

**Tales from the Chihuahuan Desert:  
Borderlands Narratives about Identity and Binationalism**

National Endowment for the Humanities and The University of Texas at El Paso  
2019 Summer Institute for Secondary School Teachers (Grades 6<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup>)

**Instructional Lesson Plan Framework with 5E Model  
for E-Portfolio with Artifacts and Readings**

**1. Title and Author of Lesson Plan**

A Place That is Not Home: Understanding the Immigrant Experience

Rosanna Orta

Rosanna has been teaching high school English for grades 9 & 10 for the past 14 years. She has earned a BA in English, an M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction with an emphasis in Gifted Education, and an M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Arizona State University. She is in the process of earning her M.A. in Rhetoric, Writing & Digital Media Literacy Studies from Northern Arizona University.

Rosanna (Rosanne) Orta is a teacher of Honors English at Alhambra High School in Phoenix, Arizona. Alhambra High School has a beautifully diverse student body, and a large number of students are refugees, the children of immigrants, or are immigrants themselves. She loves teaching, and spends her time studying trends in English education, engaging in new learning, and action research in her classroom. This past summer she has participated in The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust and Human Rights Education (TOLI), the United States Holocaust Museum Teacher Fellow Program, and the NEH Borderland Narratives Institute. She has an M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction, as well as in Educational Leadership. Rosanne was born and raised in Tucson, Arizona and moved to the Phoenix area when she was in college, and decided to make it her home. Her non-academic pursuits involve watching popular television shows and spending time with family.

**2. Content or Subject Areas with Keywords**

This unit is designed for English Language Arts and has a fiction, non-fiction, and writing emphasis.

**3. Grade Levels and Time Required**

This unit is designed for 10<sup>th</sup> grade honors English Language Arts and is designed for a quarter (8 weeks) of study. It can be shortened by excluding the Book Club/Literature Circle extension. It can be extended to a semester (approx. 16 weeks) if additional writing, discussion, role play and other related activities are done in between readings.

**4. Instructional Objectives and Student Learning**

This unit is based on the [Arizona English Language Arts Standards for grades 9-10](#).

### **Arizona Reading Standards**

9-10.RL/RI.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

9-10.RL/RI.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

9-10.RL/RI.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

### **Arizona Writing Standards**

9-10.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

9-10.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

9-10.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

9-10.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### **Speaking and Listening Standards - Comprehension and Collaboration**

9-10.SL.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

9-10.SL.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media and formats, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

9-10.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, use of evidence, and use of rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

#### **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**

9-10.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

9-10.SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

9-10.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 9-10 Language standards 1 and 3 for specific expectations.)

## **5. Guiding Questions**

What does it mean to achieve the American Dream?

Is the American Dream attainable for all people?

How does the immigrant experience connect to the idea of the American Dream?

## 6. Materials and Resources

[5 Finder Rule for Choosing a Book](#)  
[Arizona English Teacher Standards](#)  
[Costa's Levels of Questioning](#)  
[Dialectical Journal Sample Sheet](#)  
[Distance Between Us Home excerpts](#)  
[Distance Between Us Education excerpts](#)  
[Distance Between Us Friends excerpts](#)  
[Distance Between Us Prologue Ch 1](#)  
[House Built on Ashes Education Excerpts](#)  
[House Built on Ashes Friends Excerpts](#)  
[House Built on Ashes House Excerpts](#)  
[Literature Circles Assignment Procedure](#)  
[Unit 45-day plan](#)  
[I Am Not a Taco Poem](#)  
[I Am Not a Taco Steven Arenas Article](#)  
[Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter Friends Excerpts](#)  
[Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter Home excerpts](#)  
[Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter Education excerpts](#)  
[Research Project Assignment Sheet](#)

### **Anchor Text (Complete Novel):**

*The Book of Unknown Americans*, Cristina Henríquez

**Literature Circle Series Titles (Complete Novels) – chosen because they represent a range of immigrant experiences.**

*The Complete Persepolis*, Marjane Satrapi

*Everything Here is Beautiful*, Mira T. Lee

*The Newcomers: Finding Refuge, Friendship, and Hope in America*, Helen Thorpe

*Something in Between*, Melissa DeLaCruz

*The Good Braider*, Terry Farish

*Darius the Great is Not Okay*, Adib Khorram

*Love, Hate and Other Filters*, Samira Ahmed

*Picture Us In the Light*, Kelly Loy Gilbert

*American Street*, Ibi Zoboi

*Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card*, Sara Saedi

*The Dangerous Art of Blending In*, Angelo Surmelis

*Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Journey to Reunite with His Mother*, Sonia Nazario

*La Linea: A Novel*, Ann Jaramillo

*Out of Nowhere*, Maria Padian

## 7. Introduction

It is important for all students to have access to educational experiences that are both mirrors of their life experiences, and windows into the experiences of others. Students come to each year of their education with a wealth of knowledge that comes from their home, their culture, their family, and other experiences. This unit is an effort to serve as one of those mirrors that students so desperately need as they work to prepare for college and career.

Specifically, this unit seeks to bring awareness and empathy for all students with regard to immigrant experiences, and then works to connect to the funds of knowledge students already have to help develop their voice in the classroom.

#### **8. Instructional and Lesson Activities (ENGAGE, EXPLORE, EXPLAIN)**

Students will conduct a group research project on a Latin American country features in our anchor text.

Students will collaborate and create a digital presentation where they use their research to educate their fellow class members about their Latin American country. Students will read and reflect individually about aspects of the immigrant experience in the United States through reading journals and small group discussion.

Students will speak and listen in small group and whole class discussions about ideas behind immigrant experiences and border narratives and news articles.

Students will write both for short and extended periods of time about their thoughts regarding the immigrant experience and their own perspectives.

#### **9. EXTEND/ELABORATE: Additional Learning**

**Literature Circles:** The goal of the Literature circle assignment is not completion of the book. Rather, it is to give students an opportunity to connect to the story of an immigrant experience from a culture different from their own. An extend/elaborate opportunity could be to allow more time for students to finish their literature circle books as the class progresses to the next learning unit. Giving students an opportunity to extend their learning and connect to multiple texts leads to more critical thinking and creativity.

**Possible Modifications:** The unit has also been written to accommodate a student population who does not have opportunity to read more than a few chapters a week outside of class. The anchor novel will be read entirely in class, which extends the amount of time of the unit. Schools with a culture of homework and outside reading may be able to supplement the unit with additional role playing and related activities.

#### **10. EVALUATE: Assessment**

Formative Assessments: I Am Not Poem, Dialectical Journals, Student Writing ,  
Student Research Notes, Notebooks/Write Into the Day Exercises  
Summative Assessment: One process extended essay & Research Presentation

### 11. Accommodations and Modifications

The Literature Circle activity may be a driving force in this content without the whole class read. This leads to space and time for students to perhaps fully complete the novel in class, and for the teacher to use nonfiction articles to drive the unified discussion about border issues and the immigrant experience.

The Literature Circle activity may also be dropped from this unit and be controlled solely by the anchor text read. This would allow for additional reading, role playing, and writing activities throughout the unit.

### 12. College and Career Readiness (optional)

This unit is written with the college-going and future AP Language and Literature student in mind.

### 13. References (or Works Cited)

“!Ban This!: the BSP Anthology of Xicana Literatue.” *!Ban This!: the BSP Anthology of*

*Xicana Literatue*, by Santino J. Rivera, Broken Sword Publicaions, 2011, pp.  
132–134.

Arenas, Steven J. “Texas Education Review.” *I Am Not a Taco: Using Poetry to  
Negotiate Students' Identities*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018, pp. 82–89.

Grande, Reyna. *The Distance Between Us: A Memoir*. Washington Square Press, 2013.

Henríquez Cristina. *The Book of Unknown Americans*. Vintage Books, 2015.

Rodríguez José Antonio. *House Built on Ashes: a Memoir*. University of Oklahoma  
Press, 2017.

Sánchez Erika L. *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. Ember, 2019.

### 14. Reflection

This institute has been one that has completely changed the way I will teach my students. If literature and writing is the way that students both express their own

stories, and build empathy for the stories of others, then it is important to make sure that students see themselves reflected in the literature they study in school every year. To that end, I will be sure to make sure that I have students read about people who look and sound like themselves (mirrors) and then read about people who look and sound like those who are different (windows). These mirrors and windows are the ways that students can develop the critical inquiry that is required to become both scholars and people in society who will stand for what is just in the world.

This unit plan is a labor of love that will be revised each year in an effort to provide multiple lenses through which this important issue can be seen, and to make sure that the narrative and counter narrative are both presented to students so they can have an opportunity to evaluate and delineate that which is true and just from that which is not.