



## **La niñez: A Digital Story About my Childhood**

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
10th-12th Grade  
Honors and MYP Spanish III

**Keywords:** Memoir, Writing, Spanish, La niñez, Presentational Communication, Interpretive Communication. Digital, Storybird

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

**Synopsis:** This unit will use writing techniques and activities to teach students how to write cohesively and go through their writing process. Students will learn about memoir through writing exercises, read aloud and making personal connections to create strong, meaningful, writing pieces. We will focus on best practices in writing, research based strategies, conferring, and providing feedback to students throughout the writing process. We will begin with an introduction to writing by creating and using writing prompts and graphic organizers on a regular basis. Students will work on different activities structured around making connections and discovering strong topics to write a story based on their childhood. Students will also learn more about themselves and their lives in the process. As a final activity, they will be able to create a published piece of memoir writing on Storybird to share with others. I plan to teach this unit to a Spanish III class of 22 students, as well as share this unit with colleagues on my grade level. 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.

*I plan to teach this unit in the coming year to 60 students in Spanish III.*

*I give permission for the Charlotte Teachers 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.*

## Introduction

Based on the CMS curriculum, students in Spanish III will learn how to talk about the past using the preterite and imperfect tenses. La niñez (Childhood) focuses on daily learning targets, vocabulary chunks and performance assessments. Using the backwards design, students will be able to recount stories from their childhood with detail. Students will be able to present the information through the three modes of communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive and Presentational.

Effective language learning experiences are facilitated by the use of high-yield teaching and learning strategies designed to move students toward the attainment of carefully planned units and lesson performance objectives. I have written this unit for novice high and intermediate low/mid students to display their writing skills in Spanish.

This unit allows the student to create their own memoir based on story elements from their childhood. In order to get the students to produce comprehensible language, they receive the vocabulary in chunks and receive explicit instructions to talk about habitual, repeated actions using the imperfect tense. Once the students grasp the vocabulary and sentence starters/frames they delve into the world of writing memoirs. Memoir is a reflective piece that narrates an aspect of their life. Memoir is an emotional truth that is personal and sometimes intense. Students will be able to distinguish the differences between a memoir and an autobiography. Autobiographies are factual truths, not as personal and require research, dates and facts. Students will evaluate their tone, narrator's presence, time control and reflection of their own memoirs. In order to accomplish this, students will 1) Read dual language memoirs to analyze the elements of this genre. 2) Journal and brainstorm with graphic organizers and 3) write and publish their own memoir on Storybird.

From the beginning of Writing about our Lives, I have used this time to reflect on my own childhood. Coincidentally, a book idea sprung out from one of the sessions based on six word memoirs. I am anxious to sit down and create this opportunity. The seminar sessions were motivating and many of the writing ideas we examined during the seminars would be helpful to get the students to brainstorm their ideas. Who knows, I may inspire one of my students to become a published author!

## Demographics

North Mecklenburg High School is a comprehensive high school located in Huntersville, NC. Currently in its 65th year of operation, the school serves a population of approximately 2,462 students. The class of 2018 is approximately 438 students. The student body reflects the diverse community, which it serves, 61% of the students are African American, 13.7% of the students are white, 18.8% of students are Hispanic and 6.4% are other ethnic backgrounds. The class of 2017, graduation cohort rate was 95.69%. Our school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the International Baccalaureate Organization and is certified as a CMS Advanced Placement school. The State Board of Education has instituted the North Carolina Academic Scholars Program to encourage students to pursue a well-balanced, rigorous and challenging high school program. Students satisfactorily completing the course of

study requirements as identified by the State Board of Education are named North Carolina Academic Scholars and have the seal of recognition affixed to their diplomas. The faculty and support staff of North Mecklenburg High School is committed to improving student achievement as exhibited by their own professional growth, development, and level of education. According to the 2016-17 NC School Report card, of the 114 classroom teachers at North Mecklenburg High School, approximately 10.4% have advanced degrees and 10% have National Board Certification. North Mecklenburg offers a variety of academic programs ranging from Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate, World Languages, Autism Program, JROTC and a Career Technical Institute to service students interested in various careers.

## Unit Goals

Students will be able to:

- identify events in someone's childhood based on media
- illustrate events I hear or read based on a piece of media
- sequence story elements based on a piece of media
- ask and answer questions about childhood
- describe in detail what childhood was like for me and others
- relate in detail what I used to do as a child including where, when, why, and with whom

## Content Research

Since writing a memoir can lead to an abundance of thoughts and ideas, I will use Lucy Calkins's "Writing Pathways" to simplify what the students write. My motto for writing in the target language is "Keep It Simple Silly (KISS). At the novice high/intermediate low/mid phase of language learning, students often get overwhelmed with what they want to say. The acronym KISS, allows them to get their point across without compromising the writing. Calkins's graphic organizers are user friendly and spirited. Students can see what areas of growth they need to improve in with this checklist. Although students write the final product in Spanish, they can compare and contrast their writing to the checklist. During the daily lessons, students receive transition words, key words that indicate the use of the imperfect tense and sentence frames as a guide.

"From Ideas to Words Writing Strategies for English Language Learners" by Tasha Tropp Laman was a great find that Dr. Kissel shared. Although the focus is on English Language Learners (ELLs), the concepts and suggestions were helpful. "Student writing tells just a part of the story of a student's growth," (Laman, 132). Students are actively engaged in the writing process and engage in meaningful instruction. There is often the "light bulb" moment when a student connects the dots in a foreign language class. These moments are when I take that burst of excitement and keep moving them forward to grow and reflect on their writing. Chapter seven in Laman's book examined the writing growth and reflection of a student that spoke three languages. Student reflection is an effective way to inspire dialogue between the teacher and student. This builds relationships, promotes trust and the feeling of safety in the classroom environment.

The Writing Cycle by Fletcher and Portalupi was insightful and helpful in determining how I was going to teach writing memoirs to my students. As a visual learner graphics, the drawings were helpful and made relating the material easier than anticipated. I have lead writing workshops in the past, but none as elaborate as this. The ideas were student-friendly and the biggest rock from this source suggested that students have time to write, as opposed to listening to a lecture for 90 minutes. I am a firm believer in providing students with a guide, then allowing them to work independently to complete their goals.

Since pictures are worth a thousand words, I like the idea of students bringing in photos from their childhood. In a later lesson for La niñez, students construct complete sentences using sentence frames in the imperfect tense to talk about someone's childhood. This visual literacy allows the student to interpret and make meaning from an image. The output can be spoken or written. This process prompts students to use their vocabulary and string together shorter phrases to construct meaningful, comprehensible text. To keep this closely related to the target culture, "Family Pictures" by Carmen Lomas Garza will encourage students to generate written and/or spoken output based on the author's childhood in Texas. The text is bilingual and introduces students to other aspects about Mexican culture that may have not known.

Louise Rosenblatt suggested that reading is the interaction of the reader and the text; what does the reader bring and take away from the text. As someone reads, the text conjures images in the reader's mind, which brings up prior experiences. Prior knowledge can lead to student inquiry about the text. This inquiry can take the form of making predictions, connections and increasing comprehension.

As students brainstorm, draft, review, revise, polish and publish their memoirs, they ultimately reflect about their childhood and look how these events have shaped their lives. These memoirs will make a lasting impression on those who read them.

### **Instructional Implementation**

Students will begin with guided notes to introduce the vocabulary for games/toys, essential verbs and sentence starters. Sentence starters and signal words can help students to be more successful in learning both content and using the target language. Sentence starters provide an opportunity for students to use essential vocabulary while providing a higher structure than what they could produce on their own.

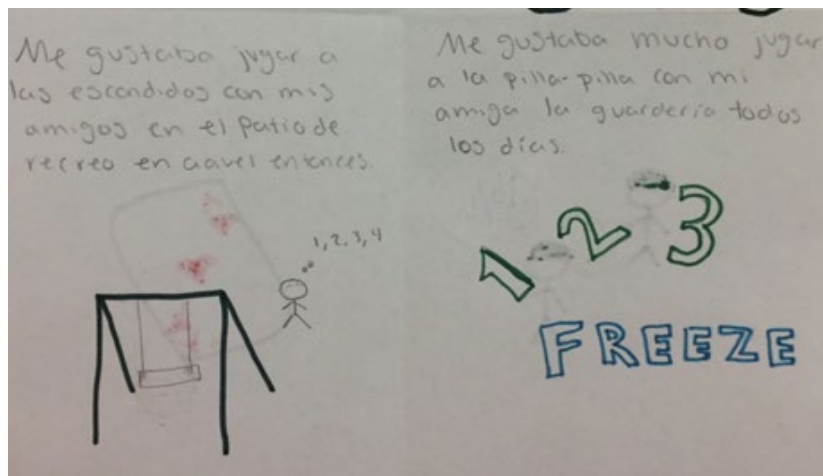
After the introduction of the vocabulary, students will fill out a graphic organizer to complete their answers to sentence starters based on the imperfect tense for the verb gustar (to like).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Flower Writing

Super Teacher Worksheets - [www.superteacherworksheets.com](http://www.superteacherworksheets.com)

After students organize their thoughts, they will apply their understanding of the phrase “Me gustaba” to sketch a rough comic strip about activities they enjoyed as a child.



Each day, students will build on their vocabulary through vocabulary chunks. Before introducing the new material, students will review the previous classes’ vocabulary. I organized and designed games and interpersonal communication activities to help students gain confidence in their language speaking skills. This allows students to increase their retention of the material without monotony. Games like Kahoot and Quizlet Live allow students to practice the vocabulary through active engagement and allows retention of vocabulary.

Students will begin the memoir portion of the unit by watching a short video entitled “What is a Memoir?” that introduces the genre and offers a comparison between autobiography and memoir. After the video, students begin the brainstorming process. Using an app called

Mindmap Maker; students generate ideas about their childhood electronically using a computer. This allows them to have a visually organized map that shows information chronologically. The mind map shows pieces of their childhood. Once the mind maps are complete, students will answer questions to elicit story ideas and make a choice to begin the drafting process for the final product. The next step, students will examine memoir text in the mother tongue and the target language to direct ideas and the drafting process. Students will watch “When I was Little, A Four-Year-Olds Memoir of Her Youth” by Jamie Lee Curtis and “Too Many Tamales” by Gary Soto for inspiration. These short videos provides students with a variety of learning tools to help learners access language, culture and content to meet performance objectives. I want them to realize that writing in the target language is not complex. Using the tools from class (notes, graphic organizers, etc.), they can use realia, props, manipulatives and other resources to make input comprehensible.

After the visuals, students write a first draft using two techniques found on Scholastic.com. Students will complete Truth and Fiction, a Memory Exercise (pictured).

**Step 1:** Write a detailed description of a real memory. Convince your reader that it really happened.

**Step 2:** Write a detailed description of a constructed memory, something that never happened to you. Convince your reader that it really happened.

**Step 3:** Read your two memories, true and constructed, to a friend. When reading, try not to give away which of the two memories really happened.

**Step 4:** Ask your friend to identify which of the memories was true or constructed. Before revealing the truth, ask your friend to explain his or her reasoning.

**Step 5:** With the help of your reader, identify which of your two memories was most compelling? Why?

**Step 6:** Is there such thing as a “true memory?”

**Step 7:** What makes a memory stick in the reader’s mind? Drawing from this exercise, use what you’ve learned to draft a compelling memoir.

After a quick discussion, students will continue the writing process by reviewing their memoirs. Students will use the graphic organizer sandwich to constructive yet considerate input in their writing. The students have sufficient time to write, review and revise their submissions. Students will also use checklist graphic organizers created by Lucy Calkins to check structure, development and language conventions.

During the polish phase, students will meet with a level five Spanish student for a peer critique. This builds camaraderie and a potential ally for the school year. The level five students are sharp and knowledgeable of Spanish grammar. Both levels receive instruction on how to peer edit writing samples. The editors are encouraged to be supportive and offer constructive feedback. The writers are strongly encouraged to listen, ask questions and take action to revise. This peer feedback will allow the writer to see what the editor took from the text

After a final review of each memoir, students will publish their memoirs to Storybird. Storybird is an online platform, which allows students to create digital stories using artwork. Students can read the memoirs of their classmates and can even co-write stories

together. This platform is unique and engaging. I am looking forward to reading what my students produce about their childhood.

## Day 1

*Warm-up:* Students complete a cloze activity reviewing the preterit past tense as a refresher.

*Momento cultural:* Discussion on traveling to Cuba, including video. Students complete a KWL Chart (Know, Want to Know, and Learned). Momentos Culturales lead up to the movie “Viva Cuba”. “Viva Cuba” examines the friendship between two children, threatened by the differences between their parents.

*The Big Question:* How do I describe what I did as a child in Spanish?

*Prior Knowledge/Experience:* N/A

*The Challenge:* Students will complete a mini-assessment using whiteboards to test their understanding of forming and communicating in the imperfect tense.

*Guided Practice:*

- A. Introducing New Material (INM): Introduce verbs related to childhood as well as sentence frames to build complete sentences.
  - a. Guided Notes
- B. Review the verb gustar and indirect object pronouns
  - a. Introduce the imperfect form of the verb “Me gustaba...”
- C. Communicative activity: Students tell a partner three different activities that they liked/disliked as a child. Partners will share out with the class.
- D. Mini-Assessment: Students use whiteboards to write a sentence expressing what someone liked or did not like to do as a child based on a photo
  - a. Photo example:



b.

## Day 2

*Warm-up:* Students complete a cloze activity reviewing the previous day's grammar as a refresher. Later in the unit, we will mix both past tenses in order to narrate events in the past.

*Momento cultural:* Introduction of popular Cuban dishes and how the tropical climate affects food choices. Students complete think-pair-share.

*The Big Question:* How do I describe what I did as a child in Spanish?

*Prior Knowledge/Experience:* Childhood vocabulary, sentence frames related to the imperfect tense

*The Challenge:* Students will complete a drawing to demonstrate their comprehension of forming and communicating in the imperfect tense.

*Guided Practice:*

- A. Students play Lo Tengo. This activity helps build students memorization and apply the vocabulary. This activity practices any concept students are learning or need more help with.
- B. Review "Me gustaba+infinitives"
- C. INM: Introduce keywords that indicate the imperfect tense
  - a. Guided Notes
- D. INM: Imperfect tense conjugation
  - a. Guided Notes
- E. Kahoot! or Quizlet Live to review of time expressions related to the imperfect, so as to build sentence fluency
- F. Communicative Activity: Students tell a partner three different activities that they did as a child, and how often they did them. Partners will share out with the class.

## Day 3

*Warm-up:* Students complete a cloze activity reviewing the preterit past tense as a refresher. Later in the unit, we will mix both past tenses in order to narrate events in the past.

*Momento cultural:* Discussion regarding benefits of being bilingual, including video. Students complete think-pair-share.

*The Big Question:* How do I describe what I did as a child in Spanish?

*Prior Knowledge/Experience:* Childhood vocabulary, verb endings for the imperfect tense, time expressions related to the imperfect tense

*The Challenge:* Students will complete a mini-assessment to demonstrate their comprehension of forming and communicating in the imperfect tense.



*Guided Practice:*

- A. Students play Surrender on Seis, a conjugation game, with a partner. This activity helps build students' fluency with the different verb endings, which are essential for communication.
- B. Review of time expressions related to the imperfect, to build sentence fluency.
- C. Communicative activity: Students tell a partner three different activities that they did as a child, and how often they did them. Partners will share out with the class.
- D. INM: Introduce other contexts in which imperfect is used, using the WATERS acronym (weather, age, telling time, emotion, repetition, and setting/description).
  - a. In pairs, students turn-and-talk as we analyze example sentences. Students also complete guided notes in their interactive notebooks.
- E. Assessment: Students complete a Google form assessment to measure comprehension and mastery of the imperfect tense. Prior to completing the assessment, students will review their understanding of the concepts by doing the following:
  - a. Playing a verb conjugation game on [www.conjuguemos.com](http://www.conjuguemos.com)

Day 4

*Warm-up:* Students complete a cloze activity reviewing the imperfect past tense as a refresher. Later in the unit, we will mix both past tenses in order to narrate events in the past.

*Momento cultural:* Discussion of Afro-Cuban All-Stars, including video. Students complete think-pair-share based on guiding questions.

*The Big Question:* How do I describe what I did as a child in Spanish?

*Prior Knowledge/Experience:* Childhood vocabulary, verb endings for the imperfect tense, time expressions related to the imperfect tense

*The Challenge:* Students will complete graphic organizer to brainstorm ideas about their childhood. This graphic organizer will evolve into a memoir

*Guided Practice:*

- A. Review Imperfect tense using Quizlet Live
- B. INM: Vocabulario Chunk #2: la niñez y verbos de la niñez
- C. Lo tengo
- D. Check for Understanding: Whiteboards
- E. Memoirs from Life
  - a. Answer the following prompts with memories from your life.
- F. Memoirs from Photography
  - a. Students view a series of photos as a class and write their reaction with a few sentences.
- G. Exit Ticket
  - a. Five minute free write based on a memory
  - b. Students write for five full minutes without taking a break or pausing

## Day 5

*Warm-up:* Students complete a cloze activity reviewing the preterit past tense as a refresher. Later in the unit, we will mix both past tenses in order to narrate events in the past.

*Momento cultural:* Discussion regarding benefits of being bilingual, including video. Students complete think-pair-share.

*The Big Question:* How do I describe what I did as a child in Spanish?

*Prior Knowledge/Experience:* Childhood vocabulary, verb endings for the imperfect tense, time expressions related to the imperfect tense

*The Challenge:* Students will complete a mini-assessment to demonstrate their comprehension of forming and communicating in the imperfect tense.

### *Guided Practice:*

- A. Students play Surrender on Seis, a conjugation game, with a partner. This activity helps build students' fluency with the different verb endings, which are essential for communication.
- B. Review of time expressions related to the imperfect, to build sentence fluency.
- C. A Memory Exercise
- D. Mapping Memories
  - a. Students create a timeline from ages three to the present
    - i. Students write positive memories above the timeline
    - ii. Students write negative memories below the timeline
  - b. Students share out their memories
- E. Exit Ticket
  - a. Five minute free write based on a memory
  - b. Students write for five full minutes without taking a break or pausing

## Appendix 1: Teaching Standards

IL/NH.COD.3	Use the language to present information to an audience.
IL/NH.COD.3.1	Use the target language to give short spoken or written presentations about familiar topics.
IL/NH.COD.3.2	Produce a sequence of simple phrases and short sentences relating common themes in other disciplines.
IL/NH.COD.3.3	Use readily available technology tools and digital literacy skills to present academic information in the target language.
IL/NH.CMT.1.2	Carry out short interactions on familiar topics, such as family, friends, and activities, with people from the target culture or communities of learners of the same target language.
IL/NH.CMT.2	Understand words and concepts presented in the language.
IL/NH.CMT.2.1	Understand practices, products, and perspectives on familiar topics from simple texts.
IL/NH.CMT.2.2	Understand the meaning of short messages used in the target culture or by communities of learners of the same target language.
IL/NH.CMT.3	Use the language to present information to an audience.
IL/NH.CMT.3.1	Use simple phrases and short sentences to describe arts, sports, games, and media from the target culture.
IL/NH.CMT.3.2	Use simple phrases and short sentences to present information in school or community events related to the target culture.
IL/NH.CLL.2.1	Understand ideas on familiar topics expressed in short sentences and frequently used expressions.
IL/NH.CLL.2.2	Summarize spoken messages and announcements about familiar topics.
IL/NH.CLL.2.3	Summarize simple texts containing familiar vocabulary in terms of the main ideas and supporting details.

Intermediate Low (IL)

Novice High (NH)

## Annotated Bibliography

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This book captures a little girl's simple, joyous celebration of herself, as she looks back on her childhood from the lofty height of four and a half years.

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This is the illustrator and storyteller's bilingual memoir of growing up in Texas, fully immersed in her family's Mexican traditions.

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This website offers tips and tricks for language teachers to get students to produce more of the target language in class with sentence frames and sentence starters.

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This book provided insight and practical tips for getting ELL students writing, from various stages of English language acquisition.

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“Truth and Fiction: A Memory Exercise.” *Truth and Fiction: A Memory Exercise*,  
Scholastic.com, [www.teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/memoir/draft/memoryexercise.html](http://www.teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/memoir/draft/memoryexercise.html)  
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This website provides lessons plans and graphic organizers for teachers to use for rigorous instruction in a variety of subject areas.

Write It: Memoir. Accessed October 20, 2018.

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/memoir/review/index.htm>.

A peer review response that is honest and easy-to-swallow in a concise graphic organizer.

## Resources

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