

# Storytelling in the Chicano-Hispanic Community

## Summary

In this lesson students will use personal family histories to connect with literature that describes the immigrant experience in the United States. This lesson plan is designed to help students improve their writing skills, as well as help them develop an understanding of their own family histories.

## Time Frame

6 class periods of 70 minutes each

## Life Skills

Aesthetics, Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Character, Social & Civic Responsibility

## Materials

Kelen, L.G, & Stone, E.H. (2000). Missing Stories: An Oral History of Ethnic Minority Groups in Utah. Utah State University Press. Logan, UT.

Revira, Tomas. And The Earth Did Not Devour Him

- Essay sheet

(adjust and borrowed from Julie Adams)

## Background for Teachers

In order to help the students make a personal connection to the material, teachers should be willing to share some of their own family history/background. Teachers must also be able to help students with their writing skills. Keep in mind that many of these students are first generation citizens and English speakers.

## Student Prior Knowledge

Students should be able to communicate orally and have basic writing skills.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to make connections between their own personal experiences and the experiences of others (who might be different than them) through literature.

Students will be able to express their own experiences as minorities in writing.

## Instructional Procedures

### Day One

*Lesson Objectives:* To introduce the Family Folklore Unit where students will make comparisons between their own personal histories and those of others. Specifically those with different ethnic backgrounds. Students will have the opportunity to write several different essays and compare them to multiple pieces of literature concerning the same topics. Each student will gain a better understanding of themselves and of others, who might be different then they are.

*Set:* Copies of the [prompts](#) and readings (Cisneros and Moldunado) will be made for each student.

*Instruction:* Explain to students that we will be exploring personal narratives using a variety of writings and readings. Handout a copy of Eleven by Sandra Cisneros to each student. Explain that a personal narrative is written in first person using "I" and tells of personal experiences. The first assignment will be to write a "Childhood Anecdote." Discuss how Eleven is a memory of someone's childhood. Then handout copies of Daniel Maldonado's ( Missing Stories) experiences as a child collecting things to

sell during the Depression, and of his father showing him how to repair shoes (461-62). Relate the story of how your own father used to pull out your teeth using a dirty, old pair of pliers (teachers can insert any of their own personal stories here).

Discuss how writers engage all five senses when embellishing a story. Discuss strategies for making writing more creative and engaging. Use your own example of a childhood memory to demonstrate how you can incorporate the five senses into writing and story telling.sd

*Writing Assignment:* Have students create their own sense chart for their own personal stories of a childhood memory. (Don't forget that most basic students do not know how to write a paragraph. Review that each paragraph is indented at the beginning and contains five sentences. Review the purpose for each of the five sentences and the five paragraphs.) Students will work on this [writing assignment](#) for homework.

*Day One Closure:* Each student essay and sense chart needs to be ready for viewing the next class period. Be prepared to share (or teacher will randomly, anonymously read a few to the class) and discuss the similarities between the stories.

### Day Two

*Lesson Objectives:* Students will first discuss their childhood stories and talk about the similarities, so that they may see the connections between their experiences. This will help them to connect to each other as readers and as writers.

Students will then discuss/share with each other the different cultural stories that are told in their family that serve as warnings. Examples are provided in the [writing assignment](#) description.

*Set:* Handout copies of Rivera book and Archuleta story from [Missing Stories](#). Copies of prompts for classroom discussion handed out to students (Attachment--Day Two Discussion Prompts). Show the film [And The Earth Did Not Devour Him](#).

*Instruction:* Ask for volunteers to share their "Childhood Anecdote." If no one is willing then collect them and randomly pick a few to share (do not reveal the author). Discuss the anecdotes with the class. Use the following discussion prompts:

What similarities do we see in the stories?

What similarities exist between our readings and the stories we wrote?

What could this possibly mean?

Conclude this discussion by remind students that, not only do we share childhood stories but also we share the fact that our parents always want to keep us safe from the outside world. One of the ways they do this is by passing on stories that warn us of things.

Handout copies from Tomas Rivera's book (pgs 104-106 calling the devil and 85 water offering to the spirits). Discuss the reading and compare it to the student's writings using the following discussion prompts:

How are the stories similar?

What warnings do they contain?

What does this remind you of?

Handout copies of Archie Archuleta (pg. 481-82 theater experience and confrontation). Discuss this story, starting with the following questions:

What is the moral of the story?

What is the message being portrayed to the reader?

### *Writing Assignment*

Write a second essay titled "Stories to Grow On." Write about a family story that is told as an example of how to live and how NOT to live, of how to act or how NOT to act. Focus on engaging the five senses and on sentence and paragraph structure. See attachment ( [Writing Assignment](#)) for more details.

*Day Two Closure:* Remind students to have the second essay ready for the next class period. Be sure to include the moral or lesson taught. Think about the lessons taught. Are they cultural or family

warnings? What is the purpose? In the next class period, be prepared to talk about tales of courage in the face of disaster, next time. Ask your parents about what they went through to get here (to Utah or to the United States). Gather some family history and be prepared to share the information with the class.

Collect the first essay from students and make corrections and suggestions for edits. Students will edit their essay in the next class period.

### Day Three

*Lesson Objectives:* Students will begin to learn their own family histories and share them with each other. Students will discuss the essays with parents and each other in order to gain pride in their history and themselves. Students will continue to work on their paragraphing skills and how to embellish their writing.

*Set:* Handouts available for each student. Have the students first essay edited and ready to return to them for revision.

*Instruction:* Return the first essay to students. Tell them that you went through and focused on two main things: 1) spelling and 2) general suggestions for change. Their task is now to re-write the essays. Give a short example of how to do this, by embellishing sections, answering questions, etc. Students should have asked their parents how their families arrived in America (many will know first hand because they are first generation) and be ready to write the experience. See if anyone is willing to share what they have found out from their parents/family.

Give a brief history of how many of the ethnic communities end up here in Salt Lake City, include (Hispanics, Caucasians, African-Americans, Italians, etc.) (See attachments for more information). Discuss this information with the students as well as the information they collected from their parents. Are there similarities between history and why people come today? What are the differences?

Share a few excerpts from Missing Stories that tell how and why they came to Utah. Relay your own family history as well.

*Writing Assignment:* Assign the second essay, titled "Tales of Courage." Again, make sure students are clear on writing the five-paragraph essay and the writing process (brainstorming, prewriting, etc.).

*Day Three Closure:* Be sure to focus on "courage" and the fact that there are similarities in the stories told by our parents. Tell the class that in the next class we are going to focus on rituals at home and family traditions.

Ask students to bring a sample of a tradition or a story that they can share with the class that is specific to their family or culture (a game, a food, a song, etc.). Collect second essay from students, review them and make corrections and suggestions for edits. Students will edit essays in the next class period.

### Day Four

*Lesson Objectives:* Students will share rituals and traditions from their families and/or culture. Students will learn from each other the different ways that families and cultures interact. Students will gain respect for each other and pride in themselves and their cultural/family background.

*Set:* If there are students who bring items from things home have them present them to the class and explain the ritual/tradition. Spend a day enjoying each other's company and discussing their experiences/traditions/rituals.

*Instruction:* Return second essay to students for revision. Some students may have brought things to share with the class for ritual or tradition. (Suggestion may be the candy bar game, Carmel brownies, Christmas Eve, Family Calendar, etc.) Give each student ample time to share their artifacts.

*Writing Assignment:* Have the students write an essay describing a ritual(s) at home or family

traditions. The important thing is to relax and enjoy each other's experiences.

*Day Four Closure:* Praise class for an excellent job sharing. For the next class period students should be prepared to share any personal experience/story from their family. Family recipes, practical jokes, things passed on from grandparents, etc. Students should ask their parents for any pictures they could bring to class to put in a folder with their stories. Pictures should be representative of the essays the children have written or the history/background of the culture of the family.

Collect the third essay from students, review these and make corrections and suggestions for editing.

#### Day Five

*Lesson Objectives:* Students will continue to improve their essay writing. Students will continue to find interest and pride in their own family histories. The main thing is to focus on the positive experiences, or what they have learning from a negative experience. Although, if you wish to use this day or another day discussing prejudice and experiences here in America, you can. Be very aware of the prejudices that exist within the classroom or school.

*Set:* Provide students with folders, colored paper and markers for making collections of their essays, stories, etc.

*Instruction:* Return the third essay for revisions. Have students begin the final essay that shares a personal experience/story with the class. This can be any story the students wish to write about, but it should represent part of the history/culture of the student's family. Make it a timed, in-class writing assignment. At the end of the assignment have the students share their stories. Challenge students to play the games, try the recipes, and sing the songs, etc, shared.

*Class Activity:* Students will place all of the stories they have written into a folder. The final folder should have pictures, stories, or any other material the students were able to bring from home. The student's folder should show a real family history that they are recording for themselves and their family.

*Day Five Closure:* Have students do a class evaluation, including thoughts on their writing, the unit, changes, etc. The final folder will be due in two class periods. The next class period is for revising, finalizing questions, and (if one is available) finishing typing in the computer lab (if not, the stories should be neatly re-copied for entry into the folders).

#### Day Six

Students will use this day to complete their family history folders. If students are not able to complete the project they will do it for homework. The folder will be due in class the following day.

#### Strategies for Diverse Learners

Any of the specific topics can be adjusted to better meet the needs of the students. For example, alternative stories from Missing Stories can be selected or more stories could be used. The time can also be adjusted to meet the speed of your students.

#### Bibliography

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#### Authors

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