

Borderlands Narratives NEH Summer Institute

This is a set of extension activities to use as a companion for literary or historical narratives. The activities themselves cumulate into an overall project that explores identity in connection with the subjectivity of language, culture, nationality, and history.



As an ESL teacher, I am conscious of the randomness of circumstance. The location of our birth could be at any time or place in history. We could be male or female, wealthy or impoverished, our skin and hair could be so many shades. The external environment influences how we see ourselves and how others see us and ultimately shapes our identities. It also greatly influences the choices we make and those made available to us.

The author Khaled Hosseini said, “When I go to Afghanistan, I realize I’ve been spared due to a random genetic lottery, by being born to people who had the means to get out. Every time I go to Afghanistan I am haunted by that.” To frame this mini projects, I chose the Mexican Bingo game called “la Loteria.”

Each humanities integrated activity represented by a card in a borderland “Loteria.” They are meant to be taught in connection with a young adult novel or historical texts, at the conclusion of each activity students create a journal entry and one Loteria card. At the end of all the activities, they should have a collage of eight cards. These can be organized together on the wall or as a digital portfolio. Students could create audio, video, or written journals. I have included in the lessons examples of previous student work using both in video and audio.

These are potential activities for classes such as Government, US History, English, or ESL. They are designed for readers that need support and can be modified for classes that are more independent or for those who need more scaffolding. I suggest that all levels work with partners and that there is significant class check-ins and dialogue for these themes.

Some young adult novels that could be taught in connection are “Esperanza Rising” by Pam Munoz Ryan, “The Kite Runner” by Khaled Hossieni, “Summer of the Mariposas” by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, several novels by Julia Alvarez, “Brown Girl, Brownstones” by Paule Marshall, “The Woman Warrior” by Maxine Kong Kingston, “An American Brat” by Bapsi Sidwal, and many more!

A further exploration is to use what they have built upon to analyze a texts that explore identities like Othello or Taming of the Shrew and they create their dramatic representations using characters that draw from their own environment.

All activities are on the site: <https://borderlandsloteria.wordpress.com/>

VA Standards

ELA 9.4 a,f,g,h,i,k,l 11.5 h 12.4 d,f 12.5 b,c,f

History and Social Sciences VSUS.8 a,b,c VAUS.9a,b VAUS.14 b

Historical Narratives, two lesson plans: the Exclusion and the Expulsion

These historical narratives look at two anti-Chinese movements on both sides of the Mexican and US. Borders occurring simultaneously. The immigration policies and racial constructs that were created may have changed focus today but continue to effect both sides of the border. I wanted students to consider the shaping of our both our national identities when these kinds of policies and language is normalized and to think about their own word choices.

The Exclusion

The Chinese Exclusion Act was the nation's first law to ban immigration by race or nationality. The act, which was renewed and enforced until 1943, banned Chinese immigration and prohibited Chinese from becoming citizens. What are the long term consequences of the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States?

Students should understand by the end of the lesson the consequences of creating policy like the Chinese Exclusion Act. Congress and the courts gave immense powers to immigration officials in order to enforce the law. It was the initial catalyst for the creation of the Border Patrol and later the wall and militarization of the border. The Act also created the idea of illegal immigrants, turning the Chinese into America's first "illegal immigrants." It split up families and went to a point where illegal immigrants would not be able to apply for naturalization and had no vote or power in politics. This created a stigma of racial prejudice against immigrants, one that still expresses itself today.

- Students work together in pairs.
- Students warm up with a vocabulary site www.Quizlet.com
- Close read introduction

- Show video clip of a Chinese person being arrested, discuss with the class
- Close read article
- Partners complete chart
- Close read the poem
- Students respond to the questions in pairs
- Class dialogue should be continuous with frequent check ins.
- Create lottery card and journal entry

Materials:

- Lesson: [chinese-exclusion-act \(1\)](#)
- KWL Chart [kwl-chart-1](#)
- paper, crayons/markers

The Expulsion

This is the partner to the narrative on the Chinese Exclusion Act, it should be taught consecutively. This lesson looks at how Mexico was targeting Chinese communities during the same time period. The dialogue should address this and their perceptions of identity and who they perceive as "Mexican" and why. What makes us different and the same? Who and what decides our identity?

- Students work together in pairs.
- Students warm up with a vocabulary site www.Quizlet.com
- Close read introduction
- Show video clip of a Chinese person being arrested, discuss with the class

- Close read article
- Partners complete chart
- Close read the poem
- Students respond the questions in pairs
- Class dialogue
- Create lottery card and journal entry

Materials

- Lesson [chinese-communities-in-mexico-1882-1940](#)
- KWL Chart [kwl-chart-1](#)
- paper, crayons/markers

Poetry

The River

The River on our Face by [Emmy Perez](#)

How does the Rio Grande River influence the identities of the border cities of Juarez and El Paso? This poem uses the symbol of the river to portray the theme of borderland identity. How can a place frame identity? The poet uses the river as a symbol of the contrasting and conflicting identities of people in the same place. Is the poet only referring to geography or does the river dividing the border also become a symbol for a shared ethnicity and the many interpretations of this identity, "the river on our face?"

Procedure

- Quietly read the poem to yourself, think about imagery and metaphor as you read. Think about what the poet is telling you, think about what you already know about rivers.
- Listen as the teacher reads the poem again.
- Students will work as partners or alone to answer the questions. The teacher should frequently check in and clarify.
- Create a "La Loteria" card and journal entry

Materials:

- Poem and work sheet [the-river-on-our-face](#)
- paper, crayons/markers

La Doña

This lesson uses [Pat Mora](#)'s poem "1910" the year of the start of the Mexican Revolution to explore how the same person is perceived differently when changing environments though they have not changed. Doña Luz is woman of status on one side of the river in Mexico and a suspected thief on the other in the United States.

Procedure:

- Quietly read the poem to yourself, think about imagery and metaphor as you read. Think about what the poet is telling you, think about what you already know about rivers.
- Listen as the teacher reads the poem again.
- Students will work as partners or alone to answer the questions. The teacher should frequently check in and clarify.
- Create a “La Loteria” card and journal entry

Materials:

- Poem and worksheet [1910-by-pat-mora](#)
- paper, crayons/markers

Fictional Narratives

The Name

“My Name” by [Sandra Cisneros](#), Vignette 4 from “The House on Mango Street”

The lesson examines identity and external and self-perceptions in connection language. How do external

constructs influence perceptions that divide or connect people? How does language divide and connect and are all languages and dialects given equal status?

The teacher should do a close read. Students should be able to go on individually to answer questions with some teacher clarification.

Create a “La Loteria” card and journal entry

Materials:

- Vignette and worksheet [My Name by Sandra Cisneros](#)
- paper, crayons/markers

Documentary

The Border

[9 Star Hotel](#) was a documentary on POV on PBS that followed several men who cross illegally into Israel to work. My students cannot discern any difference in the images from the Palestine/Israel crossings and the United States/ Mexico border until the men begin to speak Arabic. The warm up for this lesson requires not letting students know the place in order for them to make the initial comparison to the border in the United States and Mexico.

1.Clip 1: show the class part of the clip excluding the sign at the being in Hebrew and the final section that explains why they are crossing. Ask students where they think this is located and who the men are.

2. Only tell them it is a border located in the area called Palestine and Israel. Ask them to complete the “what do I know?” section of a KWL chart.

3. Then show it again including the entirety of the clip.

4. Project a world map and show the class where Palestine and Israel are located.

5. Ask students to complete the second section creating questions, “what do I want to know?”

6. Ask students what they asked and transcribe the questions on a projected document to be answered later, allow for dialogue.

7. Show Clip 1, 2, 3

More photos for dialogue after the lesson: <https://en.qantara.de/node/17033> Palestinians in Israel crossing the border

Create a “La Loteria” card and journal entry.

Materials:

- lesson, worksheet documentary clips [9 Star Hotel](#)
- [kwl-chart-1](#)
- paper, crayons/markers

Student Writing

The Song

This project is to create connections for bi-national children with their guardians or grandparents. Students ask an important adult in their life to tell them about two adventures, these adventures can be from any period of their life and be very simple or dramatic or personal. These adventures will be written as a corrido with the adult characterized as the protagonist or antagonist. They will use a basic corrido rhyme scheme and I ask them to have a scheme and mostly five line stanzas but they have some license over which lines they choose to rhyme. The level of student output should guide the strictness of the structure of the poems. I am tend towards giving a lot of creative flexibility if the idea is being well communicated. If possible, students typically write their “corridos” in the language of this adult so they can hear it. This can be done in any language! The song is recorded with the student reading it as poetry. Students will need to be explicitly guided during throughout this lesson. It is in parts and requires several due dates, so plan in accordance!

<https://chispa-media.org/2017/03/22/corrido-project/> Student examples

The Mirror

How do you see yourself and how do you think others see you? This activity explores the contrast in internal and external perceptions of self and what borders do to create a constructed view of the "other side."

Procedure :

1. Ask students for examples of a "misconception"
2. Show students the animation of the poem Doña Josefina Counsels Doña Concepción Before Entering Sears by [Maurice Kilwein Guevara](#) Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPIOHjtPLIM>
3. Again discuss- misconception or Miss Concepción in the poem
4. Students fold paper in half and create a border.
5. On one half, draw a mind map as they see themselves. On the other half, draw a mind map as they think others see them.
6. They should add to their journal two paragraphs describing how they see themselves and how they believe others see them and explain how they believe others see them. What might be positive or negative about these perceptions?
7. Show the student created videos on this topic and discuss as a class. <https://chispa-media.org/2017/05/07/student-videos/>

This a link to a few student created videos that examines how they are perceived based on ethnicity, first language, nationality, religion.

Materials:

- lesson [Misconception](#)
- projector

- paper, crayons/markers