



Cuentos de Eva Luna: Magical Realism in Latin American Literature

Curriculum Unit 09.02.05
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Objectives

My objectives for this unit are to engage students in reading world class literature from famous authors such as Isabel Allende and García Márquez. Students will also be able to interpret and analyze literary work. As an urban school teacher, I sympathize with my reading colleagues, and agree with the findings that our students lack motivation when it comes to reading literature. Even though some of our students in the district are exceptionally talented, the majority of them find themselves caught in a rip current between knowledge and entertainment. Without any doubt, today's students will choose MTV or BET over the Discovery or History channel and for some of them, reading a book is "old and outdated". This negligence toward exploring and interpreting literature is reflected on CMT and CAPT scores each year. Although the New Haven School district has come a long way, there is still work to do with our young students to change that psychology.

My aim is to guide my students in a series of readings and teach them how to appreciate literature and art as a form of freedom and self expression. Additionally, as a foreign language teacher, I would like to introduce my students to the Latin American Culture and Civilization as represented in literature and art. To accomplish my goal, I chose the study of Magical Realism in Latin American literature. Through studying this unit, students will be able to analyze short stories and make visual connections with some of the art work belonging to this particular era. Lastly, students will compare and contrast writings from Isabel Allende and Garcia-Marquez and other authors.

Introduction and Educational Standards

This unit correlates with National and State of Connecticut Standards of teaching of a foreign language. The national standards for foreign language education revolve around five goals: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities -- the five C's of foreign language education. The National Standards are rigorously required in the State of Connecticut as the foundation of foreign language teaching.

Since culture is considered an important factor while learning a foreign language, it is imperative that

students understand the products and perspectives of the culture, and the language studied. The environment in the class that I will be teaching this unit is somewhat favorable. Being that the school is bilingual, almost 54% of my students are fluent in Spanish, whereas the rest of the class is learning Spanish as a second language.

Even though half of the class is fluent in Spanish, the unit will be introduced and taught as a literature class in English to make the process easier for those who do not speak the Spanish language. Students in this class are highly motivated and are very serious about the learning process, although this class is highly successful academically, it does not reflect the majority of the students in the school. Teaching this unit in this class for the first time will open more windows of opportunity to successfully introduce the unit to other classes in the future, despite their academic level and results.

Complying with the state's standards, as much as possible, I am constantly keeping in mind that my students must exhibit understanding of Latin American culture after this unit has been taught. Even though in the class that I will be teaching this unit I have Spanish speakers, they have diverse backgrounds. Most of them are from the Caribbean islands such as Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic or countries around the Caribbean waters such as Colombia. I also have students with Mexican and Peruvian background. These students demonstrate noticeable differences, not only in their Spanish dialect, but also in their customs and traditions. They are very aware of their nationality and differences but skeptical about accepting other cultures as part of the Hispanic heritage. This phenomenon is common among students in other classes as well. It takes a lot to convince some of my students about the different types of dialects or perspectives in the Spanish speaking world. Since my students are young in age, they do not have enough exposure to other cultures which can lead to little tolerance as some of them think of their particular culture as the standard. By teaching this unit, the understanding of diversity in cultural perspectives will open new horizons to identify Latin America as a unified, multicultural world.

One of the standards of teaching a foreign language is connections between the target language and other disciplines: When teaching a world language an instructor cannot confine the lesson only to grammar and vocabulary. In theory, expanding the content area helps the students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines. By focusing on Latin American history and civilization, my students will be able to obtain information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Practically speaking, teaching this unit will give my students the chance to see more in depth some of the historical, political and cultural developments of Latin America in the course of history. Throughout the school year, one of my objectives is not only teaching Spanish but also introducing my students to Latin American Culture and Civilization. To reach these goals, students completed projects on different Spanish speaking regions of North America, South America and the Caribbean Islands. Furthermore, students learned important facts about the history of these countries during pre-Columbian, post-Columbian and modern times. Students became familiar with the geography, and major economic resources. However, they have not studied in depth some of the political distinctiveness of Latin America such as leaderships, dictators and coups d'état. The unit will be taught as a class of literature combined with historical facts about dictatorships, guerilla wars and revolutions. One of the main characters in the story "Two Words" by Isabel Allende is a rebel running for office. By studying the political developments in some Latin American countries, students will be able to better understand and analyze this character and his drastic change before and during elections. They will also be able to focus on the will of the people who, exhausted by the political warfare, are searching for peaceful transitions from one administration to the other.

Finally, comparisons: Comparison is a very important part while learning about a different culture, because it requires students to demonstrate understanding of the language studied through comparisons with their own. Our students live in a comparative society. Moreover a good part of their work includes comparing and contrasting different facts and subjects using Venn diagrams, charts, graphs and statistics. Comparing two or three cultures is part of this strategy that really helps our students enhance their reasoning skills and learn more about the environment they live in. Whereas my students who are learning Spanish as a second language, have good understanding of the geography and some important historical facts about the history of the Latin American world, when it comes to understanding the culture, these students are only familiar with the common celebrations such as Carnivals of Puerto Rico or Days of the Dead in Mexico. They usually compare both celebrations to Halloween in the United States. The purpose of this unit is to help students compare political movements in Latin America and also the United States. Remaining faithful to the reading by Isabel Allende, students will be able to compare characters in the story, their psychology, and will try to find equivalent figures in their own culture.

Background Information

Even though our students study language in daily bases following a curriculum map and pace, they have little or no exposure to Latin American literature. In fact, middle school students have a very limited knowledge about international literature. Throughout seven and eighth grade in language arts, students study important authors and artists such as Anne Frank or Vincent Van Gogh etc. They complete projects and art work that reflect and assess their learning. These types of assessments allow the teacher to evaluate their learning and also give students the opportunity to express themselves artistically showing what they have accomplished in reading and writing. However, when asked about great Hispanic authors beginning with Cervantes or contemporary writers such as Allende, or Garcia Marquez, our students are not familiar at all with their names and their work. Therefore, the introduction of this unit will give them the opportunity to further explore Latin American culture through writings and art. Since our students do not have a background in classical literature, introducing a new concept such as magical realism is not an easy task. My biggest challenge is to break down the term and have a visual representation of what the magical realism is. Students at this age learn visually and remember terms when associated with images.

Understanding magical realism as concept, one has to take in consideration that it is represented simultaneously in art and literature. The term "magical realism" was created by a German art critic named Franz Roh. What he called Magical Realism were paintings where real forms were combined in a certain way that does not conform to daily reality. "Magical Realism, unlike the fantastic or the surreal, presumes that the individual requires a bond with the tradition and the faith of the community that she/he is historically constructed or connected."(1) In literature, Magical Realism follows more or less the same pattern; in other words, coexistence between the reality and magical events. This style of writing is simple in its structures, yet able to astonish the reader and make him a part of the adventure.

Latin American authors embraced and carried on the tradition leaving a legacy of great works such as One Hundred Years of Solitude and The House of the Spirits . This aggressive literary movement is widely known as the Latin American Boom. Though today magical realism, as a literary current, is flourishing, its roots go back to the beginning of the last century with authors such as Kafka with Metamorphosis. Nowadays, this literary current is embraced and has spread world wide. The Albanian writer Ismail Kadare (Nobel Prize nominee 1993)

is one excellent example of Magical Realism in Eastern Europe. His short novel *Chronicle of the Hankonats* resembles *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in style and storytelling techniques, yet is very unique and entreating. One has to know the psychology of the period after Turkish occupation in an impoverished Albania to fully appreciate the peculiar characters struggling to endure and hold on to their assets.

Magical realism, according to Luis Leal, "is an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured form, in elaborate or rustic styles, in open or closed structures." (2) Authors such as Allende with *The Stories of Eva Luna* or *the House of the Spirits*, and ultimately *One Hundred Years of Solitude* of Garcia Marquez, praise these rustic environments with events and surprises where the abnormal translates into the ordinary. In magical realist literature the reality is twisted beyond imagination. The truth mingles with unforeseen yet comical, sequential events. The characters in a typical magical realist novel are quite mystical, yet live in an existent society and their peculiar, genuine conduct seems to be the standard in such circumstances. "Magical realism combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed." (3) In the magical realist novel or short story, events and characters complement one another even though the setting is most of the time an enigma. Like Garcia Marquez, Allende travels throughout Latin America with her characters without revealing the identity of the towns, cities or villages: "...these fictions question received ideas about time space, and identity." (4)

In addition to the fact that magical realist style leaves the setting shadowy to emphasize more its surreal nature, authors use the presence of an inexplicable supernatural phenomenon. This supernatural phenomenon, which in some cases is the ability to tell the future or do something out of the ordinary, is presented sometimes as a gift of nature and is associated with the main characters in their daily lives. Faris in *Magical Realism Theory, History, Community* writes: "...irreducible element of magic something we can not explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them." (5) Often, this phenomenon is present since the beginning of a magical realist literary piece; they are outrageous in nature, but portrayed as believable. Right in the beginning of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* Garcia Marquez writes: "The world was so recent that many things lacked name, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point" Allende in *The Stories of Eva Luna* writes: "Nicolas Vidal had always known that a woman will cost him his life. That had been prophesied on the day he was born and confirmed by the proprietress of the general store on the occasion he had permitted her to read his fortune in the coffee dregs." (6)

Styles in magical realist work depend on the author. Each style is unique and strongly connected to the background of each author as well as the environment and society from which the author emerged as a product. Allende has been compared to Garcia Marquez in her style. Similarities exist in social themes and characters. However, these authors have different prospective on the subject they chose to write. "Some critics have argued that the magical realism of Garcia Marquez is fundamentally different from the narrative of other writers- a product that is not of organization as in case of Vargas Llosa, but rather pure invention." (7)

Allende, on the other hand brings a completely different point of view in her stories. With a vast range of characters Allende represents the female as the leading force in her narrative, placing her in a very adequate social position despite her struggle for integrity. Linda Gould Levine states "Her penchant for adventure and risk- taking, her feminine convictions, her belief in the power of the word, her spiritual view of death evoke familiar shades of her most endearing female characters." (8) Surprisingly enough in macho society, women as her leading characters are able to triumph, be honored, saved from the claws of death or even seduce the enemy with the aim to conquer. *The Stories of Eva Luna* overcome what seems to be a battle for honor, values, morals, ideas and freedom.

Allende's work is a reflection of a panoramic Latin American geography, culture, behavior and psychology. Born in Peru and raised in Chile, Allende had to flee the country and live in exile for many years in Venezuela where she struggled to survive emotionally without her ties to Chile and her family. In Venezuela, Allende was able to write her first novel *The House of the Spirits*. What is important in the early work of Allende is her involvement in the feminist movement in Latin America that will later be represented in her work.

The Stories of Eva Luna; storytelling techniques and style

Writing short stories is not an easy task for any author since he or she needs to accomplish the goal in few pages and keep the reader interested at the same time.

In general, while writing short stories, the author must be creative and inventive.

Furthermore, he must show action, originality, scandals, sex and violence; themes that the reader would find appealing.

The Stories of Eva Luna are an ensemble of interesting pieces of art where the unpredictable meets the magical. The aim of Allende is to keep the reader addicted to the stories of Eva Luna which can be compared with the Persian tales of Scheherazade. Allende. In fact, states that Eva is her favorite character. "Because she rebels against her own destiny using the gift that nature gave her 'the gift of telling stories'. Because she is feminine and a feminist. Because she has an honest heart and is not afraid of her own sensuality."(9)

Allende wrote *The Stories of Eva Luna* using a variety of themes from politics, poverty, gambling, sex, prostitution, perversity, adultery--nothing less than a scandal. Being that short stories in nature are much more challenging than a novel Allende expresses: "Un cuento en cambio, es como disparar una flecha, hay una sola oportunidad, se requiere la mano de un buen arquero: dirección, fuerza, velocidad, buen ojo."(10)

"A story on the other hand is like shooting an arrow, there is only one shot, it

requires the hand of an archer; direction, force, speed, good eye." Keeping in mind this analogy, Allende succeeds in giving the reader a handful of controversial themes, amongst them love.

In fact, scandals are the motor of a magical realist work, the force that leaves the reader breathless and the controversy is often the fuel inside of each story; for example in "Simple Maria" Isabel Allende starts: "Simple Maria believed in love. That was what made her a living legend. All her neighbors came to her funeral even the police and the blind man from the kiosk who almost never abandoned his business...She was not aware of the renown of her name, nor of the legend that has been created around her. She was an old prostitute with the soul of a young girl." Allende has chosen a name that is holy for the Catholic world in Latin America and creates a controversy. Even though Maria is an old prostitute, she is well respected and loved by the entire city. Juxtaposing the social status of Maria and the respect given to her after death, Allende overrules the questions of moral values and honors a simple human life which is Simple Maria.

The characters that Allende created are unpredictable and her stories have an unthinkable twist. For example, in the story "The Judge's Wife" the plot develops rapidly and the events are in fact unpredictable. The judge's wife, who comes from a very distinguished family, young and beautiful, facing the death of her husband and

probably herself, makes love to a low-life scoundrel wanted for his crimes. "Allende has often emphasized that her aim in writing is to entertain her readers with a good story."(11) By using a variety of themes, interesting personalities, intrigues and passion, Allende allows the reader to go beyond the boundaries of reality and use the sky as the limit of imagination.

The characters in *The Stories of Eva Luna* are unique and never become redundant. They come from different backgrounds and complement the diversity of Latin American society. Allende wrote parts of her work in, Venezuela and even the United States. While reading her books, the reader understands the magnitude of Allende's acceptance toward the other cultures and races. As a matter of fact, her characters are diverse and come from different parts of the world including Latin America. The well-known theme of *mestizaje* is so greatly reflected and represented in all of her work that it reminds the reader of the unity of Latin American culture. Allende states: "Comprendí que soy hija de todas esas inmigraciones que llegan a la alucinada geografía de nuestro continente con su cargamento de tradiciones, lenguas, creencias, de codicia descabellada, odios y amores, para fundirse en un crisol de violencia, lujuria y también de amor."(12)

The Latin American woman is represented as an important figure in the society. Surviving the struggles of poverty and hardship, the woman in *The Stories of Eva Luna* becomes an icon of strength, very unusual in Latin American culture where the male figure is very possessive and dominant. Allende sees in womanhood the force that moves the society. She compliments her intellectually and physically and gives light to her wisdom. Allende gives credit and recognition to prostitutes, housewives and young girls. Expressing openly her partiality toward women, Allende never hesitates to represent men as selfish, controlling patriarchs. Once Allende places both sexes face to face she immediately becomes an advocate for women.

The story "If You Touched my Heart" has quite a symbolic meaning. A well known politician who was a womanizer has an affair with a young girl. He brainwashes and imprisons her in a Casanova like underground cell for forty-seven years. When she was discovered she did not resemble at all a human being, in fact, she was disfigured physically and mentally to fit in the little confinement. "Forty- seven years later, when Hortensia was rescued from the pit in which she had been entombed, and the newspapermen traveled from every corner of the nation to photograph her, not even she could remember her name or how she got there." The reporters accosted Amadeo Peralta "'Why did you keep her locked up like a miserable beast?'

"'Because I felt like it,' he replied calmly."(13)

Isabel Allende wrote "Two Words" as part of *The Stories of Eva Luna*, a collection of short stories. The majority of these fictions takes place in tropical villages or small towns where everybody knows everybody. Thus, rustic environments are the perfect setting in a magical realist novel or story. These rural atmospheres are commonly encountered in Garcia Marquez' work as well as in other authors. In *The Stories of Eva Luna*, the reader finds a mix of different tales, chronicles and anecdotes. When interviewed about the different themes and characters Allende has used as an inspiration, she states that they come from TV headlines, or old tales, some in Chile and some in Venezuela. What makes these adventures magical is the fact that they trespass the boundaries of the ordinary and enter a mystifying world. For example, in the story "Ester Lucero," Doctor Angel Sanchez saves, in an unconventional way, a dying girl who has fallen off a mango tree. "...placed both hands with Ester Lucero's head and began a frantic dance around the sick girl. He lifted his knees so high they touched his chest, he swooped low, he waved his arms and made grotesque faces."(14) Allende is able to successfully mix different elements and make them work perfectly in the setting where the events take place. She gives life to the old cultures of the continent and escapes from the traditional, or the daily routine. In the case of Doctor Angel Sanchez, the old rituals of a lost tribe saved the life of Ester Lucero. Emphasizing the

presence of an extraordinary event, Allende does not only remain faithful to one of the characteristics of the magical realism, but also honors the roots of Latin American culture

Preview of "Two Words"

By Isabel Allende in *The Stories of Eva Luna*

In the centre of "Two Words" is Belisa Crepusculario, a typical character of Magical Realism. Born to a poor family, her parents did not even have a name to give her. So she gave herself a flamboyant name, Belisa Crepusculario, meaning, twilight beauty.

Having to live for years in a drought, Belisa knew nothing but hunger and suffering. After burying her four brothers and sisters who died from hunger and poverty, Belisa knew it was her turn. She realized that it was time to escape the dearth that had dried out the region and exhausted human and natural resources. One day she took off and went on a journey to search for a place near the water. During her journey she met people who traveled with her in the "desert" but she did not have time to help anybody in need, because she was determined to survive and find a better place. It was during her voyage when she discovered the art of making and selling words.

Crossing from town to town, Belisa was amazed when she saw for the first time a newspaper. She asked, "What is this?" Her business-oriented mind came up with an excellent idea. She thought selling words is a much more honorable alternative rather than becoming a prostitute or a servant in a rich house. So, she paid a priest twenty pesos to teach her how to read and write, bought a dictionary, and threw it in the water as soon as she realized that it was nothing but "packaged words."

"Her prices were fair. For five centavos she delivered verses from memory, for seven she improved the quality of dreams, for nine she wrote love letters, for twelve she invented insults for irreconcilable enemies."(15)

Then, she became successful in her profession and never intended to exchange it for another. Several years later, she had her own tent where she would sell words, legal arguments and many things. One day, as the word about her gift spread around, she was kidnapped in the daylight and tortured by rebels. When she woke up she saw herself facing "The Colonel", a long time illiterate rebel, who was running for office. The Colonel needed help with his speeches in order to not only become eloquent but also win the elections.

Belisa stood in front of the Colonel quite fascinated by his authority, and gave him not only what he had asked for, but she offered him a discount; two "magic words" that the Colonel can use anytime during the election. No one knew what the magic words were, but they had a tremendous effect on the Colonel who was much softer and relaxed. The questionable magic words started spreading panic among his adjutants. The most zealous of them was El Mulato, who had a desire to devour Belisa sexually. El Mulato was concerned with the Colonel losing his manhood to the "magic words". He went on a journey to find Belisa so the Colonel can give her back the words in exchange for his power and manhood. Unfortunately, the spell could not be broken "The men knew then their leader would never undo the witchcraft of those accursed words, because the whole world could see the voracious-puma eyes softened as the woman walked to him and took his hand in hers ."(16)

To fit in the category of magical realism, a literary work must have at least some characteristics, and comply with some of the so-called principles of magical realism. Even though, in the story, there is no presence of supernatural phenomena, the scenes take you to a nonexistent place where the reader along with the characters suffers the drought and walks through the deserted areas. Moreover, Belisa Crepusculario is a very strange individual. She is a cross between a gypsy and a sage woman. She has a gift of not only using words as a powerful tool to survive, but she is also able to psychologically analyze her prey. Belisa is not the victim in the story as she appears to be, but the colonel is. She approaches the colonel just like a "mountain cat" as Allende describes her, and senses his weakness; she then uses her gift to devour him psychologically. Belisa achieves her goal. The Colonel is completely hypnotized and under the spell of Belisa, and never recovers his powers again. Belisa resembles the gypsies who stalk people in the street for a so-called psychic reading, and place them under the spell until they get their money. However, Belisa is not looking for money. She uses her wisdom to domesticate this wild puma. This phenomenon does not appear to be a mystical thrill, but complies with the magical realism format.

Allende is a witness of political warfare in Latin America. She escaped persecution in Chile and fled to Venezuela. Even though she was involved with politics, in *The Stories of Eva Luna*, Allende has explored mostly social themes. In fact, *The Stories of Eva Luna* do not have an obvious political motive or message. As a matter of fact the politics emerge as a secondary theme, but when analyzed closely "Two Words" appears to be a wish for a true political leader; someone wise and placid, a charismatic leader who listens to people, someone who does not come to power with a coup d'état and leave assassinated.

Similarities and differences between Garcia Marquez and Allende in style and themes

The similarities between the styles of Garcia Marquez and Allende are strongly linked to the culture, tradition and the psychology of Latin American people. Throughout history these countries suffered the same wars for independence, fought for human dignity and struggled to save the old traditions wiped by colonialism. Both authors relied on human heritage and artifacts to craft memorable characters. Similarly, they have experimented with various themes and topics that have touched the heart of readers around the world.

The magnitude of the themes and memorable characters is overwhelming. However, each of these characters has a unique mentality. Living in different areas of Latin America both authors represent their unique points of view. Since they represented the best of Latin American Boom, critics have eulogized their work throughout the years. The most analyzed works by the critics are *The House of The Spirits* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In fact critics have praised the two works for the distinctive styles and magnitude of characters.

"Two Words" and "Death Constant Beyond Love" are excellent examples of short stories with similar themes, setting and even style. The characters in both stories have unique personalities and come from diverse backgrounds. The dominating themes are politics and corruption mixed with tones of wisdom and insight. Senator Onesimo Sanchez in "Death Constant Beyond Love" by Garcia Marquez is the opposite of El Colonel in "Two Words" by Isabel Allende. Even though, both candidates are running for office, they are far away from being ideal political leaders. Senator Sanchez is a corrupted politician who is around forty two years old and educated in Europe as a metallurgical engineer. He is not the stereotype Latin American leader who seizes power through war. Senator Sanchez is quite sophisticated. He enjoys reading Roman and Greek philosophy

and tries to follow a "Stoic" philosophy in his daily life. Whereas, El Colonel is an illiterate rebel who had fought all his life in civil wars and is looking for a drastic change. Lacking eloquence, El Colonel is searching to fill in the gap by taking discourse lessons. Tired from warfare and violence El Colonel goes through a psychological transformation. Without openly announcing it, he is pro change in his country's life. He aims to be a true political leader with fame and glory. Despite his ability to overthrow any type of government, El Colonel refuses and wants a fair political election.

Both of these characters are very original. The past of El Colonel is the image of any dictator in Latin America whereas Senator Sanchez appears to be the complete opposite. In fact, he leans toward the version of a western politician. The complexity of both characters is reflected in their emotional turmoil. They are weak mentally, emotionally and both have given in to loneliness. As Allende describes, "She knew immediately that she was standing before the loneliest man in the world."(17) It is Belisa Crepusculario who explores his psychological condition and used it in her favor.

"In Death Constant Beyond Love", even though Senator Sanchez has a terminal illness he continues his electoral campaign to avoid loneliness before the end. His constant thoughts of death overwhelm him and he uses his electoral campaign as an escape. The irony is very poignant; before dying he found the love of his life Laura, a black girl living in the shacks of Rosal del Virrey, who would never had a chance of being noticed if the Senator wasn't ill.

The theme of women is touched by both authors but in a different scale. In Garcia Marquez the main character is a politician and the woman is complementary, in Allende, the woman is the protagonist whereas the politician plays the secondary role. This is a familiar technique used by Allende since her stories are told from a woman's perspective. In Garcia Marquez, the woman complements the hero and her development as an individual evolves around him. She is seen as part of the male character but not the nucleus of the story. The male characters in both stories come from dissimilar backgrounds. They are portrayed as powerful, yet deep inside they become weak and vulnerable in the presence of the woman. In the end is the woman who changes the course of the story. Senator Onesimo Sanchez, an eccentric politician, well educated, falls for a poor black girl living in a dry, illusionary village in Colombia.

Garcia Marquez represents the woman as an important force in his stories and uses her to manipulate the development of the story, but she is not the heroine. Laura Farina changes the fate of the Senator Sanchez. Even though he was sentenced to death by an illness, the relationship with Laura caused him to die in distress and repudiation. The disease destroyed him physically while Laura destroyed him emotionally. Allende sees the leader in women; Belisa Crepusculario is someone who struggles for survival. She is a mistress of her domain, quite capable of taking down the "wild puma" otherwise known as the rebellious Colonel. Using her gift of nature Belisa never fails; she carefully scrutinized the Colonel, exploited his vulnerability and loneliness and slowly destroyed him.

The similarities in character description are close but very authentic for each one of the writers. While describing Belisa Crepusculario, Allende writes: "The man smelled the scent of a mountain cat issuing from the woman."(18) Garcia Marquez, similarly describes Laura Farina "...for her body gave off the dark fragrance of an animal of the woods..."(19)

The events in both stories develop quite differently. The events in "Death Constant Beyond Love" develop rapidly as the illness of the senator. There are at least three parallel events that occur in a six month period. These three events, however, develop simultaneously in a fantastical way. First, the illness of the senator progresses rapidly as he travels through the desert. He guards a symbolic rose and tries to keep it alive

throughout probably the hottest region of Colombia. Secondly, the electoral campaign; a farce, a futureless parade of paper birds, paper butterflies and paper ocean is not a political campaign anymore, without any doubt it is a puppet show distracting the senator from his illness. Thirdly, his love affair with Laura Farina, whose "beauty" is questioned as the egocentric senator uses it to distract himself from the constant thoughts of death.

In "Two Words" by Allende, the events seem to follow diachronic order. Belisa grows as individual, she is strengthened as person, and is able to survive violence. After all, Belisa in the eyes of the reader is not a seductress, but a fighter. Her strength is intensified gradually as she grows up from a little girl crossing the "desert of death" to a mature, wise woman.

Strategies

The first part of the unit will introduce magical realism as a literary current in Latin America. Students will become familiar with some writers of Magical Realism in Latin America and the world.

The second part will introduce students to the literary work of Isabel Allende and the reading of "Two Words". Students will describe, comment and analyze in depth the story looking for ideas, relating the story with Latin American politics, culture and civilization. They will also look beyond the literature; some of the work of Magical Realism will be presented in art using examples of famous painters and artists

For the assessment part, students will complete a series of open ended questions where they will interpret the reading based on their personal point of view. Students then will present in art fragments from the story, "Two Words". I chose different fragments because not all the students are comfortable with drawing or painting people.

Activities

A series of activities will take place during the teaching of this Unit. Since the class I am planning to teach the unit is a class where students are high achievers on the CMT, they work independently very well and come up with bright ideas. This group of students likes research and technology. In order to complement their learning styles I will divide the class into different groups. I usually mix native speakers of Spanish with non speakers to have diversity among the groups. Each group will work on research topics such as Magical Realism in literature, art and cinematography etc. As I mentioned previously, the students like technology and they find satisfaction in presenting work through power point presentation. In addition, students will have recommended websites where they can research and find valuable information. The purpose of this research is to enable students to compare and contrast the Magical Realism from the other styles in literature and the art. Lastly, they will be asked to compare the work with the authors they have studied in Language Arts.

Lesson One

Objectives: Students will be able to learn about Magical Realism as a literary and art movement.

Activities:

1. Reading an article on magical realism.
2. Brain storm activity in group work
3. Power point presentation with work of art.
4. Assess with multiple choice handout.

Homework: Research on Allende and Marquez

Lesson development

1. I will have the students answer these questions as they read in groups a brief article about magical realism.
2. What is Magical Realism?
3. Who are some of the writers belonging to this movement?
4. What are some of the themes of magical realism?

Next, students will brainstorm their answers as the teacher organizes their answers in the white board.

b. Teacher will show a power point presentation with paintings from magical realism to visually represent the idea of "twisted reality".

Questions to ask when presenting

- What do you see in this painting?
- What is the artist trying to say?
- How does the lighting work in these paintings?
- How does the images relate to one another?
- How are these paintings different from what you have seen before?
- Do you see any relation between the artist and the painting?
- Can you make a connection between the magical realism in literature and art?

Lesson Two

Objectives: Students will be able to learn about authors of magical realism in Latin America such as Isabel Allende and Garcia Marquez. Students will receive guidelines to facilitate their research.

Gabriel García Márquez team

1. Present Gabriel García Márquez The Nobel Prize Recipient in Literature 1982
2. Highlight the most important moments in the life of Gabriel García Márquez
3. Brief Bibliography of Gabriel García Márquez
4. Use visuals such as pictures of Gabriel Garcia Márquez his birth place and his most important moments.

Isabel Allende Team

1. Present Isabel Allende as recipient of many awards
2. Highlight the most important moments in the life of Isabel Allende
3. Brief Bibliography of Isabel Allende
4. Use visuals such as pictures of Isabel Allende her birth place and her most important moments.

Activities:

1. Students will present life and work of Garcia Marquez and Isabel Allende (group project) in either poster boards or power point presentation.
2. Students will complete an assessment handout with fill in the blanks as they hear each presentation

Homework: Read "Two Words" with a set of questions to answer (allow one week).

Lesson Three

Objectives: Students will be able to analyze "To Words" by Isabel Allende.

Activities:

- Students
will
discuss
the
1. questions
previously
given to
them with
the
reading.

Sample questions

- a. Where do the events take place?
- b. Who is Belisa Crepusculario, what does she do?
- c. What are the Two Words?
- d. Who does Belisa Crepusculario represent?

- Students will complete a graphic organizer as they analyze the three main characters of the
2. story and how do they change one another. They will be able to say what happens as a consequence of this change in their personalities.

Homework: Research on Dictators of Latin America. With a rubric and a set of guidelines

Lesson Four

Objectives: Students will learn political developments in some countries of Latin America. Students will be able to relate the history of Belisa Crepusculario with the political aspect of Latin America.

Activities:

1. Students will share with class examples from different dictatorships and junta regimes in Latin America.
2. Students will discuss how coming to power with force is the standard in Latin America
3. Students will compare and find similarities between the Colonel and different dictators in Latin America.
4. Students will discuss how Belisa Crepusculario represent the Latin American people.

Final Project:

Art Project: In cooperation with the art teacher (represent your magical realist painting). The painting will describe a scene or characters from the short story. (Allow three weeks)

Websites for Teachers

<http://www.actfl.org/>

Provides the reader with an overview of the National Standards for Foreign Language Education.

<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/isabel-allende/>

Encyclopedia of World Biography on Isabel Allende. Provides the reader with information about Allende's life and work.

<http://www.cas.usf.edu/languages/whystudy/standard.htm//w>

ACTFL National Standards in Foreign Language Education

Provides the standards required to teach a foreign language in a middle school or high school level.

Websites for students

<http://www.fetlerart.com/children-art.shtml>

Provides the students with visual information about magical realist art appropriate for the age.

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~aarios/resourcebank/definitions/>

Provides the reader with information on Magical Realism in Literature and Art.

Annotated Bibliography for teachers

Allende, Isabel. 2001. *The Stories of Eva Luna*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

This is an ensemble of short stories written by Isabel Allende, using a variety of themes. The setting is predominantly in Latin America.

Bloom, Harold. 1999. *Modern Critical Views*. Gabriel Garcia Marquez. *From Realism to Magical Realism. The Meticulous Modernist Fiction of Garcia Marques*. New York. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers. The author provides the reader

with different analyses on García Márquez' storytelling techniques and style.

Feal, Rosemary G. and Miller, Yvette E. 2002. Isabel Allende Today. Pittsburgh: Latin American Literary Press. Rosemary G. Feal and Yvette E. Miller have put together this book as an anthology of essays analyzing some of Allende literary work.

Hart, Stephen M. 2003. Eva Luna & Cuentos de Eva Luna. London: Grand & Cutler LTD. The author provides in -depth review of Allende's work including themes, storytelling techniques and culture.

Lawall, Sarah. 2002. The Norton Anthology of World Literature. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc. The anthology is a ensemble of different work from World literature including short stories and poetry.

Rios, Alberto. Magical Realism: Definitions.

<http://www.public.asu.edu> (Accessed July 8, 2009).

The author provides an analysis of Magical Realism, its roots and heritage in today's literature and art.

Zamora, Lois Parkinson. Faris, Wendy B. 1995. Magical Realism Theory, History, Community. Duke University Press. The authors have analyzed the current of Magical Realism from different focal points, including foundations, theory, history and community.

Zapata, Celia Correas. 1998. Isabel Allende Vida y Espiritus. Spain: Plaza & Janés Editores S, A. The author provides different interviews with Isabel Allende including questions about her work, themes and personal experiences.

Appendix: Implementing World Language Standards in my unit

Communication: Communicate in other languages other than English. Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures: Gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Standard 2.1: students demonstrate the understanding of the relationship between practices and perspectives of the culture studied. Standard 2.2: Students understand the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections: Connect with other disciplines and acquire information. Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language. Standard 3.2: students acquire information and recognize the distinctive view points that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Notes

- (1) See the article by Alberto Rios, "Magical Realism: Definitions" 1.
- (2) See Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, "Magical Realism Theory, History, Community" 121.
- (3) See Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, "Magical Realism Theory, History, Community" 163
- (4) See Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, "Magical Realism Theory, History, Community" 173.
- (5) See Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, "Magical Realism Theory, History, Community" 167.
- (6) See Isabel Allende, "The Stories of Eva Luna "183.
- (7) See Harold Bloom, "Modern Critical Views Gabriel García Márquez" 227.
- (8) See Rosemary G. Feal and Yvette E. Miller, "Isabel Allende Today" 1.
- (9) See Celia Correas Zapata, "Isabel Allende Vida y Espiritus" 103.
- (10) See Celia Correas Zapata, "Isabel Allende Vida y Espiritus" 112.
- (11) See Steven Hart, "Eva Luna & Cuentos de Eva Luna 49.
- (12) See Celia Correas Zapata, "Isabel Allende Vida y Espiritus" 102.
- (13) See Celia Correas Zapata, "Isabel Allende Vida y Espiritus" 83.
- (14) See Isabel Allende, "The Stories of Eva Luna "146.
- (15) See Isabel Allende, "The Stories of Eva Luna "9.
- (16) See Isabel Allende, "The Stories of Eva Luna "18.
- (17) See Isabel Allende, "The Stories of Eva Luna "13.
- (18) See Isabel Allende, "The Stories of Eva Luna "16.
- (19) See Sarah Lawall, "The Norton Anthology of World Literature" 2854.

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