

Literature Can Heal Me

Estela Maria Castro
Cunningham Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

Different people name each other for different reasons. Wayne H. Finke, regarding “given names” (names given by one’s parents), states that given names mean something different for each ethnic group. For example, he mentions that Hebrews have “. . . traditionally provided the most important source of Christian names.” He then adds, “These Biblical names occur in various forms among all Christian nations.” In this article, I also discovered that the names that come from Greek or Latin roots often symbolize an abstract quality. This symbol is understood only by the giver of the name, and the giver hopes to have the bearer of the name fulfill the meaning of the symbol. He also mentions that African-American names before the 1960s “. . . resembled those of the white population. But the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s encouraged some blacks to change their names for religious reasons or to reflect their African American heritage.” Many Hispanic names, on the other hand, inherit the surname of both parents. That tradition in the United States, he explains, has become a hyphen method that, “. . . may join the two names, as in Julio Ruiz-Lopez.” Another example given by Wayne H. Finke regarding ethnic names is how American Indian names reflect the culture of “. . . a particular tribe. Names are always symbolic, though each tribe has its own naming tradition. He then adds that some American Indians who changed their names kept it secret because of religious laws.” Some reasons to change or modify a name are due to religion. Often this can impact an individual for better or worse. For example, Tom Ross, a Holocaust survivor and a *Newsweek* writer, tells us that his parents changed their names long before he was born in an attempt to disconnect from their persecutors during World War Two. Nonetheless, this man, throughout his life, felt disconnected and mentioned that he had the need to scream his immigrant background. As an adult with grown up children, he decided to recover himself by bridging back and recovering the name that his parents had once willingly exchanged for freedom. This experience illustrates the strong bond between a name and who one is.

My Personal Experience

My name reflects my ancestors’ Christianity and a relationship to the conquerors, Spanish. I was named Maria Estela Garcia. I inherited my first name from my parents, who believed that good Catholics must name their girls after the Virgin Mary. In addition to their religious beliefs, my parents also think that in the life cycle one has to pass on one’s names to his/her children. In our family, it has become a custom to bridge our past and present and project our future by naming our children after our loved ones. Therefore, I inherited the name of the Maria and a middle name that came from our

ancestors. Due to the fact that I have an older sister whose first name is also Maria, she was called by her first name, and I became Estela, just like my grandfather's teacher.

My grandfather passed away when I was four, and I remember his tales about my name until this day. He always said that my name meant a star just like his teacher. He shared how his teacher brought healing to his illiterate world. Thanks to his teacher, I could sit on my grandparent's lap and listen to him read about Jonah who was swallowed by a huge fish. I was never called by my first name and felt proud when my grandfather shared how his mother, my great-grandmother, was a great teacher. I wanted to be just like her. Therefore, I did not develop any connection with my first name. When I was in grade school, if I did not respond to Maria, professors immediately switched to my middle name and called me Estela. Then in 1984, I married and my husband and I came to reside in the United States of America.

Following my marriage, different factors created in me a problem with self-identity. One of those was my name. *Time* published a report in 1993 regarding names, which says that married women in the United States have four choices in naming themselves after marriage. First, we can keep the name that was given at birth. Secondly, we can take the husband's last name; third, we can use three names as our former first lady did at one time (Hillary Rodham Clinton); lastly, we can use the husband's name in legal matters and the maiden name in personal matters. It was interesting to see how this article says, "names possess a peculiar indelible power—subversive, evocative, satirical, by turns. The name is an aura, a costume." I, of course, did not know that, and all of a sudden, I was called Maria Castro, a first name that I did not connect with, a husband's last name that was new to me, and a new country—enough to make a human being go insane. My "aura" or my "costume" or both were stolen by my own ignorance. (In my culture after marriage, women do not change a last name.) It took me several years and legal conflicts before I could be healed. In 1999, I ". . . baptize[d] myself under a new name, a name more like the real me. . ." (Cisneros 11). I renamed myself with my middle name as my first name, Estela. My students and each human creature deserve to create a strong bond between their name and themselves. Therefore, the introduction for this unit should serve its purpose for those who like to open it and enrich their students.

Professional Experience

In 1998, I had my first experience in the teaching field. It was a 5th grade class. All of my students came from Spanish-speaking countries, and they were first generation United States citizens. I had twenty-six students, ten girls and sixteen boys. Of those sixteen boys, five were named Jose. In addition to that, out of the ten girls, four were named Maria. Each of those students was considered to be at risk. They lacked skills to cope with American culture, standardized testing, and other requirements that were not comprehensible to them. A major problem that needed to be addressed immediately was related to renaming all of the Joses and the Marias without hurting anyone's feelings.

Wayne H. Finke says regarding personal names, “All names have meanings, though people today may not be aware of them.”

Documents reveal that the early people gave someone a name with a definite knowledge of the meaning of the name. I did not want to rename those students and lose the meaning attached to their names. I tried to brainstorm amongst the children who had the same name. However, we could not find a way to heal the name similarities and the confusion that it generated. Therefore, we continued searching for help. Alma Flor Ada’s literature healed our sickness with her book *My Name Is Maria Isabel*. This book teaches us that in the Hispanic culture, a child inherits both parents’ surnames. I like the way Wayne H. Finke explains how this works. He says, “In Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries, a child traditionally takes the surname of both the mother and the father. The father’s comes first.” In Alma Flor Ada’s story *My Name Is Maria Isabel*, the reader is persuaded to use the full name. A strong bond exists between the main character and her name, a bond that bridges the main character with her past and ancestors. It seems that, for the main character and for my students, changing or modifying names means a disconnection from us and from our ancestors. Sirias and McGarry tell about personal names, “Naming . . . can also function as a tool for empowering self-definition, a means by which to redefine a woman’s [or man’s] identity.” Therefore, I did not attempt to solve the conflict. Instead, I searched and with literature healed their differences, and it solved our conflicts. We solved our ordeal by using both of the students’ parents’ maiden names.

BACKGROUND

During my five years in the teaching field, I have encountered problems with names each year. During my second year of teaching, I switched from 5th grade to 3rd grade. Kendall Hamilton and Karen Springen published an article in *Newsweek* in February 1988 where they quoted Kathy Ishizuka, author of *10,000 Names for your Baby*. In the quote she said that in the naming process, parents are more and more driven by ethnic pride. In this is an anecdote that I experienced during the 2000-2001 school year. We can see that parental pride becomes a cause for a learning deficiency. I had a student whose name was Pedro Eduardo, just like his father. I noticed that when I called his name, he acted like he had not heard. We started to read the book *Me Llamo Maria Isabel* by Alma Flor Ada (the Spanish version of *My Name Is Maria Isabel*). The book was sent home. After a few days, this student’s mother came and shared that this student had experienced difficulties with following directions in the past years, and that he had failed one of the standardized examinations. The student’s mother stated that it had never occurred to her that the learning and the behavior problems could be related to the student’s name. She had read the book that I had sent as a reading assignment. She then shared that the student was named for his father. The family, however, called this young boy by his nickname, which originated from his middle name. Therefore, this student did not respond to his first or middle name. Consequently, the young boy’s teachers labeled him an inattentive student.

During my conference with the mother, the student was questioned regarding his inattentiveness in the classroom. We reaffirmed that the student did not find any relationship between his name and himself. Worse than that, I found out that, on his first day of pre-school, he had cried when he was called by his first name because he thought that the teacher had mistaken him for his father. The student's parents and I started to heal the student's wounds. After a few weeks the learner recovered his identity; he healed and developed a sense that he could become successful in school. This example illustrates that a lack of identity can prevent a learner from achieving academically.

This year is no different regarding the names of my students. As a result of my experiences in the classroom setting and my personal experience with my name, a unit named "Literature Can Heal Me" will make healing the wounds that our names may cause or may have already caused a main goal. It will also attempt to teach students how to accept themselves with all their differences and similarities.

Currently, I am teaching 2nd grade. I have 22 students. All of them are Hispanic. My records indicate that I have in my classroom 12 boys and 10 girls. Out of those 22 students, about half of them were born outside of the United States in countries like Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, and Cuba. The other half are United States citizens who were born into Hispanic families who immigrated to this country from the same countries and whose knowledge of English is limited. Therefore, all of my students come to school with little or no knowledge of the English language. For that reason the students are taught in their language the basics of language arts, arithmetic, social studies, and science. My school profile shows that about 96% of our students come from different minority groups. It also shows that out of the 96%, 75% are "at risk." All of the students in my classroom come from that 75%; each one of them has been identified as "at risk."

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE UNIT

This interdisciplinary unit will be taught in both Spanish and English, for second grade. In it, I will integrate all of the subjects that I teach (arithmetic, science, language arts, English as a Second Language [ESL], and social studies). I anticipate that this unit will have a duration of four weeks. The best time to initiate the unit is during mid-November, and it should be brought to closure by mid-December. That way the theme will tie in with the winter holidays. The unit has three main goals. The first goal is to help my students to know who they are. The second goal is to help my students to heal past wounds. Statistics tell us that minority students have higher risks of failing standardized exams and, consequently, dropping out of school. For that reason, the third goal is to improve the learners' reading level, which will perhaps raise their scores on standardized tests. In this unit of study I will teach objectives taken from Clear, Houston Independent School District's (HISD) curriculum. These objectives will be taught through a variety of reading and writing activities that should expand the students' understanding of basic

reading and writing principles, as well as expand their understanding of literature and healing.

My unit should help heal dropout cancers, and it should motivate minority students to set learning goals and help them to excel on state and national tests. In addition, this literature will be sent home for homework, and hopefully parents will read it with their children. This learning would bridge home and school experiences and could serve as the basis for life-long learning. In order to facilitate that, I will include a large collection of literature dealing with healing which can help to create or strengthen relationships between parents and children. I have observed that children in the community I serve tend to come from a low socioeconomic background with very little education. In this environment children are only commanded. They do not converse with adults. This shared reading will attempt to heal this lack of communication. As a result, I expect that students can improve their reading skills and stay in school long enough to earn a degree.

Multicultural Library

Some examples of multicultural stories follow: *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman intends to help the learner to develop a positive image about him- or herself. Another book that I will include are *My Name Is Maria Isabel* by Alma Flor Ada. This book will continue healing and constructing the readers' self-esteem. In addition, it is a chapter book that is going to be weaved with all of the other pieces of literature. One of the language arts objectives in second grade is oral language and listening. *My Name Is Maria Isabel* is serving this purpose, and in order to fully develop it I will read from it daily chapters throughout the unit. Side by side with *My Name Is Maria Isabel*, my class will read *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say. This book will help to enhance the teaching of social studies. Another multicultural story is *Abran paso a los patitos (Make Way for Ducklings)* by Robert McCloskey, in which the characters are little ducklings that travel from one place to another. Subsequently, a book named *Chacho y Nacha* by Carmen Tafolla presents a young boy who loves his family, and all sorts of strange creatures that he finds in the street. *The Woman that Shines more than the Sun*, written by Alejandro Cruz Martinez, will bring a new sight to this unit. In that story, the main character is different than the other characters and is therefore rejected. Each selected piece of literature is somehow related to healing.

UNIT DEVELOPMENT

Amazing Grace

In the opening stages of this unit, I will challenge my students to identify with the main character of *La Asombrosa Graciela*, or *Amazing Grace*. In this book Grace, the main character, is an African American girl who loves stories. She could happily read, listen to or invent stories all day long. One day at school, Grace's teacher announces that she is planning a play of Peter Pan. Grace's classmates tell her that she cannot be Peter Pan

because she is a black girl. When Grace gets home from school that day, she is upset. Grace's mother and grandmother heal Grace's sadness by assuring her that she can be whatever she wants to be. Then Grace goes to a theater and sees that there is an African American young lady who plays the role of the New Juliet. There, it is revealed to her that the color of her skin has nothing to do with talent. She goes back to school and tries for the Peter Pan play, and she plays it beautifully.

The first day of this unit in reading, the learners will explore how to make predictions by thinking about the book title and its illustrations. Using the same book in social studies, we will research our names and find out the origins of the students and their families. Also, we will include the different groups that make up the student's family background. Then, the students will read the book to develop reading fluency. A great way to help students develop reading fluency is by encouraging them to read literature that relates to them. Subsequently, I will use this book to teach main idea and cause and effect relationships. In writing, the learners will be challenged to set a goal of what they want to be when they grow up and put it in writing. Next, the learners will share their writing aloud. Then they will study the main characters in *Amazing Grace* and do an activity where they will write their names along with adjectives that describe each one. Then they will use those adjectives to draw a book map, where they will discuss and illustrate the setting and the beginning, middle, and end of the story. A conclusion for this book is to have the learners do an Acrostic poem using their first names and adjectives that describe them.

This unit of study will integrate reading and writing in social studies. In second grade, students study about the past, customs, places and multiculturalism. We will read and discover ways in which the main characters from our multicultural library heal their differences.

My Name Is Maria Isabel

A book that I will use for the entire duration of the unit is *My Name Is Maria Isabel* by a well-known author of children's literature, Alma Flor Ada. I will read the book aloud daily during the duration of the unit, and learners will do different kinds of activities. Some of these activities will relate with other pieces of literature and will be integrated with all of the subjects. Included in these activities are independent silent reading and family shared reading.

I will then try to incorporate literature, healing, character building, and family bonding. It will be interesting to present *My Name Is Maria Isabel* and provide the learners with the opportunity to read a book with a character that relates to them in so many ways. The learners will be delighted to find out about the qualities that make the main character of our core book unique and about how that uniqueness can lead to healing and to accepting our own differences as an asset. As the teaching evolves, I anticipate that I can further enhance the objectives of this unit by using critical

questioning to find out who our ancestors are, why they moved from their countries, how they got here, in what ways they healed themselves, and what differences exist between this country and the one from which they emerged. These provocative questions can lead to a variety of conclusions and discoveries regarding healing. In the opening of our core book, we will discuss the content of chapter one. We will find out who Maria Isabel is. Where does she live and how does she feel in her first day in school? Learners will take the book home and share it with their families. Along with the book, they will take a questionnaire that will focus on questions about how the family that the book presents is similar to theirs. For example, the students might present the parents with questions regarding the first day they attended school. Furthermore, they could share with their parents their own feelings when they entered school. The goal is to help parents and students understand that their experiences are similar to the ones Maria Isabel experiences. The students will bring the questionnaire back to school and participate in a discussion before doing a writing activity.

Then, I will refocus on chapter one. There, I will challenge the learners to find relationships between Maria Isabel and themselves. Maria Isabel, the main character of our core book, has a life that resembles any of my students' lives. Her breakfast consists of coffee with milk and bread with butter. The young girl walks to take the school bus with her brother, and she wears an old dress that her mother has sewn for her with fabric that has been sent from their homeland. My young second graders can relate to the life of the young characters presented by Alma Flor Ada in the first chapter of *My Name Is Maria Isabel*.

In the second chapter of the book, Alma Flor Ada presents the problem of the story: the name of the main character is changed. The main character is at a new school where she does not know anyone. In addition to that, Maria Isabel comes from school where they communicate with her in Spanish, but her new teacher greets her in English. However, that does not bother her as much as the fact that her new teacher sees that she already has three Marias in her classroom. Therefore, without questioning her, she renames Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez as Mary Lopez. When Maria Isabel's new teacher calls her Mary Lopez, she does not answer to the call. Consequently, Maria Isabel feels embarrassed to see the silence that is built around the fact that she ignores her teacher. The young heroine is confused and cannot explain that she does not relate to the given name.

With that chapter, I will discuss feelings and emotions. We will also write about our own feelings. Moreover, the learners will research their names and conclude the activity with an Acrostic poem in which they will use their family's last name. In this piece of poetry, the learner will use each letter of his/her last name to share an experience about his/her family. The experiences can be positive or negative.

The struggles of the main character that Alma Flor Ada presents are similar to the struggles that my students face daily. In *My Name Is Maria Isabell*, the main character

also faces the dilemma of moving from her school to a different one just when she has made new friends and has plans for games. In my school, we experience a great deal of mobility. It is typical to have one half of my second grade class that has never been in my school before.

One activity that would help to mend differences in the classroom is to have students interview each other. Then, they would publish each other's interview and it would be published collectively as an anthology of biographies. It would help to do a classroom interactive activity that the students can check out and use to share with their families about each other. Then, the main character's experiences would help a newcomer understand that it is fine to be new and feel like one does not belong. Additionally, those lucky ones who come back from the previous year would learn to welcome the new arrivals.

Encouraging interactions between Maria Isabel and her new classmates, teachers, and the school environment provide ways to deal with new situations in a positive manner. When Maria Isabel arrives at school, she understands English but she cannot express herself yet. Then, due to her lack of response when she is called Mary Lopez in the classroom, she is excluded from a multicultural program in the school's winter program. However, as the story evolves, Maria Isabel finds healing in the school library when she finds books to read. If she had been in the school program she would not have had the time to wander around and make a new friend who shows her the library.

Our character's daily experiences provide us with an opportunity to bridge to our school with our public library. This is the perfect opportunity to involve our library and the public library and to have representatives who can issue library cards to the children with the authorization of the students' parents.

We will write to heal our wounds. In the book before things get better, they get worse; Maria Isabel's mother finds a job and the girl is left alone at home. She is only in third grade, yet she has to assume the responsibility of cleaning the house and cooking because the mother has to work and gets home tired. The book's heroine, then, heals her solitude by doing house chores that benefit the whole family. As a result of this, I will ask the learners to write about their imposed responsibilities and how they deal with them. Furthermore, this writing activity used as a therapeutic writing session will effectively increase its curative power if learners are asked to share their writing. This sharing will help them to understand that they are not alone in their ordeals. Finally, I will teach the students how to write a friendly letter and how they would write to persuade their families to grant them a wish. That will set the foundation to explore a social studies objective on needs and wants.

The story has a happy ending. In the presentation of a winter program, Maria Isabel is included because another character is ill. Before the program, the main character

expresses her wish of becoming Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez. This wish is granted. As a conclusion to the unit and the book, we will hold a celebration of cultures.

Grandfather's Journey and My Name Is Maria Isabel

A piece of art that I will use to enhance the teaching and learning is *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say. This book and *My Name Is Maria Isabel* will help to create a great scenario for learning about multiculturalism. In *Grandfather's Journey*, Allen Say presents the struggles that the main character goes through while he travels to America from Japan. The author also includes information about different types of transportation and how he used them to travel and to become acquainted with the vast land in the United States. After reading *Grandfather's Journey*, the learners will explore landforms here in the United States and landforms in Japan. Then, we will do a compare and contrast on landforms.

I plan to include a speaker from Japan and the students' relatives as well. During the development of the story, the writer talks about his life and customs while he lived in Japan and how he assimilated into the new culture. This creates wonderful momentum for an interview with a Japanese immigrant to question how his name has changed since his arrival in this country. Furthermore, I will include the students' families by creating a second questionnaire. This time the students and parents will discuss and answer questions about their own experiences as immigrants in this country.

For my daily language activity I will reach back to *My Name Is Maria Isabel* and use *Grandfather's Journey* to compare and contrast the main characters' struggles to those of my students' lives. The learners will keep daily entries on how the experiences of the characters in *My Name Is Maria Isabel* and *Grandfather's Journey* are alike and different. *Grandfather's Journey* talks about war catastrophes and how families go through separation, desperation, and how they are forced to leave their birthplaces in order to find better ways of living. Next, we will explore current issues like the war in Iraq and their experiences with the theme, as well as the location of the country. Afterward, we will have a discussion regarding how the grandfather in the story missed Japan when he was living in California, but then he missed California when he was in Japan. Allen Say says that the moment he is in one country, he is homesick for the other. Is this the story of other immigrants? Subsequently, I will involve parents and ask them to brainstorm with their children if that was their experience, too.

I will bring economics into the unit by exploring traveling and expenses. If we live in Houston, is it the same the distance to travel to Mexico as it is to travel to Japan? Why? Why not? How much does an airplane ticket cost to travel from Houston to Mexico City? What is more expensive: traveling to Tokyo, Japan or to Mexico? Does distance affect pricing? How? These questions will be addressed and researched as the teaching and learning evolve.

Grandfather's Journey, taught in combination with *My Name Is Maria Isabel*, will heal wounds that immigrants sometimes tend to carry on their backs. Using question strategies, my students will learn about their pasts, and we will cover different language arts objectives integrated with social studies objectives. I will expose my students to language arts objectives on their reading and writing learning level. I have studied results of the Texas Assessment for Academics Skills, and I have seen that an objective that creates a great deal of confusion for learners is the prediction of future outcomes. I see that this kind of testing is new to them. Therefore, the learners' self-esteem is affected. During my years of teaching, I have seen students fail these tests year after year. Those whom I have worked with seem to feel powerless and incapable of mastering the objectives. I hope that I can facilitate the achievement of these objectives by expanding the questioning in reading to help the readers want to read independently for pleasure.

My Name Is Maria Isabel and *Grandfather's Journey* will be used to teach math and science. In math, I will do one-on-one correspondence using all of the members in Maria Isabel's family. I will also do place value building from the games that Maria Isabel and her classmates play during recess. In science, the learners will do measuring with recipes that they will write and cook with the help of their families. Besides the basic objective of one-on-one, I will have a daily word problem regarding the heroine's experiences. With regard to the word problems, the learners are supposed to find steps to solve the problem and come to an answer.

Home and School Connection

In an attempt to promote reading fluency (An HISD language arts Clear objective), the learners will take home those books and other books from our multicultural library and read or have a family member read to them. Before any book is sent home, a survey regarding the literacy level will be sent home. This is extremely important because in the community that I serve there are a great number of parents who cannot read or write. For those families, I will record the books on a tape. During the development of the unit the learners will write their experiences as they read as if they were the main character or a chosen character from the book. Then, along with the take-home books, their students will share their own writing with their families. This sharing of multicultural books and children's own print will help the struggling readers to develop or enhance reading fluency.

Abran paso a los patitos

Abran paso a los patitos by Robert McCloskey will heal the pain in a constructive way through a fictional story where the little ducks and her mother move from one place to another very graciously. The first activity that I will do with this book is prediction using the book's title and the illustrations. The learners will then write their prediction and check it at end of the lesson. Another activity is fluency. The learners will read it aloud in small groups. Next, we will do sequencing of events by discussing and putting events

in chronological sequence. Then, we will explore the setting of the story. It is a perfect opportunity to learn about Boston's location, its landmarks, and surrounding areas. Finally, I will use technology to research and compare Boston in the 1940s to Boston in 2003, and the children will do a presentation.

Chacho y Nacha

Our Curriculum states that learners should explore different genres. I will use the following pieces of literature to teach basic reading skills. The first one, Carmen Tafolla and her story named *Chacho y Nacha*, will help to teach phonemic awareness. Tafolla's story provides a space for re-teaching about family values, print awareness, phonics, and different genres as mandated by the Houston Independent School District. This story talks about pets and children's wishes about owning and running a zoo at home. Its repetitive mode provides the teacher with a great opportunity to explore the letter sound correspondence to help struggling readers. I will teach how "c" and "h" form a single letter in Spanish. Next, I will teach letter sound correspondence. Then I will use the vowel to teach syllables in Spanish. Finally, the learners will have the time to put syllables together to make words.

La Mujer que Brillaba aun Más que el Sol

La Mujer que Brillaba aun Ms que el Sl (The Woman That Shone More Than the Sun), written by Alejandro Cruz Martinez, presents a lady who is different from the other people who live in her community. Therefore, she is rejected and asked to leave the town. This fictional story has beautiful illustrations that could tell the story without any words. It also provides an opportunity to teach three letters that have an equivalent sound in Spanish: /z/, /s/, and /c/. I will also use this story to teach vocabulary. The learners will use the context to find the meaning of words that they do not know.

English as a Second Language

In ESL, I will start with *Gathering the Sun: An alphabet in Spanish and English*, by Dr. Alma Flor Ada, a book of poetry about migrant Hispanic workers in California. I intend to use this book to teach or reinforce the English alphabet. Additionally, I will extend this activity by writing a new class alphabet, using the students' names and last names. Furthermore, I will teach alphabetical order.

Subsequently, I will read the *Napping House* by Audrey Wood. This is a repetitive book that contains a collective source of heartening rhymes. This story about a napping house is a simple tale with a "snoozing cat, on a dozing dog, on a dreaming child, on a snoring granny, on a cozy bed, in a napping house, where everyone is sleeping" (Wood 7). There is surprise in the story, and the youngest listeners will want to hear it again and again. The content of the book, the illustrations, and the repetitive dialogue will serve as a

bridge to connect the learners with the acquisition of English. I will teach the same language arts and social studies objectives with a focus on language development.

Another easy-to-read book that I am going to use is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. In this book, the learners can see how a young caterpillar gets transformed into a beautiful butterfly. Furthermore, I will use the book to teach them the days of the week and the difference in writing that exists from Spanish to English. The easy-to-read illustrations and print will facilitate the learning of numbers and vocabulary development. Therefore, the students' ability to acquire the second language will broaden. As we see the development of the story, the learners will be challenged to sharpen sequencing skills and they will also set goals to transform their learning and become more attuned to school. Continuing with language arts objectives, I am planning to have students write in journals daily, read aloud, have students share with each other, and encourage them to do independent reading using literature with this easy-to-read and well-illustrated source.

CONCLUSION

I will challenge my students to do a story map when they have completed each one of selected stories for this unit. In the story map, the learners will review basic math shapes, and in each shape they will write one of the story elements. For instance, in a rectangle, which will look like the cover of the book, the learner will write the title of the book, and the name of the author. Next, in a square, the learner will write and draw the names of the main characters. Then, the learner will use three circles to write an event that happens at the beginning, middle and end of the story. In a triangle, the learner will illustrate the problem of the story and its solution. Then in another rectangle, the learner will write his personal response to the story. Finally, the learner will use the back of the page, where the setting of the story will be drawn.

I intend to conclude this unit, "Literature Can Heal Me," with the integration of the community and the use of technology. Students will present some of their writing, perhaps in a PowerPoint Presentation and will read from their journals to their parents, school staff, and classmates. I also plan to take a video of the readers' struggles to check for academic growth. I hope that, at the conclusion of this unit, my students will have reencountered themselves and experienced healing by learning about their past wounds, their customs, their ancestors, and their traditions in healing.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1 (Language Arts)

Student Objectives

The learner will predict future outcomes and will be able to identify the parts of a book: front cover, spine, and title. Then, they will write their predictions and check them after they have listened to the story.

Guided Lesson

The facilitator will present the book cover (and will have covered the title of the book with sticky notes) and model using a talk-aloud teaching strategy that will guide the students to learn how to make a prediction. The facilitator will then introduce the vocabulary, front cover, spine, title page, dedication page and content of the book using index cards. After that, the facilitator will present the title and pictures of the book. Next, the learner will be introduced to key vocabulary words regarding predictions. For example, the learner will say, “I think that this book is about . . . because the book’s title says . . . and the picture . . . Finally, the learner will write his or her prediction.

Activity I

During the independent practice the learner will write the prediction or will draw a picture if the learner does not have writing skills. Then, students will share their predictions.

Activity II

The learners and the facilitator will do guided reading.

Conclusion

The learners will revisit their predictions and decide how close they were.

Assessment

The teacher should have a checklist with the students’ names and should observe as she reads, looking to see who can follow while doing the guided reading. In addition, the teacher should check the prediction vocabulary.

Materials

Book: *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman

Chart paper, paper, pencils, crayons, and writing journals.

Lesson Plan 2

Objectives

The learners will create a story map where they are going to draw and write about all of the story elements.

Guided Lesson

The instructor will model the story map elements by showing a sample of the story map. Further explanation: On a 24’ by 36’ butcher paper, the teacher will have drawn for the students a rectangle, which will look like the cover of the book. The learner will write the title of the book and the name of the author. Next, in a square, the learner will write and draw the names of the main characters. Then, the learner will use three circles to write an event that happens at the beginning, middle, and end of the story. In a triangle, the learner will illustrate the problem of the story and its solution. Then, in another

rectangle, the learner will write his personal response to the story. Finally, the learner will use the back of the page, where the setting of the story will be drawn.

Activity

The learners will work in groups of no more than four and start doing their book reports. (pre-cut shapes of about four by six inches should be available)

Closing

The learners will present their finished piece to the rest of the class.

Assessment

Use the book maps to see whether the learners understood the main elements in a fiction story.

Materials

Butcher paper, rulers, precut shapes where the students will draw and write, glue, markers, and crayons.

Lesson Plan 3

Objective

The learner will explore about feelings and emotions.

Guided Lesson

Read chapter from *My Name Is Maria Isabel* and discuss Maria Isabel's feelings and emotions as she starts attending a new school. Do a think-aloud as the pages are read, pausing to discuss, answer questions, and allow the students to share their own experiences. If students are reluctant to share, motivate them by pointing out the feelings of the character.

Activity

Do a hands-on activity and play a feelings and emotions game by making it on construction paper and laminating it. Then divide students into small groups of two to four students. Next, have students write feelings and emotions vocabulary words: angry, frustrated, excited, happy, sad, mortified, proud, etc. Subsequently, have students write down on one side of the cards events that occurred in the story that caused the feeling or emotion. On the other side of the card, have students write the feeling that was caused by that event.

Closing

Restate the objective and clarify any questions

Assessment

Use a checklist to keep track of those who have mastered the objective and those who need further help.

Materials

Social studies curriculum, two-by-three inch cards, construction paper, food, writing paper, glue, and scissors.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ada, Alma Flor. *Gathering The Sun: An alphabet in Spanish and English*. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1997.

A beautiful poetry book with powerful illustrations about migrant Hispanic workers in California.

Ada, Alma Flor. *Me Llamo Maria Isabel*. First Aladdin Paperbacks. New York: Thomson, 1993.

This book illustrates how a young girl loses and recovers her identity.

Anonymous. "The Strange Burden of a Name." *Time*, March, 1993: 76+

This is an article that discusses how proper names are significant to us.

Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. New York: Pilomel, 1969.

This book follows the progress of a very hungry caterpillar as he eats his way through a varied and very large quantity of food until, full at last, he forms a cocoon around himself and goes to sleep.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage, 1991.

A novel in which a whole chapter, "My Name," talks about Esperanza, the main character who changes her name.

Cruz, Alejandro Martinez. *La mujer que brillaba aun más que el sol*. New York: Scholastic, 1991.

This book presents a lady who is different from the other people who live in the town.

Finke, Wayne H. *Name*. *World Book*. 2003. World Book, Inc. 5 Apr. 2003.

<<http://www.aolsvc.worldbook.aol.com/ar/?/na/ar/co/ar380660.htm>>.

Hoffman, Mary. *La Asombrosa Graciela*. Trans. Dial Books for Young Readers. New York: Dial, 1991.

Although a classmate says that she cannot play Peter Pan in the school play because she is black and is a girl, Grace discovers that she can do anything she sets her mind to do.

Hamilton, Kendall and Karen Springen. "Naming." *Newsweek* Feb. 1988: 36+
This article discusses how parents choose names for their kids.

Lacayo, Richard. "In Search of a Good Name, African American." *Time* March 1998: 32-

McCloskey, Robert. *Abran paso a los patitos*. Trans. Viking. New York: Penguin, 1996.
A Caldecott winner in 1941, this book illustrates a beautiful story about some ducklings that move from one place to another.

McGarry, Richard and Silvio Sirias. "Rebellion and Tradition in Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* and Silvia Lopez-Medina's 'Cantora.'" *Melus* Summer 2000: 83+
This article compares Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* to Medina's short story, "Cantora."

Perera, Ilda. *Soy como Soy*. Illinois: Scott Forestman, 2000.
This is a fictional account about animals and a little boy whose family allows him to be just the way he is.

Ross, Tom. "Changing My Name After 60 Years: As 'Tom Ross' I Denied My Jewish Heritage. As Tom Rosenberg, I'm Learning to Embrace it." *Newsweek* July 2000: 10+
This article portrays a real story of an American Jew who renames himself in an attempt to regain his identity.

Say, Allen. *Grandfather's Journey*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
A lovely story about a Japanese man who is forced to leave his country during WWII.

Wood, Audrey. *The Napping House*. San Diego, California: Wood, 1984.
In this cumulative tale, a wakeful flea atop a number of sleeping creatures causes a commotion with just one bite.

Yee, Ivy. "Names." *The Social Studies* Jan-Feb 1999: 25+

Web Sources for Teachers

Ada, Alma Flor. *Alma Flor Ada*. 2003 Alma Flor Ada. June 2003.
<www.almaada.com>.
This site has book reviews and the author's biography.

Ada, Alma Flor. *Alma Flor Ada Teacher Resource Page*. June 2003.

<www.falcon.jmu.edu>.

This site has biographical information, lesson plans, and other information.

Teacher Resources

2001-2002 Houston Independent School District Profiles. Profiles 2001-2002.

This profile is published yearly.

2003 *Curriculum Guide on Mexico*. Houston International Festival, 2003.

This is a comprehensive guide for teachers about the customs, crafts, foods, dance, literature, arts, and history of Mexico.

Houston Independent District. Clear Curriculum. Language Arts, Second Grade. Houston, TX: Houston Independent School district, 2002.

This is a teaching guide detailing teaching objectives and strategies.

Houston Independent School District. Clear Curriculum. Math, Second Grade. Houston, TX. : Houston Independent School district, 2002.

This is a guide detailing teaching objectives and strategies.

Houston Independent School District. Clear Curriculum. Social Studies, Second Grade. Houston, TX: Houston Independent School district, 2002.

This is a guide detailing teaching objectives and strategies.

Suggested Reading Selections for Teachers

Bambara, Toni Cade. "The Lesson." *American Short Stories since 1945*. Ed. John G. Parks. New York: Oxford University UP, 2002. 381-382

Castillo, Ana. *So Far From God*. New York: Plume, 1993.

This book includes a fictionalized account of a mother with four daughters who died tragically.

Fuentes, Carlos. *Terra Nostra*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1993.

This novel describes the indigenous civilizations of Mexico and their struggles as they acculturate to the Spanish conquerors.

Kincaid, Jamaica. "Girl." *American Short Stories since 1945*. Ed. John G. Parks. New York: Oxford University UP, 2002: 418-420.

This short story presents a young girl who receives a sarcastic lesson on manners.

Mukherjee, Bharati. "The Management of Grief." *American Short Stories since 1945*. Ed. John G. Parks. New York: Oxford University UP, 2002: 611-623.

In this story, the writer presents a woman and the way she copes with grief.

Walker, Alice. "To Hell with Dying." *American Short Stories since 1945*.

Ed. John G. Parks. New York: Oxford University UP, 2002: 394-399.

This is a lovely story about a lonely man who seems to die and is revived by a young girl and her brothers; this man gets to live to see the young revivers grow up.

Yamamoto, Hisaye. "Seventeen Syllables." *American Short Stories since 1945*. Ed.

John G. Parks. New York. Oxford University UP, 2002: 246-255.

The writer presents a Japanese woman and her struggle to keep her identity.