



Latin American Short Fiction

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.01.07

by Jeanette Rogers

This curriculum teaches Latin American literature to middle school students. In place of treating as prerequisites the history of Latin America, her religions (ancient and modern) and the complex literary styles of magic realism and the fantastic, these and other strands are examined as they are encountered in the readings.

I have chosen to use Latin American literature for my curriculum unit, as distinct from Latino or Spanish literature. Latin American literature is written in Spanish or Portuguese by people who live in countries where those languages are spoken: in the Caribbean Basin, in Central and South America, and in Mexico. Latino literature is written in English, or the bilingual idiom sometimes called Spanglish, by people who trace their heritage or identify themselves as Hispanic with roots to Spanish speaking peoples and countries, but who live in the United States. Spanish literature refers to that which is written in Spanish by Spaniards. Spanish Language or Hispanic literature is sometimes used to refer to literature written in Spanish by people from any Spanish speaking background who write in Spanish.

The work of some of Latin America's great literary geniuses, such as Horacio Quiroga, Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, Gabriel Garc'a Márquez, Octavio Paz, and Juan Rulfo will be included. I intend to present the stories in English, as my goal is to make comparison readily accessible.

The following are my objectives:

Students will read Latin American literature to understand the impact of history and religion, ancient and modern, on the peoples of Latin America.

Students will compare texts to understand that history is recorded through the eyes of humans and therefore must be read with an eye toward recognizing that the recorders have made choices in their work.

Students will learn that politics is not merely speeches on television, but the dramatic and important shaping of national events.

Students will discuss the role of language in the determination of social class.

Students will understand the terms magic-real and fantastic as describing styles of Latin American literature.

Students will compare and contrast their own lives with the lives of characters in Latino literature.

Students will clarify their understanding of the terms: Latino, Latin American, Hispanic, and

Spanish.
Some students will travel to Mexico.

(Recommended for Spanish and Latin American Studies in Literature and History, grades 7-12)

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