



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2006 Volume II: Latino Cultures and Communities

What is Latino? Using Latino Writers to Help Define an Emerging American Identity

Guide for Curriculum Unit 06.02.02

by John J. Donahue

Through this curriculum, juniors and seniors in an English course in an urban high school form theories about the meaning and usefulness of the term "Latino" using selections from notable writers of the past who could be called Latino. The curriculum covers ten such selections over five weeks and requires a one-page paper from each student in response to each selection, with help from class discussion and larger concepts introduced by the teacher. Lesson plans are designed for an eighty-minute block period in which the typical class is divided into thirds, with 25 minutes for reading and note taking, 25 minutes for class discussion, and 25 minutes for completing the writing assignment. The readings are all taken from one anthology, *The Latino Reader*, edited by Harold Augenbraum and Margarite Fernandez Olmos, and comprise a selection of mostly Puerto Rican writers who portray four kinds of experience found in Latino literature immigrants making a new life in the United States, adults and children wrestling with the continuum of languages between English and Spanish, Latino adolescents discovering American social boundaries for the first time, and writers using poetry to assert individual identities in the face of the resistance or neglect of the majority.

(Recommended for Multicultural Literature and English, grades 11-12.)

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