



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **Female Stereotypes in Literature (with a focus on Latin American writers)**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 82.05.06  
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The basic concept of this unit is that women have been portrayed in literature as very confined and submissive characters. Their roles in novels, short stories, plays or poetry have shown none of the variety or wide range that characterizes male literary figures. Women have been constantly seen as less than heroic and often of little substance in literature. Too often they have been tragically dependent creatures, an audience of men's work. The stereotypes of women in literature have pretty much taken the form of a basic core; "The Mother," "The Whore," "The Virgin" or "The Old Maid." This unit gives some background as to these archetypes and their prevalence in literature. These types are discussed and outlined so as to be easily recognized in a text. Included is a poem (in English and Spanish) by an Argentine poet, Alfonsina Storni that captures the essence of how the female is viewed by the male. With this poem are explicit questions/exercises that attempt to understand the symbols and images projected in the poem that describe the woman. There are also other readings suggested for use in the classroom along with several ways of examining a text and gauging attitudes towards these stereotypes. It is hoped that this unit will be appropriate for any mature classroom where a "re reading" is wanted to get at and understand these stereotypes with the desired end result being changes in viewing women (and men) in both life and literature.

(Recommended for 7-12 grades English, English as a Second Language, any Language/Literature Course (Bilingual Program))

### **Key Words**

*Latin American Literature Spanish English Bilingualism Female Stereotypes Sexism*

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