



The Voice of a Latina Writer: Author Study on Sandra Cisneros

Denver Public Schools

In partnership with Metropolitan State College of Denver

El Alma de la Raza Project



The Voice of a Latina Writer: Author Study on Sandra Cisneros

By Lu Liñan

Grades 9–12

Implementation Time
for Unit of Study: 6 weeks

Denver Public Schools

El Alma de la Raza Curriculum
and Teacher Training Program

Loyola A. Martinez, Project Director
Dan Villescás, Curriculum Development Specialist

El Alma de la Raza Series

The Voice of a Latina Writer: Author Study on Sandra Cisneros

Unit Concepts

- Making connections from literature to personal life
- Developing schema
- Focusing on literary analysis: theme, voice, and tone
- Developing critical thinking skills through reading and analyzing
- Writing expository and descriptive essays

Standards Addressed by This Unit

Reading and Writing

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students use appropriate technologies to extend comprehension and communication skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW7)

Introduction

The highly acclaimed Latina writer Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago on December 20, 1954. A graduate of Loyola University with a degree in English, she has worked as a teacher to high school dropouts at Chicago's Latino Youth Alternative High School, a college recruiter, and a counselor. She has also taught writing as a writer-in-residence at several universities. Cisneros has won numerous awards for her writing, and her books have been translated into as many as 10 languages.

Cisneros attended the University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop, and while she was there, she finished the manuscript for *My Wicked Wicked Ways*, a book of poetry. During her time at the Workshop, she found her true literary voice, that of a Mexican woman. She found that her writing could reflect her distinct and special ethnic and cultural background, and she has written several books that express what others couldn't; these books are *The House on Mango Street*, *Loose Woman*, and *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*.

The House on Mango Street, which won the Before Columbus American Book Award, is probably her most widely read book and has sold more than 500,000 copies. This novel is a series of 44 related vignettes narrated by Esperanza Cordero, a Latina girl growing up in a poor Chicago neighborhood. Together these vignettes draw a memorable portrait of the barrio, its neighbors, its young children, and Esperanza's friends and family. This highly acclaimed novel is studied by students of all ages, from grade schools to universities, throughout the nation and the world.

In her poetry and stories, Cisneros' writing reflects her personal experiences and perspectives as a Chicana. In these writings, she represents her community in an honorable way and shows the diversity of her characters, who are searching for self-identity, independence, and cultural acceptance. Much of her poetry deals with the places she has traveled, and blends Spanish and English to enrich the text.

Cisneros has lectured throughout the United States, Mexico, and Europe, and is still writing. She lives in San Antonio, Texas.

Implementation Guidelines

It is advised that this unit be implemented at grades 9 through 12, in a Hispanic American literature course or in an English Language Acquisition Level 5 or Level 6 language arts class. This unit focuses on the essential literacy skills of reading, writing, speaking, problem-solving, and listening that are necessary for life-long learning. This unit is designed to be implemented in a six-week timeframe.

Instructional Materials and Resources

The following books by Sandra Cisneros will be read in this unit:

The House on Mango Street

Woman Hollering Creek

My Wicked Wicked Ways

The following resources are also needed to teach this unit:

Latino Biographies by Globe Fearon

Tactics for Thinking: Teacher's Manual by Robert J. Marzano and Daisy E. Arrendondo

Lesson Summary

Lesson 1	Making Connections from Literature to Personal Life 4 Read about and discuss author Sandra Cisneros. Read the vignette “My Name” and write about own name. Use interview sheet to interview parents or other family members about the origin of the student’s name and birth. Share and discuss thoughts on gender roles in Latino families and in student’s own family.
Lesson 2	Developing Schemas and Prior Knowledge 9 Read the vignette “The House on Mango Street” and discuss the house or apartment that was the student’s favorite. Write in a Literature Log about this home, and write a descriptive essay “Dream House” using the Writer’s Workshop.
Lesson 3	Focusing on Literary Analysis 13 Read the story “My Tocaya” in <i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> and the vignette “Born Bad,” from <i>The House on Mango Street</i> , and reflect on and write about the author’s theme, voice, and tone. Compare these readings, focusing on word choice, the elements of the stories, and the author’s attitude.
Lesson 4	Developing Critical Thinking Skills 15 Read independently from <i>The House on Mango Street</i> , <i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> , and <i>My Wicked Wicked Ways</i> . Apply critical thinking skills to develop schema about these readings, and make connections between these readings and personal experiences.
Lesson 5	Developing Writing with Cultural Understanding 18 Read biographical information about Sandra Cisneros to understand the events and turning points in her life that led to her success as a writer. Write pieces of literature in the genres studied in this unit — vignettes and poetry.

LESSON 1:

Making Connections from Literature to Personal Life

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students make connections between prior knowledge and what they need to know about a topic before reading about it.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct sentence structure in writing.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students will identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of a speaker, author, or director.

Students will paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Students will read literature to investigate common issues and interests in relation to self and others.

OBJECTIVES

Students will develop an awareness of author Sandra Cisneros through a teacher-directed lecture and discussion and through selected readings.

Students will interview a member of their family.

Students will write an essay on their names.

Students will make an oral presentation on their essays and interviews.

Students will write about and paraphrase from vignettes in the literature log.

SPECIFICS

The contemporary period in Mexican-American literature begins in 1960 and encompasses the present. Author Sandra Cisneros has developed stories using descriptive writing that provides readers with a sensory impression about the appearance of an object, a place, or a person.

Many of her vignettes in *The House on Mango Street* describe her experiences growing up in a Mexican-American household. Through her writing she shares her “voice” with the reader and creates a desire for the reader to share similar experiences, thus creating writers.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teacher-directed discussion
Independent reading
Questioning — interview questionnaire
Paraphrasing (literature log)
Oral presentation
Literature log

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Read the introduction to this unit to prepare to introduce the author to the students. Choose several vignettes from *The House on Mango Street* to assign for independent reading and the literature log. (Plan to have the students read the entire book by the end of Lesson 3.)

ACTIVITIES

The teacher will introduce Sandra Cisneros to the class with a short biographical lecture.

The teacher will read aloud the vignette “My Name” from *The House on Mango Street* to the class, and begin a discussion of the vignette by starting a dialog on names and namesakes. Continue the discussion by addressing the issue of gender roles in Latino families, in the students’ families, at school, at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Students will write an essay, “My Name,” about how they got their name: Are they happy with their name? If they are not, what name would they have given themselves? This essay may also include information about the students’ surname.

Develop an interview questionnaire that students will use with parents or other family members about their birth and their name. Use the worksheet of suggested questions and topics to help students develop individualized questionnaires. The students will conduct the interview and complete the questionnaire.

Students will give a short oral presentation on their “My Name” essays and the information they found by doing their interviews.

Students will read assigned vignettes from *The House on Mango Street* and paraphrase them in the literature log (a notebook used by the student to paraphrase readings and to chart ideas, facts, and details for their readings).

VOCABULARY

chandelier	a branched holder for several candles or electric lights, suspended from a ceiling
Esperanza	hope
imagery	a set of mental pictures; vivid language that represents objects, actions, or ideas; expression rich in descriptive words and phrases that create sensory experiences for the reader
inherit	to receive by legacy or to receive something previously in another’s possession
vignette	a short, descriptive sketch that may stand alone or be part of a larger work of fiction

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The House on Mango Street

Interview questionnaire

Literature log

ASSESSMENT

Assess the “My Name” writing assignment for correct grammar, spelling, and mechanics, the interview sheets for completeness and accuracy, and the oral presentations using the scoring sheet. Assess class discussion; a rubric may be developed based on key indicators of a good quality discussion. Assess the literature log with the rubric included at the end of the unit.

Suggested Questions and Topics for Interviews

Help students design a questionnaire that fits their individual situation. This list contains topics and questions that may be pertinent for their interview, depending on their background and personal history. You may want to use some of these topics and add others, as may be appropriate.

- What year and date was I born?
- What day of the week was I born?
- How much did I weigh at birth?
- What long was I?
- Did I have much hair?
- What color was my hair?
- What color were my eyes?
- How did you choose my name?
- Why did you give me that name?
- What does my name mean?
- What does my surname mean?
- Who are my godparents? Why did you choose them as my sponsors?
- Were there any religious ceremonies or celebrations? Describe them.
- Did you have a big celebration? Describe it.

Some students may have been adopted, they may be living with relatives other than their parents, or they may be from a single-parent household. Help these students tailor their interviews to meet their specific situation.

LESSON 2: Developing Schemas and Prior Knowledge

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students use appropriate technologies to extend comprehension and communication skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW7)

BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will make connections between prior knowledge about a topic before reading about it.

Students will use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and language usage.

Students will write and speak for a variety of purposes.

Students will plan, draft, revise, proofread, edit, and publish written communications.

Students will prepare written and oral presentations using strategies.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct structure in writing.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students will know and use literary terminology.

Students will read classic and contemporary literature of the United States about the experiences and traditions of diverse ethnic groups.

Students will demonstrate problem-solving skills through the use of appropriate technologies.

OBJECTIVES

Students will select a focused topic and draft, revise, edit and submit a final copy of a descriptive essay.

Students write a descriptive essay using the Writer's Workshop.

Students will read vignettes from *The House on Mango Street*.

Students will write about and paraphrase vignettes in a literature log.

SPECIFICS

Like Esperanza, the narrator in *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros desperately longed for a house of her own when she was a young girl. Inspired by her own background in the Spanish-speaking neighborhood of Chicago, Cisneros brings to life many of the different experiences she lived as a young girl. In *The House on Mango Street*, the vignette with the same title lends itself to create descriptive writing using sensory and visual impressions about one's own "dream house."

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read aloud

Summarizing

Descriptive writing

Writer's Workshop

Visualization and verbalization

Literature log

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Read the vignette "The House on Mango Street" in preparation for the read aloud. Develop your prior knowledge to help students with the descriptive essay titled "My Dream House." Choose several more vignettes from *The House on Mango Street* to assign for independent reading and the literature log. Briefly review the writing process specific to the Writer's Workshop if needed.

ACTIVITIES

The teacher will read the vignette "The House on Mango Street" and ask the class questions about the use of description in writing to reveal thoughts and feelings about prior events in our lives. The teacher will lead a discussion on the details and feelings described in the reading and in the life of the author.

Using the Writer's Workshop, students will write a descriptive essay titled "My Dream House." To begin work on this descriptive writing, students (directed by the teacher) will brainstorm about all the things they want to have in their dream house. While students are brainstorming, the teacher will write down all the ideas and thoughts on the board and students will take notes. After this activity, the teacher will web on the board a particular room in the house, perhaps the bedroom. Generating student participation, the teacher will diagram a web and affix all the things located in the bedroom. Students will copy the bedroom web in their literature logs and begin to web other rooms and what they contain. The students will start writing descriptive paragraphs about each room in their dream house.

As writers, students must give descriptions that create a clear picture of their dream house. They must use specific details to describe each room, thereby revealing their thoughts and feelings. Students may use imagery by pretending they are walking through this house. What does the outside of the house look like? What do they envision as they walk through the doorway? What kinds of materials is the house constructed of? Are the floors carpeted, tiled, or made of wood? What are the dimensions of the rooms? What colors are the walls, floors, and doors? Are there any works of art? What kind of furniture is in each room? Describe all of these things, and think of as many additional questions as you can to help make the essay detailed and complete.

As students are writing their first and second drafts, they will confer with the teacher or peers. The teacher should encourage them to be very specific, so that the reader can visualize what is being described more clearly. These techniques should make the students' essays more vivid and interesting.

If possible, students will go to a writing lab or a computer lab to produce the final product.

Students will continue to read assigned vignettes independently and write about them and paraphrase them in their literature log.

VOCABULARY

Brainstorming	Technique for eliciting ideas in a small group of people
Drafting	Writing ideas in complete sentences and paragraphs
Editing	Correcting errors in writing that would distract from the final paper
Prewriting	Gathering of thoughts to fit a writing purpose
Revising	Correcting and improving a draft to produce the final paper
Webbing	Connecting a word or main idea into a narrative paragraph

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The House on Mango Street

Literature log

Writer's Workshop

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate each step of Writer's Workshop and the conferences held with the students during the writing of their first and second drafts. Evaluate the final version of the "My Dream House" essay for spelling, grammar, and mechanics, and the effectiveness of the descriptions. Use the criteria given on the list on the next page. Evaluate of the literature log on grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, using the rubric provided at the end of this unit.

LESSON EXTENSION

If students have access to a drafting class, have them draw their dream house, or if they have access to the necessary software, they can produce a drawing on a computer.

Criteria for Writer's Workshop

Use the following criteria for assessing the Writer's Workshop.

Element	Possible Points	Teacher Assessment
1. The topic sentence or introductory paragraph has a thesis statement 5	5	_____
2. Details are organized in a way that supports the thesis statement, and the writing flows smoothly 5	5	_____
3. The final paper includes beginning, middle and concluding paragraphs 5	5	_____
4. Writing is free of errors in grammar and usage, and spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are correct 5	5	_____
5. Revision of the first and second draft included conferencing with a peer or the teacher. 5	5	_____
6. In the webbing, details were organized in a logical form for composing paragraphs 5	5	_____
7. Brainstorming included a written list of supporting details that were used in the composition 5	5	_____
Total Points 35	35	_____

LESSON 3: Focusing on Literary Analysis

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct sentence structure in writing.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students identify the purpose, perspective, and historical and cultural influences of the author.

Students will paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze the author's voice, theme, tone, and style.

Students will write a compare and contrast essay on the author's writing style in a vignette and a short story.

SPECIFICS

Author Sandra Cisneros has been described as a fearless writer who boldly plunges into complex characters and risky situations. In the stories titled "My Tocaya" and "Born Bad," Cisneros writes about harsh realities and harsh beauty using incorrect grammar and a strange attitude toward her subject. In reading these two stories the reader can find examples of Cisneros's stylistic devices and the effect that is created by each device and how it enriches the text.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Independent reading

Compare and contrast

Paraphrasing

Literature log

Writer's Workshop

Comprehension strategies

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Choose several vignettes from *The House on Mango Street* and several stories from *Woman Hollering Creek* to assign for independent reading and the literature log. Students should finish reading *The House on Mango Street* by the end of this lesson and *Woman Hollering Creek* by the end of the unit.

ACTIVITIES

Students will independently read the story “My Tocaya” from *Woman Hollering Creek* and read the vignette “Born Bad” from *The House on Mango Street*. The class will participate in a teacher-led discussion that centers around comparing and contrasting these two readings. Using the Writer’s Workshop, the students will then write a compare and contrast essay about the author’s voice, theme, tone, and style. The essay must analyze the author’s word choice, the elements of the readings, and her attitude in each. If possible, students will go to a writing lab or a computer lab to produce the final product.

Students will read assigned vignettes from *The House on Mango Street* and stories from *Woman Hollering Creek* and write about and paraphrase them in the literature log.

VOCABULARY

Style	The author’s unique way of communicating ideas through literature.
Theme	The central idea or message in a work of literature.
Tone	The attitude a writer takes toward the subject.
Voice	Writer’s unique way of using language to convey his/her personality through the writing.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The House on Mango Street

Woman Hollering Creek

Literature log

Writing or computer lab

ASSESSMENT

Assess the writing assignment on the compare and contrast essay for correct grammar, spelling, and mechanics. Use the criteria from Lesson 2. Assess class discussion using the rubric developed in Lesson 1. Assess the literature log with the rubric included at the end of the unit.

LESSON EXTENSION

Write a character sketch of Patricia Benavidez from “My Tocaya” and one of Aunt Lupe from “Born Bad.”

LESSON 4: Developing Critical Thinking Skills

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

BENCHMARKS

Students will adjust reading strategies for a variety of purposes.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct sentence structure in writing.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to gather data, define the problem, and apply problem-solving skills.

Students paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

OBJECTIVES

Students will create new information or restructure introduced information through the application of two critical thinking skills, concept attainment and pattern recognition, to selected pieces of Cisneros' literature.

Students will identify the organizational patterns of sequencing, description of a single concept (word or phrase), cause patterns, and similarity, in selected readings.

Students will become independent learners of new concepts by engaging in the concept attainment process.

Students will increase their vocabulary from words taken from the reading selections and identifying general concepts associated with the words.

SPECIFICS

This lesson addresses two critical thinking skills: concept attainment and pattern recognition.

Concept attainment is the process of associating experiences with a word commonly used to represent those experiences. Pattern recognition is the process of identifying organizational patterns in information presented in writing or orally.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Independent reading
Summarizing
Inferencing
Cause and effect
Teacher-guided vocabulary development
Developing schema
Critical thinking skills
Literature log

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Teaching the process of concept attainment and pattern recognition is essential for executing Lessons 4 and 5 of this unit. Consult *Tactics for Thinking* for background information about concept attainment (Unit 7, page 35) and pattern recognition (Unit 9, page 49). Choose poems from *My Wicked Wicked Ways*, vignettes from *The House on Mango Street*, and stories from *Woman Hollering Creek* for students to use in applying these two critical thinking skills.

Also choose stories from *Woman Hollering Creek* for students to continue their paraphrasing activities in their literature logs. Students should have read all of *The House on Mango Street* at the end of the previous lesson and should finish *Woman Hollering Creek* by the end of the unit.

Review or (reteach) the critical thinking processes before teaching this lesson.

ACTIVITIES

Concept attainment process. Students will read independently from *The House on Mango Street*, stories from *Woman Hollering Creek*, and poetry from *My Wicked Wicked Ways*. The students will select words from these readings to practice the concept attainment process. Students will develop a flowchart illustrating the concept attainment process.

The flowchart will be based on the following schematic:

- As you are reading, list selected keywords taken from the text.
- For each word, write about the images that the word evokes.
- List any experiences, sensations, or emotions that you associate with the word.
- Recite the word out loud and visualize how the word looks in print.

Using this schematic, students will record all the visual images and sensations associated with selected words in their literature logs. Students will also write about both direct and indirect personal experiences based on the concepts and words identified from the readings in the literature log, and they will identify new concepts that may emerge from the specific experiences described in the reading selections.

Pattern recognition. In their literature logs, students will make a list of examples of different types of patterns found in the readings.

Students will continue the paraphrasing activities of the stories from *Woman Hollering Creek* in their literature logs.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The House on Mango Street

Woman Hollering Creek

My Wicked Wicked Ways

Literature log

ASSESSMENT

Concept attainment process. Assess the flowchart based on the schematic. Check for correct sequencing of the process.

Process recognition. Assess the categorization of patterns; there should be at least two or three categories identified in the readings.

Assess the literature log with the rubric included at the end of this unit.

LESSON 5: Developing Writing with Cultural Understanding

What will students be learning?

STANDARDS

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

BENCHMARKS

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will use information from their reading to increase vocabulary and language usage.

Students demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students develop and support a thesis about the significance in particular works of literature written by an ethnic author.

OBJECTIVES

Students will outline key turning points in Cisneros' life that led to her success as a writer.

Students will read Cisneros' poems and derive the main concepts and describe patterns of sequence and similarity.

Students will compose their own poems using common themes found in Cisneros' poetry.

Students will read or perform (mime) various poems, enabling them to experience and express rhythm, structure, and cadence of poetry.

SPECIFICS

The components of poetry that will be highlighted in this unit are the following:

Rhythm: The sense of movement attributable to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry or prose or the length of sounds in qualitative verse.

Cadence: The natural rhythm of language determined by its inherent alteration of stressed and unstressed syllables.

Structure: The phonetic pattern, the sequence of images, the meaning suggested by connotations of the words or other elements.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Independent reading

Read aloud

Cooperative learning groups

Critical thinking skills (concept attainment, pattern recognition)

Literature log

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Read the biography, “Sandra Cisneros — Mexican American Novelist and Poet,” from the book *Latino Biographies*.

Review (or reteach) the components of poetry before beginning this lesson.

Chose stories from *Woman Hollering Creek* for students to continue paraphrasing and writing about in their literature logs. Students should have read the entire book by the end of this lesson.

ACTIVITIES

Teacher and students will read Sandra Cisneros’ biography. After reading, students will do the activities on pages 22–24 and gather information relevant to the writer and the process she uses in her writings. Students will outline the key turning points in Cisneros’ life that led to her success as a writer. Students will develop a life map of the events and experiences in Cisneros’ life that contributed to her success as a writer.

Students will read and analyze several vignettes from her writings and create their own vignette using the guide titled “Writing Workshop” on pages 56–59, from the book *Latino Biographies*.

Students will read the poems in Part 1 of *My Wicked Wicked Ways* and derive the main concepts of each poem and describe patterns of sequence and similarities. Students will then compose their own poems

VOCABULARY

abuelito	grandfather
acquired	to have gained for oneself
biography	a written account of a person’s life
deadline	a set time limit to complete a piece of work
distinct	easy to distinguish from others; clearly defined
fierce	extremely violent or savage; very intense or ardent
motto	a word, phrase, or sentence chosen as being expressive of the goals or ideals of a nation, group, etc., and inscribed on a seal, banner, coin, etc.
prestigious	held in high esteem, famous
recruiter	a person who enlists or looks for people to enroll in a college, join the military, etc.
velorio	a traditional viewing of a deceased person with family and friends praying and offering last respects

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Latino Biographies

The House on Mango Street

My Wicked Wicked Ways

Writer's Workshop

Literature log

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on the following:

- Completion of two poems reflective of any of the four sections of *My Wicked Wicked Ways*.
- Completion of a life map of Cisneros with the key events that led to her success as a writer.
- Short quiz on vocabulary words.
- Brief writing conference with students for joint determination of final grade based on the following:
 - understanding of characterization, setting, and main topics;
 - use of conventions and mechanics of writing (spelling, punctuation, drafts and revisions, editing, and other evidence of self-appraisal);
 - ability to labeling genre;
 - oral recitation of poems with special attention to the intonation, phrasing, and rhythm; and
 - adherence to Writer's Workshop components.

UNIT ASSESSMENT

How will students demonstrate proficiency?

PERFORMANCE TASK

Write a book report on *The House on Mango Street* which will include the following criteria:

1. Book title
2. Name of author
3. Copyright date
4. Protagonist(s) — include name and description of character(s)
5. Setting
6. Summary of book

Type and submit report at the end of the unit

Rubric for Literature Log

Students should have read and logged daily paraphrasing from literature that was required for independent reading and reading in the classroom setting.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4	All the required material is written in the log. The paraphrasing is accurate and complete, and the writing is grammatically correct.
3	All the required material is written in the log. The paraphrasing is generally complete, but the writing has grammatical errors.
2	Most of the required material is written in the log, but the paraphrasing is not complete, and there are several grammatical or mechanical errors.
1	Very little of the required information is written in the log. The writing is not sequential, and there are numerous grammatical or mechanical errors.

Rubric for Descriptive Writing

Successful descriptive writing should contain the following criteria:

Element	Points Possible	Teacher Assessment
Essay has a clear focus and sense of purpose.	25	_____
Essay has a good use of sensory details and precise words to create a vivid image, establish a mood, or express emotion	25	_____
Essay presents details in a logical order	25	_____
Essay uses transitions to help the reader understand the order of impressions that are being described	25	_____
TOTAL POINTS	100	_____

Rubric for Compare and Contrast Writing

Successful compare and contrast writing should contain the following criteria:

Element	Points Possible	Teacher Assessment
Clearly identifies the subjects that are being compared and contrasted.	20	_____
Writing includes specific and relevant details	20	_____
Follows a clear plan of organization dealing with the same features of both subjects under discussion.....	20	_____
Uses language and details appropriate to the audience	20	_____
Uses transitional words and phrases to clarify similarities and differences	20	_____
TOTAL POINTS	100	_____

Bibliography

- Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1991.
An eloquent collection of 44 vignettes that tell the story of Esperanza Cordero, a young Latina growing up in a poor barrio of Chicago.
- Cisneros, Sandra. *My Wicked Wicked Ways*. Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1988.
A book of poetry written by a grown woman whose international travels have left her feeling unsettled and who is seeking to come to terms with the pain and confusion of her childhood.
- Cisneros, Sandra. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1991.
A book of short stories about Latina women searching for independence, love, and balance. Recommended for a more mature student.
- Day, Frances Ann. *Latina and Latino Voices in Literature*. New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1997.
A collection of biographies containing the work of 23 Latino and Latina authors. This book enables educators, librarians, and parents in finding books that speak and touch the lives of all readers, especially young Latinos.
- English Profiles Handbook*. Victoria, Australia - Brewster, NY: TASA, 1991.
Excellent material for assessment techniques, especially for students who are acquiring the English language.
- Fletcher, Ralph. *What a Writer Needs*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993.
A book about writing that includes examples of students writing, sharing, revising, and publishing their work. This text speaks to the task of extending students' writing. It also focuses on literacy techniques through writing.
- Globe Fearon. *Latino Biographies*. New Jersey: Globe Fearon Educational Publisher, 1995.
A collection of biographies divided into four sections that include Latinos in Literature, Latinos in Fine Arts and Performance, Latinos in the Sciences and Mathematics, and Latinos in Public Service and Business. Recommended for curriculum that focuses on Latino culture.
- Marzano, Robert J., and Daisy E. Arredondo. *Tactics for Thinking: Teacher's Manual*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, 1986.
A training manual for teaching critical thinking skills.

About the Author

Lu Liñan is a Colorado native, born and raised in the San Luis Valley. She attended school in Conejos County, graduating from Antonito High School before moving to Denver. In 1969 she founded the dance company The Ballet Folklorico de Denver, which she directed for 25 years. During these years, the dance troupe performed throughout the Southwest and was a special guest of the Mexican government in 1976 in Mexico City.

In 1984, she realized she was not reaching enough of the student population through cultural performances; therefore, increasingly aware of the high dropout rate of Latino students, she enrolled at Metropolitan State College and obtained her B.A. in secondary education in 1990. She began her career as a certified teacher at Denver's largest inner-city school, West High School. She also taught one year at a middle school and two years at an alternative high school, and is currently teaching at West High School in the ELA Department. She obtained a master's degree in May 1997 in curriculum and instruction from the University of Colorado. She currently chairs the ELA Department and is the teacher sponsor for the Unidad Latinoamericana Club (a group of senior students). She also directs the West High Folkloric Dancers and is involved in several committees within the school.

Lu brings into the classroom the rich cultural heritage of the Southwest together with the folklore and feeling of the Mexican traditions that she has gained throughout the years in the study of music and dance from Mexico. In addition, Lu has raised four children, two boys and two girls, and also has been an entrepreneur of a Mexican restaurant and an entertainment company. She also participates as an actress for El Centro Su Teatro, where she has been cast in several plays. She has written two other units for the Alma de la Raza Curriculum Project and was instrumental in piloting several of these instructional units at West High School during the spring of 1999.