

## **Why to Name Your Daughter Selena: Journeys in Hispanic Identity in the West and the Women We Worship Along the Way**

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### **What is this Unit About?**

The American West geographically and culturally is considered one of the most significant contributors to modern American identity. With the origins of America developing from the interactions between indigenous tribes and westward sailing colonists, the American West takes cues from European ancestors and invents a new lifestyle founded in the prospects of opportunity and a determined resilience to adapt. Many would argue that modern America still continues this tradition of seeking new opportunity despite all odds. Contemporary political jargon frequently references the middle class, small-business owner and his/her resolve to survive harsh economic environments, paralleling rhetoric of early American western occupancy as millions fulfilled their manifest destiny. As Fredrick Jackson Turner writes, “Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.”<sup>1</sup> While those who occupied lands before homesteaders marched across the plains may debate terms like “free land,” the ideology of a geographic space representing the sentiment of a new beginning echoes throughout American history. For some, this beginning represented the opportunity to start anew, adapt to new environments, and conquer a seemingly untamed wilderness. For others, these beginnings meant years of hardship, disappointment, and the loss of a way of life. If there is one understanding that must be clear despite all experiences it is that the West catalyzes change in cultural identity of all of those in its terrain. Culturally, the West is ever-shifting, ever-adapting and unable to be easily pinned down to one particular ethnicity or social economy.

This renewed sense of geographic and social movement gave rise to the interaction of many different populations. This battle of dominance or coexistence rises from a geography that was believed to be “untamed.” The simple rhetoric of the “uninhabited west” or “el Norte” as a place of new opportunity and fresh starts leads students to encounter the west as a place of assimilationist ideals, where one abandons an old life to adopt a new, often better way of life. For Hispanic/Spanish populations of the American southwest and Mexico, this sense of heterogeneous assimilation is too simple to represent the complex cultural politics of movement in the West/el Norte. While some, like the early Spanish conquistadores, aimed to continue and spread their way of life, native tribes saw many of their cultural practices stamped out. This trend is paralleled in modern cultural politics as many Mexican immigrants face similar identity loss when settling in

America. This relationship between native and migrant populations is not easily measured or summarized in one moment in the history of the American southwest and Mexico. Hence, this unit aims to develop a survey of significant symbols and events that left Hispanic identity changed. As cultures negotiate their identities relative to each other and the land they each occupy, they generate materials telling of the journeys, geographic and cultural, which reveal what life was like in the West, and more importantly, what the West symbolized for each population. Since much of the West/el Norte was/is founded on a sense of coming and going, and a very immediate sense of change, looking at “traveled” artifacts of the West can help us understand how a piece of history can reflect the times in which it originated. Introducing students to these significant materials and the evolving symbolism which these materials represent will develop perspective as to what constitutes Hispanic identity historically, and how that may have changed for modern Hispanics.

This material-based approach aims to use pieces of history (both originating from the West and created in response to the West) in order to provoke students’ analytic abilities, and their clue-finding curiosities to predict what each artifact may represent to Hispanics (and possibly more interestingly including non-Hispanics). Students will identify a sense of place, time, and purpose for each of the artifacts in order to generate a larger conversation about what happened in the West that made it such a transformative region for all of those who inhabited it. Focusing on an artifact that literally or metaphorically “traveled” the West will generate a sense of journey in classroom discussions. Mirroring many Western experiences that shifted (willing or not) from one home to another, these materials will highlight the narrative between an artifact’s origins and the places to which it or its people journeyed. This unit will focus on specific artifacts that represent differing experiences of the West, from the early Spanish settlements and the negotiation of Christianity and native tribes, to Conquistadores and the survival of native ways, to women and their contribution to the Mexican Revolution and finally to the impact of the Latina music star in Chicano culture.

In terms of the World Language teacher, specifically Spanish in my case, this unit will fulfill this adventure through the West with the use of vocabulary and grammar concepts that focus on a sense of movement and time to analyze these artifacts. Specifically, students will use the following verb or verb phrase constructions: IR (to go), IR + a + infinitive (what someone is going to do, demonstrating recent future activity), VENIR (to come, focusing on location, either originating from or arriving to), and ACABAR + de + infinitive (what someone just finished doing, giving a sense of recent past). Each of these verbs/phrases is specifically chosen to honor the relationship of the individual artifact we will study, and the people it represents. Thus, this unit utilizes cultural foundations as a means of generating conversation in the target language, allowing students to achieve greater creativity with their word choice whilst still providing the basic linguistic structure to encourage growth. Through classroom discussion, this unit hopes to generate higher-level analysis in the target language that will inevitably lead to the more extensive

task of students researching their own artifact and creating their own stories about the artifact's "Western" voyage.

### **The Numbers, the School, and Content Standards**

Middletown High School is part of Appoquinimink School District, located in New Castle County, Delaware. The growing student population at Middletown consists of grades 9-12 in the primarily suburban to rural regions of Middletown, Odessa, Townsend, and Bear, Delaware. Our school population of just over 1200 students is primarily White/Caucasian with approximately 20% minority students of African-American, Latino, or Asian/Pacific Islander ethnic backgrounds. Over the past few years, our District's World Languages focus has evolved in regards to changing student and economic demands. While we have children as young as third grade being educated in a survey of several foreign languages, the secondary levels acquire a focus needed to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities at universities, the military, or full-time careers. Our school currently offers Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and recently added American Sign Language, in response to the trend of states recognizing ASL as a world language in schools. Yet perhaps the biggest challenge faced within the district is managing the economics of teachers in classrooms. Amongst the factors that impact students and teacher within our department are the implementation of Common Core standards in classes such as English and math, as well as a district-wide 2-year world language graduation requirement. Common Core, compounded with state and district budget cuts translates to the loss of teacher units, pushing some class sizes to thirty or forty students, and schools identifying a larger need in core subject support. Meanwhile, our schools must find creative ways to keep enough units available in World Language departments that allow students to meet or exceed their world language graduation requirement. Within the classroom, this graduation requirement translates to a much larger variety of learners, ranging from students with accommodations equivalent to a fifth-grade reading level to future valedictorians. Hence, this unit considers this variety of learners by approaching content in structured ways that allow students to see their growth from simple sentence construction to higher level analysis using said foundations; scaffolding is at the heart of many of my lessons, working from understanding concepts in English before making the transference to Spanish. While this initial understanding in English undermines many theories about immersive language, I have found that explaining what is a verb is necessary to a student's understanding of how to use it.

Throughout the district, our languages programs uphold American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards, assessing reading, listening, writing, and speaking, with culture contextualized within each unit. This unit aims to incorporate Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, and Connections into one cohesive piece where analysis of Culture through the target language allows for connection and comparison. Many of the ACTFL standards are met in this unit (see Figure 1, Appendix), and

hopefully, they are achieved successfully with a sense of cohesion and purposeful choice in content and form within the culture and language.

### **Who can use this unit?**

This unit is designed specifically for Spanish I classes; however, the material covered and approach could be adapted in several ways. Within Spanish, while I have identified specific grammar concepts to help guide discussion, there is a greater possibility for variance within language instruction depending upon curriculum alignment and where the use of preterit, imperfect, and future tense might fall. My hope is that an apt language educator will see the methodologies used here and identify ways to adapt the curriculum to fit the needs of the particular level that s/he teaches.

Outside of Spanish, other subjects such as history and English might benefit from the approaches to historical narrative. Social Studies/History teachers may find the focus on non-traditional primary source objects are an invigorating approach to refresh their classrooms. ELA teachers may appreciate the focus on non-fictional narrative analysis, symbolic vocabulary, and creative writing opportunities presented here. More generally, I want this unit to serve at least as a backbone for teachers of many disciplines to approach the analysis of cultural iconography. Teachers are welcome to mutate my activities and content focus to fit their own needs.

### **The Artifacts and their Journeys**

The Women of Mexico's Identity and redefining "West:" Why La Malinche, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Selena, and Adelita?

It came to my attention as I researched significant figures of Hispanic, specifically Mexican, identity that many of the most debated and cherished figures of this seemingly patriarchal society were women. All of these women push boundaries between one population and another, symbolizing a sense of cultural movement that is difficult to find so prominently in other figures. For the sake of clarity, this border crossing demands that I define "West" in more deliberate terms. For the sake of understanding, let what is termed "the West" represent the area of Mexico and the American southwest, since strict geographic and political boundaries may mislead students to believe that we refer to only regions in the current borders of the United States. Much of these symbols originate in Mexico, yet to not include their negotiation relative to American, Spanish or other interacting cultures would be ignorant of their evolution and why these symbols are so significant. I willingly admit that use of the term "West" already has an Anglican bias that teachers may wish to weed out; however, I recognize that this unit will more typically be taught to American students, and was designed in a seminar titled "The American West." I greatly encourage teachers to utilize this vocabulary as a point of

debate within their classroom because to simply accept this terminology would undermine the negotiation of cultures implied in this unit as well as the intentions of the seminar from which this unit arose. “The West” as a vocabulary term provides rich debate. Even terms like “America” will change perspectives since many of the Spanish speaking world classify the United States, as well as Central and South America as “America.” Let debate become part of the classroom as opposed to prescribing the use of potentially loaded vocabulary.

Regarding the common femininity of this unit’s symbols, I already saw great potential for debate amongst my students because they learn, at least at the linguistic level and even culturally, that the masculine dominates the Spanish language. When wishing to refer to “they” as a group of men, we say “ellos.” With a group of women as “they,” we use “ellas,” but when the group is mixed gender, we default to the masculine “ellos” to represent the group. There could be thousands of women in this group and one male, but the simple presence of that one male is enough to have us use the masculine form of “they” to represent everyone. Of course, there is the stereotypical machismo of Latin men that many will attest to be true but not unique to the latino community. So when we look at symbols that supposedly represent the cultural politics of “the West,” it seems surprising that they are women. At least at first. I’ve come to believe that these women are culturally significant to “the West” partially because of their gender. If men are believed to be the bearers of culture (as tribe leaders, conquistadores, presidents, etc.), as they move, so move their culture. Under this precept, a male’s ability to move between cultures is in some ways restricted because common belief is that the culture moves as they move. A man either embodies his own culture or succumbs to the culture of another man (via assimilation). If we only consider masculine symbols, we never consider the value of his gender because we envision him as representative of all his people, as opposed to simply men.

Yet, in the same scenario, women become agents of change; capable of transgressing multiple cultures and speaking to a larger audience. They are representative of the significant bridges built between the seemingly immobile patriarchal societies. It is fair to say that these women are not wholly representative of cultural movement in “the West,” nor should we limit this argument to simply women. There are men who could also be considered similar agents of change; however, I think that, at least within the classroom, by highlighting the symbolic qualities of these women, we introduce the possibility of debating the commodity of gender in “the West.”

## La Malinche

The first significant period in what many consider the Westernization of America is the colonization period ranging from the early sixteenth century through the seventeenth century. Specifically of interest in the West is the exploration of Spanish *conquistadores*

in what is now Mexico and the Southwest United States. The journey of the Spanish and their relationship to the West is telling of many future interactions of native and non-native populations. Considering background knowledge, many students are educated in elementary and middle school about Cristobal Colon, or Christopher Columbus in English. Thankfully, more are aware that Columbus was less of a hero and more of an opportunist out West. Much of the Spanish's interaction with native populations mirrored Columbus' interactions in Hispaniola: that of a conquering Spanish population armed with guns, horses, Catholicism and foreign diseases seeking material wealth, political prowess, and spreading God's word in a land of ancient civilizations.

There are several useful perspectives of events during this time period that will hint as to how cultures evolved in the region. Of interest in this unit are accounts of the Spanish through the Mexican and southwest American terrain in their attempts to Christianize a continent and expand the influence of the Spanish crown, and accounts of the native Indian tribes and their treatment of an invading culture in regards to their own traditions. There are many different viewpoints that a teacher can choose that will allow this section to have a select historical focus. If a teacher wanted to focus on the abuse of Indians by Spanish *conquistadores*, s/he should look no further than Bartolome de las Casas' first hand account of his time in Hispaniola and Mexico in which he reveals the atrocities done to native populations under the Spanish *encomiendas* system.<sup>ii</sup> Based upon his widely translated *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las índias* (*History of the Indies and The Very Brief Relation of the Devastation of the Indies*), a teacher could use selections from de las Casas to show both the destruction caused by colonizing Spaniards as well as the defense of natives by this influential figure in the native history of Latin America. I would recommend resourcing Andrew Hurley translated, Franklin Knight edited version of de las Casas' text, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies With Related Texts* as a more accessible text for middle to high school students. Simply one, well-chosen page will allow students a brief summary of what was happening during the Spanish conquest of the America.

Yet, I believe that students, at least at the high school level, are more conscious of the dichotic thinking that pits invader versus native. To me, what may provide more opportunity for debate, analysis, and moments of discovery is what happens when the relationship of these two cultures evolve based on their contrasting expectations within the region. Hence, identifying the significant moments and figures in which these identities interact will help students understand the ever-shifting identity of Hispanics in the West.

In terms of the Hispanic West, Jorge Iber and Arnaldo de León identify that "Biologically, Hispanics...are a product of what in Latin America is termed, *mestizaje*, or a racial mixture usually between the aboriginal race of Native Americans and European Spaniards."<sup>iii</sup> Hence, I seek artifacts that draw into direct comparison the Spanish expectations of the West as well as the Indian treatment of a foreign culture. At the heart

of this discussion lie several prominent women around whom much of Mexican identity is determined, La Malinche being the first to explore in this unit. La Malinche, or Doña Marina was the Nahuatl-speaking interpreter of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, who arrived to Mexico in 1519 with the hopes of establishing a new colony for the Spanish government along with acquiring all the riches that came with that new land.<sup>ivv</sup> As she interpreted for Cortes, the Spanish continued to overthrow the Aztec capitol of Tenochtitlán, taking advantage of the Aztec initial belief that Cortés embodied the god Quetzalcoatl, who allegedly would “redeem the Aztec Empire from corruption, profligacy, and the baneful practice of engaging in human sacrifice.”<sup>vi</sup> However, her assistance in securing Cortés power and inevitable destruction of her own people make Doña Marina an important figure in early Western history. Despite claims that she supported Cortes because “she despised the Aztec nation for its oppressive policies...raiding the many settlements beyond Tenochtitlán and demanding taxes, confiscating prized possessions, and carrying off victims for human sacrifice,” Doña Marina is still referred to in some discourse as “the Mother of the first Mexican.”<sup>vii</sup><sup>viii</sup> This tenuous relationship with her people makes her a foundational piece to Hispanic identity in the West as some Mexicans reject her, seeing her as a traitor to her people for all the destruction she assisted (“La malinche” roughly connotes “traitor,” derived from her Aztec name, Malintzín), whilst other embrace her as the first strong woman of Mexico, independent and talented at speaking many languages. She easily traveled with Cortés and his men, and even sired a son of Cortés whilst translating for him. This sense of journey as a means of establishing identity of not only herself, but the two respective populations which she drew together makes Doña Marina one of the first examples of an individual that embodies *mestizaje* culture with which many Mexicans of the West identified. Very much like other native tribes and settlers in the West, Doña Marina symbolized the resourcefulness and adaptability needed to survive the ever-changing cultural geography of the West.<sup>ix</sup>

Concerning artifacts that best represent Doña Marina, a contrast of perspective is useful in understanding the treatment of her as a symbol within Mexico. The *Lienzo de Tlaxcala* is a telling pictorial representation of the Spanish’s travels around Mexico. It depicts eighty-six scenes of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, several of which include Doña Marina standing peacefully next Cortés as he speaks to Aztec leader Montezuma. These illustrations were produced by Tlaxcalan artists decades after Cortés initial conquest, yet appear to humanize her as the bridge between two cultures.<sup>x</sup><sup>xi</sup> Meanwhile, the work of Diego Rivera, specifically *The Arrival of Cortés* in the Palacio Nacional de Mexico (1950) depicts a similar scene with different placement. Rather than having Doña Marina prominently displayed, her face is hidden behind Cortés, no longer translating, but rather, standing subservient to the father of her blue-eyed son, who stares hauntingly at the viewer of the mural, whilst surrounded by the branding and enslavement of the Aztecs by the Spaniards.<sup>xii</sup> Here, she is truly La Malinche, a traitor, conquered and used by a dominant force that fooled not only her, but her country. She stands amongst all the destruction for which much of her ancestors blame her. Additional paintings of similar

treatment include the work of José Clemente Orozco, who depicts a nude Cortés and Doña Marina sitting above an emaciated body, presumably indigenous Mexico based on skin color similarities with Doña Marina. This perspective of Doña Marina as a traitor has larger implications in the development of the American West as traditional Indian ways of life become assimilated to Spanish ways. The use of horses, the Spanish language, and Catholicism change the face of Mexico and the West as we see the assimilation of one culture with another occur before America gains a significant political role in the West. Hence, the ideal of an indigenous tribe giving way to a modern, “civilized” culture exists long before homesteaders start to push Indians onto reservations. More importantly, the culture introduced to the natives by the Spanish has more time to occupy the West in comparison to Anglo cultures that originate from the east.

### La Virgen de Guadalupe

As the Spanish and Indians cultures experience more generational shift away from *criollo* (Mexico-born children of Spanish blood) and *peninsular/poblador* (Spanish-born settlers living in Mexico and the American Southwest) labels, the identity of *mestizaje* Mexico becomes more pronounced. Settlements in Mexico and the American Southwest bring to the forefront the exchange of cultures experienced by the Spanish and Native tribes. By the 1530s, Spanish explorers like Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de la Vaca ventured northward into the borderlands of present-day Mexico and the United States, with increasingly different experiences. Like Bartolome de las Casas, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de la Vaca, a Spanish nobleman, wrote about his interactions with native tribes. Cabeza de Vaca had a very active relationship with natives, originally as a captive, but inevitably serving natives as a “curer...an emissary of God... a leader of Indian peoples.” Yet, like many of his Indian followers, he was met by Spanish forces that looted and destroyed Indian villages in Mexico, 1536.<sup>xiii</sup> Accounts of men like Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, a Spanish viceroy of Mexico, set the example for Spanish force in Mexico and neighboring regions in current-day Americas. In search of resources like food for survival, and inevitably in search of gold, Coronado scoured Mexico and the American southwest destroying any tribe that did not kneel to Spanish power, proclaiming, “in Latin, ‘Everybody here must fall down and worship Jesus Christ, and if you don't we will take it that you are worshipers of the devil and you will be wiped out.’”<sup>xiv</sup>

As explorers pushed north, more *entradas* were established where the Spanish way of life became a more permanent fixture in Mexico. As more *entradas* were created, more natives were Christianized as part of the exploration objectives behind a recently reconquered Spain (Spain was occupied by Muslim rule from 711 and inevitably “reconquered” by Christians in 1492). Ken Burns’ documentary series, *The West*, mentions Father Junipero Serra and his efforts to Christianize the West over 200 years after Cortés first landed, displaying the persistence of Catholics who believed it their duty to Christianize the West. Figures such as Father Junipero Serra and Father Eusebio Francisco Kino helped found settlements such as San Diego, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as map these nodes of new Catholic influence along a long trail of

expansion in California.<sup>xv</sup> While some accounts, like Cabeza de Vaca and others, aimed towards the peaceful presence of Catholicism in Indian territory, other experiences, like that of Juan de Oñate, who attempted to suppress several Indian rebellions, point towards a different treatment of Catholicism in the West. Charismatic Indian figures like Popé lead rebellions against invading Catholics, yet inevitably fall to the expanse and force of the Spanish invasion sweeping more parts of the region as decades pass.<sup>xvi</sup> Regardless of the peace or war in the relationship between natives and conquerors, it seemed that Catholicism and the Spanish ways left an indelible mark on regional identity in the West.

Hence, it makes sense to include in this unit an article that represents how, unlike La Malinche, certain aspects of the invading Spanish culture have remained central to Hispanic identity in the West. Perhaps the most significant of all symbols in Mexico is the Virgin of Guadalupe, as represented on the *Tilma de la virgin Guadalupe*. According to many accounts, an Indian named Juan Diego “witnessed the apparition of the Virgin in 1531...The Virgin asked...to build a chapel in her honor.” However, unable to persuade the local Bishop to start the construction, Juan Diego returned to the same location to acquire evidence that he spoke to the Virgin Mary. In a second apparition, the Virgin told Juan Diego to gather Castilian roses that grew (quite unnaturally across the Atlantic and during the Winter) and put them in his *tilma*, a pancho-like covering worn over his torso, to bring to the bishop. Upon his return to the Bishop, Juan opened his *tilma* to spread the flowers at the Bishop’s feet and instead, there appeared the detailed depiction of the Virgin Mary where the roses previously remained.<sup>xvii</sup><sup>xviii</sup> The apparition of what is now referred to as the Virgin of Guadalupe has become a central piece of Mexican lore, as she now serves as the Patron Saint of Mexico. Perhaps more importantly, the *tilma* of Juan Diego still remains in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe atop Tepeyac Hill, Mexico City, the exact location which it is believed that Juan Diego first saw the Virgin. The artifact of the *tilma of the Virgin of Guadalupe* is an important materialization of the native identity assimilating to sixteenth century Spanish religious standards. It is important that its deliverer is an Indian, representing the acceptance of Catholicism in Mexico and foreshadowing future interaction of religious figures (from Spain and throughout other parts of the West’s history) with indigenous tribes. In contrast to the seemingly traitorous La Malinche, Juan Diego is seen as a humble Indian given the huge responsibility of revealing the care of a seemingly foreign Saint. His vision reveals that his people are capable of seeing and accepting religions previously unknown to native Mexicans. This discourse concerning how a native could be blessed with a miraculous event continues today as scientists and Catholic groups alike study the physical composition of the nearly 500 year-old cloth in order to prove the other-worldliness of the garment. The weaved history of natives and conquering Christians into a figuratively homogenous Mexican culture is further supported by merging Christian iconography “with the story of Tonantzin, the Pre-Columbian fertility goddess, a common practice to convert indigenous peoples conflating pagan and Catholic deities and beliefs.”<sup>xix</sup>

Yet the impact of this original image as a symbol of *mestisaje* past is further transferred from its roots through reproduction and reinvention of the symbol for different purposes. How modern Hispanics apply her image to their lives shows what she has come to represent beyond her revelation at the hands of Juan Diego. Like modern Juan Diego's, contemporary Hispanics discover her facsimile on many other materials. In her introduction to her book *Guadalupe: Body and Soul*, Marie-Pierre Colle mentions that "[The] Virgin is also found on the back of many a Mexican prisoner who wants to avoid getting stabbed in a brawl with fellow inmates, and also on the dusty backs of illegal immigrants who cross the U.S. border... Nobody attacks the Virgin as nobody would offend her image."<sup>xx</sup> Colle goes on to show the thousands of representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe in everyday life in Mexico and throughout Latin America. Very much like how Juan Diego utilized a common material to behold something Holy, modern Hispanics continue in his tradition of discovering La Virgen through common objects. Like the tilma of Guadalupe, objects from the everyday life of a modern Hispanic are given Holy qualities with the transference of the Virgen's image onto any surface. Thus not only is the Virgin of Guadalupe significant for her connectedness to both Christian and Indian symbolism, but also she is easily disseminated to any population since her discovery is inherently intended for the "common person." This association with the "common man" plays an important role in the lives of modern Hispanics as, even when outside of the borders of Mexico, La Virgen symbolizes a shared heritage. Her image adorns the houses of farmers in Texas, the taxis of drivers in Los Angeles, and the long pilgrimage route of the Carrera Antorcha Guadalupeana as a torch is run from the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico to the heart of New York City, passing "through every state where families of [Mexican] immigrants reside"<sup>xxi</sup> Thus not only does La Virgen cross cultural borders by revealing herself to the Indian, Juan Diego, but also she crosses geographic borders between the native Mexico and immigrant populations who still wish to remain connected to their heritage.

Selena

The benefits of establishing artifacts related to these two women that generate discussion about the identity of historic *mestizaje* Hispanics will also provide opportunities for discussion about Chicano culture in modern society. While terms like *mestizaje* help to identify people of European and Native American decent, Chicano takes these cultural politics further by negotiating Mexican-American identity within the United States. Assimilationist discourse that surrounds natives and their treatment by Spaniards frequently transfers to the topic of Hispanics in America. Just as "criollo" had positive and negative connotations associated with its Spanish-decent, Latino, Chicano, and Tejano have varying connotations. While on one hand, assimilation-based connotations make "fitting into" American culture more possible, they also acknowledge a loss of primary culture. Meanwhile, rejection of a second culture seems to refuse to adapt to changes in cultural climate. In either circumstance, these different connotations draw upon a cultural cachet of being more "authentic" than others, whether primary or

secondary culture. La Malinche and the Virgin of Guadalupe and their respective artifacts call to question the relationship of early explorers and natives, similar to that of modern Americans and immigrant Hispanics. On one hand, we see a figure traditionally viewed as a traitor to her people, but now gaining reverence in her independence and adaptability. Meanwhile, the other represents a bond between native populations and their assimilated cultural practices, which have now come to redefine how Mexicans see themselves.

As Mexico and America modernized, and as political relationships became more infused with American global dominance, the identity of Mexicans within the United States became increasingly more important to the cultural climate of states like Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. This new generation of Mexican-descent Americans faced similar threats of assimilation as their native ancestors when the Spanish arrived. Only in this regard, their homeland, the United States, was also the country trying to make them assimilate to English-speaking ways. Much of the early questions in classrooms regarding what became known as “Chicano” identity circulate around an America-centric rhetoric, posing Chicanos as Mexicans who naturalized in the United States. As Deborah R. Vargas notes, the reality of Chicano politics views the population as an ethnic group that had borders and national affiliations change around them rather than migrating across borders: “ ‘We didn’t cross the border; the border crossed us.’ ”<sup>xxiii</sup> This is more than likely one of the important perspectives to establish with students as some will view modern American interaction with Mexico in regards to the more antiquated “el Norte,” where Hispanic cultural evolution is primarily northward migration and assimilationist as opposed to being part of America. Where other symbols of Hispanic identity in the West originate in Mexican territory and then journey into present day-United States, the final and most modern symbol of this unit is definitively American, Tejana to be more accurate: Selena.

Selena (Quintanilla-Pérez) was a Tejana singer whose music and life are frequently represented as the quintessential Latin crossover star. American-born, yet of Mexican descent, Selena is frequently alluded to as a star whose budding career was cut short just before she could make her complete crossover to the American pop charts.<sup>xxiii</sup> However, some argue that success as an English-language artist places too much importance on her achievement (or unfulfilled potential for success) in the English-speaking charts when in reality her true accomplishment is success across the Rio Grande. Gregory Nava’s biofilm of Selena’s life, *Selena*, starring Jennifer Lopez, follows such an Anglo-centric narrative as “The viewer’s first impression, Selena singing in English, reinscribes the idea that the pinnacle of her career was her ‘success’ through and English-language crossover status.”<sup>xxivxxv</sup> Especially in the framework of a Spanish classroom, students should be reminded that Selena was an *American* of Mexican descent, who spoke primarily English and actually had to learn Spanish in an attempt to broaden her audience base. Deborah R. Vargas does an excellent job of discussing Selena’s representative struggles to become

more fluent in Spanish as opposed to her assimilated version of Tex-Mex Spanglish, saying:

Most likely raised on the stories of parents and grandparents physically and institutionally punished for attempting to retain the Spanish language, Tejanas/os embraced Selena's struggles to communicate in Spanish in public interviews and Spanish-language television programs. This resonated with her public in *tejas*.<sup>xxvi</sup>

In addition to her deliberate use of language as a form of cultural authority, Selena also redefined Tejano music in an attempt to modernize a music style associated with lower socioeconomic, labor populations in Mexico. While stereotypical associations of tejano music and its audience base identify the genre as the "decisively unhip, blue-collar country cousins within larger Latina/o imageries," Selena incorporates a variety of styles from pop to reggae to cumbia beat, moving beyond the expected borders of traditional Tejano music.<sup>xxvii</sup> Selena reinvents more traditional art forms in the same way that Luis Valdez and El Teatro Campesino chose to renegotiate traditional regional plays starting in the 1960s. While pastoral tales of the Virgin of Guadalupe played with variation in many cities across Mexico and the American southwest, el Teatro Campesino utilized these stories and the on-going efforts of Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers of America to create a socially reflective retelling of Guadalupe in *Las cuatro apariciones de la Virgen de Tepeyac* (1972). *Las cuatro apariciones* enacts "forces of Spanish colonialism and Catholicism...symbolized by the incredulous friars or church officials whereas indigenous resistance and self-determination are symbolized by the Indians' tenacious insistence on the adoration of the Holy Mother Tonantzin/Guadalupe."<sup>xxviii</sup> This search for self-determination is a characteristic continued through Selena's modernization of traditional sounds. Like the tilma of Guadalupe, Selena's music aims to speak to the multitudes, uniting multiple musical preferences into one, ethnically authoritative music style.

Yet perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Selena's fame is her untimely death. Some would argue that like other stars whose lives were seemingly cut short, part of the allure of Selena to Hispanic populations is the ephemerality and loss of life she represents. In many of her songs, Selena symbolizes the immigrant Hispanic. Like the laborers represented in El Teatro Campesino, Selena speaks of loss (of identity, rights, etc.) experienced by many Mexican-Americans as they negotiate the role of their Hispanic ethnicity in the geographic United States. Her song, "Como la flor" is excellently described by Deborah Parédez:

In concert, "Como la flor" pulled its audience in the undertow of its marked Latina sorrow, only then to buoy them up on its bouncy cumbia rhythm. The sing-along seduction of its emotive opening...and it's easy-to-follow dance beat called upon the audience to interact with their whole bodies-as harmonizing chorus and as

exuberant dancers. Selena often expanded the song's participatory ethos by using it as the moment in performance when she engaged directly with the crowd, encouraging call-and-response echo or moving beyond the borders of the stage to share the microphone with her adoring fans.<sup>xxix</sup>

Watching her final concert in Houston along with other interpretations of the same song will offer students an understanding of Selena's charisma and ability to lure audiences into taking part in her negotiation of Latinidad. While the audience participates, Selena speaks of a lost love, potentially symbolic of a shared dissipation of Mexican culture in America. Rather than allow her culture to wallow in the traditions of Tejano music, Selena reinvents Chicano culture, allowing for the incorporation of other styles without losing the heart of the Tejano beat. In other songs, she speaks of an "Amor prohibido" (prohibited love) because she and her lover are from two distinct social classes, further emphasizing a socioeconomic reflection of American dominance over Mexican culture in the American southwest.<sup>xxx</sup> Claiming that love is valued more than money, Selena hopes for a sense of harmony between her and her love, and thus unity amongst Mexican and American cultural values.

Finally, the benefit of exploring the importance of Selena in a materialist perspective is that her life is recent enough for students to be able to interact with and readily access primary artifacts of her life, namely her music, in comparison to other symbols of Hispanic identity whose material existence is more likely to be housed in a museum than a relative's music collection. This ease of access will more likely garner the curious student to search the internet for videos or recordings of her music. The use of her music provides a different type of "traveled artifact," allowing for a variety of sources to correspond to a variety of learner types. Additionally, not only is her music more contemporary in comparison to other symbols, but the amount of secondary materials generated in response to her life is even more astonishing. Millions of websites are dedicated as fan pages paying tribute to her life and music.

Her growth in popularity at the beginnings of the digital era makes her the most likely candidate to receive modern artifacts of her legend amongst Hispanic populations. Unlike other women in this unit, Selena is unique in that her followers are more popularly labeled as fans as opposed to worshipers (although some would even argue this point). Many of these fans create dedication websites, materials like posters, photo archives, t-shirts, and anything else that could possibly show their devotion to Selena, without having to elevate beyond colloquial speech and informal presentations of their love for her. In the same way that the Virgin of Guadalupe is represented in tattoos, altars, blankets, and on the façade of buildings, Selena has thousands of fan sites that pride themselves on their abilities to tell stories of her life, of fan pilgrimages to her grave and former home, and image/video galleries of some of her concerts. With the advent of the internet, did modern Hispanics enter an age where digital devotion has become a renewed, more easily accessible, and thus more easily shared form of worship? Perhaps

these sites are simply the evolved form of shrines, virtual pilgrimage sites where fans can unite with blog entries and discussion forums. The use of the modern era to create websites posits the question of where fandom ends and worship begins, a topic later covered in one of my suggested activities. By focusing on a figure whose fandom started at the beginnings of the digital age, and whose presence and timing led to a clear, documented boom in fans, we can more clearly question what it means to be a devoted fan versus a devoted follower.

In conclusion, Selena not only offers students the opportunity to engage with modern media and a sense of celebrity closer to their understanding of fame, but also an icon who came to represent a population developing their own identity relative to a culture that has evolved along side and sometimes into their own.

### Las Soldaderas y Adelita

In my research of the significant symbols of Hispanic identity in the West, I came across the *soldadera* figure per a recommendation from our seminar leader. These women soldiers were fighters in the Mexican Revolution and were instrumental in the formation of feminine identity within Mexican culture. They fought alongside men, wearing ammunition around their shoulders and carrying loaded guns, ever ready to make whatever contribution possible for a new Mexico. The significance of *soldaderas* derives from social and political tension of and increasingly more developed Mexico as the agent for change. *Las Soldaderas'* social movement begins within their own society (*intra-Mexican*) and then like many other symbols of the Hispanic West, migrates to be utilized by different populations and regions. An important point in Mexico's history, the rise of the *soldadera* comes at a time when Mexico has evolved beyond clear binary cultural opposition of native-versus-other and into a more nuanced, subtle negotiation of an old versus new way of life. Where women were previously expected to let the wars to be waged by men, these brave women sought to engage in social change by fighting on both sides of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>xxxix</sup>

*Las soldaderas* would make significant contributions to units that wish to explore gender roles and their reinvention within a culture, and how gendered symbolism may inevitably represent entire populations who shared similar struggles. Revolutionist *soldaderas* who sided with Emeliano Zapata and to a lesser extent Pancho Villa, like the many Mexicans who wanted to fight against a corrupt political regime, represent the resilient fight for a new way of life, especially representative of those with an apparent lack of political power. Delia Fernández comments:

A woman remained under the control of a man her entire life: in her childhood, it was her father; in her adulthood, it was her husband, brother or uncle. If she joined a convent, her life was regulated by the Catholic Church. Women were expected to serve their families faithfully, especially the men in their lives. Moreover, they

were producers, in that they needed to contribute economically to the family's income, and reproducers, because they were expected to bear children and serve as their primary caregiver.<sup>xxxii</sup>

In this depiction of the *soldaderas*, students will see the border-crossing potential of the *soldadera* figure as a revolutionary for gender norms. Yet despite the inspiring history of the *soldadera*, the figure continues to evolve into other representations. Of all the real *soldaderas* that fought, one mythic representation of a *soldadera* from a popular folksong, or "corrido," *La Adelita*, came to signify much more than a female in war. The typical vision of Adelita as "the love interest and idealized female companion of the Mexican revolutionary soldier" evolved to embody many other interpretations.<sup>xxxiii</sup> While *soldaderas* came to represent the empowered female in a patriarchal society, *Adelita* twisted this figure to become a fetishized image of an independent, often promiscuous female interested in seducing men and fighting wars. As Tabea Alexa Linhard writes, "[Adelita] oscillates between women's empowerment and women's oppression, between political agency and subalternity. The varied incarnations of Adelita as a symbol, myth, and icon speak to the different meanings that have been attached to this figure."<sup>xxxiv</sup> Very much like La Malinche's multiple readings, while some envision her as a woman degendered by taking on male characteristics, or too obedient by following a man to war, others see her as the empowered female or simply the oppressed minority seeking to make their mark in the revolution. In domesticity, she is the protector of her soldier, an unforgettable vision of hope for those that fight. In the same way that La Virgen protects inmates who have her image tattooed on their backs, Adelita safeguards the soldier who carries her upon his chest, as a "shield that'll bring [him] victory."<sup>xxxv</sup> In emancipation, she is the romantic hero of the repressed. Often, discourse of the Adelita figure references her sexualized symbolism of a woman liberated from social norms, famously represented by artists like Angel Martin.<sup>xxxvi</sup> With Martin's depiction, we see a woman representative of an emancipated Mexico, bearing the flag of her country, complete with strings of bullets running just below a low cut, revealing shirt. Her expression is one of mocking triumph, as her partially torn clothing suggests victory beyond struggle. There are many other representations of the Adelita figure, many of which feature similar use of bullets, guns, and overt sexuality and beauty. For both the historical and mythic representations of *soldaderas* and *Adelitas*, these figures lend immense perspective concerning the empowerment of both men and women of Mexican descent.

I could easily see students comparing actual images of *soldaderas* (look to Elena Poniatowska's *Las Soldaderas: Women of the Mexican Revolution* for a great variety of photos) to artistic interpretations of the Adelita figure, in order to understand the differing ways in which they are appropriated for different purposes. Some media will focus on identifying historical figures in the Mexican Revolution, debating whether some fought for or against revolutionary forces, while others will create fictional characters to explore the ethos of the figure, like Josephina Niggli's play, *Soldaderas*.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Students should

consider how might various populations employ the different representations of the *soldadera/Adelita* figure in order to provide some statement in their definition of Hispanic identity. A simple look at the role of Hispanic women in the U.S. armed forces may serve as a contemporary comparison of women in the military and how their image is perceived by their society. Regardless of the interpretation, *las soldaderas* and the Adelita figure show how an image of a specific revolution, sprung from real political and social tension, may be reappropriated. Even transcending the country from which their legend sprung, *las soldaderas/Adelitas* have come to symbolize revolution, emancipation, redefining gender roles and establishing freedom from oppression within one's own society and beyond.

## Classroom Activities

### Activity 1: Investigating the Primary Artifact

This unit has a focus on artifacts because I want students to easily see tangible evidence of the impact of these symbols in Hispanic culture. Each generates a primary source (the tilma of Guadalupe, the *Lienzo de Tlaxcala*, and “Como la flor” by Selena) that students will analyze in relation to space and time. In order to get students thinking analytically, it is best to start with an artifact that has obvious cultural significance to their lives and will allow students to understand how to answer questions. Patterning how to answer these questions will help tell the story of the person who was responsible for its creation or discovery. I suggest starting simple, with a commonly accepted object of American heritage that is easily accessible to most students. For example, let's choose the Betsy Ross American flag. Based upon what they know about the Betsy Ross American Flag, students must answer the following questions in Spanish, answering as if they were living in the same time period as the article:

La bandera de Betsy Ross

1. ¿De quién es? (To whom does this item belong?) – La bandera de los Estados Unidos es de Betsy Ross y los revolucionarios americanos.
2. ¿Cómo es el artículo? (What is the item like (as in describe it's physical features)? La bandera es roja, azul, y blanca, y de algodón. Tiene trece rayas rojas y blancas y trece estrellas azules en un círculo en un fondo azul.
3. ¿Qué hace esta persona ahora? (What is that person doing right now?) Betsy Ross hace una bandera y los revolucionarios americanos declaran su independencia de Inglaterra.
4. ¿Dónde está la persona? (Where is this person at?) Los revolucionarios están en Filadelfia.
5. ¿Qué acaba de hacer? (What did s/he just finish doing?) Los revolucionarios acaban de pagar impresas.
6. ¿De dónde viene? (From Where is s/he coming?) Los revolucionarios vienen de la aula de independencia o sus casas en las trece colonias.

7. ¿Qué va a hacer luego? (What is s/he going to do later?) Ellos van a luchar las inglesas y formar un país nuevo.
8. ¿Adónde va? (Where does s/he go?) Ellos van a un campo en Yorktown, Pennsylvania.
9. ¿Qué representa el artículo? (What does the item represent?) La bandera de Betsy Ross representa la independencia de las colonias y la unidad de los revolucionarios. Las estrellas y las rayas representa las trece colonias. Todas las colonias son iguales en el círculo. Las estrellas blancas y el fondo azul forman una constelación nueva. La constelación nueva va a representar la destina eternal del país. El rojo representa la sangre en la guerra para independencia. El blanco representa la esperanza nueva de los revolucionarios. [Roughly translated, The Betsy Ross flag represents the independence of the colonies and the unity of the revolutionists. The stars and the stripes represent the thirteen colonies. All of the colonies are equal in the circle. The white stars and blue background form a new constellation. The new constellation is going to represent the eternal destiny of the country. Red represents the blood en the war for independence. White represents the new hope of the revolutionists.]

Note that in all of the example answers given, I have provided a basic structure that teachers can use to model sentences. Certain questions have them consider geographic location, physical location within buildings, and a timeline of activities that help represent the major events of these people's lives. It is less important that students are 100% accurate with their historical details (although for the sake of history teachers who wish to make this activity more historically accurate, this expectation can be upheld as well). The primary goal here is to create sentences using comprehensible structures to achieve higher level analysis. More importantly, this analysis is based on material evidence that then becomes iconic for a population, transgressing the individual or individuals that it originally represented. Very much like a literary text, students are invited to use close reading skills to predict context and create a story surrounding each article. Looking at the Betsy Ross flag, we know that the number 13 is important since it is represented twice, in stripes and stars. What might this signify? How might color or material represent the location or time period or means through which this article was generated? It is important that students understand that there is a certain creativity necessary in the story telling of each of these articles; permit them, and make it clear to them that no answers are wrong as long as they have justification based on evidence shown in the pictures or songs presented. Interpretation is an important aspect of identifying the significance of the artifacts in this unit because it is through interpretation that they have gained significance. The Virgin of Guadalupe is more significant of an icon in Mexico than she is in Iraq. "Why is a particular population connected to this icon?" is an important question that helps identify the impact of culture and geography.

Once modeling with Betsy Ross's flag has occurred, then expose students to the four major artifacts of this unit. I suggest taking a rotating stations/jigsaw-like format to give students more independence in their writing choices. Small group learning allows for discussion, and additionally prevents one generic answer from circulating around the

classroom, thus defeating the hopes of multiple interpretations in their responses. Pairs usually work best if they support the needs of both learners. Having trios could alienate one of the group members, either by elevating abilities beyond him/her or by making him/her do all the work. Make sure that by the end of the activity, students have seen all the artifacts.

## Activity 2: Products of the Modern World, with examples focused on questioning Devotion

Having explored the potential cultural significance of these artifacts in the previous activity, this activity aims to investigate how these artifacts continue to be popularized in the modern “West.” Rather than focusing on primary artifacts, this activity examines artifacts generated in response to the initial objects and the icons they represent. With each icon, hang up representations of how it is popularized in modern society, whether through art, common crafts, or digital media. The work of Alma Lopez is a perfect example of how an image may be permuted to engage new meanings and systems of significance to an otherwise holy symbol. I recommend reading her book *Our Lady of Controversy: Alma Lopez’s Irreverent Apparition* to see how her ideas concerning the Virgin of Guadalupe impacted how she engaged this symbol in her art.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Also, as mentioned previously Marie-Pierre Colle’s *Guadalupe: Body and Soul* also presents an incredible variety of everyday images in Hispanic communities utilizing the image of the Virgin. Works of art like that of Diego Rivera and other Hispanic artists could be used to show comparative representations of La Malinche. Meanwhile, video clips, fan sites, and major films could be used to represent artifacts created in response to Selena’s iconography. Have students answer the same questions as those asked of the original artifacts. How have answers changed? What elements lead students to believe that there is a difference or similarity between two artifacts. What common traits do students see in different representations of these icons?

An investigation of secondary artifacts leads to some very interesting questions when we consider icons in comparison. While exploring what was the journey of the tilma of the Virgin of Guadalupe is a valuable first step in understanding cultural significance, this study would seem incomplete without considering the views of those who have made these figures/articles significant. All people are interpreting bodies, capable of imbuing artifacts with their own unique significance. For students to get a sense of depth in discussion, it is important for them to see how those that find these symbols significant to their lives discuss such objects. Some perspectives will be very extreme, emphasizing the undying devotion to a figure, in contrast to other, more middle-ground perspectives that seem more objective and involve less pathos in their appeal. The objective is to have students question what it means to be a fan and what it means to be a worshiper. I believe that less frequently in America we see the same level of devotion to a culturally generated symbol as that of Hispanics in the West. While teen stars may rise and receive a cult-like following, their sheer identification as “teen stars” implies that inevitably their

fame fades, or at least matures to simple admiration as opposed to a seemingly religious following. True, celebrities have their extremes in fanaticism, but very few achieve a universally accepted following in the United States. While La Virgen and Selena have very different forms of authority to their people, they are more universally known and therefore better elicit questions about where fanaticism ends and worship begins.

In classroom discussion, I suggest starting with La Virgen de Guadalupe since the variety of re-appropriations of her image is well documented and diverse. La Virgen has much more clear religious connotations, yet is very appropriately paired with Selena in her level of pop celebrity within the Hispanic community. Prints, sculptures, and literally any other type of art have captured the image of the Virgin. Rather than simply seeing her image on the sacred tilma as it is held in Mexico City, we see Virgin t-shirts, mugs, framed photos, etc. In some ways, the distinct artifact of tilma and its holy reverence contrasted to a t-shirt of the same image help to provide insight in the commodity of some forms of devotion. Is the image of the Virgin commodified (and possibly devalued) by being printed on common materials? Perhaps la Virgen's entrance into popular consciousness identifies the significance of the Virgin: never has she been a Holy, untouchable relic. Rather, she is a symbol of the people, easily accessed by all and placed on many materials in order to attribute to common objects a Holy quality unable to be achieved without la Virgen. The importance here is that students question what Hispanics do with symbols that they find significant. Is the commodity of la Virgen sacrilege for a culture that, traditionally, has strong religious foundations (either native or imported)? Where does the line between worship and fanaticism exist?

I would suggest starting discussion with images similar to those found in Marie-Pierre Colle's *Guadalupe: Body and Soul*, which is an incredible resource densely packed with images, poems, and astutely-written captions. This book, like La Virgen, is able to be accepted by all, easily read at many levels, and even complete with English-Spanish versions of poems that address the significance of the Virgin. Based on these sources, have students discuss what in their culture might have similar treatment. Political leaders on dollar bills? The Statue of Liberty or perhaps the Bad Eagle? There are several symbols of America, but do these symbols receive the same level of reverence as La Virgen? If they do not, then why? I would be careful not to homogenize "Mexican/Hispanic" and "American" in this comparison. Like America, Mexico and other Hispanic populations have more than one identity. Simply make it clear to students that we study La Virgen because she is held in such high regard because she has come to be part of many unique regional identities united by her symbolic significance. Once the discussion of devotion to the Virgin is opened, then establish the following activity in order to directly compare this devotion to a religious figure to that of a modern music star.

The internet lends itself well to a readily accessed database in which the author of materials is responsible for managing the tone, content, and accessibility of a website.

Previously, I discussed the likelihood that the internet, television media, and other more instantaneous media sources contributed to the legendary status achieved by Selena after her death. Residual material generated by fans decades ago still exist and may be accessed with the right key words. Some sites are high quality and include audio clips of Selena's songs, video links to her concerts, and fan forum capabilities through social media.<sup>xxxix</sup> Meanwhile, others are a more basic design, but include information about Selena's life, and more personal accounts of pilgrimages to major locations in Selena's life.<sup>xl</sup> While some sources attempt to remain objective as encyclopedia-like, biography sites, others revel in their ability to bestow varying levels of idolatry upon Selena. What is interesting about these fan sites is that they exist with the purpose of honoring Selena and possibly uniting others who share similar devotion to the famed musician. One could argue that some have such a severe devotion to Selena that they border along worship, deifying Selena to a similar status as other Holy women of the Hispanic culture, like the Virgin of Guadalupe. While at first students question whether or not it is permissible to place a Holy figure on a common material, like a blanket or a shirt, now we question the reverse: whether a woman, whose success was founded on her ability to identify and expand her target population, is worthy of being placed on the same level of celebrity and adoration as a Holy figure.

To do so, students will explore the internet for websites dedicated to Selena. Have students identify an example of a website they would consider a "fan site" and another they would consider a "worship site." I put quotations around "fan site" and "worship" because undoubtedly students will ask how they are supposed to know the difference, to which I think the most beneficial response is "That is for you to determine." By including students in the negotiation of levels of devotion to a symbol, the gray area between fan and worshiper is determined by each student rather than a teacher feeding them a model and forcing them to fit their ideas into this academic container. More specifically, they should identify what key elements are present in their determination of worship or fan site: "What commonalities do worship sites have that fan sites do not," and vice versa. In Spanish I terms, students can simply answer "¿Cómo es un sitio de alabar/venerar/adorar?" and "¿Cómo es un sitio de fanáticos?" I suggest using "alabar" simply because it has a beautiful connection with a song from the musical *In the Heights*. While this song is tangential in content, it might make for a nice warm-up to help the students think about relevant vocabulary before they even delve into what devotion looks like in Hispanic cultures. The song is called "Alabanza" and while it primarily discusses the death of an abuela figure in the show, the tone of the song meets a similar mournful honoring of an important figure in their community as Selena was to Hispanics in the West. It even helps to explain the connotation of alabanza, singing "alabanza means to raise this thing to God's face and to sing quite literally, praise to this."<sup>xli</sup> Having established such deeply connotative vocabulary (a struggle sometimes at beginner levels), students can use basic sentence structure, previous knowledge of description words and a dictionary in order to describe the site to match particular connotations about which they would otherwise be unaware. Words like "profesional," "básico," "triste/apenado," and

“festivo” could be used in addition to basic “There is/There are” statements using “Hay” to simply state what elements are on each page.

One of the major caveats of this online, document-based approach to understanding just how significant these symbols are to Hispanics is that it does not account for the perspectives of those who are not “followers.” Teachers must acknowledge that those who feel devoted to the symbol are more likely to generate a publicly accessible material spreading the significance of the symbol, in comparison to those who feel less connected to the symbol, who will generally do not go through the trouble of making something devoted to a figure who the author does not define as significant. That is to say, non-devotees are represented by a *lack* of material. Having students identify audience of these websites will help contextualize their purpose and also support reading and writing standards along the way. Simply ask students, “¿Quién usa este sitio? / Who uses this website?”

Review the significance of the icon, then challenge students to find their own icon that has similar meanings.

### Activity 3: Identifying Parallel Artifacts in Students’ Lives

Now that the students have had the opportunity to explore the cultural significance of these icons as represented through primary and secondary artifacts, it is their turn to become part of the telling of their culture. This activity is targeted at experiential learning by having students negotiate their own sense of culture and important icons that represent their identity. This activity has two possibilities as to where it could happen in the sequence of this unit: sequentially with each artifact or culminating all artifacts at the end.

The first possibility places this activity at the end of each day’s discussion of a new icon. The “stations” mentioned in Activity 1 can be separated by day, allowing each day to serve as a discussion of each new artifact or icon. In the case of a daily icon focus, teachers could have students create similar self-reflecting products at the end of each lesson, attempting to identify an icon in students’ lives that has similar qualities as the one studied in a given day. This will have students generate more of their own material, and repeat the same process of finding new cultural icons each day. While this may be repetitive, it can develop consistency in the classroom and a structure with which students are familiar by the time they have to choose which icon they would like to explore for their project. With each new icon students choose, have them answer the same questions they were given in order to analyze the significance and story of the primary artifacts. By the end of the unit, students will have questions answered for primary artifacts (the *tilma*,

the *Lienzo*, “Como la flor”), and secondary artifacts (fan websites, tattoos, the art of Alma Lopez), and their own paralleled artifacts. From the paralleled artifacts, students will choose their topic to cover for the product discussed in the following activity.

The second approach to identifying paralleled icons in students lives saves the discussion of personally identifiable artifacts towards the end of the unit. This helps cut down on class time, and also prevents students from generating material relative to their own lives that will not directly contribute to their product. Instead of creating multiple icons of their own culture, students will simply choose one icon at the end of all discussion of primary and secondary artifacts. While cutting down the amount of time needed to complete the unit, it also eliminates the repetition needed in order for students to feel comfortable to answer the questions of activity 4.

The choice between these two options is up to the teacher. If a class needs structure and repetition in order to feel comfortable with their language skills in story-telling format, then use the daily approach. If students need to be challenged or tire of the repetitive nature of doing the same questions every day, then the back-loaded product sequence is the better choice.

Either provide them with a large variety of images with which students may identify that you think might be provoking to students’ curiosity, or allow them to use computers to print out pictures of their own icons. Providing them with a variety of choices forces them to use their analytic skills to elicit a meaning from something not of their own creation (simulating one experience of cultural negotiation), but possibly restricting them to images that “don’t mean anything” to them. Allowing them to choose their item creates an openness that fits all ways of thought, but also provides less structure for students who do not know what is fundamental to their identity. In this case, it might be useful to provide points of reflection throughout discussion that direct students to identifying what values are important to their way of life and how that might be represented in an artifact.

#### Activity 4: Telling the Story

Finally, once students have generated material that shows the symbolic meanings of culturally significant icons within their own societies, they can move on to develop materials of their own that tell the story of their chosen artifact. Utilizing the sentences and structures provided in the questions about each artifact/icon, students will write a narrative about the journey of an artifact and its representative qualities in their respective culture. I encourage that the form of this product remain open to student choice. Offering options to students will still help them determine what they want to produce. A list of topics provided in Appendix 3 will help them better choose the form of their product and ensure that it is appropriate for the type of story and/or artifact represented. Students may range outside of this work, but should have ideas approved by the teacher. Note that all of

the icons students have identified will generate some material evidence of student work, which is beneficial for assessment but also for the materialist perspectives of this unit. By creating their own work, students engage in the story-telling process through the target language as well as developing an artifact that will allow others to learn their cultural story in the same manner that the primary and especially secondary artifacts help to develop a heightened sense of significance for their icon. This last activity is the most important of all because it poses students in the active negotiation of their own culture, as stimulated by the icons of another. Rather than passively responding to icons that have implicitly already been deemed important, through their inclusion in the curriculum, students *create* their own icons and are responsible for becoming part of their own culture, instead of just ignorant acceptors of significant symbols in their culture. Half of world language standards for assessment are active skills (speaking and writing), so this unit must support this emphasis on active communication by engaging students to think critically in the target language.

## Appendix

Figure 1: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages standards addressed in this unit.<sup>xlii</sup>

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

Figure 2

Questions to be asked for “What is Devotion?” Activity

1. ¿Qué significa <<alabanza>>? OR What does “alabanza” mean?
2. ¿Quién usa este imagen o sitio? OR Who uses this image or website?”
3. ¿Cómo es un sitio de alabar? OR How would you describe a “worship website?”
4. ¿Cómo es un sitio de fanáticos? OR How would you describe a “fan site?”

## 5 ¿Cuál es la significancia de (La Virgen de Guadalupe/Selena) a Hispánicos?

### Figure 3

#### Suggested Products for Student-Generated Culture Narratives

**Pictographic Narrative:** Illustrate the journey of your artifact and its symbolism through pictures similar to that of the *Lienzo* of la Malinche. Show all the important events of its travels and be sure to make it clear which cultures were involved in the negotiation of the significance of the symbol. Be sure to include color and detail in your drawings to help communicate who are the significant players involved in the artifact's history. There should be a sense of beginning, middle, and end to the story, as structured by your sentences involving ACABAR de , Present tense conjugation, and IR + a + Infinitive. Once finished, you will tell the story to the class (¡EN ESPAÑOL!) out loud.

**Song Narrative:** Write a song about your artifact. The song should choose appropriate sound and genre to compliment the symbolic intentions of the artifact. If your original artifact is a song, write one inspired by the original. Be sure to include a sense of journey, using ACABAR de , Present tense conjugation, and IR + a + Infinitive and location phrases within the lyrics. Think about the importance of the chorus, hook line, and verse in relation to your story telling. Consider what is worth repeating, and what needs to be said for your audience to understand how the story builds. Either perform the song for the class or do an audio recording that can be listen to during class.

**Fan site:** Create a website dedicated to your icon. Consider: what do other fan sites look like? What type of content should you include on your website? How does the look of the website compliment your intentions to show that your artifact is culturally significant. Why would a fan/worshiper create a website for this icon and who is the target audience that will appreciate this website.

**Artistic Work:** Create a piece of art that reinvents your icon to create new symbolism. Does your representation aim to modernize or more generally change the perception of the icon? This artistic work should consider why a particular medium is best suited for representing that icon (medium, as in, plaster sculpture, Photo-shopped digital print, oil painting, etc.). Once finished, the student will explain (¡EN ESPAÑOL!) the significance of the artwork to the class, examining the details attributed to the artifact.

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Curriculum Unit Title Why to Name Your Daughter Selena? Journeys in Hispanic Identity in the West and The Woman We Worship Along the Way Author Michael A. Husni

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

Hispanic Icons of the West

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

What do different icons symbolize to Hispanics in Mexico and the American Southwest? How do these icons contribute to Hispanic identity in the West?

CONCEPT A

Journey through Tense

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

What sentence constructions/tenses can we use to show the journey of a person or artifact?

VOCABULARY A

Ir + a + infinitive  
Acabar de + infinitive  
Present tense  
Preterite tense

CONCEPT B

Icons

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

What makes someone/something an icon? What do icons of Hispanic identity tell about the cultures of Mexico and the American Southwest

VOCABULARY A

La Maliche  
La Virgen de Guadalupe  
Selena  
Las Adelitas/subdelitas

CONCEPT C

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

VOCABULARY A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

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## Notes

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- <sup>iv</sup> "La Malinche - Translator and Companion to Cortés."  
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- <sup>v</sup> Iber and de León, 21-2.
- <sup>vi</sup> Iber and de León, 21.
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- <sup>xvi</sup> "Popé." *The West*. DVD. Directed by Ken Burns. Alexandria: PBS Home Video, 2004.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Iber and de León, 28.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Castañeda-Liles, Socorro. "Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Politics of Cultural Interpretation." In *Mexican American Religions: Spirituality, Activism, and Culture*. ed. Gastón Espinosa, and Mario T. García, Durham: Duke University

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- <sup>xxv</sup> *Selena*. DVD. Directed by Gregory Nava. Burbank: Warner Home Video, 1998.
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- <sup>xxxvii</sup> See Arrizón, Alicia. *Latina performance: traversing the stage*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999. as in Linhard, 91.
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