



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1994 Volume II: Poetry in the Classroom: Incentive and Dramatization

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## **The Counting Train: Windows to Mexico**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 94.02.10  
by Geraldine Martin

Mexico, rich in culture, geography and history, is like a timeless train traveling across many yesterdays. Traveling throughout this country that stretches for a thousand miles, one soon becomes acutely aware that this is a large, rich and complicated country, filled with much diversity. In the large cities, many Mexicans work in modern office buildings and live in comfortable homes. However, outside the cities Indian farmers live in thatched roofed houses and still cultivate the land as they did hundreds of years ago. The past melts into the present and future as an ultra- contemporary building complex rises to form the background from the steps of an Aztec ceremonial center. Yesterdays still bring to the streets brightly colored fiestas containing half Christian and half pagan activities and practices.

In my unit I have explored ways in which poetry can be integrated for helping us to see pictures of places and people in Mexico. Using poetry as a vehicle, the children will discover the rich cultural diversity found in Mexico's past and present. My unit is composed of ten lessons revolving around the Spanish words for counting from one to ten. Each lesson gives an overview of a theme or subject that is being discussed along with an introduction to a poem pertaining to the lesson's theme. In addition to reading and illustrating poetry, lessons contain activities such as games, sampling food, compiling student books, etc., all pertaining to each lesson's theme.

The unit contains poetry from past and present authors that is suitable for integration into a unit about Mexico. More specifically, the unit consists of a collection of poetry and activities suitable for children from kindergarten through third grade. Along with reading and the language arts, the lesson plans cover curriculum areas such as math, social studies, science, music and art.

(Recommended for Reading/Language Arts, grade 1)

### **Key Words**

*Family Life Afro-American Poetry History Mexican Culture Children Ancient Civilizations*

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