

## **Female Words: Literature as a Healing Process**

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### **GENERAL OVERVIEW**

The last fifty years represent a new era in female literature: a woman could be the heroine in a story or poem, with her own words, following her own model, and her own feelings. It was not easy to jump over all old-male created strictures and structures. Women of color who were writers had to shape and reshape terms to depict their identities and show their strong literary vitality; they had to struggle consistently and constantly with themselves to show their subcultures.

The formation of women's studies programs in our different learning and teaching institutions permitted an academic focus on work by women. One of the purposes of this unit is to introduce my students to feminist thinking. I want to help spread the concepts of "female and feminism" in multicultural literature. I want to have discussions about stereotypes in literature, and I want my students to be mindful of the gender biases reinforced in literary canons. I hope to encourage my students to read, to think critically, and to write about multicultural literature. We need to dialogue about women's literary expressions in order to restart and reshape old paradigms. I sincerely believe that literature, specifically women's literature, can be used to shape youth culture. Books, magazines, newspapers, radio, television and movies are ways to share feminist knowledge.

My intention is to show my students as many aspects as I can about multicultural women's literature. Also, it is very important that I, as well as my students, work at an interdisciplinary level; it is crucial that teachers work together to develop our unit topics. Because I teach in Spanish, I have to teach and read in Spanish. I would like to use bilingual versions of novels, poems and short stories written by female writers, so I can teach native as well as non-native speakers. However, I will focus the texts in Spanish because the majority of my students are native Spanish speakers. The students can be from the 9<sup>th</sup> until the 12<sup>th</sup> grade; in my case, I receive students belonging to those grades the entire school year. I have students of diverse cultures and backgrounds, but the majority is Hispanic, predominantly Mexican. For this reason, I will turn the multicultural aspect a little for my students in authors that write or think in Hispanic-Spanish. The social background of my students is the one that corresponds to the majority of all immigrants who arrive or come to this state: they don't have a high cultural English level. They have linguistic problems as well as cultural ones. Literature is a subject or theme that some of them don't even know exists. All this means that multicultural literature and intercultural communications and relations are playing a second role in their lives and education. I will try to teach and enrich them in their ways of perceiving new concepts surrounded by new ways of understanding our international

relations as well as reinforcing the female figure in literature. I will try not only to emphasize commonalities between all people from diverse backgrounds, but I will also bring females to the front study line and try to make a specific study of female literature, which will involve multicultural roots focused on female literature. A multicultural female literature that tries not only to show how women are able to overcome barriers and obstacles, but also the capacity to heal their and our souls through words.

Literature can be classified following the national and ethnic identity of the author or protagonists; it can expose readers to ethnic issues to emphasize similarities and to let them know about the differences or disagreements between cultures and genders. One way to accomplish this is to leap over the barriers one has been taught since childhood. Doing so can be a good point of reference for trying to re-educate without losing the main issues of developing new intercultural and multicultural aspects. That is a good way to develop inclusive cultural or multicultural ideals. Once students recognize the diversity around them and understand other cultures, they are able to understand multicultural literature, a significant point for all second and third generation immigrants, because they can go back to past or removed cultures and literature from their ancestors. It is proven that multicultural literature plays a significant role in letting these students connect with their parents' world, with diverse emotions, perspectives and creativity. For a teacher this signifies the creation of a critical-creative classroom as well as assignments in the classroom surrounded by a diversity of cultures, ethnicities, languages and literatures.

Since the eighties, novels written by female writers have increased in this country as well as in Europe and other parts of the world. Hispanic female writers are fighting to express and get their own identity in North America. The last two decades have witnessed an explosion of interest in writing by and about women of diverse cultures including Hispanic women writers like Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), Carmen Lyra (1888-1949), Isabel Allende, Ana Castillo, Helena Maria Viramontes and Sandra Cisneros. Also, other ethnic writers are playing a very important role in North American literature, such as Maya Angelou, Gwendolyn Bennett or Gloria Naylor, all African American women. Louise Erdrich is Native American, and Amy Tan is Asian American. Sometimes they express identification to one culture; sometimes it's bicultural. A new phenomenon is that sometimes both cultures develop into a third one, which is the result of both; it's a mixture of both that creates or develops in a third. This produces a flow of emotions reflected in a novel, poem or short story in which we read multicultural viewpoints that the author reveals to find and fight for a self-identification. She expresses relationships between others and herself and between cultures and herself.

How often do we, in American high schools, have female writers as heroines? Well, it is time to change the vision, to include the feminine perspective. A very important goal in contemporary literature is to have the students realize that teenagers and adults from diverse cultures and backgrounds have the same experiences in successes and frustrations. This is why we have to show them the universality: similarities and differences between male and female. In a diverse country like the United States,

students need to have an engagement with literature to understand what it means to read different books and to understand distinct aspects of distinct cultures. If we can reach this point, it will be easier to go to the next step: intercultural communication and inter-socializing between our different ethnic backgrounds.

### **Does Literature Heal?**

As a language and literature teacher, my opinion is that reading as well as writing have a protecting function: through both we are being sheltered and relaxed. Like in those long convalescent years of darkness, those women had to remain apart from the society as if they were in the process of being cured. Literature was and is like a healing balm that is emerging in books and texts, and I will use it for my students. Literature has curative properties for these women because it renews and restores the pains they had hidden in their souls. Those female authors are giving us a therapy, a self-knowledge of our soul, so we will have a healing balm against our ignorance. Their words make our lives more human, more poetic and bright like our variety of authors. Healing here is not a matter of chemistry but of words.

I will transmit to my students the authors' Magic-realism and their revealed mysteries; let us feel female literature as spiritual food with almost miracle proportions. Sometimes poetic irony will shine, sometimes happiness or sadness, sometimes fantasy or cruel reality. Their pains and images will come out. But, as I tell my students: "Literature is like it heals my confusion and my chaos." Those female words are relieving, calming, and embellishing their literature. Their words transport us to other worlds created by them, to other visions or points of view, a world that belongs to those women who are presented in female characters with their corresponding dialogs, their own situations and mysteries.

Words are one of the essences of literal universal immortality. We have several examples of African American women writers who write to heal: Adrienne Kennedy says, "My only salvation is to write" (*Voices from the Gaps*). Also Virginia Hamilton says, "I see the imaginative use of language and ideas as a way to illuminate a human condition...I've attempted to mark the history and traditions of African Americans, a parallel culture people, through my writing...I want the readers, both adults and children, to care about who the characters are. I want readers to feel, to understand, and to empathize" (*Voices from the Gaps*). Sherley Anne Williams says "I am the women I speak of in my stories, my poems" (*Voices from the Gaps*). Anita Richmond Bunkley said in an interview, "I hope there'll come a time when books that have everything to do with positive feelings of love in our community will be embraced and celebrated by the public" (*Voices from the Gaps*). Shay Youngblood said in an interview, "I am interested in transformation, sparked by generational influence, how traditions are passed on in different cultures, how an individual's actions can create global, political and social changes. I write as a call to action, using Theater as a verb" (*Creative Loafing*, 1995).

My students and I will analyze female characters and expressions hoping to learn to love, to respect and to forgive each other, as well as to enjoy literature more and more.

## **TEACHING STRATEGIES**

My challenge as teacher is trying to work together with my students and show them literature that has not been studied to in the past, like multicultural Hispanic, African American, Asian American or Native American female literature. I will introduce the multicultural female writers, and then we will read different parts of novels, poems and short stories. I hope that in my classroom various debates will emerge and help us go to another stage. This helps to create a new literature written by students, because literature is written as well as spoken; with this, I want to express a clear challenge to young students. Students who are in an unstable society or family can find the beginning of their multicultural healing process in their questions or tensions, and of course find the starting point of their origins. As a teacher I need to find worthy works and texts to enrich an adolescent brain. We should not forget the classic work, for it can be a good way to confront works. A classic and a contemporary one can help the reader analyze the evolution process and make comparisons between both.

It can be very helpful to understand the developing process in our multicultural world, but it can be especially interesting for young women because of the following themes: how the protagonist grows up in a different place, far away from her roots; how she is telling and expressing her coming-of-age in a different place; how she copes in a different place with all the corresponding linguistic implications to it, a different language and a different way of communication with her New World; how the new culture she gets involved with represents a new shock to her, and how she will heal this; and how she has to deal with two cultures, which means a bi-cultural problem. In a Hispanic writer or protagonist, she will have the Hispanic-North American struggle that can develop in taking a mono-cultural or bi-cultural decision in her life. How is her attitude in her family, as she struggles for understanding and identity? How is she dealing with the multicultural female dilemma? How she is growing up as a woman, making decisions in her life that can impact her future in a positive or negative way? The same happens to Asian American female writers or inhabitants; African Americans are a little different because they are, for the most part, monolingual (English), and they are adapted to the new melting pot. They have lived in America longer than newer immigrants, but they continue to search for their roots.

I will create an atmosphere to have discussions and debates in groups, as well as conferences organized by students. A special one could be to exchange gender positions. A boy has to try to represent the role of a girl and a girl a boy from the literary point of view; they have to play different roles. This will enrich female perspectives and get the students to have a higher level of criticism and analysis. By role-playing, each student has to try to defend different visions, perspectives and also increase criticism representing

the opposite gender. The final purpose will be that a student will be able to write and read his/her own poem or short story showing his/her literature comprehension.

Each student can also consult our drama teacher as well as our art and history teachers. This will give the student a historical-linguistic context and a better understanding of what he/she reads. I will try to work with the other teaching communities to have an interdisciplinary approach of working between several teachers, so that the students can acquire a sense of learning in a collective and analytical way.

The time I would invest, following my actual school schedule, would be one time/week during one hour in nine weeks. Every two weeks, I would teach a different literary genre to familiarize the students with the text.

### **Multicultural-Intercultural Dialogue**

As a Spanish language and literature teacher, I think it is important to understand what it means to have diversity in our daily lives. Terms such as diversity, cultural pluralism and multiculturalism are taking part of a constant circle in our teaching strategies; these are important issues. We have a multiethnic student society in which various ethnic groups will preserve and develop their cultural traditions the same way that they attempt to maintain their language. The evolution can impact an individual or a group. We need to have daily the idea of sharing knowledge, so multiple standards for perceiving, believing, doing and evaluating are allowed for. Similarities and diversities can be reflected in students' spoken as well as written literature.

The majority of my students have a microculture which is going to develop and be modified by intercultural reading, writing and intercultural dialogues, as well as by multicultural relations. In my heterogeneous class, assimilation and students fusing together are very close to one other concept, integration. And here I will also include students with disabilities in their language and understanding.

### **Objectives**

The main objectives that we can see in the selected poems and texts will be focused on the issue of triumph of the human spirit of young adult students. The following are the objectives: to establish relations between cultural production of women and society in America (particularly the Hispanic population); to localize the possible conditions that can make a work written by women an adjectival work, a work in which we can read and discuss their perspectives; to detect the intervention of a woman as a historic subject, taking into account the epochs and the different places, like the colonialism or the actual Latin-American feminist criticisms; to recognize the impact that feminist discourses have on cultural theory; to establish new conditions in our human rights regarding gender, social class, and racial-ethnic identifications.

Taking in account guidelines provided by H.I.S.D., my students shall be provided the following opportunities: to recognize the major differences among poems, short stories, novels, plays and fiction versus nonfiction; to recognize the development of an overall theme in a literary work; to be able to use basic literary terminology as well as recognize relevant details; to differentiate between fact and nonfact; to make inferences and draw conclusions; to evaluate and make judgments; and finally, to perceive cause and effect relationships. The students would have the capability to obtain books from our school library, as well being able to obtain all necessary information from the Internet, magazines, newspapers, different articles, radio, cinema or television.

### **LITERATURE FOR THE UNIT: SOURCES**

I will now elaborate upon some women of color authors, poems and pieces of their short stories and novels that I consider can be useful in class because they combine and have the essential ideas I have written above in healing and overcoming through words in literature. We can select several of the objectives given and talked about above, because they refer to multicultural literature, and with the appropriate notes given to my students, let us start with a few poetry examples, and continue with short stories as well as novels.

#### **Chicana Women Writers**

##### ***Sandra Cisneros***

Cisneros is a Chicana writer and poet. In her poem she shows pride in her Chicana identity. She demands attention and shows individual uniqueness and strength. She wants to attract attention to all those young Hispanic women to reinforce their self-esteem:

I who arrived as deliberate as Tuesday  
without my hat and shoes  
with one rude black tattoo  
and purpose as thick as pumpkin...  
One day I'll write my name on everything  
as certain as a trail of bread...  
You'll see. You'll see.  
I will not out so easily  
I was here. As loud as trumpet.  
As real as pebble in the shoe.  
A tiger tooth. A definite voodoo.  
Do not erase me.

In her novel *The House on Mango Street* (1989), she writes about Esperanza's low socio-economic situation, her neighbors and her dreams for a house that one day belongs to her. It is a piece between fiction and poetry, a lyrical prose; she talks about issues that

are important to her, like feminism, love, oppression and religion. In the following texts, we can see her criticism and strength in herself:

My mother says when I grow older my dusty hair will settle and my blouse will learn to stay clean, but I have decided not to grow up tame like the others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain . . . (38)

In the movies there is always one with red lips who is beautiful and cruel. She is the one who drives men crazy and laughs them all the way. Her power is her own. She will not give it away . . . (43)

In her short story “One Holy Night,” we can hear her militant voice as she says, “She is nobody’s mother and nobody’s wife.” She writes lyrical sentences that border on poetry. She inserts in the story (as well as in poems) these near-mythical characters, these historical figures who harbor so much symbolism and meaning, but who have to struggle just like all the Chicanas to make sense of the world and survive within it. In this theoretical world, fictions are interacting; it’s a culmination of heritage and belief that tells a story of cultures that aren’t as different as they seem and people who are aware of each other. Here, she introduces the figure of Abuelita (nice grandmother), which means ancestry, and also a Chicano criticism to the new culture they are receiving and living in,

He said his name was Chaq. Chaq Uxmal Paloquin. That’s what he told me. He was of an ancient line of Mayan kings. Here, he said, making a map with the heel of his boot, this is where I come from, the Yucatan, the ancient cities. This is what Baby Boy said . . . (27)

The stars foretell everything, he said. My birth. My son’s. The boy-child who will bring back the grandeur of my people from those who have broken the arrows, from those who have pushed the ancient stones off their pedestals . . . (28)

When Abuelita found out I was going to dar a luz, she cried until her eyes were little, and blamed Uncle Lalo, and Uncle Lalo blamed this country, and Abuelita blamed the infamy of men. That is when she burned the cucumber pushcart and called me a sinvergüenza because I am without shame . . . (32)

### ***Cordelia Candelaria***

In her first poem we can see first a typical bilingual poem, mixed with English and Spanish words. She gives vegetation metaphors to illustrate generations of families. A garden was planted in the past and with time it was transformed, like the future Chicano generations:

My folks planted the yerba buena  
 yesterday...  
 where sprigs of yerba buena swim greenly  
 in teapots of boiling water, fragrant haikus  
 in oceans of prose.  
 Cuando acabaron con el jardincito  
 they pulled each other up off their knees,  
 Arranged a few stray leaves  
 and looked at me . . .

In her next poem she writes about buying a history; she compares the Chicana past to the sudden cracking of an egg; sadness is expressed; and assimilation to a society can be unconscious. What can we expect about an oppressed race that is unable to even recognize the alterations imposed upon their culture?

No history  
 So she tried to buy one  
 paying dearly for fringed rugs  
 she hung like relic tapestries  
 next to Queen Anne chairs from Sears . . .  
 One unkind day her story broke upon her  
 suddenly-like and egg cracked sharply  
 and out spilled the messy query  
 that left her wet with shiny tears  
 without a history.

***Pat Mora***

In this poem that she calls “*Legal Alien*,” she talks about bilingualism and biculturalism, Chicana realities. Her feeling about the Anglo-American part is clearly manifested. She screams, showing that cultural differences exist, and she has to struggle between two cultures—the one of heritage and the new one she has to learn:

<p>Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural,          able to slip from “How’s life?”          to “Me’stan volviendo loca,”          able to sit in a paneled office          drafting memos in smooth English,          able to order in a fluent Spanish          at a Mexican restaurant,          American but hyphenated,          viewed by Anglos as perhaps exotic,          perhaps inferior, definitely different,          viewed by Mexicans as alien</p>	<p>Bilingue-bicultural,          capaz de deslizarse de Como (te) va la vida?          a Me’stan volviendo loca,          capaz de ocupar un despacho bien apuntado          redactando memorandums en ingles liso,          capaz de ordenar la cena en español fluido          en restaurante mexicano,          americana pero con guion,          vista por los anglos como exotica,          quizas inferior, obviamente distinta,          vista por mexicanos como extranjera</p>
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(their eyes say, “You may speak Spanish but you’re not like me”)	(sus ojos dicen “Puede que hables español pero no eres como yo”)
an American to Mexicans	americana para mexicanos
a Mexican to Americans . . .	mexicana para americanos . . .
sliding back and forth	pasando de un lado a otro
between the fringes of both worlds...	de los márgenes de dos mundos . . .
by masking the discomfort	disfrazando la incomodidad
of being pre-judged	del pre-juicio
Bi-laterally.	Bi-lateralmente.

***Carmen Tafolla***

I am going to teach a couple of poems in which we can see two topics of Chicana literature like the ancestors with the figure of the mother, and the topic of the curandera (woman healer); the first one refers also to the poverty. In both is also reflected the nostalgia and the sense of past history:

West Side-corn tortillas for a penny each  
 Made by an aged woman  
 and her mother.  
 Cooked on the homblack of a flat stove,  
 Flipped to slap the birth awake,  
 Wrapped by corn hands,  
 Toasted morning light and dancing history-  
 earth gives birth to corn  
 gives birth to man gives birth to earth.  
 Corn tortillas-penny each.  
 No tax . . .

Curandera	Healer woman
Te siento arrastrando	I feel you dragging
Tus chanclas por los arcos-portales	your worn shoes through the arches- portals
De mis venas	of my veins
Bajando los botes de tu sabiduría	getting the containers of your wisdom
Del gabinete	from the cabinet
De mi cabeza . . .	of my mind . . .

***Denise Chavez***

In her work *Face of an Angel*, I am going to choose a part of the text in which religion is reflected. Religion played and plays an important role in Chicano immigrants families. She represents the common folk of the working class in which a woman plays a second role:

In our family, men usually come first. Then God and country. Country was last. Should be last. When you grow up in the Southwest, your state is your country. There exists no other country outside that which you know. Likewise, neighborhood is a country. As your family is a country. As your house is a country. As you are a country . . .

### ***Ana Castillo***

She likes to focus on her mestiza heritage and to write about gender issues and race. She introduced the term “Xicanisma” to refer to her Chicana culture. She tries to reclaim for all women their sense of self as is evident in the novel *So Far from God*. She is going to show us two typical figures in Chicana literature like “la gritona” (weeping woman) and “la curandera,” the female healer typical in the Southwest. Her texts contains a lot of symbolism:

After all, there was Ruben with his native and Chicano male friends always joking among themselves, always siding with each other, and always agreeing about the order and reason of the universe, and since Esperanza had no native women friends to verify any of what was being told to her by Ruben about the woman’s role in what they were doing, she did not venture to contradict him . . . (36)

What was left of Caridad had been brought home after three months in the hospital. In addition to caring for fe la Gritona (as her mother had begun to refer to her, although never to her face), it was Sofi’s main job to care for Caridad, or as stated more accurately above, what was left of her . . . (37)

Could Caridad even be said to know how to listen at all, much less listen properly so as to not misdiagnose an illness? A curandera not only had the health of her patient in her own hands but the spirit as well. What if Caridad gave out the wrong remedio and caused the sick one to get worse, or to go mad, or even to die? (62)

### **African American Women Writers**

#### ***Maya Angelou***

Maya Angelou is probably the first African American Renaissance woman because of all her different and diverse works. In her novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, she is trying to overcome the limitations and oppressions she was receiving physically as well as mentally in the atmosphere she was living in. Her grandmother is the part of her ancestry that enforces the spirit of a little girl who has to go to fix her teeth; so she depicts her Momma (grandmother) as a heroine because she will fight for her rights in that entire negative environment; here concretely I have chosen a scene in which Momma takes the little girl (grandbaby Marguerite) to the dentist and he ridicules both on the basics of race:

Momma knocked at the back door and a young white girl opened it to show surprise at seeing us there . . . The girl closed the door firmly. Now the humiliation of hearing Momma describe herself as if she had no last name to the young white girl was equal to the physical pain. It seemed terribly unfair to have a toothache and a headache and have to bear at the same time the heavy burden of Blackness. . .

He was choosing words the way people hunt for shells. “Annie, you know I don’t treat nigra, colored people . . .”

“Annie, everybody has a policy. In this world you have to have a policy. Now, my policy is I don’t treat colored people . . .”

He had never once looked at me. He turned his back and went . . .

Momma walked in that room as if she owned it. She shoved that silly nurse aside with one hand and strode into the dentist’s office . . . He looked up at her just before she caught him by the collar of his white jacket.

“Stand up when you see a lady, you contemptuous scoundrel . . .”

“You knave, do you think you acted like a gentleman, speaking to me like that in front of my granddaughter?”

“ . . . No, ma’am, Mrs. Henderson, I’m sorry . . .”

“I didn’t ask you to apologize in front of Marguerite, because I don’t want her to know my power . . .”

“You will never again practice dentistry . . .”

Now let us see a poem in which she promotes the figure of a woman. She calls herself *Phenomenal Woman*, like her poem. In her poetry she likes to talk about courage, perseverance and the acceptance of oneself. Angelou suggests that it is time that a woman fulfills and realizes her own potential:

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies  
I’m not cute or built to suit a model’s fashion size  
But when I start to tell them  
They think I’m telling lies . . .  
I walk into a room  
Just as cool as you please and to a man  
The fellows stand or  
Fall down on their knees . . .  
I’m a woman  
Phenomenal woman  
That’s me . . .  
Men themselves have wondered  
What they see in me . . .  
But they can’t touch  
My inner mystery . . .  
When you see me passing

It ought to make you proud . . .  
Phenomenal woman  
That's me.

### ***Gwendolyn Bennett***

Bennett is a member of the Harlem Renaissance movement. In her poem “Song” we can see reflected themes and motifs belonging to this movement such as racial pride, recognition of Black music, and the use of slang language mixed with a glamorous metonymic form in verse that makes us feel like we were listening to musical sounds. This is a typical example in verse that shows all kinds of poetical figures that can be together in a poem mixing words with musical phonetic sounds surrounded by neologisms:

I am weaving a song of waters,  
Shaken from firm, brown limbs, . . .  
My song has the ush sweetness  
Of moist, dark lips  
Where hymns keep company  
With old forgotten banjo songs.  
Abandon tells you  
That I sing the heart of race  
While sadness whispers  
That I am the cry of a soul . . .  
A-shoutin' in de ole camp  
A-strummin' o' de ole banjo . . .  
Singin' slow, sobbin' slow . . .  
Strummin', strummin', strummin' slow . . .  
A praying slave  
With a jazz-band after . . .  
Singin' slow, sobbin' low . . .

### ***Shay Youngblood***

In her book *The Big Mama Stories*, which is a compilation of short stories, the protagonist is a young African American who lost her mother when she was young. She had to grow up with a woman called “Big Mama” and other women who taught her how to be an independent, freethinking person and how to be an adult woman. She had different mothers for different situations in her life; she was receiving matriarchal experiences through different “mama experiences.” This is a typical case in the African American community, with young children growing up with other women who act like real mothers. The role of a mother is an important aspect of African American literature, not only to sons or daughters, but also to entire communities. Sometimes she not only symbolizes fertility, but also education, respect, and religion:

If you don't remember nothing else I tell you, baby, you remember this: if you got to dance or dream or anything at all, take it a step at a time and don't let nothing and nobody get in your way when you doing right. I ain't saying it's gonna be easy, but we all got a dance to do. You remember this, you hear?

### ***Kola Boof***

Boof calls herself a "Womanist" to honor the creator of that term, Alice Walker (it is an ethnic concept of feminism). She considers herself as half African and half black American. Born in Sudan, Africa, she had a hard life coming to the United States. She writes about subjects like colorism, homosexuality, and sexism. She fuses spiritual philosophies of ancient African women from the Nile River, with modern black American womanism. We can discover in her literary work symbolism that involves her political and sociological messages. Slavery and religion are other main themes we can see reflected in her work. We can see a lot of hybrid literary writing reflexes. I have chosen two poems, the first "King Of The Sun" and the second "To Be Invisible," to illustrate her poetical sense:

God is a Black man, but his sons  
Are half devil  
For this we named it war.  
We . . . who still know the names . . .  
Protect my son  
Let there be the Nile  
Let there be my blood . . .  
Our mother, the Goddess Sudan  
Her Black face  
Both Sun and blood of All Man.

The Black Americans are color-blind  
because their  
Slave Master was color-blind . . .

The Afro men and BLACK women  
filling up the prisons of America  
are there  
because their color-blind parents  
LOOKED  
at them . . .  
the blind lead the blind  
So that you DIED  
because no one could remember  
how perfectly  
human  
you  
once were

### **Indigenous/Native American Woman Writer**

#### ***Louise Erdrich***

Erdrich is the daughter of a French Ojibwe mother and a German American father; she is a member of Chippewa Indians. She likes to explore cultural identities. She said in an interview in the *Chicago Tribune* (1986): "My fondest hope is that people will be reading me in 10 or 20 years from now as someone who has written about the American experience in all of its diversity." She has a special technique in her narrative, referring to the issue of time when she writes novels. Present actions cannot be isolated from the

past: time is cohesion. It is a remembering of ancestors and heritage; it is a way to keep alive the spirit. We can see it as something holistic.

She is the result of mixed heritage and also her soul is trying to find her own way. So, she also shows a duality between Christianity and Anishinaabe. Here we see, again, a bicultural spiritual soul, the European and the Native American, as result of a mixing, melting pot. Another literary characteristic is the nature, which is full of diversity, colors, and landscape, in which the water plays a very important role; it symbolizes the flow of lives that is eternal and renewable. Other elements are air or earth. We will examine a couple of paragraphs of her novel *Love Medicine*, which is the first of a tetralogy of novels. Then I will show a poem titled *A Love Medicine*. In these works we can see some of Erdrich's themes:

Outside, the sun was hot and heavy as a hand on my back. I felt it flow down my arms, out my fingers, arrowing through the ends of the fork into the earth. With every root I prized up there was a return, as if I was kin to its secret lesson. The touch got stronger as I worked through the grassy afternoon . . .  
The spiked leaves full of bitter mother's milk. A buried root. A nuisance people dig up an throw in the sun to wither. A globe of frail seeds that's indestructible.

It was the end of the world to some. Where the maps stopped. Where God had only half a hand in the creation. Where the Dark one had put in thick bush, liquor, wild dogs, and Indians.

Still it is raining lightly  
In Wahpeton . . .  
Theresa goes out in green halter and chains  
that glitter at her throat.  
This dragonfly, my sister,  
She belongs more than I  
To this night of rising water . . .  
She goes down in wet grass . . .  
Now she feels her way home in the dark  
The white-violet bulbs of the streetlamps  
are seething with insects,  
and the trees lean down aching and empty.  
The river slaps at the dike woks, insistent . . .  
We see that now the moon is leavened and the water,  
As deep as it will go, stop rising . . . (Erdrich, "For Lise")

### **Asian American Woman Writer (Chinese American)**

## *Amy Tan*

Amy Tan grew up surrounded by bicultural influences, both Chinese and American. She is part of an Asian American movement that includes Maxine Hong Kingston (*The Woman Warrior*) and Wakako Yamauchi (*Songs My Mother Taught Me*) as main figures. In her writing we can see flashbacks, mysticism and storytelling. She likes to connect the past and the present. She is in a constant search for her Chinese heritage and the American lifestyle. Her work is probably more based on universal themes like generational and social conflicts or differences between a man and a woman. Family is shown for all through relations between a mother and a daughter. She likes and prefers more to write for the universal reader than to provide historical information.

We are going to see a couple of texts from two of her novels; the first is from *The Joy Luck Club*, where she writes about the relationships between four mothers and their Americanized daughters. Two themes represented are the roles of the mother and the daughter in the American society:

A man who watched me play in the park suggested that my mother allow me to play in local chess tournaments. My mother smiled graciously, an answer that meant nothing. I desperately wanted to go, but I bit back my tongue. I knew she would not let me play among strangers. So as we walked home . . . They would have American rules. If I lost, I would bring shame on my family . . . (21)

The other novel is called *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and is also about a troubled mother-daughter relationship. Food is very important in Chinese tradition, and it is very common for the author to use food and things that have to do with food in her narrative. Tan uses food as way to portray the tense mother-daughter relation. The Chinese believe that in the kitchen there has to be good food to feed the kitchen god; if not, bad luck will overcome the family that lives in that house. It is a typical example of love, tension, and those difficulties existing between immigrants and their children. The middle of the book talks about the mother and how she wants her children to be. The beginning and the end are about how they are growing in America, focused on her daughter. But it will be a surprise, because the mother had not a clean past. Her daughter had another father, a man that was a bad image and person in her life. But the mother is a strong woman, so she is capable of telling the truth, and she overcomes her internal suffering. It is a story full of ironies, contrasts, humor, Chinese neologisms, imagery and symbolism:

To this day it drives me crazy, listening to her various hypotheses, the way religion, medicine, and superstition all merge with her own beliefs. She puts no faith in other people's logic-to her, logic is a sneaky excuse for tragedies, mistakes, and accidents. And according to my mother, *nothing* is an accident. She like's a Chinese version of Freud, or worse . . . (29)

In the kitchen, Auntie Helen cuts a white sheet cake into little squares and puts each piece on a paper plate. She licks whipped cream off her fingers, stuffs a falling strawberry back into its spongy center. “Best cake in San Francisco . . .” (34)

I blamed Wen Fu...I cried. And then I saw that picture of Kitchen God, watching me, smiling, so happy to see me unhappy . . . . (54)

The smoke will take our wishes to heaven...it’s only superstition...But see how fast the smoke rises-oh even faster when we laugh, lifting our hopes, higher and higher. (147)

Literature is not like other school subjects that are based upon fact; it is based upon interpretation and analysis. There are no clear-cut answers, and interpretation of a book, poem, or other text is highly subjective. Students have and should be able to come up with different interpretations of the mood, theme or conflict. With the different women of color writers we have seen, it can be just amazing listening to all their variety of opinions.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Last Decade Chicano Writers**

#### *Lesson Overview*

Latina and Chicano writers are specific writers, so it is research based. The students can choose one or several; recommended writers are Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, and Denise Chavez. The lesson plan will be on Sandra Cisneros.

The teacher will give some background material as well as a text example of one specific topic typical to the literary movement, author or work. Our librarian may help with Internet information or World Wide Web access, encyclopedias, dictionaries, books and other resources available in our library. Our SLC history as well as art teachers will also help them to complete the required information. The more resources the students can use will be useful as a springboard for many activities.

The class will be divided into groups of four and assigned topics to cover, such as her biographical information and background, critical information about her specific work, basic facts, history, culture, any typical topics that appear in her contemporary work. The groups will work in class and meet twice a week at the library. During the project, the teacher will help to clarify the research process as well as complete her literary background. Groups will work on their topics, combining papers to complete their respective work and make a presentation to the class. During the ongoing project students will be reading, writing, discussing and comparing works of the writer(s) and

comparing and contrasting cultures; in this case the Chicano one with the native American.

### ***Objectives***

- Students will learn about one or several Chicano writers, trying to understand their culture, history and background to understand her/their work.
- Students will learn how to conduct a research project.
- Students will learn how to relate literature to social, intercultural and multicultural issues, as well as their own lives.
- Students will learn how to make an interdisciplinary work.
- Students will learn how to create a project in cooperation with other students and teachers.

### ***Time***

A week is required for developing this project, but it can be extended depending on the teacher and the students' involvement.

### ***Materials***

Copies of books; notes on paper and information written on the blackboard given by the teacher or on the overhead projector; research material; the school library as well as the public library; magazines; videos and computers.

### ***Activities***

There are many activities as well possibilities to this project: class presentations, research papers.

- Write a story based on the student's experiences.
- Connect to a classroom and communicate in public for others. Communicate with other communities about individual cultures. Related subjects can be researched, such as immigration from Mexico, culture, ethnic, social matters, relationships in a bicultural way between the United States and Mexico, comparisons and differences. Issues like colonialism, government, and repression or censorship.
- One other very important activity is the gender issue; roles of women in Mexico and their new role as immigrant; and roles of men and women. What is the role that a Chicano woman has inside and outside her family and her community? How is the language used? Is it monolingual or bilingual?
- Students can also, with the teacher's permission, invite local speakers who are experts in Chicano literature or are writers.
- The students can also do a role-play, speaking and interviewing different community members; they can have a panel discussion or represent specific acts of Sandra Cisneros' selected work.

### ***Procedure***

To study and learn about Chicano literature is a very important experience for the Hispanic and American youth. The activities can be modified to fit the learning styles of the students in collaboration with the teacher. Sandra Cisneros is an author who takes us to a very important issue. She speaks to young people in many ways about relations between parents and children. She writes about immigration to another culture, assimilation or non-assimilation to the new culture from the given one. Also she writes about how to grow up. One of the main approaches is to learn, of course, about the author by the students' conducting research, reading, writing and making criticism of her work. It is a cooperative learning that can be completed with an individual effort that can give an original aspect to the student's research work.

The starting point is that the teacher talks briefly about Sandra Cisneros, and after that reads a specific part of one of her works. A chapter or theme can be assigned for homework. The class needs to be scheduled for library time in order to conduct the research. Groups of four are assigned depending on the time primarily planned and the depth of the research desired. While students are trying to complete research with other teachers, the teacher will control the scheduled time and instruct the students on the research process. The final product can be present in a variety of forms, from a research paper to a multimedia presentation. Papers should preferably be typed on computer; it can increase also the computer learning process.

### **Issues and Conflicts of Minority Women (A Profile of Humanity in Literature: Segment 1)**

#### ***Lesson Overview***

The United States is made up of many racial and ethnic groups. It is these groups that have made the United States one of the most diversified and richest nations culturally in the world. This would not be possible, however, without the women that constitute the foundations of all the various families found in this great nation.

The lesson hopes to allow students to learn what women of color and various minority women face in this country—struggles, hardships, and defeat as well as the determination to deal with whatever confronts them and to reach their dreams. The way to accomplish this is to expose students to various literary genres, especially poetry, short stories, vignettes, and novellas by Hispanic, African-American, and Asian women writers. Through their reading and evaluating literary works by minority women, students will be able to relate what they have learned. By following this process, the next step will be to develop a student-sponsored textbook to expound their knowledge and awareness of issues to others.

Therefore, students will read a variety of literature (3 to 4 pieces of literature of their choosing) to determine for themselves what issues and conflicts minority women have in

common as well as what unique difficulties various ethnic and minority women face within their own groups.

### ***Objectives***

- Students will learn about the struggles, conflicts, dreams, and hopes that minority women have and will continue to face in this country.
- Students will learn how to keep and utilize a reading response log.
- Students will learn how to debate and examine the struggles and conflicts of minority women through the course of developing a well-rounded essay and sharing their finished products.
- Students will learn how to evaluate each other's writing and develop (as a continuing project) a student composed and edited class textbook.

### ***Time***

Seven-class meetings (50 minutes long) should be sufficient to allow students to read various short stories and poetry by minority women and to develop various essays to discuss and share with the class and submit for the class' textbook project.

### ***Materials***

The main materials for this unit will consist of copies of various literary pieces by Sandra Cisneros, Pat Mora, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Amy Tan. Lecture notes on conflict and essay writing will be utilized when needed. Transparencies and an overhead projector will be utilized, as well, to conduct model lessons for reading response logs, pre-writing/brainstorming, and essay writing activities.

### ***Activities and Procedures***

- Review/Discussion of types of conflicts in literature will be conducted with specifics, such as definitions and examples from certain stories unrelated to the unit, on man vs. man (including society), man vs. self, and man vs. nature.
- A model lesson on how to keep a reading response log will be conducted with a piece of literature unrelated to the unit. It will mainly consist of getting students to write down their initial feelings (sort of a critique) towards a piece of literature, what they feel the conflicts and issues of a literary piece are, and what events or issues they can connect with their own lives.
- Reading of literature—students will be allowed to choose three pieces of literature from the authors listed above and must keep a reading response log for each reading.
- Students will share their remarks and comments from the reading response logs with the peers and develop essay ideas (topics) from the conflicts and issues that they found linked to their readings.
- A classroom pre-writing/brainstorming session will be conducted through a model lesson on different pre-writing/brainstorming techniques such as free writing, webbing, listing, and outlining to get students started on essays.

- Essay writing with initial peer-editing and teacher-student conferencing will occur.
- Essay rubric and evaluation sheets will be given out and explained as a tool that students will be required to use and fill out when the sharing of essays is conducted. This will be explained as a means to help students get feedback and evaluate pieces for the student-devised textbook project.
- Students will select essays for student-devised textbook.
- Essays will be shared through an author's chair (reading), and essays will be evaluated on a classroom level.

**Unit Lesson Plan for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in the Area of Receptive and Expressive Language, based on Sandra Cisneros' novel *The House On Mango Street***

***Objectives***

- Students will engage in discussion on multicultural issues raised in Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*: the culture of poverty, the personal and familial effects of racism, the problems faced by low-income Hispanic women, the immigrant experience, the role of education in the life of Hispanic women.
- Students will define internal conflict and external conflict.
- Students will develop oral vocabulary skills through group discussion.
- Students will improve listening comprehension skills.
- Students will write to summarize and explain in simple sentences and paragraphs.

***Materials***

For daily discussions:

- Copies of *The House on Mango Street*
- Recorded version of *The House on Mango Street* on tape (optional)
- Series of discussion questions for each story or chapter of the book given as handouts and made into transparencies for an overhead projector
- Overhead projector

For summative project:

- Poster board
- Markers, colored pencils
- Glue
- Magazines
- Handout of book quotes
- Handout on characters

### ***Time and Pacing***

In general, students should read and discuss approximately three stories per class session. 30-45 minutes should be dedicated each day to reading, listening, and discussing. The entire book can be read in approximately two to three weeks without interruptions.

### ***Procedure***

- Several options are available for exposing students to the literature. If the student's reading ability is at or above a ninth grade reading level, the student is able to read the text independently, but will need assistance in responding to the discussion questions.
- For students who cannot read independently, the teacher may read the book aloud, or if the resource is available, have students listen to the book on tape.
- The teacher must facilitate the discussion using the questions once a chapter or story has been read. The teacher should have students reflect on whether or not the issues raised by Cisneros are ones to which they can relate. If the students' experiences are significantly different from the characters in the book, the teacher should lead the students through a reflection of what it might feel like, thus engaging the students in an empathic understanding of the characters.
- Teacher should actively listen to students' responses and correct articulation or syntax errors. Students should repeat oral answers until they are clear and understandable.
- Visualizations, where students sketch or select visual images that depict story themes, characters, or significant details can be used to reinforce or re-teach elements of the book.
- Specific examples of internal vs. external conflict should be highlighted.
- Once students have responded orally to the discussion questions, the teacher should model on an overhead projector how to write the responses on the question handout, emphasizing complete sentences, proper grammar, and any unique rules in writing mechanics.
- For the summative project, students should be given a selection of quotes from the story. They select the quotes they feel best reflect the identified themes of the story. Characters are discussed as a class and the students select from the group of characters already identified. A maximum of two 90-minute class periods should be given to complete.

Sample discussion questions:

***Beautiful and Cruel***

What is Esperanza saying about how women get “power”?

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“I have decided not to grow up tame like the others who lay their necks on the threshold waiting for the ball and chain.” Explain:

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***A Smart Cookie***

How could you describe Esperanza’s mom? What are all the things she can do?

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Why did Esperanza’s mom quit school?

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***What Sally Said***

Why is Sally beaten?

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Why doesn’t she tell the truth?

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Why is her father so angry?

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Why are “tame” women considered “good” or “better”?

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## FINAL PROJECT

### The House on Mango Street

*Objective:* Illustrate one of the major themes of the book

*Instructions:* Using found pictures or drawn pictures, create a visual that shows one of the major themes of the book.

**You may pick from the following:**

- ✓ Some women are prisoners of the men in their lives.
- ✓ The source of women's power can be their beauty.
- ✓ The source of women's power can be their brains, courage, and creativity.
- ✓ Your home will always be a part of you. Do not be ashamed of who you are or where you come from.

**You should:**

- ✓ Name the characters in the book that relate to the theme.
- ✓ Give at least two quotes from the book that reflect the theme.
- ✓ Be able to explain your visual orally.

### Native American Literature

*Grade Level:* Secondary (11-12).

*Basic concepts:* Recognizing cultural values represented in most Native American fictional literature and analyzing the structure of it.

*Organizing Generalization:* Native American fictional literature has a unique perspective and structure than most mainstream fictional literature. It is important to recognize, analyze and critique these structural differences.

*Culture area:* United States.

*Time Period:* Contemporary.

*Materials/Resources:* *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich.

*Background:* Native American fictional literature demonstrates the relationships important to American Indians, like their spirit, their land, and their place in the world. When examining these concepts, it is important to juxtapose mainstream literature with Native literature:

Mainstream Literature

linear

Indigenous literature

cyclical

monologic or dialogic	conversational
hierarchical	egalitarian
secular	metaphysical
critique of culture	critique of colonialism
individual	communitarian

In the mainstream literary works, we can see elements rarely found in Native literature like a hero, clear-cut villains, plot structure or concluding purpose. Native literature is bicultural, the characters are more free represented, beyond and through stereotypes or cultural idioms. The concept is to escape for freedom to reach equality and help others to have a good live. This last can be understood as a healing concept.

**Objectives:**

- Knowledge: Students will build vocabulary through reading, understand literary elements, comprehend important ideas and details, and think critically as well as analyze authors' use of language, style, purpose and perspective. They should be able to generalize about typical themes, concerns and narrative forms in contemporary Native American literature.
- Skills: Students will read *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich, or selected texts, and define the main differences between mainstream literature and Native American literature.
- Values: Students will examine and increase vocabularies relevant to different contexts, cultures, and communities, analyze literary elements: plot, characters, setting, theme, point of view, conflict and resolution. They will explain also how an author uses language to influence the audience. They should be able to identify some genres, meanings and purposes of Native American oral narrative.

**Activity:** Students should first define terms and concepts under characteristics of mainstream and Indigenous literature, then undertake reading the recommended book above.

**Extensions:** the book *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko, Sherman Alexie and his movie *Smoke Signals*, the Web site *American Passages*, as well as the book *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* by Sandra M. Gilbert/ Susan Gubar, can be used too to complete the objectives.

**Time:** Two weeks, in five times 55 minutes time-period/week.

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Anaya, Rudolfo. *The Anaya Reader*. New York: Warner, 1995.

A selection of Anaya's works and his ideas about education.

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. New York: Random House, 1969.

It is used in my draft.

Applebee, Arthur N. "Stability and Change in High-School Canon." *English Journal*, 81.5 (1992): 25-30.

This article discusses studies that examine literature instruction in the U.S., sources of literary materials and selections.

Banks, J. A & Banks, C. A. *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1989.

It helps to understand how multiculturalism is being interpreted. It addresses social class, gender and ethnicity, language and school reform as they relate to education. It also refers to disability.

Carbonell, Ana Maria. *Reconstructing Motherhood: The Female Gothic and Transcultural Strategies in African American and Chicana Feminist Writings*. Diss. Santa Cruz: U. of California, 1996.

She examines the ways in which African American and Chicano feminist writers reconfigure different representations of motherhood.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

Comments and aspects about her book are done in this unit.

Cisneros, Sandra. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Short Stories*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

The short story *One Holy Night* is studied as a part of this unit.

De Anda, D. "Bicultural Socialization: Factors Affecting the Minority Experience." *Social Work*, 29, (March/April, 1984): 35-45.

This article talks about biculturalism and acculturation; it shows us the opinion of which community and individuals will be most successful in the process of bicultural socialization. It's a good resource also for social work.

Fishman, A. R. "Literature Finding Ways In: Redefining Multicultural." *English Journal*, 84.6 (1995): 70-80.

It presents a fourth approach that encourages students to see themselves and others as representing many cultures individually or collectively. It deals with secondary multicultural education.

- Frankson, Marie Stewart. "Chicano Literature for Young Adults: An Annotated Bibliography." *English Journal* 79.1 (1990): 30-40.  
Very good for authors and titles; the annotations are helpful. These authors write in English, although some of their work may be published in bilingual editions.
- Kymlicka, Julia. *The Rights of Minority Cultures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.  
This volume talks about cultural minorities. The articles focus on a theoretical and normative perspective; aspects such as cultural pluralism and individual or collective rights and immigration are present.
- Lucero Aurora-White Lea. *Literary Folklore of the Hispanic Southwest*. San Antonio, TX: Naylor Company, 1953.  
This is a book that explains the Hispanic folklore in the southwest of the United States, including California and Texas.
- Margerison, Patricia S. "Changing Hearts, Changing Minds: Encouraging Student Teachers to Use Multicultural Literature." *English Education* 27.4 (December 1995): 255-65.  
One teacher preparation program for using multicultural literature; realistic and helpful advice on how to use multicultural literature in a school where we might not necessarily be choosing curriculum; realistic view about the limitations on student teachers in this area, too.
- McKenna, Teresa. "Immigrants in Our Own Land: A Chicano Literature Review and Pedagogical Assessment." *ADE Bulletin* 91 (Winter 1988): 30-36.  
An examination of Chicano literature, its roots, its themes, its development as a literary canon, the challenge of teaching Chicano literature, and an excellent list of works at the end.
- Messinger Cypess, Sandra. *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth*. Austin: University of Texas, 1991.  
She talks about the weeping woman of the Aztec period to the year 1990.
- Meyers, Doris & F.M. Olmos, *Contemporary Women Authors of Latin America*. New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1983.  
Resource that shows us women from different Latin American countries and communities, we can see comments as well as criticism.
- Moi, Toril. *Teoria Literaria Feminista* [1986]. Madrid: Catedra, 1988.  
It is in Spanish; it is a brief history about Castillian female writers from Spain.
- Nina Baym, "Conflicting stories." *American Women Writers at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

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It is an English journal that takes us to a page in which female multiculturalism is going to be present (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall96/f96-09-Hayn.html>), *Female Protagonists in Multicultural Young Adult Literature: Sources and Strategies* by Judith Hayn and Deborah Sherrill.

Ostriker, Alicia S. *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986.

A book that talks about the emergence of women poetry in America referring chronologically and thematically.

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It is divided in sections that cover bibliography, dictionaries, history and criticism, and anthologies. Genres (poetry, prose, drama) are separately shown.

*Spanish American Authors of the Twentieth Century*. New York: W. H. Wilson, 1992.

Information about Hispanic writers and their works, with extensive bibliographies.

Tan, Amy. *The Kitchen God's Wife*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1993.

Novel that talks about generation differences between a Chinese mother and her Chinese American daughter. It is used on my draft.

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A handbook with resources and activities for multicultural teaching.

*The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, Ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. New York: Norton, 1996.

Trotter, R. and A. Chavira. *Curanderismo*. Athens Georgia: University of Georgia, 1981.

Article that shows us Mexican American folk healers, what they do and did; there are references to Ana Castillo's work *So Far from God*.

Viramontes, Helena Maria. "The Cariboo Café." *The Moths and Other Stories*. Houston: Arte Publico, 1985.

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It is a curriculum guide for secondary English teaching.

Zavilla, P. "Hispanic Women and Gender Role Formation." *Social Work* (1990): 35-70.  
Understanding of the Latin American heritage and cultural milieu; past and current attitudes and perceptions prevalent in some parts of Latin America.

## **Periodical**

### *Creative Loafing Atlanta*

It is the primary newspaper of four weeklies owned by Creative Loafing Inc. *Creative Loafing* is an alternative newsweekly that is known across the nation and covers news, modern-day music, and culture. S. Youngblood was interviewed in 1995.

Creative Loafing Atlanta  
750 Willoughby Way  
Atlanta, GA 30312

## **Internet Sites**

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It's a literary circle and also a page for resources. It's in Spanish.

*The Cariboo Café*. University of Texas. June 2003. <<http://www2.cwrl.utexas.edu/evans/viramontes/viramontes.html>>.

This University of Texas student-created page presents a brief analysis of Viramontes' work. Specifically, you can read the classroom exchange on "The Cariboo Café."

*Catálogo de escritoras españolas*. June 2003. <[http://www.mujerpalabra.com/bibliotecademujeres/pages/catalogos\\_bibliografias/escr\\_esp.htm](http://www.mujerpalabra.com/bibliotecademujeres/pages/catalogos_bibliografias/escr_esp.htm)>.

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This site simply contains a poem by Erdrich entitled "For Lise", some of which is quoted above.

Kuhl, K. *Chicana Poets, and their Poetry*. University of Arizona. June 2003. <<http://info-center.ccit.arizona.edu/~ws/ws200/fall97/grp8/kassiepaper.html>>. From here I took Cordelia Candelaria's text; it is also a page about Chicana poets and their poetry.

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Nelson, Cary. *Modern American Poetry: Additional Gwendolyn Bennett Poems*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. June 2003. <[http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/bennett/poems.htm](http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/bennett/poems.htm)>. Gwendolyn Bennet (I am weaving a son of waters...), a page where you can read 5 poems written by her.

*Noch mehr Gedichte*. June 2003. <<http://www.beepworld.de/members4/bobdylan/nochmalgedichte.htm>>. Pat Mora's text was taken from here. It is a German page where you can read poems from diverse authors.

*The Poetry of Maya Angelou*. June 2003. <<http://www.empirezine.com/spotlight/maya/maya-p2.htm>>. This is a Page with several selected poems from Maya Angelou.

*Variability Within Group*. Stanford University. June 2003. <[http://www.stanford.edu/~hakuta/E\\_CLAD/SU\\_SFUSD\\_cult/ruff/variability%20within%20group.htm](http://www.stanford.edu/~hakuta/E_CLAD/SU_SFUSD_cult/ruff/variability%20within%20group.htm)>. From here I took Sandra Cisneros' text; it is also a page about Chicana and lowriding culture.

*Voices from the Gaps: Women writers of color*. 2002. University of Minnesota. June 2003. <<http://voices.cla.umn.edu>>. Instructional sites focusing on the lives, works, and resources about women writers of color. I used it for some of my authors: Carmen Tafolla, Shay Youngblood. There is also a Denise Chavez page. The page on Viramontes from the University of Minnesota discusses the contribution of her work as it focuses on the struggles of Chicana women and their households, culture, and society.

## **Recommended Films**

*Mi familia/ My family*. Directed by Gregory Nava. New Line Cinema, 1995. (128 minutes)

Depicts the struggles of a Mexican American family over three generations. Strong contrasts between grandparents, children, and grandchildren.

*Like Water for Chocolate (Como agua para chocolate)*. Directed by Alfonso Arau. Miramax Films, 1992. (123 minutes)  
Depicts strong matriarchal values and guidelines. The main characters are challenged with the struggle to reconsider beliefs, love, responsibility and duty.

*El Norte*. Directed by Gregory Nava. Island Alive, 1984. (139 minutes)  
Depicts the struggle of a brother and sister who migrate from a small village in Guatemala to find better life up North, in Los Angeles, CA.

*Doña Flor e Seus Dois Maridos (Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands)*. Directed by Bruno Barreto. New Yorker Films, 1978. (110 minutes)  
A parody, depicting the plight faced by a remarried young widow when her dead husband's spirit returns demanding conjugal rights. Deals with religious moral values as well as social issues and their implications.