



Yale-New Haven
Teachers Institute®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume V: Reading Across the Cultures

Other Voices -- Latino and Chicano Literature and Identity in America

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.05.10
by George Peterman

This unit is concerned with the cultural and personal identity of Puerto Ricans in the United States, particularly those in New York, and the role of language in the individual's quest for self-definition. It incorporates various forms and will analyze the individual writers' choice of vocabulary, imagery, syntax, and diction to determine the rhetorical purpose in the individual's artistic expression of self. The unit is titled "Other Voices" to reflect the fact that, while there may be similar vies and realizations among the writers, each individual's experience and expression is unique.

This unit investigates the nature of language and the individual's relationship with the language(s) with which they communicate. In introducing the focus on language we will read poems by Aurora Levins Morales, Gustavo Perez Firmat, and Rhina Espaillat. The focus is then placed on "code-switching," the alternate use of two different languages or codes by a speaker or writer. This unit includes the poetry of several poets who use different codes in their discourse: Tato Laviera, Pedro Pietri, and Sandra Maria Esteves. In addition to the formal discussion of language, poetic elements will also be investigated as part of the search for meaning. Also included are short stories by Nicholas Mohr and Judith Ortiz Cofer and short non-fiction pieces by Richard Rodriguez and Gloria Anzaldúa. The reading concludes with *Ariano* by Richard Irizzary, a play that deals with racial and linguistic identity in contemporary New York.

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