

2W.8: LESSON PLAN

Title

A Study of Our Lady of Guadalupe: Community and Creative Perspectives

Subject

Writing

Grade

6-12

Time

Extended: Completed in Sessions

Purpose

Students explore the figure of Our Lady of Guadalupe through writing and research projects that guide students through community and creative perspectives. This activity can be adjusted to study other historical and folk figures in Mundos de Mestizaje.

Key Questions

1. What is the importance of creative and community perspectives?
2. Who is La Virgen de Guadalupe? What does she represent in culture? In history?
3. If Our Lady of Guadalupe was remade into a contemporary person, what might she look like? Who would she be?

Values

Creativity, Community, Compassionate Listening, Imagination

Materials & Resources

[Virtual tour of the fresco](#); [fresco image guide](#), image PE1 “Our Lady of Guadalupe”; notebooks and pencils; “Little Miracles, Kept Promises” Handout

Activities

Session One: Experiencing the Fresco

1. Lead students through a virtual tour of the fresco. In their notebooks, ask students to write a list of adjectives that describe their experience as they go through the tour.
 2. Draw students’ attention to the four women located on the four directional pillars: La Virgen de Guadalupe, Extremadura (PN1), Our Lady of Guadalupe
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(PE1), Our Lady of Remedies (PS1), and La Conquistadora (PW1). Ask students to write a list of words (nouns, adjectives, verbs) that describe the four images in their notebooks.

3. Then, ask students to look at the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe again. Have students write down as much as they know about her.
4. Divide students into groups; ask them to share their lists of words and background knowledge. Students should add additional words and phrases to their lists that came up during the discussion.

Session Two: Researching Historical Perspectives

1. Ask students to revisit the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Do any new words, phrases, or information come to mind?
2. In pairs or groups, students should research the history of Our Lady of Guadalupe and to write a 1-2 page summary of their findings in their notebooks. Remind them of the need for a thesis sentence and to cite or reference their sources.
3. Provide time for students to read their summaries to the class.

Session Three: Community Interview

1. Students interview one member of their community about the cultural, community and/or personal significance of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Guide the class in crafting interview questions as a group. Consider and expand: What stories do they know about Our Lady of Guadalupe? Is she an important figure in their community? What does she symbolize to them? Remind students of the importance of respect, diverse perspectives, and compassionate listening.
2. After the interview, in their notebooks, students will write a one-page reflection on their interview experience. What did they learn? What is the importance of community perspectives?

Session Four: Reading a Literary Text

1. Students read an excerpt from the short story "Little Miracles, Kept Promises," written by Sandra Cisneros in *Woman Hollering Creek*.
2. In small groups, ask students to discuss the story: What stood out to them? How did the story interpret and reimagine the figure of Our Lady of Guadalupe? What did they think about this interpretation? Were there any other figures in the story they can find represented in the fresco?
3. In their notebooks, ask students to respond to the following questions:
 - a. What does Our Lady of Guadalupe represent for you?
 - b. What does Our Lady of Guadalupe represent in culture? In history?

Session Five: Writing a Short Story or Fictional Biography

1. Brainstorm:
Ask students to review what they have written in their notebooks throughout the previous sessions. Then, students write a response to the following prompt: If Our

Lady of Guadalupe was remade into a contemporary person, what might she look like? Who would she be?

2. Students write a short story or a fictional biography about a contemporary Our Lady of Guadalupe. Ask students to reimagine who she would be and invent her backstory.
3. Provide time for students to share their stories.

Evaluation/Assessment

[Feedback: Take this survey to share your feedback on this lesson plan](#); formative and summative assessment (e.g. [Edutopia](#); [CRLT](#)); state assessment tools.

Handout

An excerpt from

“Little Miracles, Kept Promises”

By Sandra Cisneros in *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991)

Virgencita ...

I've cut off my hair just like I promised I would and pinned my braid here by your statue. Above a Toys "R" Us name tag that says IZAURA. Along several hospital bracelets. Next to a business card for Sergio's Casa de la Belleza Beauty College. Domingo Reyna's driver's license. Notes printed on the flaps of envelopes. Silk roses, plastic roses, paper roses, roses crocheted out of fluorescent orange yarn. Photo button of a baby in a charro hat. Caramel-skinned woman in a white graduation cap and gown. Mean dude in bandanna and tattoos. Oval black-and-white passport portrait of the sad uncle who never married. A mama in a sleeveless dress watering the porch plants. Sweet boy with new mustache and new soldier uniform. Teenager with a little bit of herself sitting on her lap. Blurred husband and wife learning one into the other as if joined at the hip. Black-and-white photo of the cousins la Josie y la Mary Helen, circa 1942. Polaroid of Sylvia Rios, First Holy Communion, age nine years.

So many milagritos safety-pinned here, so many little miracles dangling from red thread- a gold Sacred Heart, a tiny copper arm, a kneeling man in silver, a bottle, a brass truck, a food, a house, a hand, a baby, a cat, a breast, a tooth, a belly button, an evil eye. So many petitions, so many promises made and kept. And there is nothing I can give you except this braid of hair the color of coffee in a glass.

Chayo, what have you done! All that beautiful hair.

Chayito, how could you ruin in one second what your mother took years to create?

You might as well've plucked out your eyes like Saint Lucy. All that hair!

My mother cried, did I tell you? All that beautiful hair ...

I've cut off my hair. Which I've never cut since the day I was born. The donkey tail in a birthday game. Something shed like a snakeskin.

My head as light as if I'd raised it from water. My heart buoyant again, as if before I'd worn el Sagrado Corazón in my open chest. I could've lit this entire church with my grief.

I'm a bell without a clapper. A woman with one foot in this world and one foot in that. A woman straddling both. This thing between my legs, this unmentionable.

I'm a snake swallowing its tail. I'm my history and my future. All my ancestors' ancestors inside my own belly. All my futures and all my pasts.

I've had to steel and hoard and hone myself. I've had to push the furniture against the door and not let you in.

What you doing sitting in there in the dark?

I'm thinking

Thinking of what?

Just ... thinking.

You're nuts. Chayo, ven a saludar. All the relatives are here. You come out of there and be sociable.

Do boys think, and girls daydream? Do only girls have to come out and greet the relatives and smile and be nice and *quedar bien*?

It's not good to spend so much time alone.

What she do in there all by herself? It don't look right.

Chayito, when you getting married? Look at your cousin Leticia. She's younger than you.

How many kids do you want when you grow up?

When I become a mommy...

You'll change. You'll see. Wait till you meet Mr. Right.

Chayo, tell everybody what it is you're studying again.

Look at our Chayito. She likes making her little pictures. She's gonna be a painter.

A painter! Tell her I got five rooms that need painting.

When you become a mother...

Thank you for making all those months I held my breath not a child in my belly, but a thyroid problem in my throat.

I can't be a mother. Not now. Maybe never. Not for me to choose, like I didn't choose being female. Like I didn't choose being artist it isn't something you choose. It's something you are, only I can't explain it.

I don't want to be a mother.

I wouldn't mind being a father. At least a father could still be artist, could love something instead of someone, and no one would call that selfish.

I leave my braid here and thank you for believing what I do is important. Though no one else in my family, no other woman, neither friend nor relative, no one I know, not even the heroine in the telenovelas, no woman wants to live alone.

I do.

Virgencita de Guadalupe. For a long time I wouldn't let you in my house. I couldn't see you without seeing my ma each time my father came home drunk and yelling, blaming everything that ever went wrong in his life on her.

I couldn't look at your folded hands without seeing my abuela mumbling, "My son, my son, my son ..." Couldn't look at you without blaming you for all the pain my mother and her mother and all our mothers' mothers have put up with in the name of God. Couldn't let you in my house.

I wanted you bare-breasted, snakes in your hands. I wanted you leaping and somersaulting the backs of bulls. I wanted you swallowing raw hearts and rattling volcanic ash. I wasn't going to be my mother or my grandma. All that self-sacrifice, all that silent suffering. Hell no. Not here. Not me.

Don't think it was easy going without you. Don't think I didn't get my share of it from everyone. Heretic. Atheist. Malinchista. Hocicono. But I wouldn't shut my yap. My mouth always getting me in trouble. Is that what they teach you at the university? Miss High-and-Mighty. Miss Thinks-She's-Too-Good-for-Us. Acting like a bolilla, a white girl. Malinche. Don't think it didn't hurt being called a traitor. Trying to explain to my ma, to my abuela, why I didn't want to be like them.

I don't know how it all fell in place. How I finally understood who you are. No longer Mary the mild, but our mother Tonantzín. Your church at Tepeyac built on the site of her temple. Sacred ground no matter whose goddess claims it.

That you could have the power to rally a people when a country was born, and again during civil war, and during a farmworkers' strike in California made me think maybe there is power in my mother's patience, strength in my grandmother's

endurance. Because those who suffer have a special power, don't they? The power of understanding someone else's pain. And understanding is the beginning of healing.

When I learned your real name is Coatloxopeuh, She Who Has Dominion over Serpents, when I recognized you as Tonantzín, and learned your names are Teteoinnan, Toci, Xochiquetzal, Tlazol teotl, Coatlicue, Chalchiuhtlicue, Coyolxauhqui, Huixtocihuatl, Chicomecoatl, Cihuacoatl), when I could see you as Nuestra Señora de la Soledad, Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro, Nuestra Señora de San Juan de los Lagos, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of Sorrows, I wasn't ashamed, then, to be my mother's daughter, my grandmother's granddaughter, my ancestors' child.

When I could see you in all your facets, all at once the Buddha, the Tao, the true Messiah, Yahweh, Allah, the Heart of the Sky, the Heart of the Earth, the Lord of the Near and Far, the Spirit, the Light, the Universe, I could love you, and, finally, learn to love me.

Mighty Guadalupana Coatloxopeuh Tonantzín, What "little miracle" could I pin here? Braid of hair in its place and I know that I thank you.

Rosario (Chayo) De Leon

Austin, Tejas

Cisneros, Sandra. "Little Miracles, Kept Promises." *Woman Hollering Creek*, Random House, Inc., 1991, pp. 124-129.