

No Hablan Inglés: The Role of English in the Hispanic-American Community

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INTRODUCTION

“Holá, señorita. ¿Cómo está?” This is how some of my students choose to greet me when they walk into my classroom each day. Some people might be confused by the greeting considering I am not an ESL or bilingual teacher but that I am an eighth grade reading teacher. Many might also think the greeting interesting because I am not Hispanic nor am I a fluent Spanish speaker. Why then would my students choose to address me in Spanish when I do not fit the profile of other school workers that they speak Spanish to? My opinion is that those who address me in their native language are trying to include me in their “group.” Since the school where I teach, Marshall Middle School, in the Houston Independent School District is predominantly Hispanic (96 percent of the student body) and I am an Anglo from California and Hawaii, I take it as a compliment that my students would try to make me feel like I am part of the group. I also know though that my job is not to be buddies with my pupils but to teach them the skills that they are going to need for success in high school and college. This situation is what has inspired me to sign up for the HTI seminar on Films and American Values. I hope I will be able to take a topic my students enjoy talking about and prepare a unit with it as my central theme while incorporating all of the skills they will need to be successful in their educational careers.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE TAAS ON THE READING CURRICULUM

The TAAS Test

In my class, students gain the skills that are required to pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. The test was established by the state of Texas to assure that all students meet a minimum standard of basic skills. Each grade level has different exams that must be passed in order for students to continue to the next grade or graduate from high school. Eighth grade, as it stands right now, is the grade where students are tested the most heavily. Before the eighth grade, students are only tested in two subject areas: reading and mathematics. Scores are reported to the state in third and fifth grade. In the eighth grade students are tested in five subjects: reading, mathematics, English (writing), social studies (U.S. history), and science. These scores are also reported to the state. After the huge battery of tests in the eighth grade, students prepare for the exit exam, which is required for high school graduation. Each student may first attempt the exit level exam when he or she is in the tenth grade. If the student does not pass all three parts of the exit exam (reading, writing, and math) by the end of the twelfth grade, the student will not receive a high school diploma, even if he or she had straight As all four years of high school. Again, these scores are reported to the state.

School Ranks

It is important that these scores are sent to the state each year because every accredited public school in Texas is ranked according to how well the students do on the TAAS. For ranking purposes, reading and math are looked at before the eighth grade. On the eighth grade and exit level exams, reading, math, and writing are the subjects looked at to determine rank. This is despite the eighth graders also taking exams in history and science. If 90 percent of the student body of a particular school passes the exams described above, the school is ranked “exemplary.” A rank of “recognized” is given to schools where 80 percent or more of the student body passes each exam. Schools can receive an “acceptable” rating if between 40 percent and 79 percent of students pass each test; and finally, a school receives a rating of “low performing” if less than 40 percent of the student body passes each test. A school’s final rating will be given based on the lowest of the scores for each test. For example, if a high school were to receive an overall score of 82 percent on the English writing test, 90 percent on the mathematics test, but a 78 percent on the reading test, the school would receive an “acceptable” rating even though two of the three subjects received a “recognized” or “exemplary” score.

Population Subgroups

In addition to the overall scores of the school needing to be at certain minimums for specific ratings, the school must achieve roughly the same scores in each subgroup or segment of the school’s population. For example, it would be fair to say that most schools do not serve just one particular group of students. The state feels that all of the groups making up a school’s population should have similar test scores. Students can belong to different racial and socio-economic groups. Some examples of typical subgroups are Caucasian-Americans, African-Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, and economically disadvantaged. Students identify which racial subgroup they belong to. Economically disadvantaged students are defined as students who qualify for free or reduced meals at school, meaning that their parents make below a certain amount of money annually. Because it is possible for a student to be both Hispanic and economically disadvantaged or African-American and economically disadvantaged, these students will have their scores counted for both subgroups. Students who are multiracial must choose one of the subgroups to belong to. Most of these pupils at my school choose Hispanic since the majority of the students at the school are Hispanic. A school must have a certain minimum number of students belonging to a particular subgroup in order for the particular group to count as far as TAAS results go. For example, Marshall Middle School is predominately Hispanic with over 96 percent of the students belonging to this group. African-Americans make up the next largest segment of the school’s racial population at over 3 percent. All other racial groups make up less than 1 percent of the school’s students. Over 90 percent of the school is economically disadvantaged. Because of the three subgroups that are represented at Marshall, Marshall will have its TAAS results broken down into three distinct categories in addition to receiving an overall score: one score for the Hispanic

subgroup, one for the African-American subgroup, and one for the economically disadvantaged subgroup.

Every school in the state will receive its overall rank based on the lowest performing subgroup at the school. For example, as stated before, Marshall has three subgroups. If 80 percent of the Hispanic American and economically disadvantaged subgroups pass the test but only 70 percent of the African-American subgroup passes, the highest rating the school would receive is “acceptable” even though less than 5 percent of the school’s total population is African-American. This standard was set to insure that no segment of the school’s populace goes ignored. Groups that don’t have enough students to count as a subgroup add to the school’s overall score but are not included in any of the subgroups.

Importance of TAAS in Texas

Schools all over Texas have set a high bar for themselves as far as the TAAS test are concerned. In many schools and many districts, “acceptable” is no longer acceptable. Principals want their school to receive at least a “recognized” rating while superintendents and other district administrators want all of their schools to be at least “recognized.”

These criteria make it difficult for some schools in certain districts. Marshall falls into this category. Last year’s scores for the school averaged at the 60th percentile on all tests. Sixth and seventh graders are only tested in two subject areas—reading and mathematics, while the eighth graders are tested in five. The results on all of these tests matter to the overall school rating. Marshall is in a long process of trying to bring up the school’s TAAS scores. The goal this year, 2001, is to have a “recognized” rating for the first time.

Although much effort was made on the TAAS objectives this year (2001), Marshall still did not receive its much-desired “recognized” rank. Lots of progress was made this year, especially in reading. Last year’s seventh graders scored at the 55th percentile on last year’s reading test. The eighth grade teachers knew that we had our work cut out for us if we were going to help the school receive a “recognized” rating. The three of us got together and outlined a strategy where we would teach the objectives specific to the TAAS test. We focused on the skills covered in the test with absolutely everything that we read in class and that the students did for homework. About three months before the test itself came, we took out sample reading passages from previous tests and went over them so that our students would be familiar with the test format. Because of our efforts, our students rose to the 85th percentile, a 30 percent jump over the previous year! Our group, considered to be the weakest in the school, made the greatest gains of all the grades. The seventh graders scored in the 74th percentile, and the sixth graders scored in the 61st percentile. Everyone’s scores went up from where their students were the previous year, and the school is getting closer to receiving their

“recognized” rating. I feel if every reading teacher will do what the eighth grade teachers did by focusing on the skills specific to the test and adding more creativity and excitement to reading classes that 2002 will be the year that Marshall receives at least “recognized.”

Implications of TAAS at Marshall Middle School

In order to accomplish this goal next year (2001-2002), the school has put a lot of emphasis on reading. It is felt that reading skills will help the students not just on the reading exam but also on all their TAAS tests. The reading exams, no matter what the grade, contain six different objectives that must be mastered in order for the student to pass. These objectives include some of the following skills—word meaning including use of context clues and other structural clues (prefixes, suffixes, Greek and Latin roots, etc.), supporting details, main idea and summary, making generalizations, finding the effects of certain causes and vice versa, making inferences, describing characters’ emotions, analyzing graphic sources, distinguishing between facts and opinions, and understanding the author’s purpose for writing. Working on these skills will help students master all parts of the reading test. In addition to the reading test, these skills carry over to the other subject tests that the eighth graders in particular are responsible for. In math, for example, students need good reading skills if they are to do well on story problems. It is one thing for them to be able to do math computations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division); but if they cannot understand what word problems are asking them to do, it doesn’t matter whether or not the student can do the computations that will be required of them. The math test contains very few math computation problems but mostly consists of story problems. This requires students to be able to take words on the paper (reading) and express what is being said into symbols (math). If they don’t understand what they are reading, there is a high chance that the student will not be able to obtain the correct answer even if they can do math computations with decimals, fractions, percents, etc. The science test requires very little factual recall, as might be expected, but actually has the pupil interpreting charts and graphs and drawing conclusions from them. If they don’t learn these skills in their reading classes, their scores on this test will be affected, even though they might actually “know” a lot about science. The social studies test, which tests students on American history from the time of Columbus to the end of the Civil War, is a very content driven exam. If the student does not know basic facts about American history, he or she will not in all likelihood pass this test. However, this test, like its science counterpart, consists of charts and graphs that must be interpreted. Reading teachers can help their students prepare for this test by teaching reading skills that will help students read graphic sources effectively. Because reading skills play such an integral part on all of the TAAS tests, it is essential that all students gain reading skills so they can experience success on all of the exams.

My Students and the TAAS

Despite all of my students scoring at the appropriate grade level on norm-referenced reading tests, the vast majority of them have never passed the TAAS, a criterion-referenced exam. At the end of the school year, every student at Marshall is given a reading test to determine what his or her reading level is. This score is compared to a national standard and helps to see how well a student is reading compared to others in the same grade (norm-referenced exam). The students I taught this year scored at an eighth-grade level on this exam. Because I teach eighth grade and my students read at this level, my students are described as being on-level as far as reading ability goes. However, none of my students passed the TAAS test as seventh graders. TAAS is not an exam where students are compared to other students. In order to pass this exam, the skills described above must be mastered to at least a 70 percent. If the student receives a 70 percent or higher, he or she passes; if not, he or she fails (criterion-referenced). Scores on the seventh grade exam for most of my students ranged from 50 to 69. These numbers indicated that the students failed the test but were within range of passing the test as eighth graders with some concentrated effort on teaching and mastering the skills specific to the TAAS exam. Because of this, the curriculum this past year revolved around a lot of practice with the TAAS in order for students to gain the skills that would allow them to pass all parts of the exam. The goal was that this year they would pass these exams, move on to high school, and for enough students to pass that the school would receive the “recognized” or higher rating that administrators desire. Although the school did not meet its goal of “recognized,” the eighth grade floor got to this level in reading by scoring in the 85th percentile on the reading test. The next step for the eighth graders is to help them transfer their reading skills to the other subject tests. If teachers can do this, all of the subjects will be at the same level as reading, and the school’s rating will go up as a result.

PREJUDICE, LITERATURE, AND MOVIES

In addition to the TAAS, my class consists of reading various works of literature. This is the part of the class where I get to make many of my own decisions. As a teacher in Texas, I am obligated to spend time on teaching the TAAS. Because of this obligation, I look forward to the part of the class where I get to make decisions on what and how I am going to teach. My classes will read short stories and novels written by a variety of authors and containing a plethora of themes. Out of all of the subjects we have discussed this year, the topic that has grabbed most of the students’ attention is that of prejudice. Upon exploring the definition of prejudice with my pupils, I discovered that most of them have a very narrow concept of the word. They feel that this only exists between Caucasian-Americans and other racial groups, and that Caucasian-Americans are the only group who can have prejudices. Prejudice involves power to them. They feel that since minorities are usually not in a position of power that minorities cannot have prejudices. Upon hearing comments like this and having further discussions about these remarks, I knew that it was essential that I challenge some of these ideas and see if I could widen the

views of my students. I also want them to get past the idea that prejudice only exists between people or groups of people because of racial background, but to realize that it can also exist for other differences, including language, religion, physical characteristics such as weight and height, mental and physical disabilities, and gender. I believe that since they find this topic interesting, I could accomplish the two principle goals of my curriculum by composing a unit on prejudice— teaching the skills my students will need to pass the TAAS exam and introducing them to a topic where their minds will be sure to grow.

JUSTIFICATION FOR FILMS IN THE READING CLASS

Since there is much to accomplish with this unit, there should be a large variety of options when it comes to the materials that are used. As a reading teacher who must prepare students for the TAAS, my goal will be to accomplish as many of these objectives as possible through reading. Thankfully, there are many wonderful novels and short stories out there that cover the topic of prejudice. My goal is to use two of these in addition to one movie during a two-month period.

Many reading teachers feel that the best way for a student to improve his or her reading skills is for him or her to read more. After all, if a basketball player wants to improve his free throws, the coach doesn't have the player practice slam-dunks. Although this is definitely true, movies can also be a very effective tool for teaching reading skills to students. Movies are important to use in the reading class because there are many skills required for the reading TAAS exam that can be introduced to the students very effectively through the use of films. Once the topics have been introduced and mastered through a visual medium that many of them are more comfortable with than books, they should be able to successfully transfer the skill effectively to any reading they are given. Examples of how this is done will be discussed later.

The mixture of reading and movies should also keep the topic fresh and interesting while exposing the students to more than just reading alone. The unit will also allow them to explore prejudice in less time than if the entire unit were to be based on reading alone. Although my students can read, they read at a very slow rate. It is not uncommon for them to take almost a month to read one novel about 150 pages long and one week to read a short story that is only about ten pages long. My students also have difficulty becoming motivated to read. If the entire unit were to be focused on reading, the unit would take too long to finish and student motivation would begin to wane. Mixing it up with a little bit of reading and movies will keep the subject interesting for most of the students.

READING SKILLS MASTERED THROUGH VIEWING FILMS

Inferencing

One of the most challenging skills for my students to master is making inferences. The reason for this is this skill requires them to make guesses based on evidence from the story or text that they are reading from. They don't understand that people make guesses about situations in daily life all the time without there being direct written proof of that assumption. Showing movies will be a good way to show students that they make inferences all the time. They will be asked to practice this skill with the movie and give evidence explaining why they think this or that assumption is true. The hope is that with enough practice, my pupils will transfer this skill to a reading situation and that the scores for this particular skill, which makes up the majority of the TAAS test, will go up.

Summarization

Besides making inferences, another skill that is difficult for most of my students on the TAAS test is summarization. I have two strategies that I use to teach them how to find the best summary of whatever they read, whether it is a single paragraph or an entire novel. One strategy involves them using what I call the reporter's formula. This requires them to find answers to the following five questions: Who are the main characters? What is the going on? Where does the story take place? When does it take place? And why does the story turn out the way that it does? If they answer all of these questions and write the answers to them in a couple of sentences, they will have summarized the story. The other way they can do summary questions is to look for the main problem or problems in the story and determine how each problem was solved. Again starting off doing this after reading a long novel might be too difficult for my students; however, if we practice this skill and perfect it after watching movies, the skill can be transferred to the reading task. After practicing it with movies, we would follow the same process for a single paragraph, then move to a chapter of a book, then finally conclude with writing a summary for an entire novel. If they can summarize a novel of over 100 pages, they will have little difficulty when asked to summarize a one-page short story covered on the TAAS test.

Fact and Opinion

Another complicated skill for some students to master is determining the differences between fact and opinion. Facts are defined as statements that can be proven either true or false. Opinions are explained to the students as something that cannot be proven but how one person thinks or feels about something. They have a difficult time with calling something a fact when they either know from experience or remember seeing something that wasn't true. For example, I have a bulletin board in my room that has a red background on it. I will point to this bulletin board and say to the class, "Fact or Opinion. The background color on this bulletin board is yellow." Because that is not a

true statement, the students will almost always say that this statement is an opinion. We then go back to the definitions of the two words. After several explanations and countless examples similar to this one, I have decided that my students might be able to better practice this skill through movies. I want to come up with several statements like the example that I gave based on the film we will watch. My hope is that after some practice based on visual information they will again be able to apply this information to their reading and master this major part of the test.

Characters' Emotions

Like making inferences listed at the very top of this section, understanding what characters' are thinking or feeling is an important part of the TAAS test. There are several passages on the reading test that are short one-page stories where characters start off feeling one way about something, but their feelings change by the end of the story. Most of my students can answer questions about how a character is feeling in very simple terms. They use basic words that most elementary school students use happy, sad, mad, etc. They can also describe a character's reactions to events in the story as long as the character's emotions don't change. For example, if the character begins the story sad and finishes the story upset, they are able to explain that the character is distressed and give reasons why the character feels this way. They come into problems describing emotions when two different things happen within the passage. As stated above, most of my students can do a great job describing someone's emotions, but they have trouble when the characters' emotions change within the events of the story. They can tell you how the person was reacting in the beginning and how they were feeling at the end, but they cannot make a connection on what happened to change the person's feelings. In a movie where there are many characters going through many different emotions and the students have a visual clue in addition to words to help them, they will be able to see the relationship between how a person could be feeling one way at one moment and change the next moment. The other problem with this particular skill of the TAAS is that many of my students do not have a broad vocabulary. There are of course many reasons for this; however, probably the biggest factor is that most of my students are second language learners. Since the test doesn't use words like happy, sad, and mad, it is essential for me to teach them words like upset, distressed, ecstatic, content, annoyed, aggravated, and irritated. I could give them the words that they know and give them a list of words to memorize that mean the same thing and would appear on the test. However, even if I tested my students on these new words, they would probably not retain very many of them. By using movies where students can have visual clues to help them, I can teach them new vocabulary to describe emotions. This will lead to greater retention and better scores for this particular skill.

Author's Purpose

Finally, the most difficult skill of all for my students is identifying the author's reason for writing. Since most of my students detest writing even more than they hate reading, they

don't understand why anyone would voluntarily want to write anything. I explain that the TAAS test gives three key reasons why the author wrote a particular passage—to inform or tell the reader about something the writer thinks the reader should know, to persuade or convince the reader why he or she should believe a certain way about a particular topic, or to simply entertain the reader. Most of my students have an easy time identifying passages where the author is trying to tell them about something that they didn't previously know. They can also recognize passages where the author is trying to entertain them as long as they find the passage itself amusing. The type of passage that is tricky for them are the ones where the author is trying to persuade them to feel a certain way about something or get them to change their minds about a particular topic. The movie that I have chosen to show, *Fools Rush In*, is full of persuasion techniques from both of the main characters as they try to get the other to see the world through his or her eyes. Seeing this film and pointing out how the two actors try and plead with each other would show my students what persuasion is and allows us to discuss different ways that directors or authors use to get people to do what they would like. This understanding will help them on not just the reading TAAS test but also on the writing TAAS test. If they can recognize these techniques as they read, they will eventually be able to apply them to the writing task as well. By practicing this one skill in reading, I am helping the students prepare for two exams; not a bad investment for the time it will take.

PLAN FOR THE UNIT

The War Between the Classes

I intend to start the unit with the book *The War Between the Classes* by Gloria D. Miklowitz. This book will be used to introduce the idea of prejudice and will serve as a background for building our discussion about this concept. This novel is built around a game that the students in a high school class play which allows them to explore the idea of prejudice among different racial, social, and gender classes. Students volunteer to play a game, which will test their beliefs in all of these areas. Students who are minorities in the world become members of the elite race—the Blues. These students are allowed to do whatever they want with little or no punishment from the mock police force called the G4s. Others must bow to them to show their subservience. Others are not allowed to even speak to this group. The low class group, the Oranges, is mostly made up of rich white students. They must bow to all members higher than them. They are severely punished for anything they might do wrong by the G4s. They cannot even be seen with anyone above them in rank. In addition to this aspect of the game, their society is set up so that women are superior to men. Men get to experience some of the sexist aspects of society including mandatory participation in a beauty pageant and earning less money for the same work that the women do. Needless to say, all of the students' beliefs about racial, social, and gender classifications are put to the ultimate test. Besides the experiences of the students participating in the game, the novel also covers the effects that the game is having on the family of one of the students, Amy. The family, who happens to be Japanese, is going through some interesting experiences where the father in

particular needs to overcome some of his prejudices towards his son's Caucasian wife. This aspect of the story adds an interesting dimension to the story that I believe is very important for my students. Earlier in this paper, I discussed my students' belief that only white people can have prejudices because they are the only ones who are in a position of power and people without power cannot have prejudices. The students see through the students in the Blue group and Amy's Japanese father that everyone can have prejudices.

I want my students to do more than just read this story. I think that they will benefit greatly from playing the game as outlined in the book. Doing this for one week will give the class an insight into what exactly the characters are going through. The students in the book were required to write a journal describing their insights as they play the game. My students will do the same. I believe that their attitudes about prejudice will change as a result of playing this game and reading this book. I am hoping that their definition of prejudice will expand to be more comprehensive than it currently is.

“No Speak English”

After reading this book and clarifying the definition of prejudice, the class will read the short story “No Speak English” from the book *The House on Mango Street* by the Hispanic author Sandra Cisneros. The story discusses a new immigrant to the United States who is struggling between her new world and the country she left behind. The aspect of her new life that is the most difficult is the new language she is being exposed to. Her dislike of the language, English, is apparent in her unwillingness to learn it and in her tears when her baby son begins talking, and the words that come out are not the ones the mother wishes to hear. This story will be included in the curriculum because I want the students to be exposed to someone who is considered a great Hispanic author and because I feel the theme of the story is going to be meaningful to many of the bilingual students in my class. I think that many of these students will be able to relate to the ideas in this story, either on a personal basis or through what someone close to them has experienced when moving to this country and learning another language. We will again use their journals to explore some of the themes from this story. This will allow them to practice their writing skills for the writing TAAS test in addition to focusing on the reading skills they will need for the reading TAAS.

Fools Rush In (1996)

Finally, we will end this unit with the movie *Fools Rush In* (1996). This movie will be a great conclusion because it will tie up the prejudice theme from the novel *The War Between the Classes* and expand upon the language theme in the story “No Speak English.” The basic plot of the movie involves a Caucasian man (Alex) and a Hispanic woman (Isabel) who meet in a Mexican restaurant. After a one-night stand, Isabel gets pregnant. She approaches Alex to tell him about the pregnancy. After meeting her family and wanting to do the “right thing,” the two decide to get married. As a result of their decisions and choices, they have to confront many prejudices from both of their

families. Alex's yuppie parents are unhappy with Isabel because she is Hispanic and Catholic. They have a WASP girl in mind for their son who they feel is a better match since they come from the same background. Their contempt for Hispanics is obvious with several of the remarks that are made throughout the film. Isabel's parents have similar concerns over their daughter's new husband. They have a difficult time with the fact that he is not Catholic and knows very little about Hispanic culture. They want the baby to be raised Catholic and don't understand Alex's family apparent lack of religious faith while claiming to be Presbyterian. Although many might argue that the film's happy ending is not realistic, the film is good at showing that everyone has prejudices that must be overcome. There is also a scene that will reemphasize the language issue that will be discussed during the reading of Cisneros's story. The movie will be a good conclusion to the unit because it will review the key concepts covered in the novel *The War Between the Classes* and the story "No Speak English."

INSTRUMENTS USED FOR ASSESSMENT

Vocabulary Development

I use many different tools to measure how students are doing in my classes. As stated above, one of the most difficult areas my students have when it comes to reading is vocabulary. Because of this concern, time is spent on vocabulary development with each novel that we read. Students are given a list of twenty words for each section of the book. A section will vary in length depending upon the number of pages in the book. After we are done with a section, about one week, the students will take a test on the vocabulary words. Previous to the actual test, students will do a variety of activities to help them practice the vocabulary they are learning. Some of these assignments include writing sentences for each of the words, crossword puzzles, and matching tests where they must match the definition and the word. Unlike other assessments, which will be discussed later, students are not allowed to use a dictionary or any other tool to help them on vocabulary tests.

Treasure Hunts

To test their basic comprehension of a story or novel we are reading, I will make what I call a treasure hunt. It consists of five to ten questions over about fifteen pages of reading. If the story we are reading is longer than fifteen pages, for example a novel, I will split the reading up and devise several treasure hunts over the same book. The questions that I ask are designed to test their basic understanding of the story. These questions are at the lower end of Bloom's taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, and application questions.) I usually ask about five of these kinds of questions. They can be answered with one to two sentences generally. However, questions at the higher end of this scale (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation questions) are also included to stretch student thinking and for classroom discussions. Students complete the treasure hunt individually, compare their answers with a partner and come to a consensus on what they

believe the correct answer to be, and then join the rest of the class as we go over the answers and discuss what they've read.

Adventures in Writing

In order for students to practice their writing skills, there will typically be anywhere from three to five questions that will require usually a paragraph long response. In addition to helping my students prepare for classroom discussions and expand their thinking, writing is important because it helps them prepare for their English TAAS test. I also have my students write because I notice that during classroom discussions they are typically very quiet. The reason for this is because they are afraid of sharing what they think because they believe that they will be made fun of by other people in the classroom. However, when I ask them to write about the same question, I am given lots of information concerning how they are thinking and feeling about a particular topic. With the principal goal of this unit being to expand their thinking on the topic of prejudice, it is essential for them to have the opportunity to express their feelings about the topic at hand. This will also allow me to see where everyone is at in terms of their understanding and do a better job at leading classroom discussions.

Enrichment Activities

Because it is important for students to build background knowledge to help with their reading and to make them more informed about the world around them, every week my students do enrichment activities, which allow them to learn more about a particular aspect of the story that they might otherwise have ignored. Students usually find these activities the most interesting and rewarding because it gives them a chance to get beyond traditional paper and pencil writing assignments and express their own creativity. For students who are musically inclined, they can write raps or songs after researching an aspect of the novel they are interested in. Students who are great artists can draw a scene from the story that might be particularly moving to them. Finally, students who like to write in a more creative manner (poetry, for example) can do this as their option.

Story and Movie Exams

Upon completion of each story or movie, my students will be given a final test with open-ended questions. The purpose of the assessment will be to determine that they have gained a basic understanding of the story and the principles that were being taught. I allow my students to use their notes and previous assignments on these examinations because I am more interested in them learning to be organized and on what they are thinking than in them being able to recall specific minute facts. This also encourages my students to do their work and do it well throughout the unit.

Final Unit Assessment

Because of the potential impact this topic will have on my students and my desire for them to truly learn some important life lessons, I believe that the final assessment for the unit should be unique. I believe my students should have the opportunity to do some evaluation and justify their responses and those of others. The final assessment will be to interview two adults that they know. They will be allowed to choose one of their parents, but they must choose someone else for the other adult. A teacher would be an acceptable person for example. The students will be required to ask their two adults a list of questions about prejudice. They will compare the answers of the two adults in addition to their own responses to the same questions. They will be asked to make judgments on the comments made by their two adults in a written essay form. The students will do this questionnaire twice, once at the beginning of the unit, and again upon completion of the lesson cycle. This will allow me to see if and how their attitudes toward prejudice have changed. The actual assessment will follow below in the lesson plan section of the paper.

Weekly Lesson Cycle

Reading classes at Marshall Middle School follow a program called Success for All Reading (SFA). SFA was designed as a balanced approach to reading meaning that many different skills that relate to the reading task are covered. The activities described above are part of this program. SFA runs on a weeklong cycle (five days) where different tasks are completed each day. Because it is a set program, the tasks required for different days vary slightly. Although not a complete daily schedule, a typical cycle would include some of the following activities on a given day:

Monday	Vocabulary Sentences, Treasure Hunt 1
Tuesday	Vocabulary Enrichment, Treasure Hunt 2
Wednesday	Adventures in Writing
Thursday	Enrichment Activities
Friday	Vocabulary Test, Story Test

SFA was obviously designed with reading in mind. Since this unit involves the use of audio and visual material with the movie that will be shown, some adaptations will have to be made. Thankfully, the structure of SFA will work with the film because there is no reason that vocabulary words, adventures in writing topics, enrichment activities, and a movie test could not be made for the film just like they would have to be developed for a book.

SAMPLE LESSON PLANS AND MATERIALS

Below are examples of vocabulary activities, treasure hunts, adventures in writing assignments, enrichment activities, and story tests that I will use to determine what my students have learned from this book. The entire book will take my students a month to complete. The same outline will be followed for the story “No Speak English” and the film *Fools Rush In*. The story and the movie will take one week each to complete. At

the end of the unit, a final assessment will be given where students will demonstrate what they've learned for this unit. The activities for the book *The War Between the Classes* were designed and developed by Mary Maness, the reading facilitator at Marshall Middle School. Examples of activities from this book were copied and included in this section with her permission. Assessment tools for "No Speak English" and *Fools Rush In*, not included in this paper, will follow a similar format.

Beginning Unit Questionnaire

You will need to answer the following questions with as much detail as possible. The purpose of this assignment will be made clear later.

1. What does the word prejudice mean to you?
2. Define the word racism.
3. Define the word sexism.
4. Do people with disabilities experience prejudice? Explain.
5. Are people discriminated against because they speak a different language than most of the people around them? Explain.
6. Are people treated unfairly because they have different religious beliefs than others? Explain or give examples.
7. Are people discriminated against because of a physical characteristic they might have (height, weight, etc.)? Explain.
8. Are minorities capable of being prejudiced? Why or why not?

Vocabulary Development

Assignment One

Directions: Using your vocabulary sheet with the definitions on it, write meaningful sentences for the five vocabulary words that have a star by them. When you have finished this, choose five more of the remaining fifteen words and do the same. You should have a total of ten sentences when you are done.

Vocabulary: *The War Between the Classes* p. 1-49 (Activity One)

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. | turmoil (noun) | disturbance; commotion (p. 1) |
| 2. | lunge (noun) | sudden forward movement (p. 5) |
| 3. | condescending (adjective) | stooping to the level of one's inferiors (p. 6) |
| *4. | languid (adjective) | weak; without energy (p. 7) |
| 5. | snide (adjective) | a remark meant to make someone feel unimportant (p. 8) |
| 6. | bigot (noun) | an intolerant, prejudiced person (p. 9) |
| 7. | sallow (adjective) | having a sickly, yellowish color (p. 12) |
| 8. | prejudices (noun) | opinions formed without taking time and care to |

*9.	tolerated (verb)	judge fairly (p. 16)
10.	tentative (adjective)	put up with (p. 18)
11.	prestige (noun)	experimental (p. 22)
		reputation based on what is known of one's abilities, achievements, etc. (p. 28)
*12.	aspiring (verb)	having an ambition for something (p. 28)
13.	stereotypes (noun)	idea of what a person is like because of his color, background, etc. (p. 29)
14.	sabotage (verb)	damage or destroy on purpose (p. 32)
*15.	formidable (adjective)	hard to overcome (p. 32)
16.	mock (adjective)	pretend; not real (p. 44)
17.	quaver (noun)	shaking or trembling (p. 45)
*18.	insolent (adjective)	boldly rude; insulting (p. 45)
19.	impudent (adjective)	rudely bold (p. 45)
20.	subservient (adjective)	tamely submissive; slavishly polite and obedient (p. 48)

Crossword Puzzle (Activity 2) See Appendix One

Vocabulary Test Assignment 3

Match the following vocabulary words on the left with their definitions on the right. Write the letter for the definition next to the vocabulary word on the left.

1.	turmoil	A.	tamely submissive
2.	languid	B.	boldly rude; insulting
3.	snide	C.	pretend; not real
4.	sallow	D.	idea of what a person is like because of his color, background, etc.
5.	prejudices	E.	having an ambition for something
6.	tentative	F.	put up with
7.	aspiring	G.	an intolerant, prejudiced person
8.	sabotage	H.	disturbance; commotion
9.	formidable	I.	sudden forward movement
10.	mock	J.	stooping to the level of one's inferiors
11.	insolent	K.	weak; without energy
12.	subservient	L.	a remark meant to make someone feel unimportant
13.	impudent	M.	having a sickly, yellowish color
14.	quaver	N.	opinions formed without taking time and care to judge fairly
15.	stereotypes	O.	experimental
16.	lunge	P.	reputation based on what is known of one's abilities, achievements, etc.

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| 17. condescending | Q. damage or destroy on purpose |
| 18. bigot | R. hard to overcome |
| 19. tolerated | S. shaking or trembling |
| 20. subservient | T. rudely bold |

Sample Treasure Hunts Section One p. 1-49 *The War Between the Classes*

Answer each of the following questions below. When you and your partner are done answering the questions, exchange answers and work out any disagreements you and your partner might have. We will use these questions as the basis for our class discussion at the end of the day.

Treasure Hunt One p. 1-23

1. How is Amy feeling at the beginning of this section? How do you know?
2. How is Adam's background different from Amy's?
3. How do you think Justin feels about Juan? What gives you this idea?
4. What does Adam mean when he says, "We're not all Justins," on page nine?
5. How do Amy's parents feel about Adam? Why?
6. Why didn't Amy's father like going to see Hideo?
7. What kind of work does Sue do?
8. Why does Amy talk a lot at Hideo's house?
9. What news do Hideo and Sue have for Hideo's family?

Treasure Hunt Two p. 24-49

1. Was Mr. Otero a good teacher? How do you know?
2. What is the Color Game? What is its purpose?
3. Why do the Color Game players have to keep journals?
4. Who are the G4s?
5. How do the students find out what color they are in the Color Game?
6. What colors did Amy and Adam get in the Color Game? What social class is each one in?
7. What does Amy find unusual about the colors that people picked in the Color Game?
8. How does Amy feel about being a Blue? Why?
9. Why does Amy make Justin bow to her and put her lunch tray away?

Adventure in Writing Topics

Directions: Below are four topics. You need to pick one of the four topics and develop a multi-paragraph paper on the topic you have chosen. Be sure to notice what type of essay that the question requires you to write (persuasive, descriptive, informative, etc.) You

will not be graded on grammar or spelling but on your ideas and the organization of them.

1. If you were playing the Color Game, what color would you like to be? Why would you like to be that color?
2. If you were a Blue in the Color Game, how do you think you would treat the other colors? Why would you treat them like that?
3. Amy's father is upset that his son married a white woman (instead of a Japanese woman). Do your parents expect you to date within your own race? Do you feel that you should date only your own race or anyone, regardless of color or social class? Explain.
4. Write a descriptive essay in which you describe how the Color Game is played.

Enrichment Activities

Pick one of the four choices listed below. Doing these will give you some background knowledge about events that are happening in the story or will help you clarify events in the story. If you have other ideas for something you would like to learn about, talk with me first.

1. Begin a story map for this novel. Include the title and the author. Draw and color pictures of the story from this section.
2. Go to the library or ask permission to use the Internet in class and research what a luau is. Draw a picture of a typical luau and label the things in your picture.
3. Draw and color a picture of your favorite event in this section.
4. Make up a new game to play. Write down the rules so anyone who wants to could play your game. If it requires a game board (like Monopoly), make that also. (You may work with a partner on this one.)

Story Test Section One

Answer the following questions on another sheet of paper using complete sentences and as much detail as possible.

1. Do Amy's father and mother like Adam? Explain why or why not.
2. How does Amy's father feel about his son, Hideo?
3. What is the Color Game?
4. What colors are Adam and Amy? Is this a problem?
5. What happens when Justin makes Amy angry at lunch?

Lessons for the other weeks of the unit will continue as outlined above. Section Two, which will be completed during the second week, will cover pages 51 to 98 of the book. The third week for this book will cover Section Three, pages 99 to 158. The fourth and final week of this book will consist of final activities and assessments for this

part of the unit. This week will follow a slightly different schedule than the other weeks. This week will go as follows:

Monday	Vocabulary Review
Tuesday	Finish Vocabulary Review, Begin Question Review
Wednesday	Finish Question Review, Class Discussion
Thursday	Finish Class Discussion
Friday	Take Vocabulary and Question Tests

Below are some examples of activities that will be used in this final week of this section of the unit. The question review and the question test are the same. The question review and the vocabulary test will follow the same format that the students have already experienced. Since SFA has a set schedule that must be followed, the same outline will be used for the story “No Speak English” and the film *Fools Rush In*. Each will take one week to complete (see first schedule pattern) and will not include another week where we review the content from them. Upon completion of the novel, short story and film, we will have a review week where we go over the content of each. This week will follow the same schedule as the last week of the novel (second schedule pattern).

Vocabulary Review

Vocabulary List Activity

For twenty of the thirty words below, you will need to write a meaningful sentence. These words will be on your final vocabulary list for this book. All of the words you have seen at least once before.

1. languid (adjective) weak; without energy (p. 7)
2. tolerate (verb) put up with (p. 18)
3. aspire (verb) having an ambition for something; rising high (p. 28)
4. formidable (adjective) hard to overcome (p. 32)
5. insolent (adjective) boldly rude; insulting (p. 45)
6. prejudice (noun) opinion formed without taking time and care to judge fairly (p. 16)
7. stereotype (noun) idea of what a person is like because of his color, background, etc. (p. 29)
8. turmoil (noun) disturbance; commotion (p. 1)
9. vicious (adjective) very mean (p. 7)
10. spacious (adjective) plenty of room; containing much space (p. 63)
11. abruptly (adverb) suddenly; unexpectedly (p. 70)
12. unite (verb) join together (p. 80)
13. tension (noun) mental strain; stress (p. 95)
14. lenient (adjective) mild; gentle; merciful (p. 56)
15. ambitious (adjective) eager; desiring strongly (p. 96)
16. vulnerable (adjective) capable of being hurt (p. 70)

17.	status (noun)	social standing (p. 87)
18.	subservient (adjective)	tamely submissive; slavishly polite and obedient (p. 48)
19.	sabotage (verb)	damage or destroy on purpose (p. 32)
20.	prestige (noun)	reputation based on what is known of one's abilities, achievements, etc. (p. 29)
21.	mock (adjective)	pretend; not real (p. 44)
22.	shun (verb)	keep away from; avoid (p. 52)
23.	grovel (verb)	humble oneself (p. 69)
24.	thrive (verb)	grew strong (p. 119)
25.	intricate (adjective)	complicated (p. 128)
26.	confiscate (verb)	take away from (p. 130)
27.	saunter (verb)	walk slowly; stroll (p. 137)
28.	ethnic (adjective)	having to do with the various races of people and the characteristics and customs of each (p. 154)
29.	aloof (adverb)	at a distance; withdrawn (p. 99)
30.	oppression (noun)	cruel and unjust treatment (p. 132)

Vocabulary Review Activity Two Crossword Puzzle (See Appendix 2)

Vocabulary Test

Match the following vocabulary words on the left with their definitions on the right. Write the letter for the definition next to the vocabulary word on the left.

1.	mock	A.	cruel and unjust treatment
2.	ethnic	B.	idea of what a person is like because of his color, background, etc.
3.	oppression	C.	social standing
4.	intricate	D.	weak; without energy
5.	turmoil	E.	hard to overcome
6.	stereotype	F.	very mean
7.	languid	G.	damage or destroy on purpose
8.	formidable	H.	at a distance
9.	prejudice	I.	put up with
10.	insolent	J.	having an ambition for something
11.	vicious	K.	having to do with the various races of people and the characteristics and customs of each
12.	spacious	L.	walk slowly; stroll
13.	aloof	M.	take away from
14.	sabotage	N.	boldly rude; insulting
15.	saunter	O.	opinion formed without taking time and care to judge fairly

16.	tolerate	P.	disturbance; commotion
17.	aspire	Q.	plenty of room; containing much space
18.	abruptly	R.	complicated
19.	subservient	S.	suddenly; unexpectedly
20.	prestige	T.	grew strong
21.	unite	U.	keep away from; avoid
22.	tension	V.	humble oneself
23.	thrive	W.	join together
24.	confiscate	X.	reputation based on what is known of one's abilities, achievements, etc.
25.	lenient	Y.	pretend; not real
26.	vulnerable	Z.	mild; gentle; merciful
27.	status	AA.	capable of being hurt
28.	ambitious	BB.	mental strain; stress
29.	grovel	CC.	desiring strongly; eager
30.	shun	DD.	tamely submissive; slavishly polite and obedient

Question Review and Test

Answer the following question with as much detail as you can on another sheet of paper.

1. Summarize this story. (one paragraph)
2. What did you learn about how to treat people of other nationalities, races, or social classes from reading this book?
3. How did Amy feel while playing the Color Game? What did she do about these feelings?
4. Describe the Color Game. Be sure to include what each color stands for and explain the differences between Teks and No-Teks.
5. Who were the G4s? Why were they an important part of the Color Game?
6. How did most of the Blues treat the lower colors in this game? Why?
7. What did Mr. Otero want his students to learn from playing the Color Game? Do you think that they learned this lesson? Explain.
8. What did the Oranges do to make themselves feel better about who and what they were?
9. Why did Mr. Otero make most of the minorities Blues and Dark Greens and most of the white kids Light Greens and Oranges? Was this an important part of the game?
10. How did Amy's and Hideo's beliefs differ from their father's beliefs? Why do you think this happened?

Final Unit Questionnaire

You will need to answer the following questions with as much detail as possible. The purpose of this assignment is to see what you have learned about prejudice and what others around you think about this topic.

1. What does the word prejudice mean to you?
2. Define the word racism.
3. Define the word sexism.
4. Do people with disabilities experience prejudice? Explain.
5. Are people discriminated against because they speak a different language than most of the people around them? Explain.
6. Are people treated unfairly because they have different religious beliefs than others? Explain or give examples.
7. Are people discriminated against because of physical characteristic they might have (short, tall, skinny, fat, etc.)? Explain.
8. Are minorities capable of being prejudiced? Why or why not?
9. What can be done to solve prejudice in our society? Why do you believe that this is the best solution?
10. How did your views about prejudice change as a result of the stories we read and the movie we watched? Would you recommend this unit be taught again next year? Why or why not?

Final Essay

You have two choices for this assignment. You must pick one and write a five-paragraph essay on it.

1. How do your beliefs about prejudice compare with those of the two adults that you interviewed? Why do you believe that you feel the same or differently from them?
2. Out of all the types of prejudice we've talked about during this unit, pick the three that you believe are the worst. Write a letter to the president of the United States and convince him why these are the three worst types and what he should do to rid them from society.

CONCLUSION

I believe that this unit is very important for many reasons. One of the greatest problems as far as my students' learning is concerned is their lack of motivation for school. There are many different causes for this, of course, but one of the biggest areas for concern is that they feel the reading curriculum doesn't apply to them directly. Perhaps if they could make a personal connection with each of the short stories or novels we read, then several different goals could be accomplished. First, students could develop a love for

reading and learning. Second, an increased love of reading will encourage students to read more. This will improve their reading skills, especially those skills which are tested on the TAAS. Finally, with an increase in reading and vocabulary skills, grades in all classes and scores on standardized tests like the TAAS will improve. This is a lot for any teacher to accomplish, especially one relatively new to the profession, but the first step in achieving this goal will have to start with a small but meaningful step in the correct direction. I believe this unit will be that start in the right direction.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books for Students

Cisneros, Sandra. “No Speak English.” *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

This story is about a Hispanic woman who has just recently moved to the United States. She is having difficulty adjusting to her new home because she does not want to learn English. The story gives her reactions to the language and its effect on her family. It also covers what others think about her and her unwillingness to learn English. It is an interesting story that will broaden student’s definitions of the term “prejudice.”

Hernandez, Ines. “Para Teresa.” *Living in the USA: Cultural Contexts for Reading and Writing*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994.

The story discusses two Hispanic girls growing up in Texas and how they show those around them that they have pride in their culture. The story is excellent, but the reading level might be too difficult for lower readers.

Miklowitz, Gloria. *The War Between the Classes*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1985.

This book describes a game that a teacher invents to teach his students about racial, social, and gender prejudices that exist in society. It is an excellent book for getting students talking about prejudice and what it means to them. It will also challenge many of their thoughts about racism and sexism.

Nava, Yolanda. *It’s All in the Frijoles*. New York: Fireside, 2000.

This anthology covers fourteen characteristics that are valued by Hispanics. The book is a great source for introducing these values to students. Individual stories are given for each characteristic and told by famous Hispanics throughout the United States and Latin America.

Books for Teachers

Anzaldua, Gloria. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

The author discusses various racial issues of Chicano-Americans living in the United States. This book is excellent for the section titled “How to Tame a Wild Tongue,” which discusses various dialects of English and Spanish and why Chicanos must master all of them if they are to fit into all of the different worlds they are a part of.

Crystal, David. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

This is the definitive book for information on language. The book includes information on just some of the following subjects that might be helpful to people interested in this unit: language identity, languages of the world, language in the world, and language in communication. Each of these subjects is broken down further. If you want to know something about language and it doesn't exist in this book, good luck trying to find it.

Katz, Phyllis and Taylor, Dalmas. *Eliminating Racism: Profiles in Controversy*. New York: Plenum Press, 1988.

This book is a collection of essays dealing with the topic of racism. Different types of racism, social policies toward various groups, and several ethnic groups are covered. It is an excellent source to build one's background knowledge with. In depth coverage of African-American issues is available, but the book is limited in its information on other ethnic groups.

Martin, Mike W. *Everyday Morality: An Introduction to Applied Ethics*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1995.

An excellent source of information on the topic of prejudice can be found in part three of the book (Respect for Others). The difference between overt and covert prejudice is explained and might be helpful in helping students gaining a broader perspective on prejudice. Other topics covered include stereotyping, language and humor, affirmative action, and gender roles. Hispanic American topics are not covered in detail in this source. Discussion topics are also included in each section that could be adapted for use with any grade level. A detailed bibliography is also included for future research.

Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1993.

This book gives a multicultural perspective of American history by taking many events in American history and retelling those same events from the minority point of view. Great source for history teachers or for reading teachers teaching point of view.

Films on Prejudice and Hispanic Culture

***Fools Rush In* (1996). Director: Andy Tennant, Principal Actors: Mathew Perry, Salma Hayek Rating: PG-13**

This film chronicles the relationship of Alex (Mathew Perry) and Isabel (Salma Hayek). After a one-night stand Isabel ends up pregnant. The two decide to get married for the

sake of the baby. This is where all the action takes place. The families must learn to accept each other, and Alex and Isabel have to work through their many problems. Overall, it is a good film to teach prejudice with. Teachers with younger children might not use it though because of questionable subject matter.

***Like Water for Chocolate* (1992) Director: Alfonso Arau, Writer: Laura Esquivel
Rating: R**

This film is set in Mexico and Texas. It has one numerous awards all over the world and was nominated for a Golden Globe in the United States. The story reflects two young lovers who are not allowed to be together and how she uses food to attract the attention of the one she loves. One possible drawback to the film is that it is in Spanish with English subtitles.

***My Family* (1995), Director: Gregory Nava, Principal Actors: Jimmy Smits, Edward James Olmos Rating: R**

This movie spans three generations of a Mexican-American family from East Los Angeles, a very Hispanic part of Los Angeles. It explains their journey to this great city and the triumphs and sorrows that they have experienced there. A good film because it depicts Mexican-American culture and gives another idea of the American Dream. Potential problems include very strong language. Because of this, permission letters would definitely be required.

***Selena* (1997) Director: Gregory Nava, Principal Actors: Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos Rating: PG**

This film records the history of the Tejano music star, Selena Quintinella Perez, who was shot by an obsessed fan in 1995. It shows the impact this singer had on the Spanish-speaking world, and the success that probably would have been hers in the English-speaking world if she would have finished her first English album. It is another good movie showing values that are important to Hispanics, and the prejudice they must face in their lives in the United States. There are no language or content problems that would be inappropriate for younger viewers.

***The Joy Luck Club* (1993) Director: Wayne Wang, Written By: Amy Tan
Rating: R**

Although this film does not discuss Hispanic-American culture, it is an excellent film for showing what immigrants must experience when they first come to the United States and how the first generation to be born in the United States is affected by the experience of their parents. The film is very moving and is beautifully told. It sticks to the book of the same name pretty closely, probably due to the fact that Amy Tan, who wrote the book, also helped write the screenplay. Some scenes may be inappropriate for younger

viewers, so showing the entire film is not advisable. However, many five to fifteen minute clips could be used in the classroom with little problem.

Internet Sites

Arte Publico Press

<http://www.arte.uh.edu/>

This web site offers a wide selection of books perfect for reading and learning about Hispanic culture. Many of the titles are bilingual, some are in Spanish, and the vast majority are written in English. The press, run at the University of Houston, has created a forum where Hispanic authors from around the world can be heard. Teachers of all grades are sure to find something on this web site to use in their classrooms.

Bilingual Education

<http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/eslbil.html>

This page offers a variety of links for bilingual education teachers and others interested in Hispanic culture. This is a recommended site for those unfamiliar with the intricacies of Hispanic culture or who are interested in bilingual education.

Internet Movie Data Base

<http://www.imdb.com>

This site informs the reader of practically anything he or she wants to know about a particular movie. Searches by title, actors, plots, etc. are possible due to the site's powerful search engine. Trailers for current and not so current movies are available for viewing along with a link to amazon.com where most of the movies can be purchased. People's reviews for the films are also included. The site is very well maintained and very user-friendly. It is a good resource for teachers and students alike.

Multicultural Pavilion

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/multicultural/home.html>

An excellent web site for finding or learning about multicultural issues. The page contains links to multicultural stories, poetry from all over the world, and academic research for teachers on how to effectively teach in a multicultural setting. The site also provides links for more specific information should it be desired. It is a good tool for teachers to have.

Ultimate Collection of News Links

<http://pppp.net/links/news/>

This site provides over 4000 links to newspapers all over the world. The site is very well organized and gives some general information about each country in addition to the links for newspapers and other media. This is a useful link for anyone wanting to learn about a particular place in the world. One problem with this site is that many links are in the language native to the country that they are from. However, there are enough English sites to help teachers or students learn about the world around them.

University of Houston—Dept. of Modern and Classical Languages

<http://www.hfac.uh.edu/mcl/>

This site offers many links to various sites dedicated to Latin America. Literature, cooking, and current events are just some of the topics covered in their extensive link page. The only potential problem with most of the links is that they are only in Spanish.