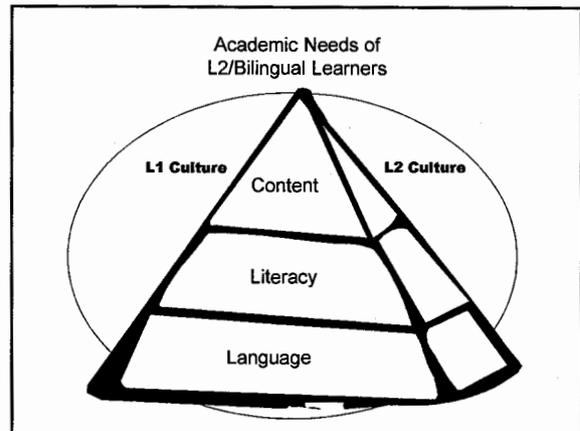




**Multicultural Literature**  
A Vehicle for Teaching  
Language, Literacy & Culture

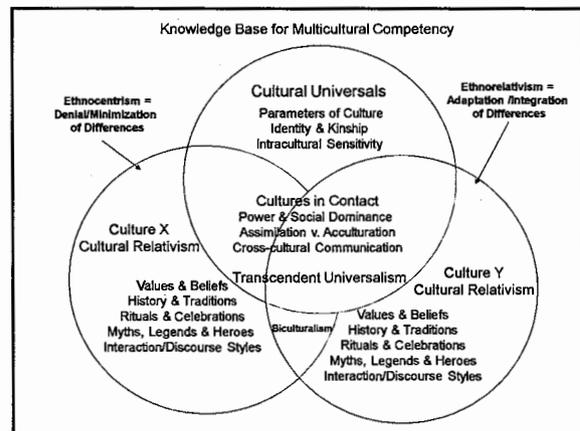
Jill Kerper Mora  
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Project CORE  
San Diego County of Education  
January 18, 2013



**Guiding Principles for DL Education**  
(Howard et al, 2007)

- Curriculum: Strand 2: Principle 1: Standards-based; C. Equal status for both languages; sensitive to the cultural & linguistic backgrounds of students; promotes bilingualism & biliteracy.
- Strand 2: Principle 3: Fully articulated curriculum; builds on linguistic skills in L1 & L2
- ❖ Instruction: Strand 3: Principle 3: Research-based; explicit language instruction & academic content integration; meaningful language use
- ❖ Strand 3: Principle 4: Cultural & linguistic equity; encourages cross-cultural appreciation

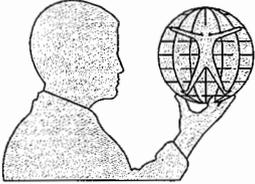


**Parameters of Culture**  
(Brooks 1973)

Parameters are:

- 25 elements or dimensions that all cultures have in common
- Compared to musical notes played on different instruments: Middle C is the same note but sounds different when played on a clarinet vs. a piano.
- Describe how cultural knowledge, skills & values are transmitted.

**Contrasting Cultural Values**



We develop cultural perceptual patterns which:

- Determine which stimuli reach our awareness
- Determine our judgments of those objects & events

### How Cultural Values Are Formed

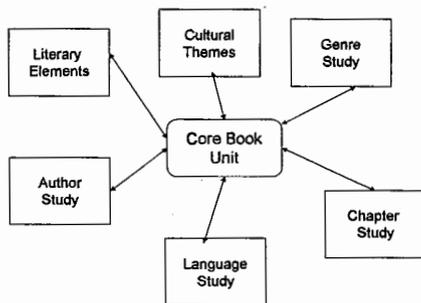
- Family & childhood messages
- Folklore of the culture
- Societal pressures: rewards & punishment
- Religious education
- Formal schooling
- Peer groups



### Multicultural Literature

- Reflects the cultural diversity within the community & within the classroom.
- Creates a bridge between students' real-life experiences & academic learning.
- Provides role models & models of competent authors who speak & write in more than one language.
- Gives a "safe space" for discussing cultural differences & conflicts through fictional characters & situations.

### DIMENSIONS OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE



### Esperanza Rising Pam Muñoz Ryan (2000)

The story is about Esperanza, whose father Sixto Ortega is a wealthy rancher & grape grower of *El Rancho de las Rosas* near Aguascalientes. On the eve of her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, Esperanza's father is murdered. Her uncles, Tío Luis & Tío Marco use the tragedy as an opportunity to take over the ranch, attempting to coerce Esperanza's mother Ramona into marrying Tío Luis. After a suspicious fire destroys their home, Esperanza & her family escape Tío Luis' evil scheme along with their loyal servants, Alfonso & Hortesia & their son, Miguel. The fictional story parallels her grandmother's life in Mexico before she immigrated to the United States & overcame the hardships of the farm labor camps in California in the 1930's.

### Multicultural Elements of Genre Studies-Historical Fiction

- Culture is transmitted through story-telling.
- The historical & cultural context of the story is essential to understanding how characters act & react to events & relationships.
- The moral dilemmas that characters face are often approached & solved through cultural paradigms & culture-specific values & belief systems.

### Historical Fiction Genre

- Characters
- Setting
- Time period
- Historical event
- Conflict/Resolution
- Style
- Turning Point
- Tone
- Theme
- Ending



### Historical Context (Early 1930's)

- ❖ The Mexican Revolution (Ended 10 years before)
- Land owners vs. rural poor
- Power grabs & corruption
- ❖ Transnational migration & the Great Depression
- Border crossings, "repatriación" (1929-35) & family members left behind in Mexico
- Labor relations & migrant worker strikes in California
- Living conditions of migrant workers

### Author Study Pam Muñoz Ryan

- ❖ Notas de la Autora & Afterward Q & A
- ❖ Cuentos de su abuela eran como "... una existencia de cuentos de hada..."
- ❖ Historia ficticia "...es paralela a su vida en algunos aspectos."
- ❖ "La fiebre del valle" y "la única fiebre que recuerdo es el afecto ardiente por mis orígenes y mis pertinencias."
- ❖ Temores, lealtades, conflictos, sufrimientos, recuerdos, alegrías

### Cultural Themes Bonding

**Bonding:** Esperanza's story conveys messages about the importance of belonging-- "the ties that bind" her family to the land and to each other. This cultural theme involves learning about how people from all cultures gain a sense of their common humanity despite differences in class, race and nationality, but also about relationships within a Mexican family and within the immigrant community.

### Cross-cultural Understanding

Nota de la Autora, *Esperanza Renace (ER)*, p. 265, entrevista con un migrante:  
"...no guardaban rencor a la gente de Oklahoma ni a otra gente que compitió con ellos por sus empleos en aquella época."  
"Todos éramos muy pobres. Los "okies" y los filipinos también eran pobres. Todos queríamos trabajar y alimentar a nuestras familias. Por eso a muchos de nosotros nos resultaba muy difícil ir a la huelga."

### Cultural Themes Resilience

**Resilience:** This parameter of culture addresses how people recover from adversity and how cultures afford sustenance and support during times of grief and tragedy. One of the strong inspirational messages of *Esperanza Rising* is how she is transformed into a more loving and ethical person by adversity than she might have been as the daughter of wealth and privilege growing into young womanhood on *El Rancho de Las Rosas*.



### Resilience

"¿Qué más había dicho Abuelita? Que después de vencer muchas montañas y valles estarían juntas de nuevo. Se inclinó sobre su labor, muy concentrada y cuando se le cayó un cabello, lo recogió y lo tejó en la manta. Lloró al pensar en los deseos que quedarían trenzados en la manta para siempre." (ER, p. 163-4)

### Cultural Themes: Ethics & Values

**Ethics and Values:** Esperanza gains a new sense of right and wrong in human conduct through her experiences with her corrupt uncles and her mother's nobility and courage to start a new life rather than succumb to their deceit and tyranny. She learns the value of family, friends, work and perseverance, as well as a sense of social justice that puts the ideals of the Mexican Revolution into a personal context due to her family's & her own struggles in Mexico and the USA.

### Ethics & Values

"Esperanza se dejó elevar hasta el cielo y supo que no caería. Supo que nunca perdería a Papá, ni El Rancho de Las Rosas, ni a Abuelita ni a Mamá, pasar lo que pasara. ...tenía su familia, un jardín lleno de rosas, su fe y los recuerdos de aquellos que habían partido antes que ella. ...y eso hacía que se elevara como si tuviera las alas del ave fénix." (ER, p. 255)

### Cultural Themes: Religion



**Religion:** *Esperanza Rising* is replete with references and symbols of the cultural universals of religion and the role of faith in overcoming hardship. Related directly to Mexican culture, the symbolism of the Virgin of Guadalupe occurs throughout the story to illustrate how religious images and traditions are transported across international borders to provide a sense of connectedness and continuity with religious practices from immigrants' homeland.

### Religion

"Por qué rezarás en la iglesia? —preguntó Mamá."  
"Encenderé una vela por la memoria de Papá —dijo—. Rezaré para que Miguel encuentre un trabajo en el ferrocarril. Le pediré a Nuestra Señora que me ayude a cuidar a Lupe y Pepe mientras Isabel está en la escuela. Y rezaré para un dulce de coco con una raya roja encima."  
"Mamá, ¿por qué rezarás tú?"  
"Rezaré por ti, Esperanza, para que seas fuerte, pase lo que pase." (ER, p. 141)

### Cultural Themes Ownership

**Ownership:** Esperanza loses all of her material possessions except for the doll that her murdered father had given her as a birthday gift, yet learns the value of giving, and giving up, material things to give joy and comfort to others. Esperanza grows from a somewhat selfish and spoiled child of privilege into a caring and generous young woman who reaches out through hardship and a sense of common humanity to those who share her plight and struggles as an immigrant.

### La Muñeca



## Ownership

Esperanza abrió su maleta para comprobar si la muñeca seguía allí. La agarró y le alisó el vestido. Una niña descalza se acercó corriendo.

"Qué linda, dijo, y extendió la mano para tocar la muñeca. Esperanza la apartó bruscamente..."

Mamá miró a la mamá de la niña.

"Disculpen los malos modales de mi hija."

Esperanza miró sorprendida a Mamá...

"Cuando desprecias a esta gente, desprecias a Miguel, Hortensia y Alfonso, y me avergüenzas y te avergüenzas a ti misma." (ER, p. 70)

## Cultural Themes: Rewards & Privileges

**Rewards and Privileges:** Esperanza evolves from clinging to the privilege she gained by virtue of birth and social position into appreciating the value of the rewards and privileges of hard work, sacrifice and closeness to loved ones. The story also carries messages about class and race consciousness in Mexico and the importance of opportunities within a society to overcome these barriers to personal fulfillment and prosperity.

## Class Consciousness

"Pero ahora que era una jovencita comprendía que Miguel era el hijo del ama de llaves y ella era la hij del dueño del rancho, y entre ellos corría un profundo río. Esperanza estaba en una orilla y Miguel en la otra, y ese río no podía cruzarse. En un momento de vanidad, Esperanza le dijo todo esto a Miguel. Desde entonces, él le hablaba muy poco... Ya no bromeaban ni se reían ni hablaban de cosas sin importancia... en secreto deseaba no haberle hablado a Miguel de las orillas del río. (ER, p. 18)

## Literary Elements

- **Theme:** "Es más rico el rico cuando empobrece que el pobre cuando enriquece."
- **Foreshadowing:**  
"Me pinché con una espina."  
"No hay rosas sin espinas."
- **Symbolism:**
  - > La hebilla de Papá
  - > La rosa
  - > La muñeca
  - > La cosecha y las frutas
  - > El tejido del reboso
- **Mood:** El tic tac del reloj; los candelabros cuando esperaban a Papá.

## Figurative Language

**Simile:** Los tíos como animales y plantas: buitres, unos chivos mal alimentados, burros.

"Los tíos... empezaron a parecerse a la planta de calabaza que tenía Alfonso en el huerto, cuyas enormes hojas se extendían invadiendo el terreno."

**Metaphor:** "Aguántate tantito y la fruta caerá en tus manos."

"Se hundió en un agujero profundo de desesperación e incredulidad."

**Personification:** Los trabajadores era como los gatitos, "...animales pequeños y temerosos."

## Language Study Usage

Use of future & conditional tense (ER, p. 9):

"¿Dónde estará Papá?"

"Papá y los hombres se juntarían bajo su ventana para cantarle Las Mañanitas..."

"Esperanza correría a la ventana para lanzarles besos a Papá..."

"Papá le regalaría una muñeca de porcelana."

### Language Study Lexicons

- puñado de tierra
- ranchero adinerado
- arrear el ganado
- pesado racimo de uvas
- los viñedos rendía su cosecha
- capataz de los trabajadores
- las hileras del cultivo
- viña, viñero, viñadero, vendimiar, la vendimia



### Chapter Study

- 14 chapters named for fruits & vegetables
- Plot Development
- Character Development
- Thematic Coherence
- Chapter Activities that integrate 4 language skills (LSRW), art & music
  - Focal Dimensions
  - Integrative Dimensions

### Chapter Activities

- Fictitious friendly letters (Ex: Between Esperanza & Miguel)
- Readers' Theatre readings based on scenes with dialogue
- Class interviews of characters (Ex: "police" interview of Tío Luis about Papá's murder)
- Write a news story about the fire at El Rancho
- Study music of the Revolución & adapt it to the story (Ex: Write a *corrido* about Esperanza or Rancho de Las Rosas)
- Create a mural or collage of story events from each chapter.

## **PARAMETERS OF CULTURE**

Nelson Brooks (1973)

1. **PRESENCE:** How we appear, how we move about, what we sound like (regardless of what we are wearing or what we are saying) may be termed presence. Poise, glance, angle of chin, gait, voice quality, smile, laughter, all are highly personal matters, yet they are to a great extent affected by the culture in which we live & our position in it.

2. **LANGUAGE:** Language makes culture possible. Born with the capacity for language, the infant is able to learn it only through contact with those who already know it; it soon becomes & remains an inseparable part of the self. A person's place in his culture depends in great part upon his knowledge of & his use of language.

3. **GESTURE:** Bodily movements, as of the head or hands, frequently accompany & reinforce speech & often are used alone. The meaning of gestures, like that of language, is specific to the culture in which they occur.

4. **TIME CONCEPT:** Every culture has traditional ways of measuring time: these, after language, comprise one of the earliest learning. Whether or not the individual is ahead of time or on it or behind it generally relates to the importance attached to this concept in his culture.

5. **SPACE CONCEPT:** One aspect of the space concept concerns the place of our birth & childhood & the location of our established home. Cultural patterns tend to respect & encourage this tie between self & land. Another such aspect is the distance, small or great, between persons in friendly dialogue. This distance, specific to a given culture, is learned without awareness when very young.

6. **BONDING:** Ties that bind a person to his family, to his friends, to mates of many kinds: class-, team-, room-, soul-, & others to religion, to political party, to the home land--all these are found at the very core of culture. Bonding begins at birth & continues throughout life. "Culture is that which binds men together."

7. **LEARNING:** Learning may be formal or informal. Although to a great extent artificial, formal learning is directly related to the refinement of culture into the high civilization we know & of which we are part. Learning of both kinds enables the individual in the shortest possible time to understand, to become competent in & to take his place in his culture.

8. **HEALTH:** Health, or soundness of mind & body, is both a personal & a public affair. From the commonest greetings to the most advanced medical research, concern for health is an enduring preoccupation.

9. **RESILIENCE:** Personal recovery from adversity, from the shocks that flesh is heir to, is a reaction for which culture affords substantial & creative patterns, illustrating the interplay of self & society.

10. **SPIRIT:** Basically, spirit may be taken as the conscious awareness of being alive. Spirit is no doubt the ultimate inner mystery for every person, but the terms of its possible understanding are furnished by his culture.

11. **PLAY & LEISURE:** Play is not only exercise for recreation or diversion. It is also a way for the young to learn their part in the intricate mazes of culture. Ways of spending leisure time, when one is freed from the demands of work or labor, are generously patterned by & are very characteristic of a given culture.

12. **ETHICS:** Knowledge of what is right & wrong in human conduct is not innate but is learned by each person in contact with the culture about him. Models of honesty, fair play, principles & moral thought & practice surround him, with which he is expected to comply.

13. **ESTHETICS:** No culture fails to provide for the expression of beauty & for pleasure in observing it. In literature, both oral & written, in painting, in music, in architecture, in the dance, man has sought gracefulness of gesture & line, harmony of color & sound, depth of feeling & nobility of idea. Ideals of beauty differ, often greatly, & the talent for its expression is unevenly shared. Yet the universal human delight in refinement of rhythm, color, mood & thought is not to be denied.

14. **VALUES:** Values imply alternatives, comparison & preference. Given man's nature & his ability to symbolize, the options available to him seem to be innumerable. Values can be both positive & negative: cleanliness, freedom, education, or cruelty, crime, blasphemy. Values are manifest in ideals, in customs,

& in institutions. They underlie ethics & esthetics. In no other area is the individual more sensitive to the models offered by his culture than in values.

15. **RELIGION:** Religion is always to be found at the base of social structure. Every child begins his encounter with the divine & the supernatural very early in life. No matter how his reactions to these may change & modify as he grows older, religion will continue to have a distinct effect upon his thoughts & actions.

16. **HEROES & MYTHS:** Typical of any culture are its unique heroes who are known to everyone. Typical also are its myths, traditional or legendary stories about supposed beings or events, dealing with the creation of the world & of man.

17. **SEX ROLES:** Awareness of whether one is boy or girl comes early in life & deepens as the years go by. The kind of life each of us leads is largely decided by sex. Although food, books & music, for example, are virtually the same for everybody, this cannot be said of clothing or language or careers. How each individual views, understands, relates to & esteems the other sex is a matter of inner tendency & cultural codes of permission, expectation & requirement.

18. **TABOO:** There are places to which one may not go, words one may not say, gestures one may not make, articles of clothing one may not wear ( or fail to wear) on pain of strong disapproval or severe punishment. These are taboo. Of course, taboos can be deliberately broken; this is the cheapest way to draw attention to oneself. Repeated violations can weaken a taboo. But the original force behind a taboo was very strong; a supernatural power was to punish. Today taboos are still to be reckoned with any culture.

19. **GROOMING:** Clothing, hair style, shaving, cosmetics, ornaments, uniforms & the like are personal variables that relate to age, sex, occasion, time of day, weather, occupation & social status. Culture formulates & dictates these, permitting personal preference only within limits that are clearly established.

20. **OWNERSHIP:** Ownership is of the essence to the individual. To have what is one's own, whether it is an idea or an emotion, a privilege or a thing, is of great importance to the self. Cultural patterns have a strong influence over the possession of rights & properties as well as of loyalties & beliefs.

21. **SUBSISTENCE:** Food, drink, sleep, shields against the weather & protection against destroyers small & great--these are the essentials of life. A prime factor in culture is to provide these for the individual in infancy & childhood, then to expect him to assume responsibility for them as he matures &, in his turn, to aid in supplying them for the next generation. How this is accomplished is a most characteristic feature of any culture.

22. **PRECEDENCE:** Who leads, who follows & in what order, who has the first choice, who takes what is left, who is oldest, strongest, brightest, most important, most imposing, most beautiful, most popular, most honored--all these questions must find an answer whether at a doorway, a dinner, a beauty contest, or an election. Culture tends to establish fixed patterns for these circumstances in which the individual assumes his relative position.

23. **CEREMONY:** Ceremonies have long been immensely popular with human beings; culture prescribes the manner in which they are to be performed. What the individual is to say, wear, & do tends to be fixed, whether at a wedding, a graduation, a funeral, a religious service, or a New Year's celebration.

24. **REWARDS & PRIVILEGES:** A reward is a recompense for merit, service, or achievement. A privilege is a legal or personal advantage gained by birth, social position, effort or concession. Rewards & privileges are closely linked with motivation & have a wide range, from a gold star in kindergarten to a Nobel Prize.

25. **RIGHTS & DUTIES:** This concept formalizes the relationship of the individual to the group, stating what each expects of the other in terms of such things as the vote, taxes, licenses, military service, financial & legal rights & obligations, the demands that each person must meet & the protection he may expect in return.

Source:

Brooks, N. (February 1973). Parameters of culture. *Foreign Languages News Exchange*. Hartford: Connecticut State Department of Education.

## A CORE BOOK UNIT OUTLINE

**Jill Kerper Mora**

A Core Book Unit (Grant Hennings, 2000) is a means of organizing reading and writing activities to study a piece of children's literature in depth. The unit includes structured and student-generated forms of Reader Response to a novel as well. The unit has a focal dimension centered around actual study of the chapter book and an integrative dimension that expands on students' learning of topics and genres around the theme of the chapter book. The objectives of the unit are as follows:

- Predict (who, when, where and what will happen) based on analysis of the title and cover of a novel and continuously predict while reading
- Visualize story scenes
- Infer character's traits from their actions
- Compare events, characters, and places found in a novel
- Infer time and place
- Hypothesize reasons and relationships
- Relate reader's own feelings to those of a story character and create personal meanings with a book
- Use context to figure out the meanings of unfamiliar story words and the way those words function in a sentence
- Use story words new to readers to talking and writing about the story
- Create writing topics based on the reading of a book, rehearse and draft in response to reading, and edit and revise what they have written in preparation for sharing
- Keep a literature response journal and highlight their writing in a portfolio
- Write a friendly letter in standard form
- Work in collaborative groups and contribute to a whole-class discussion
- Orally read favorite lines from a story, using the voice to heighten meaning
- Find pleasure in reading a chapter book and responding to it by talking and writing

### Projected Activities

<b>Focal Dimension</b>	<b>Integrative Dimension</b>
<b>Opening Celebration:</b> Tap prior knowledge and ideas using key words to predict characters, time, place, and plot based on cover clues.	Select and listen to a related piece of music or poem. Sing or recite along or compose an original chorus. Respond in journals.
<b>Chapter 1 (aloud-class):</b> Listen to infer character traits from what people say and do and to hypothesize time and place; make character webs; chart unfamiliar and interesting words; write to a main character from the point of view of characters met in the first chapter about an aspect of the conflict or plot.	Reflect on symbolism of title, names of characters, names of places, etc. as related to the selected piece of music or poem. Participate in a mini-lesson on format of a friendly letter.

<p><b>Chapter 2 (alone):</b> Share letters to main character before reading; read to check predictions in letter; expand ideas about character and setting; add to character webs, formulate ideas for main character's possible responses to letters or write to express feelings.</p>	<p>In collaborative teams, read about the time and setting of the book in a social studies textbook or reference volume. Compile a lifestyle map featuring characteristics of life in that time and location (general living conditions, hardships, social conditions, culture and traditions, etc.)</p>
<p><b>Chapter 3 (pair-share):</b> Retell events from Chapter 2 before reading and tell how the characters felt during the events; read to make an events/feelings chart; after reading, list all descriptive words that signal mood or tone (color words, scary words, etc.) in Chapters 1 and 3 and compare the difference; chart unfamiliar words based on context clues; write a response to main character or to the events of the story.</p>	<p>Select another related song or poem with symbolism related to the story. Reflect on how this song or poem reflects mounting conflicts and/or aspirations and concerns of the characters in the story.</p> <p>Relate events in this chapter to lifestyle map to elaborate on how these conditions affect characters' actions and decisions.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 4 (aloud-class):</b> Review the kind of character portrayed for a main character and expand on his/her character web; extract evidence from the story to support alternative outcomes of the conflict (Ex. Will character stay or go? Will he/she reveal a secret?) Write what you think will happen next or a feeling response to the chapter.</p>	<p>In collaborative groups, students share orally based on activities or research surrounding previous chapters (Ex: Share a new chorus to a song, an original poem using the format of a poem selected for a previous chapter).</p>
<p><b>Chapter 5 (alone):</b> Review the character and add to character web of a second character; read to propose a title for the chapter; locate descriptive phrases or words in story that indicate that character's changing attitudes or mood based on evolution of the plot.</p>	<p>Use maps, exhibits, dioramas or other artifacts to display and discuss geographical context and cultural features from the setting and plot of the story.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 6 (pair-share):</b> Review another character or chart the relationship between characters; read to compare to chapter one or to their first encounter with each other; add to character charts; discuss possible causes of the changes in characters and their relationships; identify similes or metaphors used as clues to changes in the characters.</p>	<p>Bring in a biography of a famous person from that time and setting. Look for parallels with the characters in their lifestyles, moral character, conflicts faced and overcome or in their personal success and achievements.</p>

<p><b>Chapter 7 (alone or pair-share):</b> Review the story by suggesting titles for prior chapters; read to tell what the author is trying to tell the reader about life and what is important to happiness, survival, and/or personal fulfillment. Based on these ideas, predict possible outcomes for the story. Discuss how characters might act in response to events of the plot that force a decision or pose a dilemma and the possible consequences of alternative choices.</p>	<p>Find a piece of artwork or a photograph. Create artifacts and symbols to represent events in the story related to social studies or science. Read content-area text related to these artifacts or symbols.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 8 (alone or collaborative groups):</b> Pick a high point of the chapter and defend why reader(s) selected this point. Trace and plot the high points of each previous chapter that built up to this point. Conduct Reader's Theatre to dramatize this high point or climax based on dialogue in the text. Write a response to the events of the chapter.</p>	<p>Bring in other pieces of children's literature about the time and setting or the major theme and moral issued portrayed in the book. Compare and contrast these stories with the chapter book.</p>
<p><b>Concluding chapter (aloud-class):</b> Review the story by role-playing or acting out the story. Discuss main idea of the story and how characters were changed by their experiences. Reflect verisimilitude and authenticity of the characters, plot and ending. Predict and outline what a sequel might be like or write chapter one of a sequel. Write and share aesthetic responses to the book.</p>	<p>Produce a class product to reflect responses to the book such as a mural, an art show, a poetry reading, a class newspaper, a play based on the book, and so forth.</p>

### Ongoing Assessment Activities

Students will keep a literature response journal in which they record their ongoing responses to what they are reading. They will compile a portfolio of writings and drawings to showcase their response to the novel. Teacher conducts ongoing assessment and analysis of students' literature logs that they have revised, edited, published and showcased in their portfolios. Assessment is based on checklists of stated objectives or rubrics with descriptors and criteria to demonstrate mastery of certain features of writing and content.

Adapted from Grant Hennings, D. (2000). Communication in Action: Teaching Literature-Based Language Arts. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

**ESPERANZA RISING BY PAM MUÑOZ RYAN**  
A Vignette of a Core Book Unit

Jill Kerper Mora  
San Diego State University

**Core Book Unit**

Mr. Salcedo's fifth grade classroom is decorated with photographs and posters depicting scenes and famous people from the Mexican Revolution from 1910-1920. His class is completing a core book unit on Pam Muñoz Ryan's *Esperanza Rising/Esperanza Renace* (2000) using parallel versions in English and Spanish. Mr. Salcedo believes that multicultural literature is a vehicle for developing emergent bilingual students' awareness and knowledge of culture as well as enhancing their literacy skills. He has chosen this piece of young adult fiction because of its cultural and cross-cultural themes about life in Mexico after the Mexican Revolution in the 1920's and the experiences of the characters as they flee tragedy and hardship across the border to become farm workers in the United States.

**Book Summary**

The story is about Esperanza, whose father Sixto Ortega is a wealthy rancher and grape grower of *El Rancho de las Rosas* near Aguascalientes. On the eve of her thirteenth birthday, Esperanza's father is murdered. Her uncles, Tío Luis and Tío Marco use the tragedy as an opportunity to take over the ranch, even attempting to coerce Esperanza's mother Ramona into marrying Tío Luis to gain her wealth and social status. After a suspicious fire that destroys their home, Esperanza and her family escape Tío Luis' evil scheme along with their life-long servants, Alfonso and Hortesia and their son, Miguel. They make an arduous and secretive journey to California, they find jobs working as farm workers and living in the workers' camp in the San Joaquín Valley. The story is a poignant tale of how Esperanza grows to understand the dignity of poverty and labor and comes to appreciate her father's love for the fruits of the land. The author tells how the fictional story parallels her grandmother's life in Mexico before she immigrated to the United States and how she overcame the hardships of the farm labor camps in California on the eve of the Great Depression.

**Cultural Content**

Mr. Salcedo plans his unit on *Esperanza Rising* around six components he customarily addressed in studying multicultural literature: Cultural themes, genre study, author study, literary elements, chapter study and language study. To identify cultural themes, Mr. Salcedo considers cultural universals based on the Parameters of Culture (Brooks, 1973) as well as culture-specific elements and context. In *Esperanza Rising*, he identifies six cultural themes:

1. **Bonding:** Esperanza's story conveys messages about the importance of belonging-- "the ties that bind" her family to the land and to each other. This cultural theme involves learning about how people from all cultures gain a sense of their common humanity despite differences in class, race and nationality, but also about relationships within a Mexican family and within the immigrant community. For example, Mr. Salcedo has students think critically and talk and write about Esperanza's relationship to her father, mother, and grandmother who is left behind in Mexico when she leaves for the United States. He directs students to note how families' celebrations, such as Esperanza's *cumpleaños* with a serenade and singing of *Las Mañanitas* bind her to her family's traditions, as well as the customs of Mexico.

2. **Resilience:** This parameter of culture addresses how people recover from adversity and how cultures afford sustenance and support during times of grief and tragedy. One of the strong inspirational messages of *Esperanza Rising* is how she is transformed into a more loving and ethical person by adversity than she might have been as the daughter of wealth and privilege growing into young womanhood on El Rancho de las Rosas.

3. **Ethics and Values:** Esperanza gains a new sense of right and wrong in human conduct through her experiences with her corrupt uncles and her mother's nobility and courage to start a new life rather than succumb to their deceit and tyranny. She learns the value of family, friends, work and perseverance, as well as a sense of social justice that puts the ideals of the Mexican Revolution into a personal context due to her personal struggles.

4. **Religion:** *Esperanza Rising* is replete with references and symbols of the cultural universals of religion and the role of faith in overcoming hardship. Related directly to Mexican culture, the symbolism of the Virgin of Guadalupe occurs throughout the story to illustrate how religious images and traditions are transported across international borders to provide a sense of connectedness and continuity with religious practices from immigrants' homeland.

5. **Ownership:** Pam Muñoz Ryan's story tells how Esperanza loses all of her material possessions except for the doll that her murdered father had given her as a birthday gift, yet learns the value of giving, and giving up, material things to give joy and comfort to others. Esperanza grows from a somewhat selfish and spoiled child of privilege into a caring and generous young woman who reaches out through hardship and a sense of common humanity to those who share her plight and struggles as an immigrant.

5. **Rewards and Privileges:** Esperanza evolves from clinging to the privilege she gained by virtue of birth and social position into appreciating the value of the rewards and privileges of hard work, sacrifice and closeness to loved ones. The story also carries messages about class and race consciousness in Mexico and the importance of opportunities within a society to overcome these barriers to personal fulfillment and prosperity. The author uses symbolism and figurative language to bring out this cultural element, such as Miguel's use of the term "*mi reina*" to refer to Esperanza and referring to the "*río profundo*" of social class that runs between them. An important element of the

story is how Miguel's moral integrity and kindness overcome the class differences between them when he brings Abuela to California to join her family.

### **Integrating Genre & Language Studies**

Mr. Salcedo's fifth graders engage in studies of elements of different literary genre. *Esperanza Rising* can be classified as historical fiction. By studying the common elements of genre in addition to historical event and the time period in which the story occurs, Mr. Salcedo teaches his students about the Mexican Revolution and the farm workers movement in the United States. He also uses the story to stimulate students' critical thinking about concepts such as cultural clashes and fears of deportation that are parts of the immigrant experience currently and historically for Mexican nationals. These cultural concepts are also learned through studies of the author and the cross-generational transmission of stories about her family's history, such as how her grandparents and parents met and married.

In chapter study and language study, Mr. Salcedo uses the Spanish or English version of *Esperanza Rising* for different activities and assignments for varying configurations of student task groups. He designs listening, speaking, reading and writing activities around each chapter of the book in Spanish, which the author, Pam Muñoz Ryan, names for fruits of the harvest: *uvas, papayas, guayabas, melones*, etc. For example, the teacher has students write a letter taking Esperanza's point of view, telling her Abuela back in the convent in Mexico about her new life in the labor camp in California. In studying literary elements, Mr. Salcedo leads his students to appreciate the author's use of recurring symbols and metaphors such as the rose. For example, he has students analyze the proverb "*Sin espinas no hay rosas*" and tell how it applies to Esperanza's story. He then asks students to find proverbs in Spanish and English that carry a similar message. Mr. Salcedo also makes culture-specific linkages by having students identify "rose" symbolism throughout the book to bring out the significance of the flower in relationship to the legend of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Language study also involves culture-specific imagery, as students identifying similes and metaphors the author uses to create vivid imagery, such as "*un negro manto de angustia*" or "*Tío Marco parecía un cachorro abandonado.*" Students study vocabulary in Spanish by making a list of new words and idiomatic expressions that they encounter within the context of the story and transferring these to a new usage in their journals.

### **Book Citation**

Muñoz Ryan, P. (2000). *Esperanza Rising*. New York: Scholastic.

Muñoz Ryan, P. (2000). *Esperanza Renace*. New York: Scholastic.

[www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)

## MULTICULTURAL BOOKS: A SHORT LIST

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### **Something Beautiful**

By Sharon Dennis Wyeth  
Illustrated by Chris K. Soentpiet  
Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. 1998  
African-America/Black girl looking for beauty

### **The Unbreakable Code**

By Sara Hoagland Hunter  
Illustrated by Julia Miner  
Rising Moon Books for Young Readers from Northland Publishing  
Navajo/Dine: Grandson/Grandfather, Code in own language for military

### **Grandfather's Journey**

Written and illustrated by Allen Say  
Houghton Mifflin Company- Boston 1993  
Japanese/American "Bridging of two cultures"  
What it feels like to be bicultural

### **The Other Side**

By Jacqueline Wooesdon  
Illustrations by E.B. Lewis  
G.P. Putnam's Sons- New York 2001  
A real and cultural fence separates two friends

### **Calling the Doves: El canto de las palomas**

By Juan Felipe  
Illustrated by Elly Simmons  
Children's Book Press, San Francisco 1995  
Beauty in the lives of farm workers

### **My Very Own Room/Mi propio cuartito**

Story by Amada Irma Perez  
Illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez  
Children's Book Press, San Francisco 2000  
Sharing, giving, space

### **Star of Fear, Star of Hope**

By Jo Hoestlandt  
Illustrations by Johanna Kang  
Walker Publishing 1994  
Holocaust story of valuing friendship when a Jewish friend is taken away

**Cheyenne Again**

by Eve Bunting

Illustrated by Irving Toddy

Clarion Books, NY 1995

A native American child copes with his Indian School experiences

**Manuela's Gift**

By Kristyn Rehling Estes

Illustrated by Claire B. Cotts

Chronicle Books San Francisco 1999

Manuela learns appreciation for her parents.

**Willie Wins**

Almira Astudillo Gilles

Illustrated by Carl Angel

Lee & Low Books, NY 1988

The importance of a cherished souvenir to a Filipino American boy

**Heroes**

By Ken Mochizuki

Illustrated by Dom Lee

Lee & Low Books, NY 1995

The true meaning of being a hero

**Jalapeño Bagels**

By Natasha Win

Illustrated by Robert Casilla

The flavorful blending of cultures

**Something From Nothing**

Story & Illustrations by Phoebe Gilman

Scholastic, NY 2008

Adapted from a Jewish folktale. Joseph sees his baby blanket become part of tradition.

**Too Many Tamales**

By Gary Soto

Illustrated by Ed Martínez

María and her cousins try to get her out of trouble at a Christmas dinner

**The Wedding That Saved a Town**

By Yale Strom Illustrated by Jenya Prosmitsky

KAR-BEN Publishing 2008

When Yiske's klezmer band is invited to play at a wedding in Pinsk, they discover that many of the town's people are very sick. But Jewish tradition says that if two orphans get married in the cemetery, a miracle may happen, so Yiske searches for the perfect couple.