



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1990 Volume I: The Autobiographical Mode in Latin American Literature

In Search of the “Yo Latino-americano”

Curriculum Unit 90.01.07
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I like to infuse culture into my foreign language classes as often as possible. I spend a great deal of time teaching about the daily lives of the people, as well as their art, music, literature, history, and popular culture.

One of my classes is a language exploratory course for ninth graders. They spend one semester learning French and one learning Spanish. The textbooks I use do not incorporate the culture in any meaningful way, therefore I design the cultural components of the course from various sources.

I take a creative approach with the culture for the exploratory class. Because the students are usually of low ability, I try to include a lot of hands-on project work based on cultural topics. This method helps to involve the students and gives them a creative way to express what they are learning. Many of the activities suggested below will make the subject matter more meaningful to the students as they will be actively pursuing the information about Latin America provided in the unit.

For the Spanish semester, I give the students an overview of the Spanish speaking world. One marking period we concentrate on Spain, and the other on Latin America.

Latin America, with its cultural diversity, lends itself to a great variety of topics for study and student projects. I have written two units using Latin American short stories as a means of discussing Latin American culture. As useful as these two units are, they expect more abstract reasoning from the students.

With this unit I am changing the focus of my students' study of Latin America. Teenagers are very interested in other people. They like to discover similarities and differences among people. Therefore, this unit concentrates on the people and events that made Latin America unique: the discovery of the New World and the early settlers.

The unit uses first person accounts from the era of exploration to begin to define who a Latin American is. This very descriptive, colorful, and personal material is a means of discovering the common origins and experiences of the Spanish speaking countries in the Western Hemisphere.

As a prelude to the main focus of this unit, there will be a presentation of several history lessons linking what Spain was like in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the Spaniards' reasons for expanding their influence beyond Europe. Some lessons will be devoted to native life in the New World, too. These preview lessons set the stage for the great clash of cultures that takes place when Columbus discovers America.

The collision of these cultures is the heart of this curriculum unit. The students will read, in English, excerpts of Columbus' first voyage; and the adventures of Cabeza de Vaca and Bartolomé de Las Casas.

In addition, the students will be exposed to Pre-Columbian art which will help them visualize what life was like in the Americas before Columbus and other explorers arrived. This exposure will enliven the narrative accounts that the students will read.

The unit is designed to be taught in two weeks. The preparatory studies of Spanish history can be done in the last week of the previous marking period, to finish the study on Spain and Spanish life. The Latin American introduction will follow rapidly and will provide a great deal of information to help students understand this unit. At the conclusion of this unit, the students will learn about individual countries in Latin America from colonial times to the present.

A unique feature of the unit is its versatility. It can be used in any level Spanish class and with students of all abilities. It can be used in an American History class, a Latin American History class, or an American Literature class. The unit serves also as the first in a possible series of units on the Latin American experience.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On August 3, 1492 Christopher Columbus set sail, under the Spanish flag, to find a western route to China and Japan. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella "hoped that he would blaze a trail for trading ships that would bring profitable cargoes to Spain, as Portugal's vessels were bringing gold, ivory and slaves to her from newfound territory on the coast of Africa." (*West and By North* , p. 1)

Columbus' voyage marked a turning point in the history of the world. Never again would life be as it was. The countries of Europe were foundering in confusion and strife. Spain had been made up of various kingdoms, some Christian, some Moslem. Italy only existed as city states fighting with each other. Other countries were scarcely better off.

Although unaware of the significance of the crucial time, the men of 1492, all over Western Christendom, stood upon the divide between two worlds, the old and the new, the Middle Ages and the Modern. As yet they did not know it, but before them lay a new geographical world. But more significant was the new spiritual, intellectual, economic and political world about to rise on the ruins of the crumbling structure of medieval institutions. (*West and By North* , p. 5)

In the Middle Ages, the spiritual and worldly authority of the Church and the Pope were unquestioned. When Pope Urban II called for Christians to mount a Crusade against the Moslems in 1095, everyone who could participate, did. The Crusaders came in contact with the riches of the Orient for the first time. Their appetite for these luxuries: spices, precious stones, cloth, etc. grew and grew. They wanted to increase trade in Oriental products and to expand their territories eastward.

Marco Polo's voyage to China increased Christian Europe's appetite for Eastern goods. Columbus knew well Marco Polo's story of his travels. He based his thoughts about the proximity of China and Japan on Marco Polo's information. "Indeed, Polo's errors in placing China and Japan much nearer Europe than they are helped to persuade Columbus that a sea crossing to these lands was feasible." (*West and By North* , pp. 8-9)

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was the catalyst for the Renaissance, "the revival or rebirth of learning, with its emphasis upon the study of the Greek language as well as Greek literature. Coincidental with the new

interest in learning came a revival of interest in painting and sculpture, partly inspired by classical models from Greece and Rome." (*West and By North* , p. 10)

The Renaissance was concerned with man's goodness and the goodness of man's life on earth, a major change from the Dark Ages. Man didn't have to wait until he died for a better life. The Italian Renaissance, in particular, emphasized the joy of life on earth and the lack of concern with the consequences of satisfying one's desires.

The Pope, Alexander VI, marked the Renaissance with his worldliness, his extravagances, his women and his children: Juan Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia. "His reign exemplified a growing efficiency in worldly materialism, a hint of things to come in the brave new world then springing to life." (*West and By North* , p. 11)

The invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg in 1456 spurred the development of books as a craft destined for ordinary people. The literature, political tracts, philosophical theses, etc. that were widely distributed, effected the demise of the old way of life and opened the horizons to new discoveries in every facet of life.

The new emphasis on business and commerce underlined the most significant difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The influence of commerce on European life destroyed any vestiges of the medieval way of life and forced the people to look westward to find the East and its wealth.

Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal "had a vision of Portugal's destiny as an expanding commercial power and at once set about creating the means of stimulating exploration and discovery." (*West and By North* , p. 20) He encouraged navigators and sailors from all over the world to come to Portugal and sail in his service. He wanted Portugal to be the most important commercial power in the world. In addition, Prince Henry used the guise of bringing the Catholic religion to the pagans to expand his influence. When the sailors brought slaves to Portugal, they pretended that they, as Christians, were taking care of the poor heathens.

The Portuguese were exploring Africa greedily and were keeping it a secret from the rest of Europe. They discovered that Africa got smaller in the south, so they thought that perhaps they could sail around Africa to reach India. At the same time, Portugal declared war on Spain to get the territory of Castilla, but they lost the war.

... In 1479 Spain signed the Treaty of AlcaCovas, which confirmed Portugal in its monopoly of trade and expansion in Africa and in possession of all the Atlantic islands except the Canaries, which Spain had undertaken to conquer from the native Guanches. (*West and By North* , p. 21)

When Bartholomeu Dias sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and landed on the east coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean, the route to India became part of Portugal's trade monopoly. And when Vasco da Gama found Calcutta (1497-99), the Portuguese empire was assured in India.

At the same time that Portugal was establishing its empire, Spain was involved with its continuing battles with the Moors. It wasn't until January 2, 1492 when King Boabdil surrendered the city of Granada to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella that the Spanish could turn their attention to new conquests.

When their Catholic majesties finally accepted Columbus' proposals and the details were completed for the voyage, the little town of Palos was chosen as the port of departure for various convenient reasons, including the fact that their majesties had recently imposed a fine upon the town requiring it to provide the use for a year of

two caravels—vessels which Columbus now required. (*West and By North* , p. 24)

As King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella ended the 800 years of war between the Christians and the Moors, they also got rid of Spanish Jews. Their advisors encouraged the exile of all Moors and Jews so that Spain could be pure and Catholic.

The Jews of Spain were among the most learned and talented of the subjects of Ferdinand and Isabella. Through eight centuries of cold and hot war between Islam and Christendom they had been the go-betweens, the carriers of Arabian science and learning, the apostles of learning to Western Europe. They were the leaders in the professions of medicine, law and the arts generally. They had also shown great sagacity in developing banking and commerce. In short, they were the people who had done more than any others to provide Christian Spain with intellectual and economic leadership. Now, to satisfy the pious wishes of the sovereigns and to comply with the Christian commands of their confessor and Inquisitor-General these people were herded like cattle to the ports and shipped out of Spain, many to die in the deserts of North Africa. (*West and By North* , p.23)

Columbus' first voyage to the New World was fraught with uncertainties, danger, discoveries and excitement. When he landed on Watlings Island in the Bahamas on October 12, 1492, he thought he had found the coast of Japan which would lead him to the rich country beyond where he would find untold treasures. What he found instead were natives wearing gold nose plugs and pearls. Columbus was determined to find more gold and pearls, thus beginning the search for gold which inspire Spaniards and others to continue exploration of the "New World."

In November, 1492, Columbus discovered Cuba and natives who rolled an herb and smoked it—tobacco! Columbus recorded his observations of the flora and fauna as well as the natives. He felt the natives would be good workers for their masters. He saw himself as "the ruler under the Crown of Spain of territories already populated with a convenient supply of labor." (*West and By North* , p. 25)

Columbus was still searching for Cipangu (Japan) when the Santa Maria, his heaviest ship was wrecked on the northern coast of "La Isla Espa-ola"—Hispaniola, the Haiti of today. Here Columbus founded a fort called La Navidad for the members of the crew he could not take back to Spain as he only had two boats for the journey. The indians here had many gold objects that they were willing to trade. They told of gold so plentiful that it was meaningless, located not too far away.

The settlement of La Navidad ended in disaster, but the thirst for gold would push the later explorers far into the unknown territories.

Columbus had his share of the greed for gold and the lust for power that would dominate Spanish conquistadors for generations to come. He saw himself not only as the Admiral of the Ocean Sea, a title granted him by the Spanish crown, but as viceroy, governor and lord of territories that would make him and his heirs rich forever. Not only would his discoveries give him wealth and prestige, but they would also enhance the glory of the sovereigns of Spain. (*West and By North* , p. 26)

With Columbus' discovery both Spain and Portugal intended to continue these explorations and fill their treasuries with gold. They both wanted to determine their rights to the unknown regions waiting for their plunder.

Fortunately for Spain, the reigning pope was a Spanish Borgia, Alexander VI, who in a series of bulls confirmed Spain in her new possessions and in the second bull *Inter caetera* , dated May 4, 1493 accepted Ferdinand and

Isabella's suggestion of a line of demarcation 100 leagues west of the Azores. All lands west of that line would belong to Spain regardless of the nationality of the discoverer. (*West and By North* , p. 27)

Portugal wasn't satisfied with the dividing line, even though it had all territories to the east. After much negotiation, Portugal signed the Treaty of Tordesillas on June 7, 1494 which moved the line 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. This move gave Brazil to Portugal.

SUMMARY: THE VOYAGES OF COLUMBUS, LAS CASAS, AND CABEZA DE VACA

Christopher Columbu

Christopher Columbus' momentous voyage of 1492 marked the culmination of much speculation and probing and opened the way for an era of exploration the like of which the world has never seen. Most of what we know about the voyage is contained in a journal that Columbus kept. (*West and By North* , p. 39)

Columbus' journal begins with a prologue addressed to Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain. He relates the highlights of their reign at the time of his voyage: Ferdinand and Isabella entering Granada and expelling the Moors and Jews from Spain; and their command to him to sail to India to convert the people to Catholicism. He mentions also what his voyage will do for their royal majesties and what it will do for him as well.

Another of Columbus' jobs is to record the details of the voyage daily—how far they went, what happened during the day, etc.

Also, Lords Princes, I resolved to describe each night what passed in the day, and to note each day how I navigated at night. ... Above all, I shall have accomplished much, for I shall forget sleep and shall work at the business of navigation, that so the service may be performed; all which will entail great labor. (*West and By North* , p. 41)

In the first part of the excerpt, Columbus tells of the voyage crossing the sea. He tells how he lied about the number of leagues they had gone so as to not frighten the sailors. He then describes the sighting of land, after seeing sandpipers, other birds, and some kinds of weeds in the water.

When they said the 'Salve,' which all the sailors were accustomed to sing in their way, the admiral asked and admonished the men to keep a good lookout on the forecastle and to watch well for land; and to him who should first cry out that he saw land, he would give a silk doublet, besides the other rewards promised by the Sovereigns—which were 10,000 maravedis (about \$67.50) to him who should first see it. At two hours after midnight the land was sighted at a distance of two leagues. They shortened sail and lay by under the mainsail without the bonnets. (*West and By North* , pp. 45-46)

Columbus then describes the landing on Watling Island, called Guanahani by the Indians. The natives were naked, and very handsome. They saw mostly youths, with very coarse hair. They were painted black, white, red, or other colors. Some had the paint only on their faces while others had paint all over their bodies. They didn't have any weapons and didn't know what they were when Columbus showed them some swords.

The natives would make good servants and Christians, according to Columbus. He plans on taking six natives back to Spain for the King and Queen.

Columbus describes the island as being very green with many trees, much fruit and a lot of water. The only animals he sees are parrots.

Columbus believes he has found India and that China and Japan are close by. He is searching for gold and spices, and will go wherever they are to bring them back to Isabella and Ferdinand.

Columbus describes his trip to Cuba from the island of Hispaniola. He goes there to find gold, spices, merchandise and large ships. He says that “this island is the most beautiful that eyes have seen, full of good harbors and deep rivers, ... full of very beautiful mountains, although they are not very extensive as regards length, but high... (*West and By North* , p. 48)

The natives are very helpful to Columbus. They tell him of riches beyond belief and of glories yet to come. The Indians of the interior of Cuba all want to go with Columbus because “they thought the Spaniards were returning to heaven.” (*West and By North* , p. 49) And, for the first time, the Indians are seen smoking.

The excerpt ends with a description of the ship destroyed on a sandbar, and the return to Palos. Columbus intends to report to Isabella and Ferdinand as soon as possible.

Before Columbus reached Europe after the discoveries made on his first voyage, he sat down in his cabin aboard ship and composed a letter which he proposed to send by some messenger from his first landfall in case anything should happen to him before his arrival in Spain. Actually, he carried the letter to Spain himself. It was enclosed with one addressed to the sovereigns, which has been lost. (*West and By North* , p. 51)

This letter gives many more details of Columbus’ explorations in the various islands he finds while searching for China. The letter is published in several languages which helps to spread the news of Columbus’ successful voyage, even though he still thinks that he has found India.

Bartolomé de Las Casas

Bartolomé de Las Casas was born in Sevilla in 1474. He had a good education and served in the army against the Moors. In 1493 he saw Columbus’ triumphant return with seven Indians who were carrying red and green parrots, fishbone belts, and masks.

In September, 1493 his father and two uncles sailed with Columbus on his second voyage. When his father returned in 1498, he gave Bartolomé a Taino Indian boy as his servant. Later Queen Isabella ordered the boy to be set free and sent back.

In January, 1502, Las Casas left for the Indies with his father in Nicolas de Ovando’s ship. Because of his knowledge of Latin, Las Casas was given the job of teacher of Christian doctrine to the Indians. He received a good salary, and he could acquire property like other settlers. They landed in Santo Domingo and heard about gold being found and a war with the Indians (which meant there were plenty of slaves for the taking).

While he was living in Hispaniola, Las Casas “helped put down Indian uprisings and was rewarded by Admiral Diego Columbus with an *encomienda* near La Concepción. An *encomienda* was a tract of land or village whose Indians were entrusted to a Spanish settler who, in return for instructing the Indians in Christian doctrine or promising to instruct them had the right to their forced labor in fields or mines.” (Sanderlin, p. 7)

In 1513 Las Casas went with Pánfilo de Narváez to conquer Cuba. He received another *encomienda* in Cuba where he farmed, raised cattle, traded with Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, and became wealthy. He treated his slaves well but became concerned with others' treatment of the Indians. Nine tenths of the Indian population disappeared on Hispaniola, due to overwork, abuse, and disease. In Cuba, Las Casas saw Indians being slaughtered and tried to stop it.

Because of his growing concern for the natives, Las Casas arranged for the release of his slaves and preached a sermon denouncing the Spanish treatment of the Indians (1514). In 1515, Las Casas met with King Ferdinand about the abuse of the natives. Ferdinand died before he could take any action.

Between 1516 and 1522 Las Casas went all over asking for changes in the handling of the Indians. He developed a plan of "communities" to replace the system of *encomienda*. The Indians would be living in villages of their own, grouped around Spanish towns. They would work with carefully chosen supervisors, and would get a share of the profits.

Las Casas was appointed Protector of the Indians in 1516. He did the best he could to fulfill his obligations.

In 1518-1519, Las Casas attempted to recruit Spanish farmers who would emigrate to the Indies and help establish an integrated society of Spaniards and Indians working together, in place of Spanish masters exploiting Indian slaves. (Sanderlin, p. 10)

Las Casas received some land in Venezuela for a colony. For this tract of land, he promised Charles I (Ferdinand's successor) to establish five Spanish towns, to convert the Indians, and to deliver 15,000 ducats in three years from the sale of various products.

He left Spain with seventy colonists, but before they arrived, Spaniards from Cuba enslaved some of the Indians. In revenge, the Indians had killed two Dominican friars and destroyed the monastery.

Spaniards from Hispaniola with Gonzalo de Ocampo were on their way to punish the Indians by taking more slaves. Las Casas tried to stop them when they arrived in Puerto Rico. He went to Santo Domingo to protest to the authorities. Then he proposed a merger of the two groups. They could share the profits and only Indians judged guilty of cannibalism would be made into slaves.

The seventy colonists Las Casas left in Puerto Rico while he protested, ran away and joined Ponce de León in his attempt to conquer Florida. When he arrived at his land in Venezuela, there was only a small number of settlers with him.

Ocampo's men continued to raid Las Casas' settlement until he was persuaded to go back to Hispaniola to protest. When he left, his second in command, Francisco de Soto left in their only ships to get slaves. Soon afterwards, the Indians killed a lay brother, a gunner, an interpreter, and de Soto, and burned the monastery.

On his return, Las Casas' ship landed at the wrong end of Hispaniola, and it took him weeks to return to his land. On his way, he heard about the massacre and decided that God was punishing him for the compromises he had made. He entered the Dominican monastery, and in 1523 was professed a Dominican.

For the next eleven years, he studied law and theology. In 1527 he was sent to the monastery at Puerto de Plata in the northern part of Hispaniola. He refused "to grant absolution to Spanish colonists unless they would make restitution for goods and services taken from the Indians." (Sanderlin, p. 13) He began to work on his book, *History of the Indies* while he was in this monastery.

In 1537 Pope Paul III issued a bull *Sublimis Deus* which “proclaimed the rationality of the Indians and their capacity to receive the Faith. They were not ‘beasts who talked,’ as the conquistadors called them.” (Sanderlin, p. 13) This papal bull became the basis for Las Casas’ beliefs and encouraged him to continue fighting for Indian rights.

Las Casas returned to Spain in 1540 to bring more monks back to Guatemala to help christianize the natives. The climate was more favorable to his proposals this time, and Charles I (Charles V Holy Roman Emperor) enacted the New Laws on November 20, 1542. The New Laws stated that the Indians could not be made into slaves and there were to be no more *encomiendas* given out. Those *encomiendas* that were functioning, would revert to the Crown upon the death of the owners.

Las Casas was offered the bishopric of Chiapa in Mexico where he was to administer the New Laws. This was a very difficult time for him because the Spanish settlers were hostile and hated him for his beliefs. Soon there were revolts in Mexico, Peru, and Nicaragua against the New Laws. Las Casas planned to return to Spain to get support for his reforms. Before he left he received word that “the emperor had revoked the Law of Inheritance, which had provided for phasing out the *encomiendas*.” (Sanderlin, p. 17)

In spite of the news Las Casas left for Spain and stopped in Mexico City for a bishops’ conference. While he was there he wrote the *Confesionario* or rules for confessors. This book caused Las Casas to be accused of treason.

He had insisted on every penitent’s freeing his Indian slaves and making full restitution before receiving absolution, no matter what heirs were waiting for his property—because the penitent’s wealth had been unjustly acquired. But if everything done by Spaniards in the New World had been unlawful, what just claim did Spain have to the Indies? What right did Spaniards have to be there at all? (Sanderlin, p. 18)

All copies of the book were confiscated, and Las Casas had to explain his ideas to the Council of the Indies.

At this time, Las Casas found himself with a literary adversary, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, the emperor’s chronicler served in the Spanish army in Italy and France.

Alvar Nu- ez Cabeza de Vaca

Cabeza de Vaca was appointed *aguacil mayor* of the Narváez expedition to the New World. In 1527 Narváez and six hundred men sailed from San Lúcar de Barrameda with Cabeza de Vaca as second in command.

Pánfilo de Narváez participated in the conquest of Cuba. He was sent by governor Diego de Velásquez to go to Mexico and arrest Hernán Cortés because he defied the governor’s authority, but Cortés imprisoned him for a while, and he returned to Cuba without Cortés.

In 1527 Carlos I granted him land along the Gulf of Mexico from Florida to R’o de las Palmas, as a reward for his loyalty. “As governor and captain-general he was empowered to explore, conquer, and settle this area—this, to be sure, was to be done at his own expense, as was the common practice in the Age of the Conquistadors.” (Cabeza de Vaca, p. XVII)

Cabeza de Vaca’s account of his voyage is called “La relación” and “picks up the story of the attempt to activate Narváez’ grant, as they sailed from Spain, the stop in Española, the defection of one hundred and forty of the prospective colonists there, the progress of the party along the south shore of Cuba, the loss of two ships during the hurricane season, the landing in Florida, the imprudent dispatch of the ships to explore

westward, the overland advance of the land party to the north, the continuing disappointments at finding no great riches, the realization that they were stranded, the decision to fashion boats and make for Pánuco (New Spain/Mexico), the loss of several of these boats in the Gulf, the arrival of some eighty survivors on the Texas coast, the gradual reduction of these to four, the trials and experiences of these four until their final arrival in new Spain.”(Cabeza de Vaca, p. XVII)

In November, 1528, the survivors of the voyage landed on the Texas coast, traveled up the Florida peninsula from Tampa Bay, and fifteen days later reached the Withlacoochee River. They crossed the river and the Suwanee, went to the northwest and entered Tallahassee. Cabeza de Vaca gives an early picture of the Florida countryside, the flora, fauna, sources of food, and the natives.

The party stayed in Tallahassee about a month exploring inland and toward the Gulf, with no success in finding riches. They decided to return to Christian lands, to Pánuco, in particular, as it was supposed to be closer than the Antilles.

The Spanish went toward the west across the Apalachicola toward the Gulf. Near Panama City on St. Andrew Bay (Bah’a de los Caballos) they built five boats for two hundred fifty men and left on September 22. Seven days later they were in Penascola Bay. When they reached Mobile Bay they hit a storm.

They met Indians, members of the five Civilized Tribes of the old southwest. They reached the Mississippi, whose strong current helped by the north wind, pushed the barges far into the Gulf. They could not stay together, so it was each group for itself. Three of them were lost, including the one with Narváez aboard.

Cabeza de Vaca’s boat landed on the eastern end of Galveston Island in early November. Dorantes-Castillo’s group also made land. There were more than eighty men who landed, but many died from exposure, difficulties, or Indians. Some tried to find Pánuco by walking, but they perished also. Only four men survived to continue the exploration.

The most interesting and exciting segment of the narrative begins with this landing, so called, on the Texas coast. The following seven and a half years is an amazing record of human endurance, suffering, courage, ingenuity, and many things more. (Cabeza de Vaca, p. XXII)

Cabeza de Vaca’s men and those of Dorantes-Castillo found each other on Galveston Island. They tried to repair the barge that was in better condition, but they couldn’t. The men split up, each group going with a different group of Indians. The next few years were hard.

After a while, the Dorantes-Castillo survivors went to Matagorda Bay and stayed there for several years. During this time Cabeza de Vaca, “playing the role of trader, moved farther inland than any of the others, and saw more of the country and its strange wonders, among them the American bison, the ‘shaggy cow.’ ” (Cabeza de Vaca, p. XXIII)

Toward the end of 1532, Cabeza de Vaca went to Matagorda Bay and found only Castillo, Dorantes, and Estevanico. All others had died. They stayed together, with their Indians during the pecan-gathering season of 1532-1533. They were separated by the Indians.

The four men met again in 1533 in the area of San Antonio during the *tuna* gathering season. *Tuna* is the prickly pear cactus. The four men talked of escaping, but they decided to wait for another year. They separated again with the Indians going in different directions.

In 1534, during the *tuna-gathering* season, they decided to escape. They went north, probably as far as the beginning of the Colorado River.

Spring, 1535 found the men acting as medicine men for the Indians, and moving toward the west through New Mexico. They never saw any buffalo. They did see robes made from buffalo skin made by the Indians.

The four travelers stayed with many different Indian groups. They heard of Indians beyond the mountains who always had a lot of maize. They heard of Indians who lived in towns who also had a lot of food. Cabeza de Vaca and the others were only interested in going to the west to find their own people. They went up the R'ó Grande to find a westward route but missed meeting the Pueblo Indians.

They also met the Opata farmers and the Pima farmers and hunters. They crossed many rivers and heard of white men to the south. They met Diego de Alcaráz, one of Ni-o de Guzmán's men. Melchor D'az, the mayor of Culiacán greeted them warmly. From there it was relatively easy to get back to Spain.

Cabeza de Vaca tells about Indian customs, their foods, and the animals such as the buffalo, antelope, and jackrabbit. His report on precious metals was disappointing to the Spanish. He did not find any precious metals in his travels.

The three men who endured the adventures with Cabeza de Vaca ended their lives in different ways. Castillo went back to Spain with Cabeza de Vaca, but then returned to New Spain, married a widow, and lived a very comfortable life on the revenues from the Indian town of Tehuacán. Dorantes was supposed to be a member of the expedition to the north led by Mendoza, but for some reason, he didn't go. He married Do-a Mar'a de la Torre. They had a big family. He received several *encomiendas* and became quite wealthy. Estevanico fared the worst of the four men. Dorantes gave him to Mendoza who sent him as a guide to Fray Marcos de Niza to do some scouting for the expedition. Estevanico was impatient to arrive at his destination so he went before the priest. He "reached Háwikuh, principal of the cities of 'C'bola,' vexed the men of the Zu-i nation by his swagger and swash buckling manner; the Indians, fearing that he was a spy or an advanced agent of potential conquerors and finding that he was much too attractive to their women, saw to it that he was eliminated." (Cabeza de Vaca, p. XXIX)

OBJECTIVES STRATEGIES

1. To learn Spain's history from 711 to 1492.
2. To use the knowledge of Spanish history from 711-1492 as a means of understanding the Spanish conquest of the New World.
3. To learn about Columbus' Las Casas', and Cabeza de Vaca's voyages, discoveries, and adventures in the New World through their own words or those of a biographer.
4. To use the information learned from the reading of the autobiographical or first person accounts to make distinctions between Spanish crops and products, customs, holidays, food, costumes, etc. and those of the natives.
5. To make guesses about the next phase of the Spanish conquest settlements. Using the knowledge they have gained while working through the four previous objectives, the students will

be encouraged to make some educated guesses about how the Spanish culture and that of the natives will blend and evolve into an American way of life.

6. To begin to formulate the definition of who is a Latin American.

7. To utilize Pre-Columbian art to help explain what life was like before the Spanish arrived.

In order to attain the first two objectives, the students should know, in general, Spain's history from 711-1492. In 711 the Moors crossed the north of Africa and the Strait of Gibraltar, and proceeded to conquer much of the Iberian Peninsula. They even crossed the Pyrenees and entered France. Charlemagne and his army repulsed the Moorish invaders and pushed them back into Spain. (The students might like to hear about the *Song of Roland* here.)

Spain was made up of many individual kingdoms (its provinces today) that were continually at war with one another. It was very easy for the Moors to conquer as much territory as they did because of the lack of a united front among the Spanish kingdoms

In 718, a Christian king, Pelayo, fought back against the Moors. He began the *Reconquista* or Reconquest. From this point on, more and more Christians battled the Moors. El Cid and his battles with the Moors made him the first national hero of Spain.

The war between the Moors and the Spanish Christians lasted until 1492. The battles were not continuous, however. In an area where there was a victor, the people living there were ruled by the victor, Christian or Moor. These periods of peace alternated with periods of war. During this time the Christians continued fighting each other as well as the Moors.

It wasn't until Fernando of Aragon married Isabel of Castilla that the Christians had a means of uniting against their common enemy. Fernando and Isabel encouraged all the Christian kingdoms to join together in a common religion, Catholicism, a common language, Castilian, the Spanish language of Castilla, with a common king and queen, Fernando and Isabel, and against the Moors.

The newly unified nation was now able to expend a concerted effort against the Moors, which ended in 1492 when the last Moorish stronghold, Granada, fell to the armies of Fernando and Isabel.

To make this story even more interesting for the students, the teacher can show the movie of *El Cid*. The history of Spain that concerns this unit can be presented in one day, with two days for showing the film.

An important aspect of the history of Moorish Spain is the contributions of the Moors to Spanish culture, which were then brought to the New World. These contributions included "Spanish architecture," fountains, and patios.

Students can look at pictures of Spain and Latin America to compare and contrast the architecture. They can

also compare and contrast the way Spanish and Latin American towns are organized. These activities can be done in small groups and then reported back to the entire class for any further discussion.

In order to attain objective number three above, the students will read about the voyages of Columbus, Las Casas, and Cabeza de Vaca (using excerpts from the books listed in the Teacher Bibliography below. My choices of excerpts are in xerox copies on file at the Yale New Haven Teachers Institute 53 Wall St. New Haven, Ct. 06520). The students can make a large map of the world and plot the explorers' voyages. In this manner they will be able to visualize the explorers' experiences.

The students can perform a skit about an event that particularly interests them based on the stories they are reading. The skit may be on video tape or performed live. It may take the form of a radio or television show, or a "You Are There" or news report. For my students these kinds of activities are in English sprinkled with Spanish words they know such as "Buenos d'as," "Cómo está usted?" etc. The students should be encouraged to dress in costume and to use props.

Some students may prefer to write an eyewitness account of an event. This account can be written as a newspaper story or an entry in a diary. They are to make the story as interesting as possible and with as many colorful details they can find. These stories can be reproduced and bound together in a booklet for each student.

Other students may choose to represent an event in a diorama or another three-dimensional form. These projects may be presented to the class along with a short oral report on the significance of the event.

Yet another possibility is for a student or several students to make either a montage (just pictures) or a collage (pictures, objects, material, etc.) of products of the New World that they have read about. They may also represent the natives and their customs, the animals, or plant life described by the explorers. In addition, they can make a booklet of pictures that they have drawn or taken from magazines, to represent what they think are the most important points of an explorer's adventures.

For objective four, the students will compare and contrast the Spanish way of life with that of the natives. This activity can be done in small groups. They can then individually illustrate their comparisons with oral reports, written accounts, pictures, skits, etc.

To achieve objectives five and six, the students can brainstorm ideas about how the Spanish and native cultures evolved into a Latin American culture. They may work in small groups or as a whole class. They may select the best ideas for a research project. In this way, the students will begin to form opinions about who a Latin American is.

Attaining objective seven may be a collaborative team effort between the foreign language teacher and the art teacher. They can team teach one or two lessons about pre-Columbian art. The students and teachers may go to the Peabody Museum in New Haven or the Museum of Natural History in New York. The students can make their own version of statues, jewelry, utensils, games, etc. out of clay or other materials. They can try to weave cloth too, if they choose.

As a review of all the material learned in this unit, the students can make up a game like *Jeopardy* or *Trivial Pursuit*, or a board game or a card game. They may want to challenge a United States History class to a match using the game.

Another way of concluding this unit is to have a mini fair to which other students are invited. Student work can be displayed with explanations by a guide. Samples of Latin American food can be offered as well. There can be a fashion show of Spanish and native costumes as well as games to be played. There's no reason why learning can't be fun!

TEACHER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bandelier, Fanny, translator. *The Narrative of Alvar Nu-ez Cabeza de Vaca* (Barre, Massachusetts: The Imprint Society), 1972.

A good translation of Cabeza de Vaca's account. See chapters one, seven, twelve, fourteen, fifteen, eighteen, in particular. These chapters tell about the voyage and the Indians and their customs.

Sanderlin, George, ed. *Bartolomé de Las Casas A Selection of His Writings* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.), 1971.

A good selection of Las Casas' works. For our purposes the sections on Autobiography in the *History of the Indies*, and the *Anologetic History* are to be used. In these works Las Casas tells us about the Indians and their customs and why making them slaves is wrong. An interesting way to discuss slavery and manifest destiny!

Wright, Louis B. and Elaine W. Fowler, eds. *West and By North* (New York: Delacorte Press), 1971.

See chapters I, II, III, IV for a good background to the Age of Exploration as well as Christopher Columbus' account of his first voyage and his letter to Ferdinand and Isabella. A very useful book.

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