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PUENTE | ANTHOLOGY

Cultura:

Language, Culture,
Identity

Curriculum



"Culture, it turns out, is the way that every brain makes sense of the world. That is why everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, has a culture. Think of culture as software for the brain's hardware. The brain uses cultural information to turn everyday happenings into meaningful events. If we want to help dependent learners do more higher order thinking and problem solving, then we have to

access their brain's cognitive structures to deliver culturally responsive instruction."

—Zaretta Hammond

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NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR

- Engaging our students through cultura is at the center of the Puente pedagogy. Cultura encompasses many aspects of our identities - language, relationships, interests, experiences, and family. Our stories are dynamic, complex, and personal, and affect both how we see ourselves and how we interact with others. As educators it is important for us to first understand our own stories and how we validate those of others, including those that are different from your own.
- Puente's professional development has always valued research that seeks to understand how linguistics, identity, and culture impacts teaching and learning. Some of the content of this chapter has been drawn and inspired from recent Puente faculty inquiry and collaboration around these topics.
- This chapter is designed for students to engage in the discovery of their own community cultural wealth, reaffirming and raising critical consciousness around issues of identity and belonging. The pieces in this chapter work well with Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model.
- For more information on why culture is a critical component of the classroom, see Zaretta Hammond's work on culturally responsive teaching: [Surface Culture: The Visible Gateway to Deep Culture - SchoolRubric](#)

Key Term / Definition

Community Cultural Wealth is defined as "the assets that many students acquire from 'a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition.'" Community Cultural Wealth includes aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistance capital. ([source](#)).

Learning Objectives

These pieces have been selected as a way for students to:

- Gain a deeper understanding of their own community cultural wealth and amplify their voices.
- Analyze the forces that have shaped their cultural identities.
- Gain the knowledge necessary to advocate for themselves and become agents of change in their communities by building understanding, empathy, and breaking down stereotypes.

Essential and Guiding Questions

- What is the value of honoring all of our intersecting identities?
- How is our identity and sense of belonging shaped by the people and circumstances we encounter?
- What has shaped the way I speak? How would I describe the way I speak? How is it unique?

- How do our beliefs about difference influence the ways in which we see and choose to interact with each other?
- How can we uplift, respect, and honor the most marginalized members of our communities?

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Suggested Activities

- **Cajita Project** is a reflection and contemplation project which works as a great frame for students to enter the conversation of cultura through pedagogy that is rooted in social justice, activism, and community building. [MS, HS, CC]
- **Community Cultural Wealth** [MS, HS, CC]
 - Consider the following writing prompt from the [Pedagogical Applications of Tara Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model in the Puente Classroom](#) Designed by Puente teacher Gustavo Flores.
 - Writing Prompt: Use the Community Cultural Wealth Model (aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance) as a way to view the movie, book, or field-trip that you just completed. Write 2 responses of what you learned.
 - Identify the cultural wealth capital, identify the evidence of the cultural wealth capital, then following in a few sentences explain why you chose the evidence and discuss your connection with it. This type of writing is more of a journal response than a structured essay – show your best thinking.
- **Linguistic Justice #1** [MS, HS, CC]
 - Read and Annotate ["This Ain't Another Statement! This is a Demand for Black Linguistic Justice!"](#)
 - Have students discuss/define their linguistic groups and which they incorporate in their communication in the classroom. Discussion suggestion: What assumptions do we have about "academic" language?
 - Additional readings: ["Should Writers Use They Own English"](#), ["If Black Language Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?"](#), ["These Students Speak Perfect Spanglish — And Now They're Learning To Own It"](#), and [Code Meshing in the Real World \(and in Academia\)](#).
 - In groups, have students create a poster board of demands for their Puente English class.
- **Linguistic Justice #2** [MS, HS, CC]
 - Teaching through [Ariana Brown's Spoken Word Poetry](#).
 - Topics: bilingualism, Afrolatinx identity, curanderismo, Mexican spirituality, mental health, Black hair
 - Use this [curriculum](#) which includes full lesson plans, video, and poetry transcriptions for 1-2 lessons and week-long lessons.
- **Linguistic Justice #3** [MS, HS, CC]
 - Review this open access [Spanish Curriculum Centering Blackness in Latin America and Black Language Learners](#). Lesson plans, learning objectives, videos, and lesson materials are provided for free on over 10 different subjects, including hair, music, geography, food, shopping, giving directions, etc.
 - Discuss with your class the significance of the above curriculum. Often, racism is framed as a U.S. issue, not a Latin American one. Use this conversation as an opportunity to discuss anti-Blackness and other types of racism within Latinx communities and why it is important to honor and respect each of our unique relationships to culture, race, and language
- **Dance & Music as Culture** [HS, CC]
 - Read this excerpt from Hanif Adurraqib's [A Little Devil in America](#). (This link includes a short excerpt and an interview with the author.)

- Writing Response: What music, sounds, dances, and movement are central to your understanding/ location in your culture? How do these sounds and movements correlate to specific events or celebrations? How do they define your life?
- Consider any writing (reviews, cultural essays, social media posts) about the sounds/ music/ artists you selected. What can we learn about their influence and effect? How does the author's experience with it compare to yours?
- Discussion: How do our response to sounds, music, dances and movement serve as ways for us to define cultural communities?
 - How does social media affect this? (ex. TikTok and the widespread of new music, what reaches across generational/cultural divides, cultural appropriation)
- **Colorism** [MS, HS, CC]
 - Review Learning for Justice's ["What's Colorism'?" explanatory essay](#) to start.
 - Review Learning for Justice's [Toolkit for "What's 'Colorism'?"](#) for an introductory explanation for students and share the introductory activity with them. As you discuss colorism, be sure to frame colorism as something that can happen in any racial or ethnic community, but is rooted in anti-Blackness.
 - Group Activity: Divide students into groups of 4 and ask them to come up with a list of 10 ways they can end colorism in their communities. Each group will present their ideas to the class. Then, lead the class in a group dialogue to decide which ideas we will incorporate into everyday class activities or into the class social contract. Write these down on a large piece of paper and hang it in the classroom so students can see it every day.
 - Additional resources on [Teaching About Colorism](#)
- **The Marrow Thieves: Indigenous Culture, Identity, & History** [MS, HS, CC]
 - Read [The Marrow Thieves](#) by Cherie Dimaline as a class. Use the discussion questions, paired readings/viewings, and lesson plans from this [Teaching Guide](#). You may want to draw a historical link between the persecution of Native Americans in residential schools and the dystopian reality faced by the characters in the book.
 - Activity: Have students write their own individual Coming-To Story modeled after the characters in The Marrow Thieves. Their Coming-To Stories should include important information about them as individuals, the culture(s) they are part of, and anything they may want to share with the teacher. Read another [teacher's reflection on teaching this book and the Coming-To Story assignments](#).
 - After students turn in the assignment, have them discuss as a class the importance of retaining cultural practices even in the face of discrimination and assimilation. Why is it important to tell our stories in our own ways?

Text Selections

AUDIO / VISUAL

- All My Relations. (2019). ["Beyond Blood Quantum"](#) (Podcast Episode) [HS, CC]
- All My Relations. (2022). ["The Border Crossed Us"](#) (Podcast Episode) [HS, CC]
- Arzu-Brown, Sulma V. (2014). [Pelo Malo No Existe](#) (Picture Book) [MS, HS, CC]
- Bailey, Ebony. (2017). [Life Between Borders: Black Migrants in Mexico](#) (Documentary) [MS, HS, CC]
- Blactina Podcast. (2020). ["Latinidad is Canceled with Alan Pelaez Lopez"](#) (Podcast Episode) [HS, CC]
- Harris Machado, Dash. (2010). [Negro: A Docu-series About Latinx Identity](#) (Documentary) [CC]
- Lin, Grace. (2014). [Dim Sum for Everyone!](#) (Picture Book) [MS, HS, CC]
- Marte, Melania Luisa. (2022). ["BLACK SPANISH"](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
- Mendez, Jasminne. (2021). [Josefina's Habichuelas / Las Habichuelas de Josefina](#) (Picture Book) [MS, HS, CC]
- NPR. (2021). ["What Does it Mean to Be Latino?: The Light Skinned Privilege Edition"](#) (Podcast Episode) [HS, CC]
- Latino USA. (2020). [LOUD: The History of Reggaeton](#) (Podcast) [CC]

- PBS NewsHour. (2021). [“How colorism haunts dark-skinned immigrant communities”](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
- Reid-Vazquez, Michele. [Dialogues in Afro-latinidad](#) (Podcast) [CC]

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POETRY

- Acevedo, Elizabeth. (2015). [“Afro-Latina”](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
- Anacristina. (2018). [“On being bilingual”](#) (Video) [HS, CC]
 - Asghar, Fatimah and Safia Elhillo. (2019) [The Breakbeat Poets Vol. 3: Halal if You Hear Me](#) (Anthology) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Brown, Ariana. (2022). [“For the Black Kids in My 8th Grade Spanish Class”](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Brown, Ariana. (2021). [We Are Owed](#) (Book) [HS, CC]
 - Choi, Franny. (2017). [“Choi Jeong Min”](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Coval, Kevin, Lansana, Ouraysh Ali, and Nate Marshall. (2019). [The Breakbeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop](#) (Anthology) [HS, CC]
 - Lozada-Oliva, Melissa. (2021) [Dreaming of You](#) (Novel-in-Verse) [HS, CC]
 - Lyiscott, Jamila. (2014). [3 Ways to Speak English](#) (Spoken Word) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Lyfuong, Pacyinz. (2019). [“The Day I Learned to Speak My Grandmother’s Tongue”](#) (Text) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Marte, Melania Luisa (2018) [Afro-Latina Poem](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Naderi, Marjan. (2019). [“Learning My Name”](#) (Text) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Portillo, Leilani. (2022). [“in our chant of the creation of the world”](#) (Text) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Santos Perez, Craig. (2017). [“The Carbon Footprint of Spam”](#) (Video) [HS, CC]
 - Serros, Michelle. (1993). [Mi Problema](#) (Text) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Siagatonu, Terisa. (2016). [“Meauli”](#) (Video) [HS, CC]
 - Stewart, Ebony. (2017). [“Hairitage”](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Stewart, Ebony. (2017). [“Young, Gifted, & Black”](#) (Video) [CC]
 - Suzara, Aimee. (2020). [“Amphibious”](#) (Text) [HS, CC]
 - Treviño, Wendy. (2017). [Brazilian is Not a Race](#) (Text) [HS, CC]
 - Tyabji, Azura. (2020). [“Diaspora”](#) (Text) [MS, HS, CC]
 - V.H. Jr., Tino. (2021). [“Dos Lenguajes”](#) (Video) [MS, HS, CC]
 - Valles, Jesus. (2018). [“\(un\)documents”](#) (Text) [MS, HS, CC]

FICTION

- Acevedo, Elizabeth. (2021). [With the Fire on High](#) (Novel-in-Verse) [MS, HS, CC]
- Arthurs, Alexia. (2019). [How to Love a Jamaican](#) (Novel) [CC]
- Belin, Esther, Jeff Berglund, Connie A. Jacobs, and Anthony K. Webster. [The Diné Reader: An Anthology of Navajo Literature](#) (Anthology) [HS, CC]
- Danticat, Edwidge. (2022). [Behind the Mountains](#) (Novel) [MS, HS]
- Danticat, Edwidge. (2015). [Krik? Krak!](#) (Short Stories) [HS, CC]
- Dimaline, Cherie. (2017). [The Marrow Thieves](#) (Novel) [MS, HS, CC]
- Elhillo, Safia. (2022). [Home is Not a Country](#) (Novel) [MS, HS, CC]
- Estrada Kelly, Erin. (2017). [The Land of Forgotten Girls](#) (Novel) [MS, HS, CC]
- Hiranandani, Veera. (2019). [The Night Diary](#) (Novel) [MS, HS, CC]
- Lalami, Laila. (2020). [The Other Americans](#) (Novel) [HS, CC]
- Perez, Celia C. (2022) [TUMBLE](#) (Novel) [MS, HS, CC]
- Reddi, Rishi. (2020) [Passage West](#) (Novel) [HS, CC]
- Smith, Cynthia L. (2021). [Rain is Not My Indian Name](#) (Novel) [MS, HS]
- Wang, Jen. (2019). [Stargazing](#) (Graphic Novel) [MS]
- Warga, Jasmine. (2019). [Other Words for Home](#) (Novel) [MS, HS, CC]
- Wilson, Diane. (2021). [Ella Cara Deloria: Dakota Language Protector](#) (Novel) [MS, HS, CC]

NON-FICTION

- Abdurraqib, Hanif. [A Little Devil in America: Notes and Praise of Black Performance](#) (Essay Collection) [CC]

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- Alexander, William. (2022). [Celia Cruz](#) (Biography) [MS]
- Alvarez, Julia (1999) ["I Want to Be Miss America"](#) (Essay) [MS, HS, CC]
- Alvarez, Julia ["Names/Nombres"](#) (Essay) [MS, HS, CC]
- Brand, Dionne. (2002). [A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging](#) (Essays) [HS, CC]
- Bui, Thi. (2018). [The Best We Could Do](#) (Graphic Memoir) [MS, HS, CC]
- Cisneros, Sandra (1995) ["Only Daughter"](#) (Essay) [HS, CC]
- Coomes, Nina Li. (2019) ["Notes on Citizenship"](#) (Essay) [HS, CC]
- Elhillo, Safia. (2021). ["Searching for the Words to Describe Myself"](#) (Essay) [MS, HS, CC]
- Espinoza, Alex (2001) ["Easy Like Sunday Morning"](#) (Essay) [MS, HS, CC]
- Gao, Laura. (2022). [Messy Roots: A Graphic Memoir of a Wuhanese American](#) (Graphic Novel) [MS, HS, CC]
- Gharib, Malaka (2019) [I Was Their American Dream: A Graphic Memoir](#) (Graphic Memoir) [MS, HS, CC]
- hooks, bell. (1995). ["Performance Practice as a Site of Opposition"](#) (Book Chapter) [CC]
- Jones, Michael MJ. (2015). ["Colorism in the Black Community: Perspectives on Light-Skinned Privilege"](#) (Article) [HS, CC]
- Lopez Oro, Paul Joseph. (2021). ["A Love Letter to Indigenous Blackness"](#) (Essay) [CC]
- Mendez, Jasminne. (2022). [Islands Apart: Becoming Dominican American](#) (Memoir) [HS, CC]
- Mier, Tomas (2020) [How Latino dads are using TikTok to connect with their children](#) (Article) [MS, HS]
- Nguyen, Joshua. (2019). ["Not-So-Subtle Asian Traits"](#) (Essay) [MS, HS, CC]
- Noah, Trevor (2019) [Born A Crime: Adapted for Young Readers](#) (Memoir) [MS, HS, CC]
- Pelaez Lopez, Alan. (2021). ["On 'In the Heights,' Imagination, and When 'Latinidad' Falls Apart"](#) (Article) [MS, HS, CC]
- Pew Research Center. (2021). ["Majority of Latinos Say Skin Color Impacts Opportunity in America and Shapes Daily Life"](#) (Article) [MS, HS, CC]
- Qamar, Maria. (2017). [Trust No Aunty](#) (Book) [HS, CC]
- Tolentino, Jia. (2020). [Trick Mirror](#) (Essays) [CC]
- Treviño, Wendy and Chris Chen. (2017). ["Mexican is Not a Race"](#) (Interview) [HS, CC]

Resources:

Reference materials
for the educator,
background,
databases

- [Lengua Unit](#)
- [Puente Anthology 2nd Edition](#)
- [Dominique James's writing and collage projects](#)
- [Teaching Guide](#) for Natasha Marin, Black Imagination
- [My Part of the Story- Exploring Identity in the United States-](#) Facing History and Ourselves

For those looking for lessons pertaining to "community" as well as "culture":

- [ISSUES TO ACTION 2019](#): 45 minute lessons address Equity, Gender Pronouns, Non-Partisanship– they are aligned to CCore standards but can be modified to use with younger students. Reflection is built in and throughout the lessons.

NEXT CHAPTER: Trusting Indigenous Knowledge

The Puente Project

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