



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1983 Volume V: Drama

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## Four Contemporary Mexican and Chicano Plays—An Analysis

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.05.06  
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Plays as a vehicle for language arts development is the focus of this unit. More specifically, four short (16-28 page) contemporary Mexican and Chicano works have been analyzed in order to extract various grammatical/vocabulary elements. The selections are of a high-interest level for middle and high school English Literature and E.S.O.L. students while utilizing a simplified vocabulary structure suitable for below-grade-level classes. The history of Mexican and Chicano theatre is presented in the background section to prepare students for plays and appropriate follow-up activities provided.

The works, “A Solid Home” by Elena Garro, “Los Vendidos” by Luis Valdez, “La Raza Pura” by Ruben Sierra, and “El Jardin” by Carlos Morton are serious (although very often amusing) adult drama written by foremost Mexican and Chicano playwrights and typify these two movements at their best. The Valdez and Sierra plays exemplify characteristics of the “renaissance” of Chicano theatre by utilizing stereotypical barrio figures and delivering a contemporary political message. The Morton work contains elements of this Chicano formula but transfers them into the more mythological setting of the Garden of Eden. And the Garro work, the only purely Mexican of the group, is structured in a classic, European manner, although the setting of a common grave is somewhat untraditional.

The plays can be read on different levels and tangible follow-up activities are provided after a brief synopsis of each work in order to enhance language arts development.

(Recommended for Grades 6 through 12 middle level and advanced E.S.O.L. and English Literature and Language Arts Classes)

### **Key Words**

*ESL Teaching Drama Bilingualism Literature Hispanic Mexican*

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