

The Hidden History of Chicax Literature and the Importance of Incorporating Chicax Literature in the Curriculum

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Project Proposal

1. Lucia Gonzalez, Humanities and Communication with a concentration in English Subject Matter Preparation
2. Focus: The specific issue I want to address in this essay is answering why Chicana writers and novels do not remain in the K-12 curriculum. Why is it essential for students to read Chicana writers, especially those students that identify as Chicana? How can we better incorporate Chicana writing into the classroom?
I chose this focus area because, as a person who identifies as Chicana and planning on becoming an English teacher, throughout my K-12 education, I rarely read novels from Chicana writers or any books. It was not until college that I was introduced to Chicana writers and stories, which I loved because I could identify and see myself in these writings, but it also upset me. Why was I not introduced to this in my K-12 education? Especially going to a predominantly Chicana school, students need to see writers and writings they can identify and connect with. The difference it would have made if I had read about Chicana writers throughout my K-12 education is that I would feel seen, my culture would have felt valued, and that I mattered as a student. When students do not feel seen, it is easy for them to believe that they do not belong here. Also, it would have improved my college experience better. I often was hard on myself or felt that I did not belong here, but as I furthered my education, I realized that the system runs this way. It runs in a way where our culture rarely is seen and valued, a system that still needs to provide us with the resources we need to obtain higher education. I want to explore these writings and novels hidden from us and how we can incorporate such writings into the curriculum.
3. My project aligns with the theme of the course, Hidden Histories. In the U.S., there is not much discussion about the Chicana community and how much we have contributed to this country that countries to belittle us. Not only is there little discussion of the history of Chicanos, but our stories are eliminated, not seen, and viewed. It must stay in the curriculum, especially in this country with many Chicana students. We should teach them that they are essential and that their individual stories are important.
4. My primary focus is to reach out to educators and the Chicana community; I want to get the message across that there needs to be more inclusive Chicana writing and literature in our K-12 instruction. I hope people who see my project or read my essay fully understand the importance of representation, especially in this day and age when Chicana students at times feel they do not belong in the U.S. or their home country, that this sentiment is something a lot of Chicana can relate to.
5. Capstone title: The Hidden History of Chicana Literature and the Importance of Incorporating Chicana Literature in the Curriculum

6. Summary: In this capstone research paper, I plan to look into the history of the treatment of Chicana students in education and why Chicana students are not included in the curriculum and remain that way. I also want to examine Chicana studies and why they should be in the K-12 educational system. I also will analyze certain young adult literature novels such as "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" and "Loteria" I will explain why such novels are beneficial to Chicana students and how it will also be beneficial to their peers in learning about their culture and differences and privileges they might hold. As part of the ESMP requirement, I also will develop a lesson plan in which students will read the texts mentioned above and learn about Chicana writers that will connect with them.
7. Sources: I will read novels such as "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" and "Loteria"; these will be my primary sources. For my secondary sources, I will also use peer-reviewed articles. I will use secondary sources to explain the history of why Chicana writers are limited or almost not included, possibly looking into the banning of books. I will also examine how the exclusion of Chicana writing from the K-12 curriculum affects Chicana students. I will research papers to expand my knowledge.
8. Next Steps: To meet my project expectations, I will need to work on my project weekly and consistently, making a to-do list of what I need to do by the week or what I hope to get done by the end of the week. I also need to create an outline of the topics I will discuss and an outline of my curriculum as well. I will make sure to have all my resources and research before actually writing my paper. I need to also meet up with Dr. Lee and receive feedback on my progress.

9. Timeline:

Sources and novel notes collection- March 10, 2023

Paper outline rough draft- March 13, 2023

Revised senior project proposal- March 13, 2023

Paper outline- March 16, 2023

First draft- March 25, 2023

Draft senior project title and abstract- March 27, 2023

Draft senior project essay- April 10, 2023

Senior project - Due May 1, 2023

Poster- May 9, 2023

Abstract

This essay will analyze and look into the issue in K-12 education where there is little representation of Chicana students and a little talk about their culture, history, and novels to which they can relate. This essay will examine why Chicana writers and books do not remain in the K-12 curriculum and how we can fix this. To answer the following questions and find a solution, I will examine the history of Chicana students' treatment in the educational system. I will also create a lesson plan catered to middle school/high school Chicana students in which they will be able to connect and relate to and expose their peers to multicultural literature. It has been shown throughout the years that Chicana students struggle to navigate the educational system because there needs to be more representation for Chicana students; throughout the years, stories of Chicana writers have been eliminated and silenced, and this essay discusses the importance of discussing these stories.

Hidden History of Chicana Literature in K-12 Curriculum and the Importance of Incorporating Chicana Literature in the Curriculum

Introduction:

At a young age, I fell in love with literature—I then propped up my stuffed animals and pretended as if I were reading to my stuffed animals. I read through stacks of books. Eventually, my love for literature and my passion for writing grew as I got older. As a quiet girl growing up, I could find my voice through writing and express myself with no one shutting down my ideas or opinions. Because I appreciate literature and writing, I decided to become an English teacher. However, as I started my educational journey at Cal State Monterey Bay, the meaning of wanting to pursue a career as an English teacher became much more significant. I wanted to work with Latinx and Chicana students who might be first-generation students, who come from immigrant parents, and who, at a young age, had to learn a new language. Students that I can relate to that have similar experiences and hopefully become a mentor that can help students navigate the educational system. As a self-identified first-generation Chicana, I want to represent my future students so that they can see that they can earn a degree and obtain a higher education, even though it might seem impossible.

Getting further through my education at CSUMB, Professors introduced me to Chicana writers. I immediately fell in love with Chicana writing, stories, and writers that, for once, I could relate to, which opened a whole new world to me. As time went by, my love turned into frustration; it made me think why it took so long for me to know about young adult literature that I would be able to relate to or even my peers. Some of me felt robbed of my education; I soon faced reality and realized that at a young age, Chicana are stripped away from their native language and forced to learn a new language. The educational system often needs to pay more

attention to the needs of Chicana students and embrace and teach Chicana culture. As a future educator, for my capstone project, I want to show and demonstrate the importance of Chicana literature where students feel valued and validated. It is vital for there to be an inclusive curriculum for Chicana students to build community and better understand the social issues in the community and help navigate academia and become advocates in our communities. I will answer the following questions in this essay: Why is it essential for students to read about Chicana writers? How can educators better incorporate Chicana writing and literature into the curriculum? Moreover, why has Chicana literature yet to be incorporated into the curriculum?

Background Information:

Understanding Chicana studies, historical contributions, and experiences in the United States is critical. First, let us explore the term Chicano and how it came to be. There are different theories and perspectives on how the word came to be; in the article "Chicano: Origin and Meaning," the author Edward A. Stephenson researched how the term 'Chicano' possibly came to be. Stephenson acknowledges that there is no exact origin of the term; he states, "It can be safely said that no one knows for certain the origin of the word. Various theories exist; of those suggested, scholars and students of Mexican-American life and literature generally accept one of two" (Stephenson 225). Chicana has a different meaning; some who identify as Chicana feel more connected to Mexican-Indian culture. Another theory is that the term was created or means a poor, educated young man since chico means a young boy (Stephenson 226). Even today, the term and its meaning are changing, one thing that can be said is that at one point, the term became used for the lower-class Mexicanos, which were put a label, but now the term has a different meaning. Those identifying as Chicana are those born in the U.S. whose parents

immigrated from Spanish-speaking countries. The term is for those that do not feel appreciated or valued, for those that do not feel American enough but also not Mexican enough or such, and for those that feel stuck right in between; it gives us a term we can go by. So why are Chicana rarely represented in the K-12 education system? Why are they often neglected and ignored when it is one of the most populated groups in this country?

Chicana, for decades, have been underrepresented and mistreated. It is no surprise. Often Chicana students were put in rundown schools or given used textbooks in bad conditions. Educators were also racist or prejudiced against Chicana students. At one point, Chicana students had enough and stood up to the mistreatment; many activist groups and history demonstrate students standing up for their needs. One example is the East L.A. walkouts which took place in 1968. In the article "Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts," Dolores Delgado Bernal explains the reasoning behind the walkouts. Some of the reasons behind students walking out were: Students demanded that teachers should obtain training in bilingualism and bicultural, that standardized testing should not be the primary source that demonstrates students' intellectual knowledge and skills, an improvement on the facilities, for educators, teachers, and faculty face repercussions who are racist or prejudiced against Chicana students, for there to be inclusivity and incorporation of Mexican history into the curriculum. (Bernal 117). Some of the statistics from East LA schools were that there was a 50 percent pushout and dropout rate in Chicana students, and had one of the lowest rates when it came to reading, and many students were also labeled as 'mentally retarded' (Bernal 119-120). Chicana students obtain the label of 'lazy' or 'unfit; society is quick to blame students for not succeeding in the education system instead of asking, "As educators/district/ community, what can we do for students to succeed?" and as a result many

Chicanx decide to drop out because THEY are labeled as the problem when instead we should look at how hard it is for Chicanx students to navigate the educational world where many for them their first language is Spanish, several have parents that have received little to no education, of course navigating school is going to be a lot harsher for Chicanx students compared to another student that has privileges and resources to do well in school. Even today, there are no official requirements for educators to obtain training in the bicultural curriculum; standardized testing continues to test students' knowledge. In low-income schools that serve Chicanx, students need more representation.

So what was the outcome of the East LA walkouts? For one, students were ignored and not taken seriously regarding their demands. As a result, Chicanx students went on strike and boycotted. Students from East LA took the correct steps by going to the school board and stating their frustrations and demands, but even with that, the school board denied students' demands. Several schools participated in the blowouts and coordinated together; the protests took place for about a week and a half, and over a thousand students participated (Bernal 120). As a result of the walkouts, faculty threatened students and student leaders with jail time, faculty prohibited students from being on campus, police beat down students, and many students were injured and arrested (Bernal 120-121). Chicanx students fought for their rights and freedom of speech, but as a result, the system punished students for simply wanting to feel represented in their school districts.

A school board meeting occurred where students could state their demands; over twelve thousand attended. The school board meeting took four hours, but although the school board acknowledged the demands of students, their response was, "There is not enough money to fund these new proposals" (Bernal 122). The school board's response was a massive slap in the face.

How is there not 'enough funding'? Especially funding for schools that are highly populated with Chicax students, where is the money going? Shouldn't the funding serve the students? There was little to no effort from the school board to take into effect student demands; instead, students faced the consequences of the blowouts. On June 2nd, 1968, police arrested twelve students for conspiracy, and police also arrested educator Sal Castro; However, the system dropped the charges, and the district suspended educator Sal Castro from teaching at the school (Bernal 122). The East LA walkouts are just one example of many movements started by Chicax students trying to wrestle with the issues students observe in the classroom and schools. However, none of these historical events and leadership movements started by Chicax students are taught in the classroom, which is essential for Chicax students to learn and see that they uphold rights in the schools they attend.

Much literature taught in the K-12 curriculum is catered to White students and often leaves out students from different backgrounds, and why is that? In today's day and age, there is a significant amount of political discussion on which books teachers can teach to students; some states are banning certain books that discuss race, and in other states, laws are going into effect where if students and parents might feel uncomfortable about a particular topic then it can not be taught in the classroom. The discussion on book banning has been tremendous, with many parents agreeing that certain books are inappropriate for children, but what is book banning doing to students? For one, book banning only shelters students from real-life issues they might face as adults. Second, it excludes Chicax students from relating to books compared to White students who most likely relate to novels incorporated into the curriculum. In the article "Book Banning, Censorship, and Ethnic Studies in Urban Schools: An Introduction to the Special Issue," authors Luis Urrieta Jr. and Margarita Machado Casas, go into deeper detail on the issue

of book banning and how it affects students, especially for minorities, they state, "...amongst others, and the conservative white political backlash against empowering educational approaches for minority urban youth are the most recent manifestations of cultural annihilation campaigns" (Urrieta, Casas 2). In the United States, in the past years, the population has significantly grown, especially when it comes to Chicax in this country; as stated previously, in the past, the educational system has catered to White students and keeping out minorities and people of color; although this country often states that everyone has a freedom of speech and everyone is equal, but our schools demonstrate the opposite.

Teachers and educators often face repercussions when they include a curriculum that is too controversial; educators do not even have a space where they can safely introduce novels that their students who are minorities or are people of color can relate to because it might be 'too much' of a political debate. Students get introduced to ethnic studies or multicultural literature until college. Due to the book banning and censorship, multicultural literature does not make it into the curriculum as much as it should, and as seen in history, marginalized groups are often put down and shut down; it is a system created for minority groups to continue to fail, but now more than ever some organizations and groups continue to fight for their rights and have an equitable education.

Ethnic studies have been recently a topic of discussion; several states are making ethnic studies classes part of a requirement. So what exactly is ethnic studies, and how is it beneficial for the Chicax community? The goal of Ethnic studies and multicultural literature is as Urrieta and Casas state:

"Ethnic Studies programs are not meant to be a separate subject, such as an elective, but encompass different and complete knowledge systems that can include all subject areas in

order to fully recognize Children of Color's holistic existence and well-being in culturally safe and authentically caring spaces where they can be recognized as full human beings through culturally relevant curriculum and appropriate pedagogies." (Urrieta, Casas 3)

Chicanx students must not fit into one category. However, Chicanx students might relate to similar experiences due to their cultural background; only some Chicanx students live similar experiences. Ethnic studies help to unravel this and open the conversation of what it means to be a human with different lived experiences.

Future teachers going into the field should not only go into the field to teach mathematics, reading, and such, but it is essential for educators to take into consideration that their students have different lived experiences, some uphold advantages and disadvantages, and it is crucial to understand that they need an equitable education. As stated in the article, "Toward an Ethnic Studies Pedagogy: Implications for K-12 Schools from the Research", by authors Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, Rita Kohli, Jocyl Sacramento, Nick Henning, Ruchi Agarwal-Rangnath, and Christine Sleeter, "... the purpose of Ethnic Studies pedagogy is to eliminate racism. Ethnic Studies pedagogy, as an anti-racist project, encourages both teachers and students to critique racial oppression at the institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels while also showing how each level influences the other" (Tintiangco-Cubales, Kohil, Sacramento, Henning, Agarwal-Rangnath, Sleeter 112). At times parents and even educators feel uncomfortable discussing such topics because it demonstrates their privilege, and at times they do not want to acknowledge their privileges; it also might expose their internalized racism, but it is necessary to have an open conversation. Hence, students such as Chicanx students obtain the education they need and deserve.

To answer the following question; how can educators better incorporate Chicana writing into the classroom? For one, I will discuss several young adult literature novels that Chicana students can relate to. The first novel I will discuss is "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" by Erika L. Sanchez. This novel follows a teenager named Julia, who often goes against her parents, specifically her mother; Julia goes against the stereotypical gender norms that Chicana women have to follow. Julia hates going to church and dislikes the expectation of having to cook, clean, and dress modestly. Julia instead loves school, specifically English class; she loves to read and write poetry. Poetry for Julia becomes an outlet for her to express herself where she feels there is no judgment from her family and mother. Julia has an older sister named Olga; Olga is the "perfect Mexican daughter" She cooks and cleans, dresses appropriately, has a job, and goes to school, she is mom's pride and joy, but a tragedy hits the family when Olga suddenly passes away. As Julia tries to cope with the death of her sister and have a stable relationship, Julia finds out that her sister Olga was not as perfect as it seemed and goes on to unravel the hidden secrets of her sister. Julia debates whether or not she should tell her mother the secrets she has unveiled or keep quiet.

The novel "I am not your Perfect Mexican Daughter" is an excellent Chicana book that many young Chicana girls can relate to. In the article "The Fourth Choice:" Forging the Future of Chicana Mother/Daughter Relationships through Storytelling and The Path of Conocimiento in Erika Sanchez's I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter and Barbara Renaud Gonzalez's Golondria, Why Did You Leave Me? Margaret Cantu-Sanchez explores the daughter and mother relationship in Chicana literature, specifically in these two novels. She states, "...younger generations who have grown up in more privileged households have begun to question these traditional expectations just as Anzndula once did" (Cantu 3). Coming from a more privileged

background than my parents and generations back, I have questioned the gender norms; I grew up with a different culture, being in a Mexican household, but also being raised in the States. As I got older, I questioned the expectations, and often I rebelled against the norms. I always asked why I had to help my mother cook and clean, but my brother never had to. I questioned whether I had to follow the Catholic faith when I was unsure if I was Catholic myself. My family would say I dressed proactively, even when I simply wore shorts. In my experience, this is what I questioned, and it is something that many Chicana women in the U.S. start to ask themselves. Chicana women are beginning to become independent, have a career, and live independently. Chicana women no longer put up with the machismo that prevails in the Latinx community. Chicana women no longer marry men, depend on them, and become submissive to men. Now more than ever, Chicana women are going against the gender norms.

In the novel, not only is there the theme of gender norms, but there are also many other important themes, such as mental health, grief, ambition, family, and cultural identity. Throughout the novel, the reader can see Julia's struggles regarding her mental health. Julia goes into a depression and, at one point, becomes suicidal. The death of Olga affected Julia tremendously, but her relationship with her parents also affected her. Julia's mother, with her daughter's death, also affected her tremendously; she stays in her bedroom all day and barely comes out. She often compares Julia to Olga, which affects Julia; it also affects her that her father is there physically in her life but not really there to guide her as her father. Julia feels alone and has no one, and it all affects her at once. Mental health is such an important topic, specifically in the Latinx community, because it is a taboo topic; Chicana students, for the most part, grow up with the idea that one should not openly discuss the issues one might be dealing with, but instead keep it to themselves. Parents of Chicana students do not openly discuss their

children about the importance of mental health, and this is because parents themselves grew up with this mentality from their parents. There are several taboo topics in the Chicana community, but mental health is prevalent. According to the article "Report: Latino College Students Less Likely to Seek Mental Health Services," about 65% of Latinx have experienced mental health issues but never sought help (McCormack 3). Often when Chicana students speak up about mental health issues and seek help, they are labeled as "crazy" or "exaggerated," Because of the stigma, Chicana students tend to keep to themselves. Having novels such as "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" help students realize that they are not alone in dealing with mental health issues and that it is essential to obtain help when needed.

Grief is another important theme in the novel; everyone in the family is dealing with grief in different ways, such as Julia's mother, who locks herself up; her father, who does not speak and keeps to himself; and Julia, who misses her sister, but at the same time resents her, she states "It's like a living death. I almost envy Olga, which I know is completely fucked up" (Sanchez 27). Here Julia gives a hint in two ways; for one, Julia resents her sister because, to her mother, Olga was perfect when Julia, in her mother's eyes, always messes up. The second hint is a hidden message where she resents Olga because she is not alive anymore; here, the reader sees Julia's mental struggles; she is drained and wishes for her death.

Culture and identity are other big themes throughout the novel. Julia does not want to follow the gender norms; she does not want to be a housewife and become dependent on a man. She states, "I'd rather live in the streets than be a submissive Mexican wife who spends all day cooking and cleaning" (Sanchez 13). Chicana women growing up in the States find their independence but often feel ashamed for not wanting to follow the societal norm in their culture. In the example of Julia, Julia wants to move out of her parent's house and follow her dreams of

becoming an author; Julia plans on attending college out of state. For Chicana and Latina women, the expectation is for them to move out of the house until they are married. It is not customary to go to college out of state far from home, and in the long history of Latino culture, it is not normal for Latina women to obtain an education.

I read the novel, "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter," in my second year of college, and I fell in love with the novel. I deeply related and connected with Julia because, on one aspect, I love my culture and traditions, but on the other hand, I despise the gender norms and the expectations young Mexican women have to follow; it is two worlds young Chicana women have to move through, and at the moment it might seem that Chicana women are alone in this journey when in reality many Chicanas face similar experiences and going through the same struggles. "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter" is an excellent novel for young Chicana girls who want to pursue educational careers or are fighting against the gender norms in their culture. It gives them a sense of knowing they are not alone and that the struggles they face are prevalent; having this novel in the curriculum will help not only Chicana girls but also classmates from different backgrounds and cultural traditions help to understand the conditions young Chicana girls have to endure.

Another Chicana novel is "Loteria" by Mario Alberto Zambrano; this novel is about a young girl named Luz whose father is in jail, and her older sister Estrella is in the hospital; Luz is in the care of the state. As she shies away from everyone and not wanting to discuss the events that took place, Luz unravels everything in her journal. She tells her story using Loteria cards, a traditional Mexican-style bingo game. Each Loteria card has a unique picture, and each chapter is a different card that represents Luz's life.

There are several themes throughout the novel, which include: domestic violence, alcoholism, and sexual abuse. These themes depict realities for the Latinx community, topics often pushed under the rug. Domestic violence is a significant theme throughout the novel, as Luz tells her story and describes her good relationship with her father. Still, as the reader soon realizes, the relationship with her father is more complex. There are several events in which Luz's father hits her mother, her and her siblings. On one occasion, when her mother gets hit, she states, "Papi punched because he was a man, but we hit him too. There was one time when Mom grabbed the Don Pedro bottle from the coffee table and smashed it over his head (Zambrano 16). Here we see Luz and her siblings protecting their mother, and as a defense, their mother uses the bottle. Unfortunately, this is a reality for many Latinx families, specifically for women.

According to the Esperanza United organization, one in three women will experience intimate partner violence, and one in twelve Latina women has experienced intimate partner violence in the last twelve months (Esperanza United 2). Due to gender norms and machismo being a prevalent issue, many Latina women do not report the abuse, and women in the States feel they do not have rights due to their immigration status. Young children such as Luz are traumatized because of such incidents. For young Chicana women speaking about such topics is crucial so they do not experience and tolerate such incidents as past Latina women endured.

Alcoholism is another prevalent theme in the novel, Luz's father has an alcoholic issue, and it triggers the abuse he causes to his wife and children. In Latinx culture it is common for people to start drinking at a young age, specifically men. A lot of Latino men heavy drink and it leads to alcoholism, Luz who has had a lot of trauma due to her life constantly views her father consuming alcohol, she states, "He came home with his arms covered in black. Sweaty. Tired. Worn-out. And that's when I'd get a beer from the kitchen. I'd cut a lime and squeeze juice over

it, because beer is better that way. Then I'd take a sip to make sure it tasted good. Like that, I'd get a *little peda también*" (Zambrano 25). Luz who is only eleven years old, learns that her father uses alcohol as a way to relax and forget about issues, here she states that when her father drinks after work, she sometimes drinks as well and it feels good to her. Luz learns that alcohol is an escape, but unfortunately when one uses alcohol as an escape it leads to alcoholism. In the Latinx community alcoholism is a social issue, many whom have an addiction which typically are men never acknowledge there is an issue due to stigma. Many men who lead to an alcoholic addiction have mental health issues, but because of the stigma of machismo in the Latinx community, men often do not discuss the issue. Reading about this issue is important to young students because it begins the discussion and issue of alcoholism and the importance to seek help when one has an addiction.

Lastly, another theme discussed in the novel is sexual abuse; in one instance, Luz briefly discusses when the sexual abuse occurred caused by one of her cousins. She states, "Memo took me to the place between the fence and the coop and he grabbed my hand and put it between his legs, like if he was sharing a secret" (Zambrano 36). The only thing Luz mentions about the abuse, as the reader can see, is that Luz is not entirely comfortable talking about the traumatic experience yet and has difficulty discussing the events. Sexual abuse is another important social issue in the Latinx community; many young Latinx children do not speak about it due to anyone believing them and also because most children that experience sexual abuse come from a family member or a person well-known to the family. In the article "Polychronic Narration, Trauma, Disenfranchised Grief, and Mario Alberto Zambrano's *Loteria*," the author Mario Grill discusses the social issues the Latinx faces and relates to psychology using Zambrano's novel. He states, "Luz's fear of the potential reactions from her family, many women in this study stated that they

had not disclosed their abuse because of fearing shame, not being believed, or because they did not want to upset their families” (Grill 55). When Luz first tried speaking up about the abuse, her father punished her by physically hitting her because he thought that she gave full consent when she was only seven years old. Luz experienced trauma; her father hit her instead of getting guidance and comfort from him. Her father did not believe her. Unfortunately, it is a reality for many Chicax students.

I read the novel “Loteria” in my third year of college, and I enjoyed reading the book. However, it was also hard because it depicts the constant abuse a young Chicana has to endure at a young age. I also it is a reality for many Chicax individuals. I know several friends or family members that have experienced similar traumatic events. Incorporating the novel “Loteria” into the curriculum will help many Chicax students bring the discussion of critical social issues that occur daily in Latinx families.

Beginning my college journey, I often felt that I was not prepared, did not deserve to be here, and often compared myself to my classmates, thinking I was not smart enough. I often saw myself as the problem for needing to prepare more. As I have gone through my college journey, I realized that the educational system failed me and continues to fail minority groups. As I pursue my career as an educator, I do not want my future students to feel the same as I did, but to relate to the lessons and curriculum and overall feel validated.

My goal for this project was to discuss how it is essential to have more Chicax literature in the classroom and how Chicax students have been affected by a curriculum that typically is catered to White students. As I continue my educational journey, I have realized the importance of fighting and advocating for Chicax students. As someone who wants to work with Chicax

students, I will advocate for them and never try to strip them away from their roots. I hope as an educator I am able to accomplish my goal.

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“I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter”, Discussing Cultural Identity

created by Lucia Gonzalez

Grade 9, week 1

Purpose of the Lesson: The purpose of this module is to use the text “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter,” which discusses the themes of cultural identity, gender roles, immigration, and mental health. Cultural identity plays a massive part in who we are as individuals, our customs, the way we speak, and more; every individual has their own cultural identity, traditions, and customs, and the novel discusses the tradition of gender roles and how women have to behave in the Latinx community. The novel also discusses themes of immigration, where this country has immigrants from different backgrounds who speak different languages. In this module, students will look in depth at their own identities and of their peers. They will do journal entries or a set of poems and create a short story, which will talk about their experiences within their culture to have a sense of identity. Students will look at different themes and literary devices to help them better understand the novel and social issues discussed in the novel and better develop their stories.

Questions:

The following questions that will be answered in this module are:

- What is your cultural identity?
- How is gender viewed and discussed in "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter?"
- What social issues are in the novel, and why are they important?"
- How can sharing our cultural experiences and listening to others' experiences help us better understand society? Why is it important to share our stories?

<p>Standards:</p> <p>Content Domains</p>	<p>1.1 Literary Analysis 1.2 Literary Elements 3.1 Written Composing Processes 3.2 Rhetorical Features of Literary and Non-Literary, Oral and Written Texts 4.4 Creative Writing</p>
<p>Learning Target</p>	<p>Social issues, themes, literary devices, creative writing</p>
<p>Objectives</p> <p>Critical thinking Creative writing Analyzing literature</p>	<p>Students will discuss themes prevalent in the novel</p> <p>Students will write poems/journal entries discussing their cultural identity and experiences.</p> <p>Students will explore literary terms such as metaphors, character development, motif, symbols, etc.</p> <p>Students will collaborate to discover social issues in the novel which relate to today's society and the importance of these issues.</p>
<p>Assessment and Feedback</p>	<p>Students will receive credit for sharing their experiences through journal entries or poetry.</p> <p>Students will receive credit for participation in discussions and group collaboration.</p> <p>Students will be graded on the literary devices they have been able to identify throughout the novel.</p> <p>Students will receive credit for their short essays and their writing.</p>

<p>Materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concept Maps ● Literary devices worksheet ● Worksheets with activities such as “say, do, mean and matter” ● Journals ● Worksheet for puzzle story assignment ● Novel “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter” ● “Cinco de Mayo” poem
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Looking At Our Own Cultures

Day 1; Allotted Time 1 hour and 10 minutes

Preparing to read “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter”

Purpose: To help students look into their own cultures and identities and other cultures that might differ or have similarities to their culture.

Students will take the time to reflect on their traditions and cultural identities and reflect on how this has shaped them as individuals. Students will have the opportunity to share their traditions with the class and share their knowledge to discuss other cultures that have similar or different traditions than theirs.

Activity 1: Concept Map Activity

For 15 minutes, write down the concept map that will be handed out with your culture/s in the center of the map. For each leg of the concept map, write down the beliefs, food, music, language, attitudes, faith/religion, and customs/traditions that make up your culture and identity.

After the 15 minutes, for 8 minutes, share with a partner and share your concept map. Note any similarities or differences between each other's cultures.

After you have shared for 8 minutes with your partner, you and your partner will meet up with another pair of partners (making a group of four) and share what you and your partner found similar or different about each other's cultures.

After you are done sharing, one person from each group will share with the class what you discussed with your group, what new cultures/traditions you learned about, or what you found similar this will take 10 minutes.

Activity 2: Writing Prompt

For 15 minutes, students will write on a sheet paper answering the following question: “Think about a time when you faced a challenge relating to your family or culture.”

Once students are done, the instructor will share their own stories to make students feel more comfortable about sharing. We will share for about 10 minutes or more as a class if needed.

Looking at Different Literary Elements

Day 2; Allotted Time 1 Hour

Preparing and Reading “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter”

Purpose: Before the class reads the novel, students will learn about the different literary elements and literary devices and be able to identify the other elements throughout the novel students will begin to read the novel as a class and as homework.

Activity 1: For 15 minutes in this activity, students will be given a worksheet with the different literary elements and devices (plot, setting, metaphor, symbol, motif, resolution, etc.). They will have to define the terms on the worksheet. Students will use the knowledge they already know or work with a partner to define as many literary terms as possible.

For 30 minutes, we will come as a class to define the terms together and the meaning of the literary devices and elements.

Activity 2: For about 45 mins as a class, we will start to read beginning to read the novel “I Am not your perfect Mexican Daughter” chapters 1-3. As we read the book in class, students will be asked to list any literary devices they see throughout the novel.

Students will be asked to continue reading “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter” as homework. Chapters 4-6.

At the end of class, students will also be introduced to an activity they should start thinking about. Students will be asked to tell stories that help them discuss their cultural identity, an experience, or a journey to discovering their identities. Students will have to write at least two poems and one short story and will share with the class.

Interpreting Themes in the Novel

Day 3; Allotted time 40-50 minutes

Say, Mean Matter, Do Activity

Purpose: Students will identify quotes from the novel relevant to the themes discussed throughout the book. Students will identify what the author is trying to convey in the quote and why it is essential. The purpose is for students to understand and better analyze the language and meaning in the novel. This strategy will help students clarify any confusing elements in the text and keep track of important details. This will help students with their short stories and poems to create meaning in their writing. They will also do a journal entry to help them think about their name and identity and how people might call them differently.

Activity 1: For about 25 minutes, students will work in groups of 4 to 5 and collaborate to work on an activity called “Say, Mean, Matter, and Do” activity. In this activity, students will at least pick out three quotes from the text. In the say box, they will interpret the quote in their own words. In the Mean box, students will write down what the author is trying to say in the quote or convey in the quote. In the matter box, students will answer the question, “So what?” what is the significance and importance of the quote? And how does it connect to the theme? And finally, in the Do box, students will write down what rhetorical effect this quote gives in the novel. After students are done, each group member will share their findings with the class for about 10 minutes.

Activity 2: Students, for 10 minutes in a journal entry, will answer the following question: “What is your preferred name? How do you like to introduce yourself? What do friends and family call you? What mistakes or assumptions do people make about your name? What are your nicknames, and how do you feel about them? After students finish, they will share with their partner for 5 minutes.

Students will continue to read the novel “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter” as homework.

Rhetorical Feature of Literary and Creative Writing

Day 4; Allotted time 1 Hour, 10 minutes

Looking and Analyzing Poems

Purpose: For this activity, students will look at different poems and analyze the literary elements in the poems; the poems students will look into will be identity poems to give students an idea of developing their poems. This aims to get students to think about their poems and look at the different forms writers get creative through writing. Students will be able to identify the big picture and meaning of the poem. Students will also start to develop their poems.

Activity 1: Before students begin analyzing poems independently, the instructor will give a mini-lesson on analyzing poems. As a class, we will examine the poem "Cinco de Mayo" by Luis Rodriguez. We will first look at the poem's title and make predictions of what we believe the poem will be about. The poem will be read aloud twice, and then we will look into the mood and tone of the poem. Identify the theme, select quotes from the poem, and break down the meaning. In the end, as a class, we will look at the overall message Rodriguez is trying to make to the audience. This activity should take around 20 minutes.

After having the mini-lesson, students will be put into groups of four. Each group will get a different poem that discusses cultural identity; students will have 15 minutes for this activity. Students will apply the knowledge they learned and identify the various elements and the overall message the author is trying to convey throughout the poem.

After 15 minutes, each group will share with the class what the poem is about and the overall meaning of the poem. (10 minutes)

Activity 2: Students will have about 10 minutes to write down ideas and topics they want to write about for their poems. Students then will have about 20 minutes to develop their poems; students can develop two if they have time. After, students will share their poems with the class.

As a class and as homework, we will continue to read the novel.

Creative Writing

Day 5, Allotted time 1 hour and 20 minutes

Creating our own Stories

Purpose: For this activity, students will write individual stories discussing their identities. In the novel "I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter," Julia discusses how she often feels her family pushes her to be someone who is not her. Students will create a story that relates to this experience. Students will be able to structure a short story that has a message and flows together. Students will be able to get creative in their individual stories and hear their peer's stories as well. Students will use prior knowledge such as the say, mean, matter, and do activity and identify literary devices to incorporate in their writing. By the end of the activity, students will be able to develop their own short stories.

Activity 1: In this activity, students will recreate a scene from "I Am Not Your Perfect Daughter" As a class activity. There will be two characters played out, Julia and Ama. This scene will be where Ama compares Julia to her older sister Olga. The teacher will ask for two volunteers to play Julia and Ama. As the scene plays out, students will be asked questions such as:

1. What are Julia's frustrations?
2. What are Ama's frustrations?
3. What does Ama view as a "perfect daughter?"

Students, for a few minutes, can write down their thoughts or discuss with a partner and will share with the class their thoughts or what they shared. (20 minutes)

Activity 2: In this activity, students will be asked to create short stories. Julia describes her life as a complex puzzle, not knowing how to navigate it; students will write down their stories on paper formed as different puzzles, and students will have three paper puzzles.

Thinking about the scene and using the idea of a puzzle, students will be asked:

"Think about a memory where you faced a challenge regarding your family, identity, or culture.

"Think about Julia and the scene we saw. Have you faced a similar situation? How did you handle it? Was there a time someone or your culture forced you to be someone you are not?"

Students then will take a few minutes to write down as much of the story as they remember, such as people involved, where the story took place, the issue, what age, describe, and give details as

much as possible. This will be the student's first piece of the puzzle. Students should write down about five sentences.

In the second piece of the puzzle, students will be asked to tell the story they just wrote down told from the other person's perspective. Students will be asked:

"Think about the other person involved in the situation; how do you think they felt?"

"What was their point of view?" "What emotions did they feel?" "How did they handle the situation?"

Students then will have a few minutes to write down as much detail but from the other person's perspective. Students should write about five sentences. This will be the student's second piece of the puzzle.

Students will then be asked to read and reflect on the writing they wrote from their perspective and the other person's perspective. Students will be asked:

"What did you notice?" "What are the differences between these two perspectives?"

In the final piece of the puzzle, students will be asked to write a new perspective; this can be written down in a third-person perspective. Try to create something new that involves both perspectives. Can there be a solution? Students will have more time to write their final puzzle piece.

As students finish their stories, they will stick their three puzzle pieces together using glue or tape and will be asked to share with the class if they feel comfortable, share the story, or share a bit of what they wrote.

Students then will hang their stories on the wall and will have a few minutes to walk around the classroom and read each other's puzzle pieces stories. (1 hour)