Belle O’Neill Week 3 Evaluation of a Unit Plan implementing global education

Source: Primary Source

Description of the unit: This is a unit about Juana Ines de la Cruz, a nun and writer, who was the first great Latin American poet and one of the first feminist writers of The New World. Students will learn about her through reading and analyzing two of her writings: Las Redondillas (1689) and La Respuesta (1691). The unit is suggested for Spanish classes, grades 9-12. I would say it would work better for Honor’s or AP Spanish classes ( 3rd or 4th year Spanish) due to the literary analysis, verb tense requirements ( must include the subjunctive tense), and upper level vocabulary.

My opinion of the unit: Students will be intrigued and hooked from the start because of the universal theme of a woman’s place in society. Juana, writing in the 1600’s, felt women should be educated and educators’, and she accused men of being the cause of the ills they blamed on women. Looking at the global competence matrix for World Language, most of the competencies would be covered in this unit.

Under the competency investigate the world, a suggested assessment of the unit was in fact multi-disciplinary, as well. Students had to create in Spanish a timeline of Juana’s life, covering important events and historical events in Mexico (New Spain) that involved or affected Juana’s life or world. I liked that EDSITEment created a link to model a timeline as a reference. Then students had to create a parallel timeline that showed events occurring within the same timeline of her life, anywhere else in the world. This would incorporate the two disciplines of world language and history. I liked the way resources were indicated where to find the information. LANIC (Latin American Network Information Center) and The Library of Congress, Country Studies: Mexico were both listed.

Under the competency recognize perspectives, I loved the suggested extension for the lesson. It was: imagine all of your communication and entertainment devices and everything you loved was removed from your bedroom so it was empty the last years of your life, just like it was for Juana. How would you feel? Write a one page essay in Spanish in journal or letter form in the first person to those who have authority over you. Use proper tenses, including the subjunctive. Say why it’s unfair to take these things away from you. Write as if you were Juana.

Under the competency communicate ideas, one of the activities students had to do was to figure out, to whom was La Respuesta intended to reach? Which audience was Juana writing for? The students had to analyze her tone and attitude in La Respuesta. Does the letter effectively communicate the author’s attitude and feelings? How does this support the title of Juana as The New World’s first feminist writer? I should add La Respuesta was an autobiographical letter that Juana wrote (using a pseudonym to protect herself, no doubt!) in response to a letter from The Bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernandez de Santa Cruz, saying that women aren’t intellectuals and needn’t be educated. Also under the competency communicate ideas, using the other writing of Juana, Las Redondillas, students listed in Spanish words from this writing that were associated with men and words that were associated with women. Some examples (translated to English) for men were arrogant , combative, and childlike. For women were possession, ungrateful, and tease. Students were then asked to write about if these stereotypes were still relevant today. This activity also shows how knowledge of the language effects communication. For example, the word for tease in Spanish is coco, short for coqueta, a negative connotation to a flirt bordering on meaning a prostitute.

My critique of the unit is that it covers some of the common core world language standards of cultures and connections. It needs more in the category of interpersonal communication. I want students to not only write about stereotypes of women today, I want them to discuss them aloud and have a debate! How has a woman’s place in society changed from Juana’s time to now? Conduct a comparison. Are women today still seen as a possession, ungrateful and a tease? Is this more predominant in certain regions or socioeconomic areas of our U.S. society? What about in other regions of the world? This would fulfill the world language standard of comparisons. What about the competency take action? This wasn’t addressed in the lesson plan. How can students work together to improve the conditions of women in other parts of the world or locally in their community? The world language standard of community would be then addressed as well, because students would use Spanish beyond their classroom. As you can see, I am a strong advocate of women’s rights, and although I would be careful to keep my opinion to myself, my strong interest and energy in the topic would also motivate the students because when students sense their teacher is interested in the topic, they tend to be, as well.