

Sample Thematic Unit:
Hispanic Immigration
to the New World



Sue Barry
Auburn University

SAMPLE THEMATIC UNIT: HISPANIC IMMIGRATION TO THE NEW WORLD

This unit for intermediate students (Level IV of high school Spanish or third-semester college Spanish) includes strategies for both teaching grammar and identifying stereotypes within a whole language approach. The primary goals are to reintroduce the geography of Spain and past narration within the global theme of immigration. The unit's objectives state that students will be able to

- locate Galicia and Andalucia on a map of Spain and tell something of interest about both areas.
- appreciate immigration as a universal phenomenon that crosses cultures and centuries.
- use new vocabulary to speak and write about the themes and imagery presented in the musical selections, and
- narrate in the past time frame.

EL ABUELO

artista: Alberto Cortez

1. **Pre-listening activities:** Students look at photos of poor farmers that include at least one photo of a farmer pushing a hand plow through the fields of Galicia. Then encourage students to recall the previous discussion about Galicia, its terrain, and its legends. This review should lead to a discussion about immigration in general and the feelings of immigrants as they live out their lives in a strange land.
2. **Listening activities:** First the students listen to the song and contemplate the lyrics with specific questions in mind, such as "is this song telling a story? If so, who is it about? What did he do? How does he feel—happy, sad, or both? Why does the song begin with the sounds of bagpipes? Why does the tempo keep alternating? After this first listening activity, students contribute their ideas as the teacher compiles a list of their ideas on the board for future reference. Then students do the cloze activity.
3. **Silent reading of the lyrics:** The teacher directs the students to read their corrected lyrics in Spanish, without a dictionary, to get the gist of the story. Then, with the teacher's help they either confirm or discard some of their previous ideas listed on the board.
4. **Intensive reading activities:** The students now have a general idea as to the theme and content of the song. Next, they turn their attention to form with an intensive reading activity that focuses the narration. First a synonym search helps the students to decode the words in the lyrics that are difficult for intermediate readers. This activity requires students to engage in problem-solving rather than to depend on English glosses or teacher explanations for decoding unknown words. The second activity requires students to find proof in the song that a list of sentences is true. Together these sentences make up a summary of the song written in simpler L2 than that used by the singer. In this way, students are reintroduced to the text in order to better understand the song and to be

prepared for the following narration activity.

5. **Writing activity:** Students listen to the song again, paying close attention to the story line, while the teacher distributes directions for the writing activity. The teacher explains that after completing the following exercise, the students will present a short narration about the grandfather's life in their own words to the class. Students peer edit their sentences before creating their versions of the story to present to the class. They may work in groups to present their stories as a pantomime activity in which one person reads and the others act out the story.
6. **Discussion activity:** Students are assigned to small groups of three or four and given specific questions to encourage a discussion on the universality of the theme and its relationship to the problems of immigration today.

LA OTRA ESPAÑA
artistas: Mocedades

1. **Pre-listening activities:** The teacher puts up several posters or pictures with images that are presented in the song, such as whitewashed houses with balconies and flowers and fields of sugar cane or tobacco. After having seen pictures and videos of Andalucía in the introductory phase of the unit students can relate these images to their probable locations in either Andalucía or the New World.
2. **Listening activities:** Before listening to the song, the students receive a chart with two columns headed, **Andalucía** and **La otra España**. Then without the lyrics they listen for the words that they think convey images of either place and write them in the appropriate column. Afterwards, the students listen several more times to complete a cloze activity. With the corrected lyrics in hand, the students compare their lists of images with those in the song and decide if they have attributed them to the most probable locale. They also hypothesize as to where the man may have gone in the New World—to the Caribbean Islands, to Mexico—and suggest reasons for their choices.
3. **A guided reading with interpretation activities:** The problem-solving activities for this song require students to find in the lyrics the items designated as Spanish and those identified as belonging to the New World. Students check hypotheses concerning the young man in the song. For example, is he a womanizer, an adventurer etc.? In the class discussion students try to clarify some ideas about stereotyping and overgeneralization. For example, are the distinctions between Spain and the New World as clear cut as the song makes them appear? Is the poncho a common article of clothing in all of Latin America? Are all people in Latin America lazy?
4. **Speaking activity.** Students create a narration in the past concerning this young man and the girl he left crying on the balcony. Since these lyrics attempt to capture images more than to tell a story, this activity will require students to create an original story in which

they can infer whatever they like to make the narrative more interesting. This can be a chain story if the teacher prefers.

5. **Synthesis activity:** The students can choose a theme related to any of the ideas presented in the unit, such as "Andalucia," "el inmigrante," or "un aventurero to write a poem, either of their own design or according to a formula such as a cinquain.