriculum unit are numerous but some highlights include a simulation on border crossing and privilege, a panel on immigration, the creation of altars for Día de Muertos, and a food tour of Central Avenue.

Before delving into the essential question—Why do humans migrate? When do people migrate by choice and when is it determined by circumstances?—I wanted students to participate in an experiential simulation on border crossings and locational privilege. Using masking tape placed on the floor, I divided the classroom into Side A and Side B. Then, without explaining my rationale, I started to silently pass out candy to the students on Side B. The students on Side A received no candy. They began to show signs of frustration. Then, I passed out even more candy to the students on Side B, who were greedily hoarding their three and four pieces with big grins. The students on Side A began to look dejected and frustrated. Then, remembering that we were studying migration, a student on Side A yelled out: "Oh, it's the border! We are in Mexico and they are in the United States." We paused and debriefed. I asked students questions like: "In real life, what does the candy represent? Why didn't you choose to cross the border? and How did you feel during this simulation?" I was amazed by the insight in their responses. Then I prompted students: "There is an inequality here. One side has candy—more than they should really eat—and the other has none. How could we address this inequality?" Students began to share their candy with their classmates on Side A. Other students welcomed their peers to the other side of the border. After crossing, I promptly shared candy with them too. Of all the classroom activities I have implemented through this curriculum unit thus far, this seems to have been the most impactful and memorable for students.

I am currently in the planning stages of an immigration panel for all eighth-grade students. Students have been asked to invite family members and friends to share about their immigration experiences, but while many students demonstrated enthusiasm in class, we have received no affirmative response to date. I am attributing this to the necessity of work for many of our students' families, as well as concerns about documentation, especially within our current political climate. However, we have been fortunate to receive support from members of our extended community and will be hosting panelists via the Latin American Coalition and other connections made through this Charlotte Teachers Institute course.

Another learning task is upcoming—the creation of altars for Día de Muertos. This task addresses the central questions—How do families and individuals honor and celebrate their own heritage? How do families share their stories? and Why are family and cultural traditions

important? Many of my Latina/o students hail from Mexico originally, and thus, are intimately familiar with Día de Muertos. Other students have taken a marked interest in this family-oriented celebration after Disney's 2017 release of the movie *Coco*. After learning about Día de Muertos and the traditional elements of ofrendas, students will design and create their own ofrenda in memory of a loved one or a deceased hero of the Latin American community (like Cesar Chavez, Berta Cáceres, or Gloria Anzaldúa). I have invited local muralist and artist-activist, Rosalia Torres-Weiner of Red Calaca Studio to join our class in this effort.

Finally, inspired by our course's food and culture tour of the Central Avenue led by Tom Hanchett, students will be studying the Southern Foodways Alliance's oral history collection on the Central Avenue Corridor.[18] Through this task, students will consider the following: Is the United States still a land of opportunity for immigrants? What challenges do migrants face in their new homes? How can migration lead to conflict? and How can food be used as a tool for alleviating conflict and bridging cultures? While our school's bureaucracy makes it difficult for us to take students on a food and culture tour during school hours, my co-teachers and myself are organizing a tour to take place on a Saturday in November. Already, our students are so very excited—and I am remembering that food, and not just books, can be a means of interrogating and expanding Latina/o identity.

Classroom Lessons and Activities

Week One

The unit is organized conceptually around weekly thematic essential questions. The first week asked students to interrogate the concept of identity through thinking about their names. Besides Alvarez's *Garcia Girls,* students read excerpts from print texts, like Sandra Cisneros' "My Name" from *The House on Mango Street* and Julia Alvarez's personal essay, "Names/Nombres," and a narrative poem by Jonathan Rodriguez, titled, "Two Names, Two Worlds." Coupled with these print texts, students also considered several digital shorts from StoryCorps, which hosts a rich collection of brief oral history interviews. Inquiry-based strategies like Identity Charts, One Word Whip-Arounds, and Think-Write-Pair-Share served as both activities and formative assessments throughout the unit's introduction.

Week Two

In week two, students began to explore heritage, place, and culture, with a particular focus on music, dance, and art. Students created their own family quilts, representing their unique heritage and cultures. Students also utilized lyrics and music videos in both Spanish and English, like Calibre 50's "Corrido de Juanito" to consider the idea of home. Strategies utilized this week included: Silent Discussion, Listening: Ten Times Two, and Share-Trade—all of which continue to build students' capacity for dialogical, or dialectical, thinking.

Weeks Three and Four

Week 3 and 4 began to shift to a more macroscopic focus, asking students to consider the topics of migration and Latina identity. The lesson on migration utilized simulations to make the plight of migrants and refugees concrete. In particular, students participated in a simulation of the refugee camp experience from CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere). As students entered the classroom, they were issued a new identity, corresponding to a real refugee.

They had to provide the refugee camp director, my co-teacher, with their stamped fingerprint and relinquish their belongings to me, the aid worker. Students were then prompted to sit on the floor and share "their story," a brief biography of the refugee whose experience they were now embodying. This impactful simulation then segued into an opportunity for writing and outreach, with students composing messages of support that we shared with refugee children through CARE's global network.[19]

In considering Latina identity, students examined the feminist politics, or lack thereof, of each of the Garcia Girls—Carla, Sofía, Yolanda, Sandra, and Mamí through the creation of Body Biographies. Then, students analyzed poetry, both in written and spoken word form, from contemporary Latina poets, like Elizabeth Acevedo, Melissa Lozada-Oliva, and Denice Frohman.

Weeks Five and Six

In week five, students participated in our immigration panel, hosting members of the local immigrant community, including Dr. Anthony Fernandes (India), Ms. Mariella Fernandes (Guatemala), Ms. Susana Cisneros (Argentina), Ms. Candida Gomez (Panama), Ms. Irene Sandoval Arce (Costa Rica), Ms. Gina Esquivel (Costa Rica), and Ms. Yisel Maren (Cuba). This activity was one of the most impactful of the unit, as students were able to both interact and connect with our guest speakers, emphasizing that immigration is a human story. Through my research, I have discovered that we often teach about immigration in the abstract. This becomes problematic in that it reinforces an us versus them dichotomy—othering the immigrant experience. When in fact, unless our ancestors were indigenous or enslaved, we are all descendants of immigrants.

Students parlayed their revised thinking from the panel into food for thought for an Immigration Solutions roundtable, putting on the "hats" of lawmakers. Students were tasked with researching a particular legislative solution for the current global immigration "crisis"—Open our Borders, Admit the Talent We Need, Restrict Immigration, or Make Emigration Unnecessary. This activity was adapted from Brown University's Choices Curriculum.[20] After reading a concise policy brief, student groups determined both the pros and the cons of their assigned policy. Students considered the values behind their assigned solution and what image their solution would project to the world, if adopted as policy or law. Finally, student groups created a poster presentation "selling" their solution to their classmates who served as members of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims in a mock congressional hearing.

Week Seven

The final week of the unit gave students an opportunity to spotlight both their formal writing skills and their artistic talents. Día de Muertos was introduced through a Visual Gallery Walk. Students then read scaffolded texts on the holiday and the elements of traditional ofrendas before responding to a Literal-Inferential-Evaluative question sets. After participating in a mini-lesson on writing artist statements, students drafted their own artist statements, giving the rationale behind the design of their own ofrenda. The remainder of the week was devoted to constructing the ofrendas, with most of the pieces being dedicated to deceased family members. Some students chose to memorialize Latina/o heroes, like Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, César Chávez, and Gloria Anzaldúa, who have passed on.

Students displayed their artistic gifts of love and devotion in one of two grand, colorful community ofrendas placed in prominent locations in our school building. Our student-artists also chose to invite the larger school community—students in other grade levels, faculty, and staff—to bring in photos of their departed loved ones to display on the ofrenda as well. The ofrenda will remain in place through November 2nd, when our students will also enjoy traditional pan de muerto and champurrado.

Assessments

Both formative and summative assessments were used throughout the unit. Some significant formative assessments included students' participation in Warm Up activities throughout the unit, like the Whip-Arounds and See-Think-Wonder protocols mentioned earlier in this narrative. Students were assessed formatively through both written and oral responses to support the needs of our English Learners, who need consistent practice developing their speaking and listening skills, and to highlight the strengths of our struggling readers and writers, who can often articulate their thinking beautifully in conversation.

Summative assessments in this unit included the "My Name Is…" poems, Immigration Roundtable group presentations, Día de Muertos Artist Statements, and Día de Muertos ofrendas. For each of these summative assessments, students were graded using a holistic rubric. In some cases, students helped to create and define this rubric alongside the teachers. For all summative assessments, I found it invaluable to ensure that students had an opportunity to "publish," showcase, or present their work to an authentic audience. Publication heightened student "buy-in" during the creation process and gave students a feeling of accomplishment and pride upon completion of the task. This was especially impactful for students who typically struggle academically.

Reflection

In teaching and learning alongside my students through the first iteration of this unit of study, I found myself heartened, saddened, inspired, and often, surprised. Gloria Anzaldúa, celebrated queer Chicana cultural theorist, famously wrote about the experience of living in the "Borderlands," which she defined as being torn between competing cultures and identities: "Because I, a mestizo continually walk out of one culture and into another because I am in all cultures at the same time, alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro, me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio. Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan Simultáneamente."[21] Anzaldúa's words are a sentient articulation of my students' experiences of living between cultures.

I was both shocked and heartbroken to discover that many of my Latina/o students were uninformed or unfamiliar with their own cultural practices and history. Students found Latino and Hispanic indistinguishable. They have never even heard of the descriptor, Latinx. In introducing the ofrenda project, I found that very few of my students, even those who spent their childhoods in Mexico, could describe the meaning behind Día de Muertos. Similarly, both my Latina/o and non-Latina/o students held many misconceptions about immigration policy. These realizations reconfirmed my belief that educators must center and celebrate the narratives and histories of people of color. My students' ignorance did not happen in a vacuum. It is a result of being educated in a system that ignores—and even erases—their stories. Education, after all,

transmits values. If we want our students of color to love who they are and believe in the possibility of what they can be, teachers must first sow the seed by uplifting the richness of their culture(s).

Another revelation highlighted my own need to continue to grow as a culturally competent educator. In highlighting the story of a young immigrant who had been detained while crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, some of my students shared that, they too, had experienced what the young man was describing. Our class transitioned to a time of sharing, which I now view as one of the most sacred moments in my teaching career. My students talked about having to eat icy ham sandwiches. They shared stories of sleeping on the floor with only a space blanket. Emotionally, they described the uncertainty of being separated from their families in Mexico and Honduras for weeks, only to be reunited with parents they didn't even remember here in the States. Through this experience, I realized how much I have left to learn—and unlearn. Moreover, I was struck by the transformation that can happen in a classroom when you make time to listen to your students' stories.

Some years after her writing on mestiza consciousness, Gloria Anzaldúa wrote in *Light in the Dark/Luz en el Oscuro*: "May we do work that matters. Vale la pena, it's worth the pain."[22] I consider myself lucky to be trusted to share in my students' stories and to teach about their culture. I am fortunate to have the opportunity to deepen my understanding of Latina/o identity and community—and how that community is changing my native Charlotte for the better. I am grateful every day to do work that matters, work that allows students to become "the largest versions of themselves." May I always be so lucky, fortunate, and grateful.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

The standards from the unit are derived from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's English Language Arts Standard Course of Study, adopted in April of 2017. It should be noted that these standards are vary only negligibly from the Common Core State Standards—the standards used before this most recent adoption.

Literature:

8.RL.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

8.RL.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

8.RL.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character or provoke a decision.

8.RL.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

8.RL.5: Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

8.RL.6: Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Language:

8.L.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

a. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Writing:

8.W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the election, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

d. Establish and maintain a formal style.

e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented

8.W.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

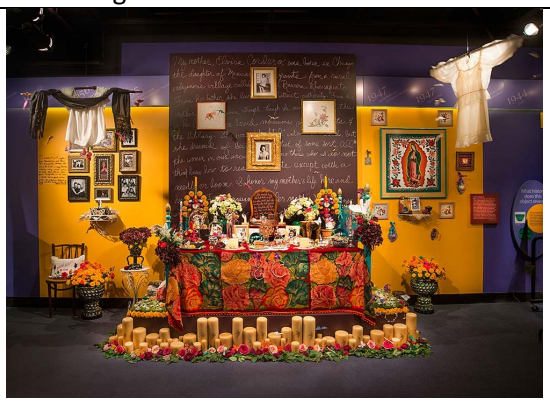
a. Apply grade 8 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new”).

b. Apply grade 8 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., “Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced”).

Appendix 2: Excerpt of Día de Muertos Teaching Materials

Introduction to Día de Muertos and Ofrendas

Essential Question	Week 6-- How do families and individuals honor and celebrate their own heritage? How do families share their stories? Why are family and cultural traditions important?
Objective & Standard	8.W.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. a. Apply grade 8 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new"). b. Apply grade 8 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced"). • SWBAT analyze literary or informational texts.
Lesson Prep/Materials	Create: n/a Access: copies of *Garcia Girls* Print/Copy: Student Work, handout
Exit Ticket ***(or evaluate and assess)***.	See Evaluative Question in Independent Work
Differentiation Based on Data	Content: Sentence stems provided for short answer responses Process: Pictures embedded in texts and student work Product: Use of images to communicate understanding
Read Aloud [15 minutes]	*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, pp. 189-199, at page break Before reading aloud, establish the expectations for what students should be doing at this time. Namely, following along in their version of the text with their finger, pencil, or eyes. Tell students that, often, they will be tasked with doing something involving what we have read together, so they should be attentive and engaged during read aloud. Notes for Teacher Read Aloud: -p. 191-- "This is like a little protest from Sandi, who has, remember, witnessed Mrs. Fanning's bad behavior!" -p. 195-- "Conquistadores are conquerors from Spain who colonized Mexico, parts of South America, and much of the Caribbean."

	-p. 196-- “By the word ‘interrogate,’ I can tell that these are not good men.” -p. 198-- “These men must be part of the dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. So now, the setting of the story has changed. The family is no longer in New York. This is before their immigration. Maybe they had to immigrate because of the men with the guns?”
Warm Up [5 minutes]	 Using the image above as a stimulus, “play” The Elaboration Game.” See instructions below: As a group, observe and describe several different sections of an artwork. 1. One person identifies a specific section of the artwork and describes what he or she sees. Another person elaborates on the first person’s observations by adding more detail about the section. A third person elaborates further by adding yet more detail, and a fourth person adds yet more. Observers: Only describe what you see. Hold off giving your ideas about the art until the last step of the routine. 2. After four people have described a section in detail, another person identifies a new section of the artwork and the process starts over. WHAT KIND OF THINKING DOES THIS ROUTINE ENCOURAGE? This routine encourages students to look carefully at details. It challenges them to develop verbal descriptions that are elaborate, nuanced, and imaginative. It also encourages them to distinguish between observations and interpretations by asking them to withhold their ideas about the artwork – their interpretations – until the end of the routine. This in turn strengthens students’ ability to reason carefully because it gives them practice making sustained observations before jumping into judgment. WHEN AND WHERE CAN IT BE USED? Use this routine with any kind of visual art that stays still in time, such as painting or sculpture. You can also use the routine with non-art objects, such as a microscope, an animal skeleton, or a plant. The Elaboration Game is an especially

	good way to launch a writing activity because it helps students develop a detailed descriptive vocabulary.
Introduction & Lesson Hook (*or engage/explore*)	TW tell students that the image is of an ofrenda, or an altar. Ofrendas are created to celebrate a special holiday in Latin America, called Día de Muertos. Ofrendas are made by family members and friends in honor of loved ones who have passed away. This ofrenda was created by the famous Mexican-American author, Sandra Cisneros, in memory of her mother. You might then use this time to engage students in a KWL or Schema Map on Día de Muertos. For notes on these strategies, see links below: -KWL: http://www.nea.org/tools/k-w-l-know-want-to-know-learned.html -Schema Maps: http://www.adventuresofaschoolmarm.com/2016/09/schema-maps-alternative-to-kwl-chart.html
Direct Instruction *(or explain + stamp the learning)*	TW tell students that we are going to read about a specific ofrenda, or altar, now--the one we examined at the beginning of class. Read-aloud in your desired format the essay from Sandra Cisneros, "An Altar for My Mother" After reading, students can jointly answer the Stop and Jot questions below to assess their comprehension-- Stop and Jot Questions: 1. Literal: Describe Sandra Cisneros' mother. What is she like, according to Cisneros' depiction? Cisneros' mother is complicated. She loves the arts. She is also beautiful and sophisticated, despite her poor upbringing. Her mother is frustrated by the limits life has placed on her. She seems to wish she were somewhere and someone else. 2. Inferential: What items do you think Cisneros might include in an ofrenda for her mother? I think she might include tickets to museums and art exhibits. She might also include items like paint-by-number sets, crepe flowers, seed packets, puppets, sewing needles, thread, library books, concert programs, and movie tickets. These are all things that reflected her mother's interests. 3. Evaluative: Cisneros had a complicated relationship with her mother. Reflect on why she might she still want to create an ofrenda memorializing her mom. Despite Cisneros' mother being complicated, and often angry, the author obviously still loves and admires her mother. She credits her mother with being the force that motivated her to become a writer. Therefore, perhaps she wants to honor her mother's impact on her life-- and give voice to her mother's unfulfilled hopes and dreams.

Guided Practice ***(or extend)***	SW read alone or in pairs the below linked text on Día de Muertos, answering the Stop and Jot questions that follow. Day of the Dead/Día de Muertos [from PBS Learning Media] https://d43fweuh3sg51.cloudfront.net/media/media_files/8bjqjihs9vno9q5e9s2gw88h664c508q.pdf Stop and Jot Questions-- Literal: What do celebrants use to decorate *ofrendas*? Celebrants use items like candles, pictures, colorful paper, treats like fruits, tortillas, and pan de muerto, sugar skulls, and Calaveras. Inferential: Why might Día de Muertos be considered a joyful or celebratory holiday, rather than a sad or depressing one? I believe that Día de Muertos is considered a joyful holiday because it is a time to remember the happy times they shared with their loved ones and to reflect on their belief that they will see them again in the afterlife. Evaluative: Who might be someone you would like to create an ofrenda for? What would you use to make the ofrenda? What items might you use to decorate the ofrenda (Remember that they should be representative of the individual you are memorializing.) Someone I might create an ofrenda for is my grandmother, who passed away in April. I would use cardboard to construct the ofrenda and paint it so that it is very colorful and bright, like my grandmother's personality. Some items I might include are sunflowers, balloons, Chico's bags, and sand-- these are all things my grandmother loved. I would also include lots of pictures of my grandmother. *Yellow Highlight indicates Success Point
Independent Practice ***(or apply)***	See above
Closing	Revisit KWL or Schema Chart, adding to "L" or Misconceptions/New Learning, depending on which tool you utilized initially.
Homework	Read 20 minutes/night and track progress using teacher's designated accountability measure

Introduction to Día de Muertos and Ofrendas

Essential Question	Week 6-- How do families and individuals honor and celebrate their own heritage? How do families share their stories? Why are family and cultural traditions important?
Objective & Standard	8.W.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the election, organization, and analysis of relevant content. a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically. b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. d. Establish and maintain a formal style. e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented • SWBAT use text-based evidence to support analysis, reflection, and research.
Lesson Prep/Materials	Create: Posters for Gallery Walk of Ofrenda Images [see Resources folder] Access: copies of *Garcia Girls* Print/Copy: Student Work
Exit Ticket ***(or evaluate and assess)***	See task in Independent Practice
Differentiation Based on Data •	Content: Sentence stems provided for short answer responses Process: Pictures embedded in texts and student work Product: Use of images to communicate understanding
Read Aloud [15 minutes]	*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, pp. 199-206 Before reading aloud, establish the expectations for what students should be doing at this time. Namely, following along in their version of the text with their finger, pencil, or eyes. Tell students that, often, they will be tasked with doing something involving what we have read together, so they should be attentive and engaged during read aloud. Notes for Teacher Read Aloud: -p. 200-- "Chucha is a practitioner of brujeria, or what we would call witchcraft or black magic. This is a pretty widespread practice is some Latina and Native-American cultures, where it is thought to ward off evil spirits." -p. 201-- "Laura is Mami-- and she is tricking the men with the guns, isn't she? She is using her femininity and hospitality to disarm them and kill time. Hopefully her strategy works or the family could really be in danger!"

	-p. 202-- “San Judas, or Saint Jude, is the saint of lost causes. This tells me that the family’s situation is very desperate!” -p. 205-- “I’m wondering who this man is and how he is connected to the Garcia family? Also, what is he doing in the Dominican Republic?”
Warm Up [5 minutes]	<u>Gallery Walk of Ofrendas</u> Note: Prior to this task, the teacher should have posted posters/Anchor Charts with Ofrenda images around the classroom. These are the stimuli students will use for their Gallery Walk. Instruct students to circulate around the room, looking at the images and writing on their Post-It notes. They should use the See-Think-Wonder protocol to guide their thinking/writing. See notes below if you are unfamiliar with this strategy. With regards to Gallery Walk, you may wish to start a certain number of students at each poster to facilitate “Crowd Control.” For Honors classes, students should use at least three Post-Its. For standard/inclusion classes, at least two Post-Its. <u>Gallery Walk Notes:</u> How to Use-- 1. Write Create six questions or prompts about the current topic of study, and write each one on a piece of chart paper or on a whiteboard. Hang or place the questions or prompts in various places around the classroom to create six stations. Images, documents, problems, or quotes may also be used. 2. Group Group students into teams of three to five students, depending on the size of the class. Each group should start at a different station. 3. Begin At their first station, groups will read what is posted and one recorder should write the group’s responses, thoughts, and comments on the chart paper or whiteboard. For individual student accountability, you may also have the students record their own responses on a worksheet (see template below), or put their initials below what they wrote. Having different colored markers for each student is also an option. 4. Rotate After three to five minutes, have the groups rotate to the next station. Students read and discuss the previous group’s response and add content of their own. Repeat until all groups have visited each station. To involve all group members, you can have groups switch recorders at each station. 5. Monitor As the teacher, it is important to monitor the stations while the students participate. You may also need to clarify or provide hints if students don't understand or misinterpret what is posted at their station.

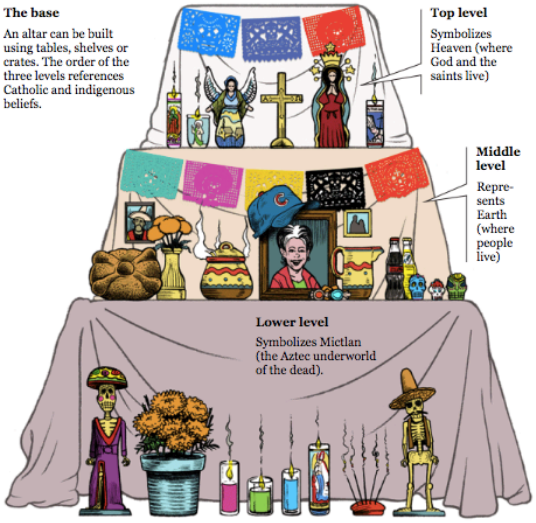
	6. Reflect Have students go back to their first station to read all that was added to their first response. Bring the class back together to discuss what was learned and make final conclusions about what they saw and discussed. When to Use-- Use a Gallery Walk at any point in the lesson to engage students in conversation: -After reading a story to discuss ideas, themes, and characters -After completing a lab to discuss findings and implications -To examine historical documents or images -Before introducing a new topic to determine students' prior knowledge -After students have created a poster or any other type of display project, or even before they submit it for a grade, use I Like, I Wonder, Next Steps (see below) -To solve a math problem using UPSV -To generate ideas or pre-writes Variations-- -Graffiti The items posted around the room do not have to be questions, but can be ideas or concepts or even math problems. Large sheets of paper or chart paper are placed on the walls of the classroom. Students write their responses, draw pictures and record their thoughts on the given topic on the graffiti wall. Students are encouraged to use colored markers to make the wall interesting and to identify each student's work/response. -I Like, I Wonder, Next Steps Use a Gallery Walk format for students to get feedback on their work. Hang student products, such as drawings, visual representations, poster projects, etc. Students, individually or in groups, rotate around the room and provide feedback to the creator of the work. Students are required to record one thing they like about the work displayed, one thing they wonder about it, and one thing the creator could do next or improve. This can be done before work is submitted to the teacher so that students may use their classmates' feedback to improve their products. Students can write feedback on chart paper posted by each work, or they can use three different colored sticky notes (one for each category) to write their feedback and stick it directly onto the student product for instant feedback. -Gallery Run This is a quicker version of a Gallery Walk. The questions posted at each station are lower level questions involving knowledge or comprehension. Students don't need to spend as much time discussing questions at each station, so they rotate them through at a quicker rate. You can post many more than 6 questions so students get much more practice.

	<u>See Think Wonder Notes:</u> A routine for exploring works of art and other interesting things -What do you see? -What do you think about that? -What does it make you wonder? Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage? This routine encourages students to make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry. Application: When and Where can it be used? Use this routine when you want students to think carefully about why something looks the way it does or is the way it is. Use the routine at the beginning of a new unit to motivate student interest or try it with an object that connects to a topic during the unit of study. Consider using the routine with an interesting object near the end of a unit to encourage students to further apply their new knowledge and ideas. Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine? Ask students to make an observation about an object--it could be an artwork, image, artifact or topic--and follow up with what they think might be going on or what they think this observation might be. Encourage students to back up their interpretation with reasons. Ask students to think about what this makes them wonder about the object or topic. The routine works best when a student responds by using the three stems together at the same time, i.e., "I see..., I think..., I wonder...." However, you may find that students begin by using one stem at a time, and that you need to scaffold each response with a follow up question for the next stem. The routine works well in a group discussion but in some cases you may want to ask students to try the routine individually on paper or in their heads before sharing out as a class. Stu-dent responses to the routine can be written down and recorded so that a class chart of observations, interpretations and wonderings are listed for all to see and return to during the course of study.
Introduction & Lesson Hook (*or engage/explore*)	See above. You might give students an opportunity to share about their observations from the Gallery Walk-- or, simply, ask students: What did the ofrendas have in common? And how were they unique?

Direct Instruction
(or explain + stamp the learning)

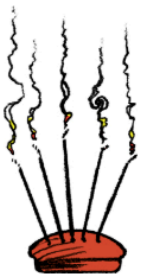
Structure of the altar

The altar is one of the most distinctive ways Day of the Dead is celebrated. An altar is made in honor of the deceased and can be displayed at a grave site or in the home. Offerings of food, beverages and prized possessions are displayed. "The altar is a good example of the fusion of both religions and cultures," said Eric Garcia, Arte Ambulante coordinator of the National Museum of Mexican Art. "These altars pay respect to both the indigenous and the Catholic beliefs of the afterlife and situates them logically."



Offerings

On the different levels of the altar, offerings or gifts are placed, usually including favorite items of the deceased intended to honor and welcome them back home.



Incense (incienso)

Made of copal, which is pine resin, and used to communicate with the spirit world.

Marigold (flores de cempasuchil) flowers

Orange color and penetrating aroma lure heavenly souls to Earth. Petals are sprinkled on the floor leading to the altar to guide the souls to it.

Bread for the dead (pan de muerto)

A sweet treat for the spirits. Design on top is meant to look like skull and crossbones.

Food (comida)

Includes a deceased loved one's favorite items to eat and represent the Earth element.

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Water (agua) and other drinks (otras bebidas)

Quench the thirst of the spirits who are believed to travel to Earth for one day.

Candles (velas)

Represent the element fire and attract the spirits to the altar.

Paper banners (papel picado)

Intricate crepe paper cutouts represent the wind and fragility, and are used as decorations for festive occasions throughout the year. Include images of skulls for Day of the Dead.

Photos and possessions (fotos y otros objetos)

Photos of the deceased, as well as personal possessions are included to remember loved ones who have passed away.

Skull (calavera)

In the form of puppets, toys, candy made of sugar or little figurines acting out scenes of daily lives (working, marrying, singing), skull art is a reminder of life's brevity and the inevitability of death.

Catrina (la catrina)

A female skeleton figurine wearing a wide-brimmed hat and dress common for upper class Mexican women in the late 1800s and early 1900s. This style satirizes those who favored European culture over Mexican foods and customs. Popularized in graphic images by artist Jose Guadalupe Posada.
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<td>Guided Practice
(or extend)</td>
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Stop-and-Jot Questions--
1. Literal: What do the three levels of the traditional ofrenda represent?
The first level represents the Aztec underworld of the dead. The second level represents Earth and the third level represents heaven.
2. Inferential: Why do you think ofrendas are often displayed in the home?
I think ofrendas are displayed in homes because this is where families gather and, likely, the first place a spirit would want to visit upon returning to earth.
3. Evaluative: Which of these items might you want to include on your ofrenda? Explain.
I would definitely included marigolds, as my grandmother loved flowers and she is the one I am memorializing with my ofrenda. Also, I would include food, like her favorite candy, chocolate covered cherries. Lastly, I would include papel picado because my grandmother loved bright colors and celebrations.

*Yellow Highlight indicates Success Point
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<td>Independent Practice
(or apply)</td>
<td>Ask each student to select a person, or subject, who inspires him or her. Ofrendas can be dedicated to one person (family member, friend, or someone famous who has died), or a group of people (police officers, teachers, soldiers, etc.).</td>
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Have each student respond to these questions:
• To whom do I want to dedicate this ofrenda? (It may be dedicated to one or more people.)
I will dedicate my ofrenda to my grandmother, Elizabeth Kerr.
• Why is this person/are these people special to me?
My grandmother passed away in April and I miss her a lot. She was my sunshine. This ofrenda will be a way to grieve her death and celebrate her life.
• What more would I like to know about the person/people I am honoring in my ofrenda?
I will need to think about some of the things my grandmother loved in life-- her favorite foods, activities, etc.
• Who could I talk to in order to learn more?
I will talk to my family, especially my aunt, mom, and dad.
• What do I want people to remember about him/her/them?
I want people to remember my love for my grandmother. I want them to know what a fun-loving person she was and how much we all miss her.

I would advise students choosing from:
-a deceased family member
-a deceased hero of the Latin@ community

You might assign specific classes specific groups of people. See mention of individuals in each of the later categories below. It might be preferable to assign individuals in the category below to Honors students, as it will involve the additional task of research.

<u>Deceased Heroes of the Latina/o Community</u>
-Cesar Chavez
-Selena Quintanilla
-Berta Casares
-Celia Cruz
-Frida Kahlo
-Diego Rivera
-Gloria Anzaldúa
-Chavela Vargas
-Sylvia Rivera
-The Mirabal Sisters
-Oscar Romero
-Maria Felix
-Claudia Patricia Gomez Gonzales
-Benito Juarez
-Individuals Who Have Died While Crossing Borders

Note: Prior to this, students need to determine if they would like to work alone or with a partner.

Closing	Revisit KWL or Schema Chart, adding to "L" or Misconceptions/New Learning, depending on which tool you utilized initially. Also, tell students that this week, we will write our artists' statements-- formal declarations regarding the content and meaning behind our ofrendas. These will be displayed alongside our art. Next week, we will construct our actual ofrendas, which will be displayed in our school and community at large.
Homework	Read 20 minutes/night and track progress using teacher's designated accountability measure Note: If you would like students to complete their ofrendas in miniature, please begin asking them to bring in shoeboxes.

Appendix 3: Table of Whitewater Middle School's Literary Canon—Before and After

Eighth Grade—Before

Novels	Demographics of Author
Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes	White male
Night by Elie Wiesel	White male, Jewish, immigrant
"The Laramie Project" by Moises Kaufman	Latino-Jewish male, Gay
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee	White female
The Lord of the Flies by William Golding	White male

Eighth Grade—After

Novels	Demographics of Author
How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents by Julia Alvarez	Latina female, immigrant
Night by Elie Wiesel	White male, Jewish, immigrant
"The Laramie Project" by Moises Kaufman	Latino-Jewish male, Gay
The Girl Who Fell from the Sky by Heidi Durrow	Bi-racial female
The Lord of the Flies by William Golding	White male

Appendix 4: “Siempre en Nuestros Corazones”

Our Community Ofrenda

Whitewater Middle School

Charlotte, North Carolina

Fall 2018

Resources

List of Materials for Classroom Use

"The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46550/the-new-colossus

This is the poem inscribed on the Statue of Liberty. In my unit, I used this poem to talk about the meaning of the American Dream. This poem was paired with Dave Eggers' *Her Right Foot*.

"Home" by Warsan Shire
https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/complit203/2017/05/02/password-dance/

This contemporary, powerful poem speaks to the human story of immigration. Students read this text alongside the immigration policy proposals in preparation for our Immigration Roundtable.

"EL Corrido de Juanito" by Calibre 50
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC7a27zE2fs
https://lyricstranslate.com/es/el-corrido-de-juanito-juanitos-corrido.html

A corridor is a Mexican folk ballad that tells a story. This corridor tells the story of an undocumented Mexican immigrant. Many Latina/o students are familiar with this musical group. All students were able to empathize with the struggle expressed in the lyrics and music video.

"Two Names, Two Worlds" by Jonathan Rodriguez

Rodriguez is a student-poet who aptly captures the duality of his Latino-American identity. Students identified with how you can be many things at once—even when society only sees you as one thing. I paired this poem with Inside/Outside Body Biographies, often called Character X-Rays.

"Julia Moves to the United States"
https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/julia-moves-to-the-united-states

This informational text is a personal essay about author Julia Alvarez's immigration experience from the Dominican Republic to New York. It is heavily adapted and excerpted, making it a good choice for ELs and struggling readers.

Reading on Día de Muertos
https://d43fweuh3sg51.cloudfront.net/media/media_files/8bjqjihs9vno9q5e9s2gw88h664c508q.pdf

This text provides a concise and historically accurate overview of Día de Muertos. I used this reading to introduce the holiday and give students context for how it is celebrated differently throughout Latin America. You might also pair this text with descriptions of other holidays around the world that are commemorations for the dead, like All Saints Day in the United States, The Bon Festival in Japan and The Hungry Ghost Festival in China.

The Arrival by Shaun Tan

A wordless graphic novel, with beautiful, thought-provoking illustrations, *The Arrival* highlights the universal experience of all migrants, as they try to adapt to a culture that is not always welcoming. I found this book to be especially useful for my ELs, as our classroom is linguistically diverse—and sometimes linguistically disparate.

Her Right Foot by Dave Eggers

This children's book for all ages tells the fascinating story of The Statue of Liberty's right foot. Did you know that The Statue of Liberty is an immigrant, too? I ended my unit with this book—and used it to segue into a discussion on The American Dream.

"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez
https://mrregalbuto.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/tonights-reading.pdf

This essay from Alvarez asks students to think about the significance of their own names—What does your name represent? How does it feel when your name is not valued? I used this text to introduce students to the author and to begin the unit by thinking about naming and identity.

"Names and Identity" [from Facing History and Ourselves]

This text is another personal essay, describing the link between names and identity from the perspective of an Asian-American teenager. Students appreciated reading about the perspective of a non-Latina/o person of color.

"The Story of Migration is the Story of Humankind" [video clip]
https://reimaginingmigration.org/the-story-of-migration-is-the-story-of-humankind/

This short clip reframes migration as a universal experience. It helped our class define migration. It also allowed us to think about how we "other" immigrants and refugees—and how this "othering" might be damaging, divisive, and hurtful.

"The Dream 9" [podcast episode]
https://reimaginingmigration.org/the-dream-9-from-latino-usa/

We used this podcast, as well as a digital exhibit from Google Arts and Culture to think about how the story of The Dream 9 is an embodiment of "The American Dream." We also interrogated definitions of "The American Dream" and considered what groups might struggle most to achieve "The American Dream."

"Facundo the Great" [video clip from StoryCorps]
https://reimaginingmigration.org/facundo-the-great/

This digital short, compiled from an oral history interview, provided a humorous introduction to our discussion on names and culture. Students later explored the StoryCorps oral history archive to think further about families, culture, and identities.

Resources for Students

Refugee by Alan Gratz

This young adult novel tells three fictionalized stories, highlighting the refugee experience in Nazi Germany, 1990s Cuba, and modern day Syria. I did not use this book in my teaching, but made it available in our classroom library as recommended reading. It became a student favorite quickly.

Enrique's Journey by Sonia Nazario
http://enriquesjourney.com/enriques-journey/exerpt/
https://www.npr.org/books/titles/138360928/enriques-journey#excerpt

Similarly, this biography was also made available to students in our classroom library. *Enrique's Journey* tells the story of a Honduran teenager who travels on "La Bestia," making his way to the United States to reunite with his mother. This is the story of many of my students, as I discovered.

Resources for Teachers

"Moving Stories Educator Guide"
https://reimaginingmigration.org/moving-stories-educators-guide-home/

Reimagining Migration offers a curriculum and a digital platform for students to interview their peers, families, or community members about stories of migration. We did not complete this project in full, but we used the questions included in the Educator Guide to prompt students to think about their own "Moving Stories," linking the personal with the universal and cultivating empathy.

Notes

[1] Emily Style, "Curriculum as Window and Mirror," *Listening for All Voices* (1988).

[2] Karen Gaffney, "Julia Alvarez, ¡Yo!" in *Reading U.S. Latina Writers: Remapping American Literature*, ed. Alvina E. Quintana (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 15-24.

[3] Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, "Breaking the Link," (Feb. 2018), http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/accountability/Documents/Breaking%20the%20Link%20English.pdf.

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