

**The Hispanic Immigration Experience:
Literature for Special Education *Latina/Latino* Students**

B. R. Guillory

HISPANIC IMMIGRATION

Immigration from throughout Latin America is significant in all regions of the United States. The new immigrants coming into this country, especially those from Mexico and the Central American nations are supplying many critical needs in our growing economy. As time goes on, this growing immigrant segment of our national population will play an ever increasing role in the economic and social development of what was once referred to as Anglo America..

Locally, in Houston schools, this immigrant population is very visible. Although the students in our schools are not necessarily directly immigrants themselves, a significantly large segment of the student population is descended from immigrant parents or grandparents. Hispanic enrollment in several Houston schools, depending on certain schools, may be as high as ninety percent; in many cases, the percentage of Hispanic enrollment exceeds ninety percent. Several cities across the United States can also demonstrate similar statistics regarding a growing Hispanic enrollment. Hispanic enrollment in high schools, however, in Houston is not necessarily quite that high yet, particularly in the last three years of high school. A significantly high percentage of Hispanic students drop out of school before completing high school. The percentage for drop-outs averages in excess of thirty-four percent. This is an area of concern that needs special focus; the drop out rate simply must be decreased. Our schools must strive harder to motivate this large and growing Hispanic segment of the population of the United States to achieve a higher level of success. High school must be completed. Our economic and technological success depends on motivating the children of immigrants to achieve the highest possible level of success. Apart from certain individual schools with Hispanic enrollment that approaches or exceeds ninety percent, the overall average of Hispanic enrollment in Houston schools is in many cases well above fifty percent. In short, dedicated efforts to include all students of all ethnic groups within the range of academic success is mandatory for personal and national productivity.

A large percent of Houston's Hispanic population is foreign born. As a result of this fact, many of our Hispanic students have limited English proficiency. Especially noteworthy is the fact that foreign-born Hispanics in the Houston area now make up approximately a quarter of the overall Hispanic population of the Houston metropolitan region. As a result of this fact, students with limited English proficiency are indeed quite apparent in Houston schools. As time factors are considered, a certain percentage of Hispanic students with limited English proficiency are also found to be in need of special education services.

Special Education Concerns

Most of the students in my special education language arts classes are of Hispanic heritage. Most of these students come from families which have recently arrived from Mexico. Apart from Mexico, there are a few students whose families originate from Central American nations such as Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. In some cases, a child in our school might have a father of Mexican ancestry and a mother of El Salvadoran origin. These students in my language arts classes, as stated above, are special education students. It is important to note that Hispanic students in special education with some degree of learning disabilities are not necessarily over represented when compared to other ethnic groups in this country. In fact, the percentages for special education students are about the same as that of other ethnic groupings (1).

My special education language arts classes are resource classes for developmental reading and writing instruction. Although many of these students are students with limited English language proficiency, their learning disability has legal precedence over placing them in a class dedicated to teaching English as a second language. Frequently, however, when the home language is Spanish, learning and assimilation of target lessons may be rather slow; they will not learn as fast as other students whose home language is English. Greatly extended learning time is required for them to catch up with vocabulary and reading skills because of being behind other students whose customary home language is English. This extended time, according to the research of some, may require as much as five years of dedicated effort and application to catch up with fluent English speakers.(2).

Unfortunately, such students are frequently and unfairly referred to special education classes instead of remedial English classes. With students whose home language is English, on the other hand, there is high parental pressure to finish high school with expectations of academic success (3). This is a significant reason who many Hispanic have been wrongly referred into special education classes.

There is another side to this discussion, however; some researchers have maintained that even though the child's home language may not be English, there is merit and room for a double-tiered parallel system of instruction through a well-managed bilingual system, in spite of the fact that a language other than English may be the customary home language (4). An opposing view maintains that there is insufficient research to support the above-stated view. There are few programs existing at this time which will support a dual immersion system where English and Spanish are both used for teaching content area classes with meaningful interactive learning activity. So, there remains a question as to whether or not Hispanic students have received effective reading instruction in U.S.

schools (5). Finally, some have maintained that bilingual students can be empowered by studies within the context of their native culture(6).

There are many approaches to the successful teaching of essential reading skills to special education students. Some of these reading approaches are centered around a variety of activities all of which aim toward the overall mastery of comprehension skills. This is particularly true in teaching special education students. The major activities of importance should focus on the use of basal readers, the mastery of phonics and decoding skills and the occasional use of related learning games. Frequently repeated practice sessions are also particularly significant as far as vocabulary development is concerned. The teacher must, above all, strive to become a master of the necessary art of productive motivation for general academic success.

CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

It is my goal to inspire and encourage the Hispanic special education students in my language arts classes to read selected short stories and short novels written by Hispanic authors who focus on the traditions and experiences of *Latina* and *Latino* immigrants in the United States. Additionally, these students will be encouraged to reflect upon and analyze their own experiences and recollections of life in reaction to the experiences of the principal characters encountered in their reading assignments. Furthermore, the students will be expected to comment and analyze, orally and in writing, the literary developments and the plot of those reading assignments. The students will also compare and contrast characters and plot developments with the experiences of their families in the process of relocating to the United States.

These students will be expected to develop a writing portfolio for commentary and expository writing activities centering on the immigrant experiences with which they can empirically and vicariously identify and appreciate through class reading assignments and homework activities.

These students will be expected to develop a reading fluency that will allow them to eventually successfully read some of the world's favored classics for their own enjoyment.

TAAS and TEKS Objectives

For this particular curriculum unit, the students will be required to focus on the TAAS objectives in preparation for the annual academic skills standardized test, referred to as the TAAS test. Since the students in my class are functioning and performing below their grade level, they take the released TAAS test, which tests at the students' present level of performance. These objectives are now referred as the TEKS, the essential knowledge skills.

The first of the reading objectives is probably the most fundamental of all. This most fundamental skill to be practiced in reading is decoding and vocabulary development. Comprehension of words in the context of the reading assignment is a first objective which

can not be ignored. Included in this first objective is the matter of spelling, which reinforces the recognition as well as the meanings of words.

The second objective of essential knowledge skills is reading comprehension. In reality, all of the discussion and writing assignments given in English classes focus on some aspect of this particular objective. Also allied with this objective is the requirement that the student focuses on analysis and problem resolutions as important factors in reading comprehension.

The third objective requires students to summarize the plot development of a story or novel. This is usually done orally at first as a general discussion. The written response comes later.

The fourth objective requires the students to recall information, perceive cause and effect and speculate on outcomes of the general plot.

The fifth objective focuses on drawing conclusions about characters and plots as situations develop in a given story. Practice in this objective gives students the opportunity to use charts and graphs, when presented, as part of the tools of analysis and summarization. Students will analyze characters and personality traits as well as motives which drive the characters in a given story.

Finally, the sixth objective requires the student to discern propaganda devices and points of view of the author and of the characters he created.

Most of the discussion questions and written responses are expressed in such a manner that the students will eventually gain significant practice toward mastery of these assessment objectives.

Time Requirements

The time required will vary significantly with special education students. One of the most useful modifications for special education classes is extended time in working on specific academic assignments. It might be necessary to reteach certain lessons on more than one occasion. So, the matter of time requirements is not rigidly fixed; students will stay on a given task until a lesson is completed within the parameters of their level of ability and performance. This applies to all components of any given lesson for both classroom and homework assignments.

CONVEYING THE MATERIAL TO THE STUDENTS

As much as possible, and as much as student skills will allow, the students will work cooperatively in pairs or small groups. The research for promoting cooperative learning is both extensive and impressive (7). In using cooperative learning strategies, students will learn to work together while maximizing their learning opportunities. In doing so, students will learn group skills while being individually accountable for completing assignments and for effective learning. This method promotes the development of leadership among students. Working in groups also allows students to evaluate individual and group work

After individual silent reading of assigned selections, the students will reread the assigned selections with an assigned partner from the cooperative learning group. Each will read the same material to his or her partner. In this way, students will learn to identify and correct mistakes. This also reinforces the learning of vocabulary and sentence structures in context. Thus, learning becomes student centered in activities and not exclusively teacher centered (8). This type of learning activity encourages social and linguistic interaction which in turn encourages bilingual fluency (9). This type of learning pays off at the reading comprehension and story analysis stages (10). Many recognize that cooperative learning is important in negotiating word meanings from context, since the acquisition of knowledge is most effective as a social undertaking (11).

Comprehension and expository writing activities will be greatly enhanced through cooperative learning. Ideas will be expanded through small group discussions with questions relating to what students predict will happen in the following chapters as well as how the students will relate to what they just encountered in their reading selections. Thus, they will focus on and discuss how their personal values will be challenged and how they will personally and collectively identify with characters' experiences in the reading selection (12).

Significant gains in vocabulary development can be made through the implementation of cooperative learning groups. They can discuss vocabulary words and show perceived meanings, dictionary skills for meanings of words and sentences from the reading selection which show how the author used these words in his or her writing (13). Vocabulary word spelling becomes easier to learn when students practice in small groups for mastery through a phonics approach. They can devise lists to check each individual in the group (14).

Reinforcement of what was studied in class is accomplished through daily homework. For this to be successful, parents or other older relatives must be depended upon to play a key role in this activity. Both teacher and student must communicate expectations to parents and guardians (15). Successful homework develops a great degree of self-accountability and the student is eligible for receiving rewards from both the

teacher and the parents. Additionally, the parents or guardians can become helpful partners in the education of their child. The teacher's homework planner which records the assignment and time to be spent doing the assignment becomes a means of meaningful communicating with the parents at home, since the parents have to sign the planner and record how much time was spent on the assignment (16).

Usually, the assignment for homework focuses on vocabulary spelling and meanings as well as reading out loud to the parents what was read in class. Thus, the development of reading fluency and writing the final draft of their written responses to the general comprehension questions is rehearsed for skills refinement.

The selected materials for this particular curriculum, as stated above, will be read both in and outside of the classroom. Since this is literature written by Hispanic writers and raconteurs about the Hispanic experiences of immigrants in the United States, it is expected that the students will read assigned literature selections with greater interest in class. Far too often, Hispanic students have to be subjected to reading material which may reflect an alien cultural bias that may have little or no immediate interest to them. Hispanic themes can therefore enrich their academic success. Additionally, familiar Anglo-focused literature for young Hispanic students may exhibit cultural stereotyping and may use too many culturally oriented clichés. Therefore the use of reading material written by Hispanic authors who focus on themes of great interest to Hispanic students will undoubtedly be of great assistance to Hispanic students (17).

The goal of any teacher should be centered on developing a community of learners. This may be accomplished by means of making general adaptations to the learners' particular culture. Frequently the learning materials and presentation of the lessons are divorced from the students' culture and background. It is truly a good idea to choose instructional materials which reflect Hispanic culture and characters familiar to the students. Even the response of the students to the learning activities may be quite different from that of Anglo students. Children from different cultural backgrounds may enjoy activities such as choral reading, echo reading or chanting the lesson material as a way of learning and reinforcing (18). The teacher must experiment with this type of approach in order to find a successful method for use in the classroom.

Classroom discussions will constitute an important segment of the curriculum. Students will be required to identify and relate to experiences recounted and brought out in the book or story selection. Oral reports on the reading selections will be an integral part of the curriculum's procedural development. Vocabulary development, through the use of a vocabulary and word usage notebook will be required of each student.

As the work of progressive reading is done, written responses to the student's identification with elements of the plot and characters will be assigned on a continuing basis. These written responses will hopefully require the helpful resources of family

anecdotal experiences needed to develop and expand the students' skills in producing well-written responses.

Among all highly rated teaching strategies for skilled mastery of reading, the importance of reading out loud to children should play a major role in and out of the classroom environment. Even the use of tape-recorded selections of high interest material can not be ignored. Such taped selections can liven up basal reading selections. Students can read along with the taped selection or perhaps follow with a teacher reading out loud. This approach can help students absorb correct pronunciation at the same time. The benefits of such a manner of conveyance can include the appreciation of the rich patterns of well-structured literary productions and of the wielding of colorful and imaginative vocabulary words in correct context. Furthermore, reading out loud to students can convey to the students that good literature can have a unity of time, place and action while demonstrating that reading with skill can be a source of pleasure and vicarious experience (19).

In summary, as mentioned above, motivation to read successfully is of great importance, particularly for Hispanic special education students. Reading, for Hispanic students, can become more productive and enjoyable if the use of literary material is the product of Hispanic authors who focus on the *Latina* and *Latino* experiences. Of special importance, the use of such culturally relevant text materials for reading activities is virtually necessary and mandatory. This truly helps students to focus on literary patterns and story materials that are environmentally friendly and loved. Furthermore, vocabulary development can be made far more easily and much more enjoyable through the use of Spanish and English cognate pairing. The development of automaticity, through the reading of culturally relevant material can be encouraged and nurtured, which will prepare them for future focus on standard world classics.

Remember, as in other reading programs for the general student population, students are asked to read a given selection silently and individually. After this is accomplished, the students are asked to read the story out loud to a partner from their group. Students may be asked to do this two or three times until fluent automaticity is sufficiently practiced and students can demonstrate metacognitive understanding about themselves as emerging fluent readers. Thus, miscues and low levels of fluency can be eliminated to a great extent. Once again, and finally, the use of culturally relevant reading material has been shown to bring about measurable results in Hispanic students who are poor readers (20).

FIRST READING SELECTION

One useful publication to be employed in this class, entitled *Benito's Bizcochitos/Los Bizcochitos de Benito*, is a bilingual short story written by Ana Baca. This charming and beautifully-illustrated hardbound little volume is only thirty-two pages long. Although intended for very young elementary students or very low level readers in need of remedial

work, one of the very appealing features of this book is that it is written in bilingual English and Spanish format. Students who are able to read Spanish can use the bilingual format to their utmost advantage by making use of cognates in dealing with the vocabulary. Hopefully more books of this type will be produced in the near future.

Written in the style of a magical tale, it is the story about how special Christmas cookies, called *bizcochitos*, came into existence. This little book is the story of how a magical butterfly revealed to Cristina's great grandfather, a shepherd in New Mexico, the secret of making special anise-flavored holiday cookies.

After becoming tired of routine farm work, Cristina's grandfather Benito ran away from home at a very young age. Subsequently, by fate or by providence, Benito found a new career as a shepherd. After becoming stranded in a severe snowstorm, Benito was miraculously rescued by a special butterfly which left him a butterfly shaped sweet bread which he wore around his neck on a string. According to this legend, this is how Benito's family acquired the mythical cookie recipe. A recipe for these special holiday cookies is given at the end of the story.

Learning and Assessment Activities

This delightful short story is well suited for a series of folklore-based discovery activities and essays dealing with regional culinary and folkloric traditions of the Hispanic world.

Vocabulary Development

Since the book is bilingual, in English and Spanish, the students may use this book as a ready-made and self-checking resource for building word fluency on an elementary English level.

Time Requirements

Due to the very short nature of this book, the entire reading assignment can be finished in about one and a half class periods, preferably before any given weekend at the beginning of the school year. The related written responses can therefore be completed as one weekend assignment. The written exercises prescribed below are intended to be completed with members of the extended family as exercises in recording family and communal oral history or folk traditions.

Writing and Discussion Activities

1. After reading the story, ask the students to write about old and traditional recipes and how these food traditions came into existence. For example, the students could write and explain special foods which are eaten during different times and seasons of

the year in the students' homes, or the homes of friends and other members of the extended family. This is an area for rich expression of traditions which have come to the present from many generations of family and regional customs.

2. Although not discussed in the book, the students can gather and write about traditional folk medicines or home-made medicines and how they were developed over many generations. For example, the students could explain home-made remedies for common ailments such as colds, headaches, toothaches and other discomforts. Especially important is the explanation of what materials and ingredients were collected by parents, grandparents and other family members in the preparations of these folk-medicines. A class cooperative writing project of historical materials on this subject could help the students develop an interest in writing, as well as in the folklore of their own cultural traditions.

3. As far as these special preparations for special seasonal and holiday foods are concerned, what changes have occurred in preparing these dishes? If no changes have taken place, why have these procedures remained unchanged?

SECOND READING SELECTION

A practical example of a useful book for this special student population is *Emilio*, a very interesting and short novel written by Houston-based writer Julia Mercedes Castilla. This is the story about a young boy who has to leave his Central American village of Conchagua to join his mother and two siblings, Jaime and Victoria, in Houston, following the death of his beloved father who was killed by guerrillas. This is really an intriguing story of a twelve-year old boy who feels very awkward and out-of-place in a strange and unfamiliar new world. He misses his native village, his grandparents, his deceased father, familiar foods and his friends. The death of his father is dealt with only briefly, but plays an important role in the development of the plot, which centers on an adjustment of the adolescent's new environmental forces. This story deals with the agony of learning a new language, acquiring new friends, dealing with bullies, revenge, facing the insults of coping with "...you don't belong here. Go back where you came from..." and other tragic events.

Learning and Assessment Activities

Writing activities based around this very well-written story could be numerous. A story of this nature can provide the class with many different reflective essays on the synthesis and evaluative levels.

Time Requirements

This is a longer book and will require several days for special education students to complete. Overall mastery of reading skills rather than a speedy completion is an

important factor to consider. Class time spent on reading is also reviewed for homework. This is also true for composing the various stages of the writing assignments, which have to go through various stages. Finally, the time needed for completion depends on the students' present level of performance.

Vocabulary Development

With each chapter of this book, there will be a short selection of general vocabulary words which the students will master by writing a definition, an excellent learning activity for the student to develop essential dictionary skills. Afterwards, the student will copy the sentence where the word is found and explain how the author used that particular word.

Chapter I: Another Day of Dread

The young hero of this story finds himself in a continuous situation of being uncomfortable in his new situation in a Houston middle school shortly after having arrived from his native home in his native Central American village of Conchagua. Attending school, for Emilio, is not a very positive experience.

- A. Pre-reading vocabulary for guided and independent reading:
 - 1. dreading 2. gamble 3. excuses 4. according 5. tradition
 - 6. violence 7. argue 8. accusingly 9. penetrating 10. nauseous
 - 11. panic 12. insulting
- B. Comprehension Questions for discussion and writing:
 - 1. Describe why Emilio might feel lonely living in a new country. Answers will vary, but might include reasons such as unfamiliar sights, customs, memories of his old village in Central America, and regretting the loss of his father.
 - 2. If you had the opportunity to meet someone like Emilio, what advice might you give him to lessen his feeling of loneliness in his new school environment? The answers should focus on the value and challenge of making new friends.
 - 3. Make one or more predictions about the outcome of this story. Students should be able to predict that a good and well-written story should have a fulfilling and positive outcome, especially for early adolescent students.

Chapter II: New Friends

- A. Vocabulary Activities:
 - 1. debating 2. brooding 3. gathering 4. regretted 5. accept
 - 6. parochial 7. discipline 8. reaction 9. Jordan 10. stadium
 - 11. confidence 12. experiences 13. puzzled 14. charity

15. Engrossed

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. Why was Emilio afraid of not being accepted by his peers? Answers may vary, but will remain focused on language limitations and a new and unfamiliar social environment.
2. Do you think that Clara's offer of friendship will be accepted in the end? If so, on what basis will this friendship be established? The answer should include that Clara and her friends were also immigrants from Mexico and Jordan. The students should point out that developing a sense of belonging is a broadening experience.
3. How did Clara use wisdom and tact in making Emilio comfortable in finding new friends? She gave Emilio descriptive information about each one of the people she was planning to have him meet.
4. Why did Emilio's sense of self-confidence weaken as he walk into the stadium to meet Clara's friends? He suddenly felt a fear of the unknown and he thought he sensed potential hostility in so many new and unknown faces.
5. Why did Emilio feel uncomfortable with Clara's special friends? He thought they were treating him with a sense of condescending charity, which gave rise to a feeling of insecurity; he thought they felt sorry for him and he wanted an identity independent of such feelings.

Chapter III: Why Me?

A. Vocabulary Activities:

1. foreign
2. insisted
3. sociable
4. frail
5. brooding
6. annoyance
7. attitude
8. anger

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing:

1. Why did Emilio want to be alone after two bullies attacked him? He viewed them as a serious threat to his sense of independence and self esteem.
2. Can you predict why Jaime, Emilio's older brother, does not want to associate with Emilio and Victoria, his little sister? At this juncture, the students could offer a wide variety of good and challenging responses focusing on matters such as age differences and perhaps different interests. It is important to stimulate predictive responses on different levels in students of this age.

Chapter IV: A Bad Day:

A. Vocabulary

1. approaching
2. impulse
3. tormenting
4. meekly
5. interfere
6. daring
7. eternity
8. dismissal
9. ventured

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Explain Emilio's great fear of going to school. He was exhausted from the stress of having to deal with unexpected events that seemed to come up against him each day.
2. Describe how Emilio felt when the police picked him up and brought him to school. Why do you think he hid behind the azalea bushes for the rest of the day instead of reporting to class?

Chapter V: You Have to Give Me an Excuse!

A. Vocabulary

1. undetected
2. accusing
3. responded
4. victim
5. concentrate
6. dialogue
7. distinguish
8. characters
9. illiterate
10. anxiously
11. catastrophe
12. sermons
13. exhausted

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Predict how Emilio will get even with the boys, Matt, Cato and Jose, who are tormenting him. What do you think he will do to earn their respect?
2. From what you have read from this book so far, explain how Emilio felt about being limited in his comprehension of English.

Chapter VI: Facing the World

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. intently
2. avoided
3. mockingly
4. permitted
5. annoyed
6. calmly
7. rage
8. mesmerized
9. candidly
10. willpower

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. What made Emilio feel an urgent need to learn the English language? Being at the mercy of Jose's translations gave him a feeling of not being adequate, especially when Jose had to translate a note to the teacher written by Emilio's own mother, who also had to depend on a neighbor to write her correspondence.
2. Was Emilio acting in a reasonable manner by denying that he had arrived at school with wet pants? The answers will vary, since this is a matter of personal opinion.
3. What finally made Emilio understand and realize that Clara and Ali were indeed his loyal friends? They counteracted Jose's bully remarks and unreasonable attitude toward Emilio. Clara and Ali genuinely sought Emilio's friendship and even appeared to believe Emilio's lies about the wet pants.
4. Describe what probably went through Emilio's mind when Matt and Cato taunted him about wetting his pants. Describe how you might feel if you were faced with such a situation.

Chapter VII: A New Experience

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. knack
2. passably
3. distrustful
4. disappoint
5. involuntary
6. reflex

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. Can you relate to Emilio's fears of visiting in a stranger's house? How do you think he felt? The answer will focus on how Emilio entered into the domain of a foreign culture.
2. Why do you think Emilio reacted negatively to the taste of tea in a Middle Eastern home? Explain how he felt about never having tasted tea before this visit.
3. Explain how Emilio felt after being beaten up again by Matt and Cato. Explain what would have gone on in your own mind.

Chapter VIII: Encounters

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. sarcastically
2. envious
3. regaining
4. wobbled
5. assailed
6. harassing
7. creative
8. encountering
9. *pandilla*

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. What would be an appropriate response to Matt and Cato when they insulted an immigrant by shouting, "Go back where you came from, worm"? Discuss the pain and agony such cruel prejudice can inflict upon an individual's concept of self-worth and self esteem. How would you feel?
2. When Matt and Cato severely battered Ali in a violent assault and seriously injured him, what may have gone through their minds when Ali did not show up at school on the next day? Discuss the role of fear in discovering that misdeeds and violent behavior might merit legal punishment to the fullest extent of the law.
3. Emilio noticed that his older brother Jaime is now exhibiting some noticeable changes in behavior; Jaime no longer seems interested in his younger brother Emilio and his little sister Victoria. Emilio subsequently discovers that his brother Jaime is involved in a gang. Design an anti-gang poster, describing the dangers and disadvantages of gang membership.

Chapter IX: The Next Day

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. lingered
2. concentrated
3. stumbling
4. vanish
5. dreaded
6. snap
7. disbelief
8. opportunity
9. embedded
10. pretended

11. determination
12. self-confidence
13. apprehensive
14. accompanying

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. During a dream, Emilio has a vision of his father and Jaime back home in Central America. His father tells Jaime that he can not be a *pandillero*. Explain how this shows Emilio's strong concern for his older brother's safety and well being. The answers will be reflective and will vary.
2. Write a prediction about how Emilio will have his revenge toward Matt and Cato, his dreaded tormentors.
3. Matt, Cato and Jose apparently have reactions of guilt for assaulting and battering Ali. Explain what might cause such feelings of guilt in these boys, particularly in Matt and Cato. The answer should be focused on the fear of severe consequences.

Chapter X: Learning to Ice Skate

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. expectation
2. pitiful
3. accountable
4. jittery
5. haven
6. guardian
7. ignorant
8. reluctant
9. inadvertently

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. What do you think went on in Jaime's mind when he found out that Emilio knew that he was a member of a gang? Emilio reminded his older brother that he was expected to be a proper role model to his younger siblings. Do you think Jaime felt like a heroic brother at this point in time? The answers should focus on the sense of shame and failure in being discovered as part of a street gang.
2. How did Ali's tragedy help Emilio to gain a sense of self-confidence and maturity? The answers should focus on Emilio's sense of self-worth in being concerned with the well-being of a peer who offered him friendship and kindness.
3. Explain how Emilio's friendship with Clara and Ali, along with learning how to ice skate help ease his painful memory of the loss of his father. The answer should focus on the value of loyal friends and enjoying the development of discovering mutual interests with such loyal friends.

Chapter XI: Hard Times

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. vandalized
2. sobbing
3. pleaded
4. anguish
5. determined

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. When Jaime's mother, Herminia, finds out that her son is a *pandillero*, a member of a gang, she is stunned in disbelief. Why would a caring parent have this kind of reaction? The answer should focus on parental

love and a strong sense of family loyalty.

2. How was Emilio's secretive participation in a math contest changing his general behavior? Emilio was acting responsibly and showed a growing sense of maturity. He was beginning to think creatively.

Chapter XII: The Test

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. translate 2. barely 3. abstract 4. chores 5. pained
6. compete 7. florist 8. teasing 9. oral 10. consider

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. What did Emilio wish to prove by competing in a math test? One reason for such a competition was to show others, including his foes, that he was a capable and intelligent person who could exhibit a sense of self-worth and value to society.

2. Was Emilio's father's voice, conveying words of parental encouragement, real or imagined? Build a persuasive case for both sides.

Chapter XIII: Day of Suspense

A. Vocabulary Activities

1. meekly 2. caressing 3. broadly 4. thrilled 5. anxious
6. speculating 7. ceremony 8. irritated 9. impression 10. elaborate
11. subdued 12. elegant 13. voluntary 14. applaud 15. resigned

B. Comprehension Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. What discovery did Emilio stumble upon in finding out that his new country was lacking in comparison to his village of Conchagua? He realized that there were no movie houses in Conchagua, not even dollar movies. What does this signify for his situation in a new homeland? He was beginning to become adjusted in his new environment.

2. What is your personal reaction and feeling to Emilio's winning of the middle school level award in math? Answers will vary.

3. Discuss the symbolism of Emilio's strong faith and feeling that his father, although having passed away, would help him in this important math competition? Answers should center and focus on the spiritual connection that Emilio had with the strong memory of his father and of his love for his son.

4. Why was it very important for Emilio to gain a higher level of respect from his two special friends, Clara and Ali, his brother Jaime, and his two old enemies, Matt and Cato? Emilio wanted to show Clara and Ali that he could accomplish great things apart from any one's spirit of condescending charity. He wanted to show his brother Jaime that he should to be treated as a worthy and important member of the family who

deserved the best of brotherly respect. Finally, he wanted to get even with Matt, Cato and Jose and prove that he had independent merit and significant personal worth which commanded respect and admiration based on merit. The answers may vary, but should contain the above-mentioned ideas.

End of Unit Activities

- A. Review your vocabulary notebook.
 - 1. Use as many of the words we studied in *Emilio* to plan and accomplish the following assignments.
 - 2. You may use your book, notes and vocabulary lists for these test exercises.
- B. Group Discussion and Writing Project
 - 1. Discuss, plan, and write with your group a sequential summary plot sketch of *Emilio*, the story we have just finished reading.
 - 2. What do you think might happen to Emilio if the story of this young boy were to continue?
 - 3. Plan and write a skit based on your favorite section of the book.
 - 4. What effect did this story have on you? Did it make you think about some important lesson in life?
 - 5. What are the first five words that come to your mind when you think about Emilio and about this story?
 - 6. Pretend you are a radio talk show host. You are interviewing Emilio on the day of his twenty first birthday. What happened to make Emilio famous? Plan questions and answers that the listening audience might want to ask Emilio.

ADDITIONAL READING SELECTIONS

There is a small but growing body of literature dealing with the Hispanic immigrant experience intended to be read and studied by young readers. Listed below is a sampling of this genre of literature. More of this type of fun reading material is being published on a regular basis and is usually available in local school and public libraries.

This listing is a starting point to help in locating reading materials similar in nature to the

above reading selections and are suitable to meet the needs of a wide range of reading levels and student abilities.

Augenbraum, Harold and Ilan Stavans. *Growing up Latino; Memoirs and Stories*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993. Augenbraum and Stavans have presented a thoroughly delightful collection of short stories and reflections about the experience of growing up Latino in a multifaceted environment. The short selections are perfectly

suitable to be read out loud for listening comprehension lessons; they are also great for more advanced readers to enjoy.

Baca, Ana. *Benito's Bizcochitos/Los Bizcochitos de Benito*. Houston, Texas: Pinata Books, 1999. As discussed previously above, this beautifully-illustrated bilingual volume spans the realms of both fantasy and folk tales. This selection is listed above and activities for this short book have been provided.

Bunting, Eva. *A Day's Work*. New York: Clarion Books, 1994. Francisco, a young Mexican-American boy helps his grandfather find work and discovers that his grandfather has some very important life lessons to teach his grandson.

Casteneda, Omar S. *Among the Volcanoes*. New York: Lodestar Books, 1991. This is the story of a Mayan girl's coming of age and development of an identity awareness in her native Guatemala during a time of political and military upheaval.

Casteneda, Omar S. *Imagining Isabel*. New York: Lodestar Books, 1994. This is a short novel about a young Mayan teenage bride caught up in the turmoil of Guatemalan political and military froth during the early 1990s. This particular selection, as well as the preceding selection above by the same author, should be used as a reading selection with special caution. Young people whose families may have suffered during the political upheavals mentioned in the story may experience some degree of post traumatic shock.

Castilla, Julia Mercedes. *Emilio*. Houston, Texas: Pinata Books, 1999. This is the story of a young immigrant boy who struggles to learn English and to readjust to a new environment in the United States. This selection is listed above. Activities for this book are also provided above.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991. This Hispanic author presents the classic example of short reflective essays for simple enjoyment.

De Anda, Diane. *The Immortal Rooster and Other Stories*. Houston, Texas: Pinata Books, 1999. This is a collection of shorter stories which focus on the joys, trials and disappointments of young Mexican Americans.

De La Garza, Beatriz Eugenia. *Pillars of Gold and Silver*. Houston, Texas: Pinata Books, 1997. Blanca Estela visits her grandmother for the summer in a small Mexican village. After a period of adjustment, she knows she will miss it after returning to the United States.

Hernandez, Irene Beltran. *Across the Great River*. Houston, Texas: Pinata Books, 1989. The intriguing story of Kata Campos and her family illustrates the heartaches and

travails of an immigrant family moving across the Rio Grande into the United States of America. This story of the harsh realities of immigration is an attention-grabbing drama that will hold the attention of young readers. This is an excellent short novel that is well-suited for middle school children.

Hernandez, Jo Ann Yolanda. *White Bread Competition*. Houston, Texas: Pinata Books, 1997. This is the story of Luz, a young student from San Antonio, who wins a spelling competition. Her success triggers a variety of emotional outbursts from family, friends and the community in general.

Jimenez, Francisco. *La Mariposa*. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1998. The son of a migrant worker, Francisco, who speaks only Spanish, has difficulty with school. He finally begins to fit in by studying a classroom caterpillar.

Mora, Pat. *Tomas and the Library Lady*. New York: Dragonfly Books, 1997. The son of migrant workers in the United States, Tomas, finds many joyful vicarious experiences in the local public library.

Paulsen, Gary. *The Crossing*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1990. Young Manny Bustos dares to cross the river from Juarez under the very noses of the border patrol to seek a better life on the U.S. side of the border. The skillful denouement of the plot is guaranteed to arrest the attention of young readers.

Seeley, Virginia, ed. *Mexican American Literature*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Globe Book Company, 1993. This anthology of short selections is truly a literary feast. Well established authors such as Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, Tomas Rivera and many others present a kaleidoscope of exciting short selections which can adequately serve a class for reading out loud for listening comprehension activities.

Soto, Gary. *Off and Running*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1996. This is the story of a school's class elections and how competition from two school clowns, Rudy Herrera and Alex Garcia, give Miata and her friend Ana some hard competition.

Talbert, Marc. *Star of Luis*. New York: Clarion Books, 1999. A young Mexican American boy travels from Los Angeles to New Mexico with his mother to visit relatives for the first time. While there, he discovers his family's hidden Jewish heritage.

IMPORTANCE

For Hispanic special education students, especially for the children of recent immigrant families from Latin American nations, the very important mission to learn to read with effective fluency cannot be overemphasized. These students can, and should be enlightened to the fact that reading fluency in both Spanish and English can open

effectively significant doorways to rewarding careers in the near future. Fluent bilingual skills can greatly increase their chances for specialized employment which will provide concrete rewards that would otherwise escape them.

Developing immigrant student interest in fluent reading and writing skills is of the utmost importance and urgency, especially during middle school years. If reading skills are not fully developed by the third grade, developing those reading skills in the middle school years will be much more difficult. Furthermore, the task of locating age and content-appropriate literature for immigrant special education students with limited English proficiency is not always an easy endeavor. Therefore, it is my goal to find and use an effective sampling of such appropriate reading material. Such a useful listing of reading material can be of great value to other special education language arts teachers who are faced with a similar situation of having to deal with learning disabled students in their own classes.

Age-appropriate reading material for Hispanic immigrant special education students should strike these students as mature and interesting. Far too frequently, students at this age find their reading assignments to be rather childish and immature. They want material for reading that can sustain their emerging interests and which reflect topics drawn from the cultural matrix of their respective cultures and forbears. They may not yet grasp the importance of all of these factors mentioned above; but, fluent reading and comprehension skills will shortly become mandatory in all important aspects of their lives.

Because of an overemphasis on literature rooted in Anglo-American culture, it is no wonder that some of these *Latina* and *Latino* students sometimes lose interest in developmental activities in their language arts classes.

The late Bertrand Russell once said to Alfred North Whitehead that it was nice to know things, when reflecting on the aesthetic values of knowledge and education. The ability to read for pure enjoyment and appreciation should be made available to all students.

All great stories for children and young people are rich and memorable. An emphasis on literature that transcends the borders of time can become the warp and woof of the fabric of knowledge that will become part of the great tapestry of an enjoyable lifetime (21).

In closing, when one takes into consideration that traditionally mostly-white cities are rapidly changing, educational objectives do not have to be sacrificed. Dalton, Georgia, for example, is now about one third Hispanic and Spanish-speaking. In view of this, the importance of dealing with Hispanic students in our public school system becomes important, especially when one considers that in less than another decade, Hispanics will become the second largest ethnic group in the United States. The citizens of Dalton,

Georgia have seen the critical importance of dealing fairly with these new immigrants. Georgians have also seen the economic value of incorporating these new immigrants into the economic picture of their community. Hispanic students now make up forty-one percent of the student population. Additionally, academic achievement test scores have remained high (22). The facts speak positively for themselves.

ENDNOTES

1. Macmillan, Donald L. and Reschly, Daniel J., "Over Representation of Minority Students: The Case for Greater Specificity or Reconsideration of the Variables Examined." *The Journal of Special Education*, 32 (Spring 1998), 15-24.

2. Cummins, Jim, *Empowering Minority Students* (Sacramento, California: Association for Bilingual Education, 1989), 25-29.

3. Duran, Elva, *Teaching Students with Moderate/Severe Disabilities, Including Autism: Strategies for Second Language Learners in Inclusive Settings, 2nd ed.* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1996), 224-225.

4. Gonzales, Josue M., *Towards Quality in Bilingual Education* (Rosslyn, Virginia: National Clearing House for Bilingual Education, 1979), 1-14.

5. Jimenez, Robert T. "Understanding and Promoting Reading Comprehension of Bilingual Students," *Bilingual Research Journal*, 18 (Spring 1994), 99-119.

6. Rong, Xue Lan and Preissle, Judith, *Educating Immigrant Students: What We Need to Know to Meet the Challenges* (Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, Inc., 1997), 97-

7. Freiberg, H. Jerome and Driscoll, Amy, *Universal Teaching Strategies*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon 1996), 277-285.

8. Partin, Ronald L., *Classroom Teacher's Survival Guide: Practical Strategies, Management Techniques, and Reproducibles for New and Experienced Teachers* (West Nyack, New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1995), 108-148.

9. Freeman, Rebecca D., *Bilingual Education and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 1998), 151-156.

10. Gopaul, McNicol., Sharon, Ann., and Thomas-Presswood, Tania., *Working with Linguistically and Culturally Different Children: Innovative Clinical and Educational Approaches* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 58-62.

11. Cohen, Myrna D. and Tellez, Kip, "Implementing Cooperative Learning for

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13. Johnson, Denise and Steele, Virginia, “So Many Words, So Little Time: Helping College ESL Learners Acquire Vocabulary Building Strategies,” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 39 (1996), 348-357.

14. Oldrieve, Richard M., “Success with Reading and Spelling: Students Internalize Words Through Structured Lessons,” *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 29 (1997), 57-61.

15. Jayanthi, Madhavi; Bursuk, William; Epstein, Michael H.; and Palloway, Edward A., “Strategies for Successful Homework,” *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 30 (1998), 4-7.

16. Bryan, Tanis and Sullivan-Burstein, Karen, “Homework How Tos,” *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 29 (1997), 32-37.

17. Garcia, Eugene E. and Flores, Barbara, eds., *Language and Literacy Research in Bilingual Education* (Tempe, Arizona: Center for Bilingual Education, 1986), 87-127.

18. Diller, Debbie, “Opening the Dialogue: Using Culture as a Tool in Teaching Young African-American Children,” *The Reading Teacher*, 52 (1999), 820-828.

19. Hall, Susan L. and Moats, Louisa C., “Why Reading to Children is Important,” *American Educator*, 24 (Spring 2000), 26-33.

20. Jimenez, Robert T. and Gamez, Arturo, “Literature Based Cognitive Strategy Instruction for Middle School Lamina/o Students,” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 40 (1996), 84-91.

21. Bennett, William J.; Finn, Chester E. and Cribb, John T. E., *The Educated Child: A Parent’s Guide From Preschool Through Eighth Grade* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 101-186.

22. Kirp, David L., “The Old South’s New Face,” **The Nation**, 270, 25 (June 26, 2000), 27-30.

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- Beers, Kylene. *When Readers Don't Read: A Look at What that Means and What You Can Do About It*. Houston, Texas: University of Houston, Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Unpublished report, 1998. Beers strives to give rational motivation to transcend the limitations of functional illiteracy.
- Bennett, William J, Chester E. Finn, Jr. and John T. E. Cribb, Jr. *The Educated Child: A Parent's Guide from Preschool Through Eighth Grade*. New York: The Free Press, 1999. Former Secretary of Education and former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, along with co-authors C. E. Finn and J. T. E. Cribb, endorses mastery realistic minimum standards for elementary and middle school students. At the same time, the book calls for determined parental involvement. This should be mandatory reading for all parents, teachers and administrators.
- Broza, William G., Paul Cantu Valerio, and Minerva M. Salazar. "A Walk Through Gracie's Garden: Literacy and Cultural Explorations in a Mexican-American Junior High School." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 40 (November, 1996) 164-170. Cooperative learning draws a great deal of potential from students, regardless of the students' cultural heritage.
- Bryan, Tanis and Karen Sullivan-Burstein. "Homework How Tos." *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 29 (July/August, 1997), 32-37. Parents and teachers can and must team up and jointly devise a system of positive reinforcements.
- Cohen, Myrna D. and Kip Tellez. "Implementing Cooperative Learning for Language Minority Students." *Bilingual Research Journal*, 18 (Winter/Spring, 1994), 1-19. The authors maintain that the learning of language skills is a matter of social interaction and negotiation.
- Cummins, Jim. *Empowering Minority Students*. Sacramento: California Association for Bilingual Education, 1989. Far too frequently, students whose customary home language is not English are behind other students. Giving such students sufficient time and opportunities, they frequently catch up with other students
- Diller, Debbie. "Opening the Dialogue: Using Culture as a Tool in Teaching Young African-American Children." *The Reading Teacher*, 52 (May, 1999), 820-828. It is

very important to select interesting reading material that is culturally familiar to children from cultures that are different from the mainstream of Anglo-American society.

Duran, Elva. *Teaching Students with Moderate/Severe Disabilities, Including Autism: Strategies for Second Language Learners in Inclusive Settings*. 2nd ed. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, Publisher, 1996. For special education students, fluent proficiency in reading is of importance for children of immigrant Hispanics.

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design.

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Hall, Susan L. and Louisa C. Moats. "Why Reading to Children is Important." *American Educator*, 24 (Spring, 2000), 26-33. Children learn to appreciate good language and listening comprehension skills through focused listening of interesting and exciting stories and narratives.

Jayanthi, Madhavi, William Bursuk, Michael Epstein, and Edward A. Polloway. "Strategies for Successful Homework." *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 30 (January, 1998), 4-7. Parental involvement, frequent parent and teacher communication and reports are primary keys to homework success.

Jimenez, Robert T. "Understanding and Promoting Reading Comprehension of Bilingual Students." *Bilingual Research Journal*, 18 (Winter/Spring, 1994), 99-119.

Jimenez, Robert T. and Arturo Gamez. "Literature-Based Cognitive Strategy Instruction for Middle School Lamina/o Students." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. 40 (October, 1996), 84-91. The use of culturally relevant literature can motivate students to raise their levels of performance.

Johnson, Denise and Virginia Steele. "So Many Words, So Little Time: Helping College ESL Learners Acquire Vocabulary Strategies." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 39 (February, 1996), 348-357. Vocabulary skills can be expanded and strengthened through a variety of strategies such as maintaining a vocabulary grid journal that contains a pedestrian meaning, a precise dictionary meaning and sentences which illustrate correct usage of the vocabulary words in question.

Kirp, David L. "The Old South's New Face." *The Nation*, 270, 25 (June 26, 2000), 27-30.

This valuable weekly magazine has presented a vital commentary on the rapid growth of Hispanic presence in the United States.

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the Case for Greater Specificity or Reconsideration of the Variables Examined.”
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These writers discuss how Hispanic and other students gain a sense of empowerment from their own native and traditional cultures.

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Experienced teachers discuss usefully empirical strategies which help build an environment that is conducive to productive instruction and fruitful learning.