



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **An Analysis of “the Oxcart” by Rene Marques, Puerto Rican Playwright**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 82.05.04  
by Norine Polio

“The Oxcart” by Rene Marques is a well-written, professional play, on a par with classic European-based theatre, and is an excellent example of Latin American, specifically Puerto Rican, drama at its best. In addition to Marques’ genius as a writer, I chose the play because the language is remarkably simple in nature due to the subject matter presented— the journey of a contemporary Puerto Rican family from the land to the city (in this case, San Juan and New York) and back again to the land. It is the story of any immigrant (migrant in the case of Puerto Rican) family in its struggles to adapt to “foreign” surroundings, although the problems presented are specifically Puerto Rican. Any American, whose roots go back, no matter how long ago, to foreign soil, should be able to relate to these common struggles of human beings looking for a better way of life and the corresponding pain and happiness involved. My unit provides cultural data giving background material on Puerto Rico and the specific reasons behind the migration. The play is then analyzed, giving the synopsis, character portrayal, technical component (props, costumes, lighting, sound effects, and stage directions) and related classroom exercises. The entire process in my particular class (6th, 7th, and 8th grade E.S.O.L.) will take a few months of dedicating 2 periods per week to walking through the play with all the technical aspects present. This, of course, depends on the reading level and time involved, and will vary with each teacher. I feel the play is well worth the time involved and know that my students, most of whom are natural “hams”, will respond favorably to a long play for a change of pace. The corresponding language development exercises can be added to the total package to ensure growth in this area of their learning. I prefer “sneaking in” these traditional exercises which in another context usually produce groans on their part. It always reminds me of dissolving a horrible pill in orange juice—the end effect is the same, but the process is pleasant!

(Recommended for 6-12 grades E.S.O.L. Drama, Social Studies, English, History and Spanish)

### **Key Words**

*Bilingualism Latin American Spanish English Literature Drama Marques Rene Oxcart Play Performances Production Puerto Rican Hispanic Reading Instruction*

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