AFFIRMATION, ASSIMILATION, AND ACCULTURATION: MIDDLE SCHOOL

Washington State Social Studies Assessment: *Enduring Cultures*

**TEACHER INSTRUCTIONAL STEPS**

- Review the Historical Background.
- Read the Teacher Background Information on Affirmation, Assimilation and Acculturation.
- Explain the purpose of this lesson, which is to learn about two cultural groups by examining the economic, social and political challenges that they faced, how they responded to these challenges and their current status.
- Guide students in examining background information about this group (for this lesson the focus is Latinos)
- Compare two types of music from one of the following regions as an example of acculturation and/or affirmation such as San Francisco (Latin rock); Miami (Latino pop); New York (hip hop); San Antonio (corridos).
- Guide students in developing an essential question comparing the challenges the two cultural groups faced, their responses to these challenges and their current status. An essential question is a question that focuses on the larger importance of a topic. By taking the time to develop an essential question, students will be able to answer the “So What?” question when reporting their findings.

*Note for Washington State teachers: The Enduring Cultures assessment lists Hispanics as one cultural group. The peoples (Cuban American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, etc.) that comprise Hispanics and/or Latinos will be treated as individual groups within this cultural group in order to fulfill the required assignment.*

**TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION: AFFIRMATION, ASSIMILATION, AND ACCULTURATION**

The United States has experienced immigration by Latinos for reasons that range from political exile to better work opportunities. Further, Latinos already situated within the country often migrate(d) to other parts of the nation. (For more information, refer to the teacher background in the Elementary School lesson.)

While living and working in the United States brought new opportunities to Latino immigrants, it also presented a number of challenges; many have seemed insurmountable, unjust and discriminatory. Regardless of their country of origin, one of the first obstacles that greeted Latino immigrants was the language barrier as Spanish, not English, was the primary language of most. Latinos had to learn English well enough to find work and remain employed as well as to navigate through daily life in a new country. Immigrants struggled with the language barrier, but after decades of advocacy and hard work today there are a number of programs and services to assist immigrants and non-English speakers.

The process of adopting new cultural forms, including language, is called assimilation. Latino immigrants also became acculturated without giving up their native culture altogether. On the contrary, today Latino cultural influences are ubiquitous and can be experienced in everything from food (tacos and salsa) and music (Reggaetón, Latin rock), to language (“hasta la vista,” a saying in Spanish that entered the popular jargon via movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger). But beyond influences in popular culture, Latinos have responded to challenges with substantial contributions that have improved quality of life.

Challenges faced by Latinos as a cultural group include issues of civil rights, systemic discrimination and educational inequity. For example, in East Los Angeles in the late 1960s students at five high schools walked out to protest inferior educational practices and a lack of inclusion of Latinos in the history books as well as in school staff.
Systemic discrimination was a reality of everyday life for immigrants, especially in the working conditions for laborers in the field and factory. In New York during World War II, tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans filled war-related jobs. However, most were not allowed to work at skilled jobs. Immigrants were most often offered manual labor jobs and at lower wages than their non-Latino counterparts. In the Southwest and in California, agriculture required a tremendous amount of labor. The U.S. government created the Braceros Program especially to fulfill the demand in this sector. The name of the program has its root in the Spanish word for “arm” or brazo, reflecting the manual labor expected of the participants.

In response, the farm workers adopted political methods of their new country. The United Farm Workers (UFW) is the oldest and most successful agricultural union in California. The roots of the UFW are in the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), which César Chávez and Delores Huerta formed in 1962. One success story of the NFWA concerns the grape industry; the NFWA rose to national attention when it joined the mostly Filipino union, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), in striking against the Delano grape growers in 1965. The following year, the two unions joined together to form the UFW. The strike lasted five years, and grew to include all California grape growers. In 1970 the UFW successfully signed the first agricultural contracts with the grape growers.

Other examples of challenges include conditions in the communities Latinos lived. For example, in the early 1970s many Puerto Ricans in New York’s Bronx borough were living in dire conditions. The neighborhood was deeply blighted to the point that some apartment owners would intentionally burn down their properties for the insurance payments. If education and employment were out of reach for most in the Bronx, so were venues for culture. Like salsa a decade earlier, hip hop also grew from social need. Young people could not afford to rent music studios, purchase instruments, or buy admission tickets to venues like the Palladium. The streets became their creative lab (recording studio) and street lamps supplied electricity. Parents’ turntables were adapted and became the “instrument” of choice. What started as an underground movement inspired by house parties and street music grew to become a commercial success with a global impact. Hip-hop’s messages of hope and racial and political realities resonated on a mass scale. While it was not exclusively a Latino expression, Latinos were a key part of the style’s musical development. Hip-hop demonstrates how youth responded to challenges and contributed to the development of American music and culture.
VOCABULARY

Acculturate: to adapt to another culture

Acclimate: to adapt to a new situation

Affirmation: a positive assertion; the act of being affirmed

Assimilate: to make similar; to absorb into the culture or mores of a population or group

Corrido: a narrative ballad or a song reflecting the history of the Mexican people; a genre dating to the 1800s that uses an accordion as its main instrument

Crossover: (in music) a term used to describe music or an artist that has an appeal beyond a specific audience or musical style or genre

Movement: in political or social context, a movement is an (collective) action by a group

Salsa: a term to describe a group of musical styles having their roots in the Caribbean and Latin America

MATERIALS PROVIDED BY EMP|SFM

- A map of the United States
- Musical timeline
- Latino Challenges and Responses worksheet
- Young People Respond Through Music worksheet
- Oral History from Juan Barco (video stream or transcript)
- Oral History from Juan Flores (video stream or transcript)
- Web links to audio materials on hip hop, salsa and Reggaetón at empsfm.org

MATERIALS TO BE PROVIDED BY TEACHER

Note: Because of music licensing laws, we cannot make the songs cited in the lessons available for download on the EMP|SFM Web site. However, we have set up an American Sabor Education playlist at iTunes for your convenience; many of these artists’ CDs can also be borrowed from local libraries or purchased through vendors like Amazon.com.

- “Quimbara,” Celia Cruz with Johnny Pacheco
- “Amor Bonito,” Lydia Mendoza
- “No One to Depend On,” Santana
- “Oye Como Va,” Tito Puente
- Brief biography of Tito Puente from MSN Encarta (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tito_Puente)
- Brief biography of Carlos Santana from MSN Encarta (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlos_Santana)
OBJECTIVE

Students will understand the challenges (cultural, political, economic and social) and responses as related to Latinos in the United States with particular focus on the effects of the cultural integration, via regional music.

WARM-UP AND ON-GOING ACTIVITY

Students keep a journal for a week or during the time that Latino music is being studied. Ask students to write (without any advanced study or preparation) what they know about Latino culture. Writing should be honest. Consider the following questions as prompts to encourage writing: What does Latino culture in our community look like? Where do we find Latino culture locally? Do we see evidence of Latino culture in our everyday life? Students continue to write in their journal leading up to an entry that summarizes what they learned about Latinos and Latino culture. If students agree to share their final entry, read entries to the class and discuss.

AUDIO WARM-UP ACTIVITY

Play a contemporary song or excerpts by a Latino/a musician as students enter class, i.e. Shakira, Selena, Celia Cruz. (Note: these Latina figures represent different Latino groups – Columbian, Tejano and Cuban, respectively.)

STUDENT LEARNING PREPARATION ASSIGNMENT

Students should visit the Web site for American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music to get a sense of the music, themes and people included in the exhibition.
ACTIVITIES

1. Ask students if they have ever moved to a new place and how they make themselves feel comfortable in a new environment.
   - Introduce definitions for assimilation, acculturation and affirmation.
   - Discuss what assimilation, acculturation and affirmation mean as they apply to Latinos and immigrants. What are some ways that Latino immigrants have assimilated? (Answer may include the use of English, eating new foods, etc.)
   - Have students read or view the oral history by singer-songwriter Juan Barco in which he discusses his and his family’s experiences of migrant labor in the 1950s and 1960s. Where can the students see assimilation, acculturation and affirmation in his story?

2. Using a map of the U.S., have students identify regions within the country where Latinos have settled. Students should particularly note the cities of Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Antonio and San Francisco, featured in *American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music*. Beside each city on the map, have students list one challenge (political or social) faced in that region by Latinos. Students can consider the emergence of Chicanos in the Southwest, Cubans in Miami and Nuyoricans in New York.

3. Distribute the Latino Challenges and Responses worksheet. Review and discuss with students how they might research these issues. This worksheet will take time at home to complete.
   - Using the resource materials accompanying this curriculum, introduce a few different types of Latino music that were produced in various regions of the United States. Consider the combination of music and history as a primary source material in documenting the issues and plight of Latinos at that particular time. Particularly well-related styles include Latin rock (San Francisco, Carlos Santana), corridos (U.S.-Mexico border, Lydia Mendoza and Los Tigres del Norte), and salsa (New York, Willie Colón and Celia Cruz).
   - Introduce musicians Carlos Santana (Chicano from San Francisco) and Tito Puente (Nuyorican from Spanish Harlem, New York) with the biographies and musical selections listed in the Materials section. Have students compare and contrast both musicians in terms of time period, family life, preferred instruments and style of music. How did these two musicians express their cultural identity through their music? How did they respond to the challenges that faced them and their cultural groups?

4. To illustrate responses by young people in particular to challenges, have students listen to the Audio Essays on salsa, Reggaetón and hip-hop and read or view the oral history from scholar of Latino music Juan Flores. They should then complete the Young People Respond Through Music worksheet.
Washington State Educators: As a class, explore the history of Latino cultural groups in order to complete the Enduring Cultures Classroom-Based Assessment.

- Students choose (or teacher assigns) two cultural groups to study, using the Internet, written sources and/or information taken from the Historical Background.

- Help students identify what other information they need in addition to classroom learning and how they will locate it.

- Students can use the Latino Challenges and Responses worksheet to structure their research.

- To incorporate music into the assessment: students should choose one musician from each group that they are studying. Below are listed some Latino musicians who are particularly well known for responding to the issues of their community.

  Key questions may include:

  - What kind of music does this person create/perform?
  - How does his or her life reflect the challenges faced by his cultural group?
  - Why did this person choose music as a response to challenges?
  - How does his or her music respond to the challenges faced by this group?

WASHINGTON STATE ASSESSMENT: ENDURING CULTURES
(http://www.k12.wa.us/SocialStudies/Assessments/MiddleSchool.aspx)

Students write a position paper, comparing and contrasting two cultural groups and the history of their development in the U.S. or world through challenges they faced.

Assignment:
In a persuasive paper or presentation, students should:

a) explain the challenges members of two cultural groups faced with specific, supported examples

b) explain how members of two cultural groups responded to challenges with specific, supported examples

c) explain significant similarities and/or differences related to challenges and responses to the challenges with specific, supported examples

d) present a plausible position that:
   - is clear,
   - outlines the central challenges and responses, and
   - makes a generalization about the types of challenges members of cultural groups face or the ways members of cultural groups respond to challenges
LATINO MUSICAL FIGURES AND MUSIC GENRES OF NOTE

The following music artists are listed as example of Latinos who faced obstacles (political, social, educational, etc.) and responded through their music. The music genres are listed as examples of responses that grew from challenging situations.

- **Joan Baez:** A musician who sang about freedom and civic participation in the 1960s, Baez was part of the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. She used her music as a way of communicating issues of civil rights. Interestingly, her father is also a figure of note. Albert V. Baez, Ph.D., a physicist, researcher and an educator, was a scientific pioneer as part of the groundbreaking team that developed the x-ray microscope.

- **Ruben Blades:** Immigrant from Panama; singer, songwriter, poet, lawyer and activist, Blades epitomized the musician as politician with his politically-aware lyrics and Afro-Cuban jazz rhythms.

- **Lalo Guerrero:** One of the first musicians to add lyrics in Spanish and slang (caló) to “American” style music such as swing and R&B. His songs became anthems to the pachuco culture and youth of the 1940s.

- **Lydia Mendoza:** Considered the songstress of the poor, Mendoza is known for her corridos, which have been a male-dominated genre in Mexico and in the regions along the southwest border along the United States and Mexico. Mendoza paved the way for other women in corridos such as Jenni Rivera.

- **Carlos Santana:** A pioneer of Latin Rock whose music spoke to a generation during a time of civil rights activism. His music, particularly the electric guitar, infused a hybrid Latin vocabulary into the language of mainstream rock.

- **Selena:** A female singer who was successful in a male-dominated musical genre, Tejano, she won over audiences with her personable performances and music.

- **Corrido:** A narrative ballad or a song reflecting the history and people; a genre dating to the 1800s that uses an accordion as its main instrument

- **Salsa:** A term to describe a group of musical styles having their roots in the Caribbean and Latin America. Salsa was a term to market Latin music and was popularized by Fania Records. Salsa is a Spanish word that means “sauce.” Salsa music originated with youth in New York.

- **Hip hop:** Originated in the 1970s as a youth movement. It is a culturally inclusive expression of resistance and affirmation that today is globally known.

- **Reggaetón:** A form of hybrid music that came from Jamaican dance halls and incorporates hip hop and Latin music. Also a musical genre that originated in youth culture.