



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1987 Volume I: The Modern Short Story in Latin America

An Analysis of “the Highroad of Saint James,”

Guide for Curriculum Unit 87.01.01
by Jeannette Gaffney

“The Highroad of Saint James” is a sixty page short story by the Latin American writer, Alejo Carpentier. The story takes place in 1568-1569, during the Golden Century of Spain, and is told against this rich historical background in a style reminiscent of that era’s baroque artistic and literary style. The curriculum unit analyzes the story, citing references for teachers and students to use for further research on a variety of topics which originate from the story. Topics can be addressed in a number of ways. For example, students may wish to prepare reports, or to have class discussions on some of these, or to read literature on others. Discussed in the paper is 16th century art of Spain, the Netherlands, and the New World; the maroon societies of escaped slaves in the colonies; literary styles of allegory, morality plays, and the picaresque story; 16th century attitudes about religion, including the Spanish Inquisition and the Reformation; 16th century historical and political situation, including the plague. The story lends itself to be used as a stimulus to discussion of ethics and morality.

Though designed to be used with a Spanish I class, the unit will be appropriate for students in any level Spanish class. The story may be read in Spanish by advanced students. The largely historical nature of the story makes it valuable to classes of European history, or studies of Latin American or Afro-American history. Any literature class reading short stories or Latin American fiction can use the unit. Finally, it may be used in a block of time as a literature class might find appropriate, or spread over several weeks as a history class might wish.

(Recommended for Spanish classes, grades 8-12; Literature of the Western Hemisphere or The Short Story classes, grades 11-12; and high school level European History classes)

Key Words

History Latin American Afro-American European Influence Literature Short Story Latin American Spanish

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