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Dr. Warner, English 112B, T 4:30-7:15  
Unit of Study

### Unit of Study on Immigration

The focus for my unit of study will be the topic of immigration and will be introduced with the non-fiction book *Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario. Nazario's work is targeted to middle and high school students and has a version that is modified to fit these audiences. The purpose of this topic is to engage students with the numerous cultures and ethnic backgrounds that form the people of the United States. The use of a non-fiction text relating to this topic can drive the class to discuss and understand the problems faced by children their age to find refuge in other countries. Alongside the reading of the text, different projects will be assigned to broaden the knowledge of the multiple cultural backgrounds present amongst students.

The use of other resources such as poems, performances, and informational text that relate to immigration around the world can extend the topic of borders beyond the one between Latin American countries and the U.S. The book is told in third person point of view allowing different perspectives to be communicated. Because I am expecting to teach an English as a Second Language class, I am understanding that most of the students in the high school course will have gone through hardships dealing with immigration and could find it appealing to see themselves reflected in a relatable text. If I were to teach this to students proficient in English, it would include other rigorous assignments.

In alignment with the qualities provided by *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, *Enrique's Journey* provides a protagonist that doesn't necessarily go out on an adventure, but on

a journey with a real purpose in a credible setting and that people south of the border have actually traveled. The novel follows through with Exeter Qualities by having characters who “reflect experiences of teen readers, something that is not found in much of the literary canon, especially when it comes to strong female protagonists”, “varied levels of sophistication that will lead to the continual development of reading skills”, and “themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues.”(Nilson) Enrique appears to be the archetypes of “The Innocent Embarking on a Journey” and “The Orphan”, respectively for the reasons of his yearn to be with his mother and, although he isn’t abandoned completely, is having to face life without his biological parents with him during his childhood and adolescence.(Nilson)

According to the chart of stages of literary appreciation in Literature for Today’s Young Adults, middle school students are gaining interest in learning about problems in novels, and where it states, “They move away from simple interest in what happened in the story to ask why. They want logical development and are no longer satisfied with stereotypes. They want characters controlled by believable human motives because their reading has real purpose to it.”(Nilson) Students would also be able to explore characteristics in the novel that pertain to real life, develop an understanding of identity, home, and social issues, and further go into exploring what events push a plot.

### **Introducing the unit**

I am going to play the performance poetry video of Hillary Kobernick's poem "Immigration Problem" to introduce the unit on immigration. Because Kobernick doesn't have a transcribed form of her poem, I will ask students to take out a piece of paper and write down terms that they are unfamiliar with and phrases they find powerful that relate back to the topic of immigration. The performance talks about political and social topics, so I would facilitate the discussion after the video by asking questions such as what the title of the performance poem means to them? Who are refugees? Why do people leave their countries? What kind of poetic elements does the speaker use to keep you engaged? Do people have a choice when they leave?

The poem "Home" by Warsin Shire would also be a way of introducing students to a more figurative way of understanding immigration. I would provide a copy for students and make it available for them online as well. An interactive activity for students would be to have them read the poem and pick out a few lines they think describe an immigrant experience and depict it in an art form with paint and butcher paper.

Home  
By Warsin Shire

no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well

your neighbors running faster than you  
breath bloody in their throats  
the boy you went to school with  
who kissed you dizzy behind the old tin factory  
is holding a gun bigger than his body

you only leave home  
when home won't let you stay.

no one leaves home unless home chases you  
fire under feet  
hot blood in your belly  
it's not something you ever thought of doing  
until the blade burnt threats into  
your neck  
and even then you carried the anthem under  
your breath  
only tearing up your passport in an airport toilets  
sobbing as each mouthful of paper  
made it clear that you wouldn't be going back.

you have to understand,  
that no one puts their children in a boat  
unless the water is safer than the land  
no one burns their palms  
under trains  
beneath carriages  
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck  
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled  
means something more than journey.  
no one crawls under fences  
no one wants to be beaten  
Pitied

no one chooses refugee camps  
or strip searches where your  
body is left aching  
or prison,  
because prison is safer  
than a city of fire

and one prison guard  
in the night  
is better than a truckload  
of men who look like your father  
no one could take it  
no one could stomach it  
no one skin would be tough enough

the  
go home blacks  
refugees  
dirty immigrants  
asylum seekers  
sucking our country dry  
n----- with their hands out  
they smell strange  
savage  
messed up their country and now they want  
to mess ours up  
how do the words  
the dirty looks  
roll off your backs  
maybe because the blow is softer  
than a limb torn off

or the words are more tender  
than fourteen men between  
your legs  
or the insults are easier  
to swallow  
than rubble  
than bone  
than your child body  
in pieces.

i want to go home,  
but home is the mouth of a shark  
home is the barrel of the gun  
and no one would leave home  
unless home chased you to the shore  
unless home told you  
to quicken your legs  
leave your clothes behind  
crawl through the desert  
wade through the oceans  
drown  
save  
be hungry  
beg  
forget pride  
your survival is more important

no one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear  
saying-  
leave,  
run away from me now  
i dont know what i've become  
but i know that anywhere  
is safer than here

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### **The Centerwork**

Enrique's Journey is about Enrique, who is a young Honduran boy, who experiences the side effects of distance between his migrant mother in the U.S. and his experience without her in their native country. To make the story more engaging and a collective effort at understanding the plot, I would create large paper shape that resembles peaks and valleys and place it on a wall

in the classroom. The book is split up into 7 chapters and can be covered within 5-6 days in class. Students will be expected to read 1-2 chapters a night and come prepared to fill in the “peaks and valleys” poster. This exercise can also help students identify the archetype that best fits Enrique. Because Enrique goes through different emotional stages and low points that involve drugs at one point, students will be able to identify Enrique’s journey of self discovery and his different purposes of immigrating within the text. I would also pass out a handout on identifying characters so students can have definitions of who the characters are and how they relate to the protagonist. The centerwork would go under Chapter 4 and 7 in *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning* by Mary L. Warner because Enrique is the protagonist of a story that children in other countries around the world go through and that include the hardship of survival in a country they have never lived in and with a parent they’ve hardly spent time with. In relation to sacrifice, at the end of the story, Enrique leaves behind his daughter who unfortunately is assumed to possibly go through the struggle of family separation Enrique went through.

### **Expanding the Unit**

Another discussion based activity would include a socratic seminar discussing the following questions, “How are immigrants different than refugees? Or can they be considered the same?”, “Why would people want to immigrate to the U.S.?”, and “How can the sacrifice of family separation bring benefit to a family with a migrant family member?” These questions can open up a discussion where students will be able to research evidence based on definitions of the

terms immigrant and refugee, reasons people immigrate, and think in “immigrants shoes” by debating if family separation is a reasonable sacrifice.

Another assignment leading up to the day of the socratic seminar would be for students to interview somebody they know that is an immigrant; whether it be a family member, friend, or neighbor. Taking into consideration some students may be immigrants themselves, another activity that can bring students together in understanding their culture is creating a poem about their heritage, where their families originate from, or share their own immigration story. These poems can even be performed in the classroom for students to get an understanding of their peers.

The film “Under the Same Moon” directed by Patricia Riggins partially resembles a journey similar to Enrique’s and can be shown in class. To conclude the unit, students will be asked to write a synthesis of 500 words about how *Enrique’s Journey* and the other assignments expanded their knowledge about immigration and the literary elements they learned by reading his story.

### **Suggested readings**

#### **“The Betrayal of Triste” by Hannah Dreier**

This is a feature story written by a journalist who investigated the arrest of a 17 year-old Salvadoran immigrant named Henry, who was associated with the infamous MS-13 gang, and awaits deportation. The feature story expands on the journal entries of an underage young adult who awaits deportation back to a country he was first driven to escape.

### ***The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande**

In her memoir, Grande expands on the effects of family separation and the ongoing mending of her family relationship after immigrating to the U.S. Reyna Grande and her two sibling leave their home country of Mexico to live with their father in the U.S. where they then went through economic and emotional struggles as they grew up in Southern California.

### ***The Sun Is Also A Star* by Nicola Yoon**

“Chance brings Jamaican-born Natasha and Daniel, son of Korean immigrants, together for a day in New York City. She seeks legal assistance to avoid deportation, while he struggles with parental expectations at odds with his love for poetry. Despite personal and cultural differences, the teens develop a romantic relationship and share their stories in alternating chapters.”

([https://www.slj.com/2017/03/diversity/immigrant-voices-focus-on/#\\_](https://www.slj.com/2017/03/diversity/immigrant-voices-focus-on/#_))

### ***I am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai**

“Instead, Malala's miraculous recovery has taken her on an extraordinary journey from a remote valley in northern Pakistan to the halls of the United Nations in New York. At sixteen, she has

become a global symbol of peaceful protest and the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate. *I Am Malala* is the remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.”

(<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17851885-i-am-malala>)

***Something in Between* by Melissa De La Cruz**

“Successful high school senior Jasmine is the cheerleading captain, valedictorian, and winner of a prestigious scholarship. When her loving, hard-working Filipino parents reveal the family is undocumented, her college dreams shatter. This semi-autobiographical novel presents the emotional trauma experienced by many U.S. immigrant students, while weaving in romance and teen drama.”

([https://www.slj.com/2017/03/diversity/immigrant-voices-focus-on/#\\_](https://www.slj.com/2017/03/diversity/immigrant-voices-focus-on/#_))

***The Good Braider* by Terry Farish**

“Viola, age 16, recounts her immigration journey in powerful free verse. Propelled by the Sudanese civil war and the horror of rape, she walks barefoot to Cairo, navigating land mines, hunger, and loss. The teen and her mother attain refugee status, escape to Maine, and navigate their identities with new freedoms.”

([https://www.slj.com/2017/03/diversity/immigrant-voices-focus-on/#\\_](https://www.slj.com/2017/03/diversity/immigrant-voices-focus-on/#_))

### **YA PAIR:**

#### ***Black Boy* by Richard Wright**

“Richard Wright grew up in the woods of Mississippi, with poverty, hunger, fear, and hatred. He lied, stole, and raged at those around him; at six he was a "drunkard," hanging about taverns. Surly, brutal, cold, suspicious, and self-pitying, he was surrounded on one side by whites who were either indifferent to him, pitying, or cruel, and on the other by blacks who resented anyone trying to rise above the common lot. *Black Boy* is Richard Wright's powerful account of his journey from innocence to experience in the Jim Crow South. It is at once an unashamed confession and a profound indictment—a poignant and disturbing record of social injustice and human suffering.”

(<https://www.amazon.com/Black-Boy-Richard-Wright/dp/0061443085>)

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