
Chapter 4 At-a-Glance

Chapter 4 is the first of four subject-specific chapters that will address ways in which you can help your ELLs meet the standards that are an increasing factor in measuring the success of teaching and learning. Middle and high school teachers, as you know, are primarily focused on their subject areas, and these chapters are designed to supplement the more general information presented in Chapter 3. Also, for a much more detailed discussion of assessment strategies and resources, please refer to Chapter 8, “Assessment and Evaluation: How Can We Be Fair and Demanding?”

Some highlights of Chapter 4 include:

- Making literature more comprehensible
- Encouraging students to maintain their native language
- Using story maps
- Teaching ELLs how to write
- Selecting multicultural texts

The bulk of this chapter is adapted from “Preparing Secondary Education Teachers to Work with English Language Learners: English Language Arts,” by Kris Anstrom, with contributions from Linda Mauro and Patricia DiCerbo (1998). The project was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs. The paper in its entirety is available at the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education at the George Washington University website at www.ncbe.gwu.edu.

*“Adolescent literature
needs to be a mirror of
who they are and what
they are struggling with
as well as a window for
understanding the
world.”*

—Dr. Linda Mauro



CHAPTER 4:

Making English Language Arts Comprehensible to the English Language Learner

Respect Student Diversity

The recently released Standards for the English Language Arts is among the few national content standards documents that explicitly focus on the needs of ELLs. Two of the 12 standards are directly related, one focusing on the importance of native language development and the other promoting an understanding of, and respect for, diversity in language use. The authors state that the capacity to hear and respect different perspectives and to communicate with people whose lives and cultures are different from our own is a vital element of American society. Simply celebrating our shared beliefs and traditions is not enough; we also need to honor that which is distinctive in the many groups making up our nation (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 1996).

Dr. Linda Mauro, English education professor at the George Washington University, reinforces these statements in her discussion of the role minority literature can play in the lives of both native and non-native speakers. She remarks:

I believe that adolescent literature needs to be a mirror of who they are and what they're struggling with as well as a window for understanding the world. So, I think for a second language learner...if we deny them the opportunity to ever read literature that is for them a mirror, we're doing them a disservice. And if we deny native speakers and native born students a chance to use literature as a window to understand other cultures and other students, we're denying them a chance to look beyond what they already know.

Select Appropriate Texts

The idea of giving students a chance to celebrate their diversity is related to one of the key issues in English language arts curriculum development—selection of appropriate texts. Research into reading indicates that students use past experiences and background knowledge to make sense out of unfamiliar texts. For this reason, ELLs may have difficulty with texts that are culturally unknown to them, contain difficult vocabulary and complex themes, or use academic or archaic syntax. Literature that is relevant to the life experiences and cultures of ELL students, including folk tales or myths from their first culture, can facilitate cognitive and language development. Short stories written by minority authors, such as William Saroyan, Sandra Cisneros, and Amy Tan, are also beneficial because they tend to contain themes and characters with which students from the respective cultures of these authors are familiar. Moreover, these works allow students from the majority culture the opportunity to learn from perspectives that may differ from their own (Sasser, 1992).

Some examples of books that depict the migrant experience include the following:

Barefoot Heart, Stories of a Migrant Child by Elva Treviño Hart (Bilingual Press, 1999)

The Circuit by Francisco Jimenez (University of New Mexico Press, 1997)

Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories, S. Beth Atkin (Little, Brown and Co., 1993)

Y No Se Lo Tragó La Tierra/And the Earth Did Not Devour Him by Tomas Rivera, (Arte Público, bilingual edition, 1995)

Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya (Warner Books, 1995)

Make Literature More Comprehensible

A second emphasis of the language arts standards is to give students the tools to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate a wide range of texts (International Reading Association & National Council of Teachers of English, 1996). To help ELLs meet this goal, teachers are encouraged to adopt instructional approaches which help make literary material more comprehensible to these students and actively teach strategies that will support them in their endeavors to unlock meaning in works of literature.

Sasser (1992) suggests a number of tools teachers can use to make literature more understandable. For example, graphic organizers (clusters, semantic maps, storyboards, matrices, semantic webs, and Venn diagrams) can help students visualize and organize thematic content and characters and keep abreast of plot developments. Through the process of listing, sorting, and evaluating information, students become involved in responding critically to the work they are reading. In addition, graphic organizers force students to reformulate abstract information from the text into a concrete form. Such activities aid students in comprehending and expressing difficult ideas. Sasser also recommends that students keep journal entries about the literature they read and interact with their peers orally and in writing. Together, these activities give ELLs the extra support needed for successful academic experiences with literature.

Into, Through, and Beyond

Language approaches, which view meaning and natural language as the foundations for literacy development, are particularly well-suited to language arts classrooms where students are actively involved in constructing meaning from their own experiences and through encounters with various texts. It may be helpful to present a literature unit using the three stages: INTO, THROUGH, and BEYOND.

Into

Sasser (1992) describes the INTO stage as what occurs before the reading begins. The purpose here, particularly for ELLs, is to interest the students in the text and elicit prior knowledge that may be useful in interpreting the work. Anticipation guides (see p.65), often composed of simple true-false or agree-disagree statements, encourage students to identify and think through their positions on ideas prevalent in the literary work. The teacher can also introduce the reading through simulation activities or by eliciting predictions from the students about the content and outcome of their work.

Through

During the THROUGH phase, students either read the text silently or listen to the teacher reading selected portions of the work aloud. Tape recordings of the text being read can also be a helpful tool, which the students can listen to when they're working independently either at school or at home. By hearing the text, ELLs get a better sense of inflection, pronunciation, rhythm, and stress, which can aid understanding. ELLs can also develop the skills necessary for comprehension of a complex work of literature—following a sequence of events, identifying foreshadowing and flashback, visualizing setting, analyzing character and motive, comprehending mood and theme, and recognizing irony and symbols—by taking part in oral and written discussion and activities. As classmates share their different interpretations of a text, those who come from educational systems that stress only one right answer begin to realize the possibility for multiple viewpoints. In addition, the use of graphic organizers becomes important as students grapple with the complexities of theme, character, and plot.

Beyond

The BEYOND stage involves students in activities that refine their thoughts and deepen their comprehension of a text. Comparing a book with its film version (for example, *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck), conducting research on issues raised from reading or discussion, or responding through poetry or song are examples of how teachers can further student involvement with a literary work.

Encourage Students to Maintain the Native Language

A key focus of the English language arts standards is on maintaining the native language of ELL students. Authors of the standards documents assert that students should make use of their first language not just in language arts classes, but in all content areas. Providing opportunities for native language use has been found to have a positive effect on the academic success of ELL students in predominantly English-medium settings (Tikunoff et al., 1991).

ELL students who are literate in their native language and have been in U.S. schools for less than a year or two will greatly benefit from being provided with novels and textbooks written in their dominant language. Selecting texts which relate to the content being taught will help them to keep up with the course material. This will keep them involved in reading that is cognitively demanding while they are learning English. Students will also be able to demonstrate their true level of comprehension if they can explain what they have learned using their first language.

For monolingual English teachers or those teachers who do not speak all the languages of their students, Tikunoff et al. (1991) outline several ways to facilitate native language use. These include utilizing the services of aides or tutors fluent in the native languages of the students to assist in explaining content materials and allowing students to respond in their native language to questions asked in English. This can be an effective way to check their comprehension of the essential points of a lesson. In addition, native language books, magazines, films, or other materials relating to the topic or theme of a lesson support native language development when other resources are not available. Lucas and Katz (1994) suggest that students who are not proficient in English can keep reading logs or journals in their native languages. Teachers can also utilize their students' linguistic resources by pairing students with the same native language, but different levels of proficiency, so that more proficient students can tutor those less proficient.

Native Language Peer Tutoring

The teacher sets out the steps for the day's lesson on the process of writing a family history. The class, a heterogeneous grouping of middle school students whose native languages are Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean, watch quietly and attentively as Mr. Parks (the teacher) brainstorms the topic, scribbling notes about his family history on the overhead projector as a model of how this prewriting technique can help them begin exploration of this topic. Next, Mr. Parks turns to the chalkboard, writing his first draft as he explains the students' task. When he is done, the students turn to each other at their tables to exchange ideas for their own family histories. After about five minutes, Ana leans over Rosa's paper, which is already three-quarters filled with writing in Spanish and English. Rosa has only been in the school for one month, and Norma describes her level of English as beginning. Ana, on the other hand, has high-intermediate English skills. Mr. Parks has carefully constructed students' groups to make sure each contains students with different skill levels so that they can help each other in either English or their native languages. Her brow furrowed, Rosa consults with Ana, discussing what is on the sheet and what still needs to be added. She speaks quickly and quietly in Spanish, an occasional word from the sheet in English breaking the flow (Lucas & Katz, 1994).

Story Maps

One way to help LEP students comprehend the main characters and elements of a story is by using a graphic organizer that limits the amount of vocabulary that the students will have to know to read the most essential words and characters. The common structure or basic plan of narrative text is known as the “story grammar.” Although there are numerous variations of the story grammar, the typical elements are:

- Setting—when and where the story occurs
- Characters—the most important people or players in the story
- Initiating Event—an action or occurrence that establishes a problem and/or goal
- Conflict/goal—the focal point around which the whole story is organized
- Events—one or more attempts by the main character(s) to achieve the goal or solve the problem
- Theme—the main idea or moral of the story

The graphic representation of these story elements is called a *story map*. The exact form and complexity of a map depends, of course, upon the unique structure of each narrative and the personal preference of the teacher constructing the map.

One major purpose for story mapping is to assist teachers in planning and conducting reading instruction. Therefore, in preparing to have students read a narrative selection, it is recommended that teachers analyze the structure of the story and create a map. The process of creating such a map helps teachers determine what is important enough about a story to be emphasized in class. For example, the theme often indicates background knowledge that students will need to use for comprehension, and this can become the focus of a pre-reading discussion. Here are some other ways to use story maps:

- **Use story maps to teach students the elements of the story.**

Teaching students the structural elements enables them to anticipate the type of information they should be looking for as they read and strengthens their recall of story events. On a regular basis, after a story has been completed, use the teacher-created map to define and illustrate the story grammar elements.

- **Use teacher-made story maps to teach students to create their own story maps.**

After students have had several opportunities to see how the major elements of the story can be represented in a map, provide experiences for the students to become active participants in creating and using them. In this way, students will become directly aware of how knowledge of text structure will help them understand what they read.

- **Use story maps to create questions that guide the discussion of a story.**

The discussion of a narrative selection will enhance students' understanding if the order of the questions posed by the teacher follows the organization of the story map. Also, consistently discussing stories in their logical sequence will strengthen the students' sense of the important story elements and thus increase their ability to comprehend stories they will read in the future. The following are sample questions that can be asked about each of the story elements:

1. Setting

- Where does the story take place?
- When does the story take place?
- Could the setting have been different?
- Why do you think the author chose this setting?

2. Characters

- Who were the characters in the story?
- Who was the most important character in the story?
- Which character did you enjoy the most? Why?
- What is (a particular character) like?

3. Initiating event

- What started the chain of events in this story?
- What is the connection between this event and the problem?

4. Problem/goal

- What is the main problem/goal?
- Why is this a problem/goal for the main character?

- What does this problem/goal tell us about this character?
- How is the setting related to the problem/goal?
- What is there about the other characters that contributes to this problem/goal?

5. Events

- What important events happened in this story?
- What did _____ do about _____ ?
- What was the result of this?
- Why didn't it succeed?
- What did _____ do next?
- How did _____ react to this?
- What do you learn about _____ from the course of action taken?

6. Resolution

- How is the problem solved/goal achieved?
- How else could the problem have been solved/goal achieved?
- How would you change the story if you were the author?

7. Theme

- What is the theme of the story?
- What do you think the author was trying to tell readers in this story?
- What did _____ learn at the end of this story?
- Having students "retell" a story (either orally or in writing) in their own words is an excellent way of gauging their comprehension.

FICTION: Retelling Guide		
Student _____	Date _____	Grade _____
Characters _____		
Setting _____		
Problems _____		
Events _____		
Solution/Resolution _____		

“Chunking the Text”

In preparation for a unit, the teacher “chunks” the book into sections. The chunks set a pace at which students study the story. At least one lesson is devoted to each chunk. The goal of “chunking” is to create manageable portions of reading at meaningful junctures to engage the students in

discussion and writing. Some chunks are short because the content is complex and critical to the larger understanding of the story and theme(s). Other chunks are longer because the content is more straightforward.

Providing students with an outline of the various “chunks” will help them to navigate the story.

Example: Chunking for “Annie and the Old One” Literature Unit

CHUNK 1

Pages 1-7

Synopses of Chunks

Describes Annie’s environment, activities, and relationship with the Old One (grandmother), who tells Annie it’s time for her to learn to weave.

Understandings to Develop

The closeness between Annie and the Old One; fragility of the Old One—suggesting she may not have long to live.

Discussion Topics

What have you learned about Annie and the Old One? (Who is Annie? What is expected of her? What kind of relationship does she have with the Old One?)

Literature Logs

Write about someone you are very close to and describe your relationship, or write about a time you thought someone you loved might die.

CHUNK 2

Pages 8-13

Synopses of Chunks

Annie seems lost in thought as she watches her mother weaving a new rug; Annie tells her mother she is not ready to start weaving.

Understandings to Develop

The role of weaving—passed on from one generation to the next; and Annie’s uncertainty about learning to weave.

Discussion Topics

Why do the Old One and Annie’s mother think it is time for Annie to learn to weave? Why does Annie feel she is not ready to weave?

Literature Logs

Describe an important responsibility you have at home that makes you feel grown up. Why does it make you feel more grown up?

Excerpted from Successful Transition into Mainstream English: Effective Strategies for Studying Literature by William Saunders, Gisela O’Brien, Deborah Lennon, and Jerry McLean, CREDE, 1999

The Writing Process

Writing is a challenge for most LEP students, but there are recommended strategies for helping them to become effective, proficient writers. Among the strategies previously mentioned in Chapter 3 are the

Language Experience Approach (Chapter 3, page 60) and Dialogue Journals (Chapter 3, page 61). The following section will provide an overview of strategies for use during each stage of the writing process.

Six Steps to Fluent Writing

Six steps in the writing process are described here: prewriting, drafting, sharing or conferring, revising, editing, and publishing. Not all steps are used with all types of writing; neither are all used with every piece a student writes. Certain stages may be changed or omitted depending on the student's age and proficiency at writing. For example, inexperienced writers are not expected to use revision extensively and often publish "first drafts." Experienced writers, on the other hand, often do not need elaborately structured prewriting experiences but can prepare to write privately.

Step 1. Prewriting

Prewriting experiences help students to develop the need and desire to write and to acquire information or content for writing, as well as necessary vocabulary, syntax, and language structures. To help students get ready to write, provide:

- a. Talking and listening time, including language experience activities
- b. Shared experiences, such as trips, plays, interviews, or films
- c. Wide exposure to literature appropriate to the students' age and language proficiency
- d. Drama activities, including role-playing and storytelling
- e. Opportunities to study, discuss, and map story patterns and structures

- f. Semantic mapping to elicit vocabulary and organize ideas
- g. Opportunities for students to prepare for writing by exploring what they know—their own personal experiences or subjects they have studied in depth
- h. "Freewriting"—having students write anything that comes to them, without stopping, for a short period of time

Step 2. Drafting

When drafting, students write quickly to get ideas down, working for fluency without worrying much about mechanics. They are encouraged to think of writing as mutable, not as "done" once it is put to paper. Students are encouraged to spell based on the sound of letters and words they know.

Remember to

- a. Write along with the students. Model being a writer, and produce your own pieces to share with students.
- b. Encourage students to spell as best they can. Students may be a little frustrated with this at first, but if you persist in not providing too much help, they will become more confident writers. They may use dictionaries, thesauruses, and the spell-check feature on the computer to edit and revise at later stages in the writing.

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- c. Provide writing experiences daily. Journals or learning logs may be helpful.
 - d. Encourage students to refer to maps, webs, jot lists, or outlines they have made during prewriting.

Step 3. Sharing and Responding to Writing

In this step, students share their writing in small groups, large groups, or individually with the teacher. Teacher and students give one another encouragement and feedback or input in preparation for revision. Suggested activities follow.

- a. To model and teach the conferencing process, share and discuss an anonymous piece of writing (written by you or by a student from another class or year). An overhead projector is very helpful in this activity. Model giving encouraging and specific responses in writing.
- b. Use peer conference groups, and train students to use “PQP” in their responses to others’ writing—Positive feedback, Questions to clarify meaning, and suggestions to Polish writing.
- c. Have students read their writing aloud in regular, individual, or small group conferences. Reading aloud helps students evaluate their own writing in a situation where they can get suggestions from others. Begin peer conferences by demonstrating appropriate skills as in (a) above. Motivate students through your regard and respect for their writing. Begin with paired groups and short, structured times (e.g., five minutes), during which each partner finds something he/she likes about the other’s writing.
- d. Respond to students’ writing in interactive journals (see *Dialogue Journals*, p. 61).

Step 4. Revising Writing

In this step, students revise selected pieces of writing for content quality and clarity of expression. Not all pieces are revised, only those in which the student has a particular interest and for which the student has a particular audience in mind. Revision activities include the following:

- a. Demonstrating revision techniques such as using editorial symbols on the overhead or physically cutting and pasting a chart-sized paper or transparency to rearrange text.
- b. Using a word processor to make revisions.
- c. “Mini-lessons”—demonstrations/discussions of qualities of good writing, such as clarity, voice, sense of audience, appropriate sequencing, word choice, lead, ending, and transitions in preparation for revision. Focus on one skill per writing project; as students accumulate skills, they can revise for these aspects in their writing.
- d. Students applying revision guidelines and suggestions to their own work. When appropriate, encourage students to share (Step 3) and revise (Step 4) several times until they are satisfied with the content of their work.

Step 5. Editing

In this step, students, with the help of peers and teachers, fix up mechanics of usage and spelling. Editing standards are different for students of different ages and at different stages in their writing. This step is only carried out when there is a purpose and an authentic audience for the writing, such as when a piece is going to be published. Editing activities may include the following:

- a. Creating a student editing checklist (for classroom walls or folders) that lists editing skills familiar to students.
- b. Creating an editing center with resources, such as an editing chart, a dictionary, a thesaurus, a grammar reference, computers with spell check. Alternatively, students could keep a chart of editing skills they have acquired.

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- c. Conducting editing mini-lessons and conferences with individuals, small groups, and full groups. You might require an editing conference before a student's final draft.
 - d. Helping students make personal spelling, translation, or picture dictionaries for their use in checking spelling or usage.
 - e. Peer edit exchanges or conferences.

Step 6. Publishing

Through publication, the writing is presented to the public and celebrated. Although new language learners' writing is often published in draft form, writing of more proficient writers will be revised and edited before publication. Middle and high school students probably need some protection from adverse audience response—perhaps an editing conference with you before work is prepared for presentation to outsiders. Publishing gives students an authentic reason to write. Publish students' writing often. See the boxed list of suggested ways to publish student writing.

Ways to Publish Student Writing

- Write stories or folk tales to share with younger students.
- Bind contributions from each student into a class book, such as a poetry anthology, short story collection, or nonfiction collection.
- Make a class newspaper or literary magazine.
- Mail letters.
- Print a useful book to sell or give away in the community, such as an ethnic restaurant guide, a multicultural cookbook, or a local history.
- Ask each student to choose a favorite piece of writing to polish and add to his or her writing portfolio.

Diamante Poems

Sample Diamante poem:

Seasons
Winter
Rainy, cold
Skiing, skating, sledding
Mountains, wind, breeze, ocean
Swimming, surfing, scuba diving
Sunny, hot
Summer

Warm-up Activities

Begin by linking “cinquaines” to things such as a nature walk just off campus, closure for a certain class activity/unit, end-of-term remembrance, etc.

Instructions

1. Students work in small groups of three to five. Each group has one example poem, and the tasks are
 - a) Identify the structure/form of the poem (what are the parts of speech in each line).
 - b) Report orally and informally to the rest of the class on the feeling/tone of the poem.
 - c) Answer the question: What is the relationship between the first and last lines? Students can use dictionaries as necessary to figure out unfamiliar words.
2. Students report on their assigned poems. The structured form is then written on the board or screen and/or presented on a handout. For example,

Line 1: Winter = NOUN-A

Line 2: Rainy, cold = ADJECTIVES-A

Line 3: Skiing, skating, sledding = 3 GERUNDS-A (verb + -ing)

Line 4: Mountains, wind, breeze, ocean
= 2 NOUNS-A + 2 NOUNS-B

Line 5: Swimming, surfing, scuba diving = 3 GERUNDS-B

Line 6: Sunny, hot = 2 ADJECTIVES-B

Line 7: Summer = 1 NOUN-B

3. Students’ observations regarding antonyms, parts of speech on each line, emotional tone, etc. are also discussed/outlined clearly.
4. Individual groups then “brainstorm” as many possible pairs of antonyms as they can create. The teacher puts the pairs on the board/overhead screen as suggestions (e.g. school days-holidays, student-teacher, love-hatred, peace-war...). Students can use a dictionary or thesaurus.
5. Students and instructor choose one of the brainstormed topics and write a cinquaine poem together on the board/screen.
6. Working individually with a template, students write one or more cinquaines on the subject(s) of their choice. (Poems can also be written or transferred onto a computer via a teacher-prepared template.)

The Earth

By Ivan

Mountain
High, rocky
Flying, looking, killing
Eagle, power, fear, rabbit
Living, moving, making noise
Deep, beautiful
Valley

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RESOURCE PAPER:

Promoting Reading Among Mexican-American Children

Literature addresses the universal need for stories. Stories are most meaningful and best able to promote literacy when they speak to a student's world. Good books can help children develop pride in their ethnic identity, provide positive role models, develop knowledge about cultural history, and build self-esteem. However, Mexican American students in the United States often do not experience literature in this way. This digest identifies key challenges, recommends classroom strategies, provides literature selection guidelines, and suggests reading lists for various grade levels.

Mexican American Children's Literature

Literary works written for or by Mexican Americans were not represented in mainstream children's publications in the United States until the 1940s. Beginning in the 1940s, Mexican American literary characters were developed largely by European American writers who were removed from the cultural experience of the Mexican American minority. Consequently, portrayals of Mexican Americans reflected a rural existence and stereotypical images (Harris, 1993).

Between 1940 and 1973, there were only four or five books published each year on Mexican American themes by the major publishers of children's literature. Analyses from the late 1980s and early 1990s showed even fewer—only one to three books each year (Schon, 1988; Cortés, 1992). Of the approximately 5,000 children's books published annually by major publishers in the United States, books about or by Mexican Americans made up one tenth of one percent. These statistics reveal the persistent dearth of children's literature by Mexican American authors through the early 1990s. The literary genres were also limited. Most were folklore, legends, and protest pieces (Barrera, Liguori, & Salas, 1993; Harris, 1993; Tatum, 1990; Schon, 1988).

In the early 1990s, awareness of these issues resulted in the publication of growing numbers of books with Mexican American themes and authors. Small publishing houses, such as Arte Público, Piñata Books, and Bilingual Review Press, have increased dissemination of minority literature and helped launch writers such as Tomas Rivera, Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, and Sandra Cisneros to national recognition (Barrera, Liguori, & Salas, 1993).

Classroom Strategies

Using effective classroom strategies and selecting the best literature for particular groups of students are the two pivots for promoting reading among Mexican American children. The following strategies can help Mexican-origin and other teachers improve both their methods for promoting reading in the classroom and their students' cultural understanding (Murray, 1998a; Barrera, Liguori, & Salas, 1993; Escamilla, 1992; Galda, 1991; Diaz, Moll, & Mehan, 1986):

- Explore Mexican American culture, history, and contemporary society through texts such as *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas 1836-1986* (Montejano, 1987), *The Hispanic Americans* (Meltzer, 1982), or *The Mexicans in America* (Pinchot, 1989).
- Consult book reviews, such as those in *Our Family, Our Friends, Our World: An Annotated Guide to Significant Multicultural Books for Children and Teenagers* (Miller-Lachmann, 1992).

- Take an ethnic literature course. From the 1960s to the present, a growing body of literature written by or for Mexican Americans has emerged.
- Include multicultural readers in the secondary level curriculum, such as *Mexican American Literature* (Tatum, 1990) or *Arrivals: Cross-cultural Experience in Literature* (Huizenga, 1995).
- Incorporate trade books whenever possible, using selection criteria (see Reviewing Literature and Selecting the Best, below).
- When possible, invite local Mexican American authors to talk with or read to classes. Correspond with one or more authors located through websites.
- Participate in school district committees that select curriculum materials. Make a case for including various U.S. minority group histories and literatures to be studied as serious literary works.
- Request in-service seminars by university and school district experts on the use of Mexican American literature and interdisciplinary instruction.
- Organize a committee of volunteer parents to suggest or review selections of readings for the class.
- Invite minority parents or grandparents to present oral traditions by sharing family histories or experiences. Written collections of their stories could be included in the school library.

Reviewing Literature and Selecting the Best

The following checklist provides a few important guidelines for selecting appropriate classroom literature (Murray, 1998b; Escamilla, 1992; Diaz, Moll, & Mehan, 1986):

- Does the selection present specific and accurate information about the culture?
- Do the illustrations and/or text reflect the diversity of the people, or do they reflect stereotypes?
- Are Mexican-origin characters depicted in active (not passive or submissive) roles?
- Do the story line and/or character development lend themselves to a universal interpretation?
- Does the narrative voice in the selection come from a perspective within the culture?
- If the cultural elements were removed, would there be a developed plot structure?
- Is the culture presented in a positive way? Do the characters come to a constructive resolution of conflicts? Are the characters multidimensional?
- Can mainstream works (i.e., literary canon) parallel the themes, issues, or characters of the selection? Identify them, then compare and discuss.
- Are the Spanish words or phrases in the text understandable within the context of the sentences? Is there a glossary?

Suggested Selections by Grade Levels

The following authors and works have been reviewed (Murray, 1998) and represent some of the authentic within-the-culture perspectives available today.

Grades 7–9

Baseball in April by Gary Soto
Cool Salsa by Lori Carlson
El Mago by Ron Arias
Everybody Knows Tobie by Daniel Garza
Friends from the Other Side by Gloria Anzaldúa
I Can Hear the Cowbells Ring by Lionel García
Hispanic, Female and Young: An Anthology
edited by Phyllis Tashlik
Latino Voices by Frances Aparicio
Mexican American Literature (anthology) edited
by Charles Tatum
Neighborhood Odes by Gary Soto
Quinceañera: A Latina's Journey to Womanhood
by Mary Lankford
Taking Sides by Gary Soto
The Anaya Reader by Rudolfo Anaya
The Challenge by Rudolfo Anaya

Grades 10–12

Barrio Boy by Ernesto Galarza
Chicano by Richard Vasquez

Fair Gentlemen of Belken County by Rolando Hinojosa-Smith
Get Your Tortillas Together by Carmen Tafolla
Inheritance of Strangers by Nash Candelaria
Latino Rainbow by Carlos Cumpián
Like Water for Chocolate by Laura Esquivel
Mi Abuela Fumaba Puros: My Grandma Smoked Cigars by Sabine Ulibarri
New Chicana/Chicano Writing edited by Charles Tatum
Oddsplayer by Joe Rodríguez
Pieces of the Heart by Gary Soto
Pocho by José Antonio Villarreal
Rituals of Survival: A Woman's Portfolio
by Nicholasa Mohr
Schoolland: A Novel by Max Martinez
The Day the Cisco Kid Shot John Wayne
by Nash Candelaria
The Heart of Aztlán by Rudolfo Anaya
The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros
The Iguana Killer by Alberto Ríos
The Road to Tamazunchale by Ron Arias
Tortuga by Rudolfo Anaya

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