PLANT THE SEEDS

Design a bulletin board that encapsulates the values and key objectives of the Poetry Series as they are explored throughout the unit.

The bulletin board becomes a metaphoric garden where ideas are planted and knowledge and student productivity are harvested. This is a tremendous tool to create an interactive, child-centered environment to launch the theme of the unit. You may want to use the model below as an inspiration for your Poetry bulletin board.

What Is Poetry? Engage students in a discussion about what poetry is. Ask them if they have ever read poems or listened to someone reading poems. Encourage them to describe the poems they have seen or heard. Guide them so they note that poems are usually arranged in short lines that contain rhyming words and rhythmic and musical sounds. Invite them to talk about the themes or topics of the poems they know. List these themes and topics on the board and categorize them in groups, such as nature, feelings, loved-ones, love for one’s country, pets, etc.

Discuss why human beings like poetry. Tell students that poets have always existed. Explain that even before books were invented, people created and recited poems, and passed them on verbally to their children for centuries. Encourage them to note the poetry around them. They might think of nursery rhymes, books, and greeting cards. Help them note that song lyrics are also forms of poetry! Finally, invite volunteers to share with the class poems that they may know by memory.

Tell students that the books Dreaming Fish and Laughing Crocodiles are poetry anthologies, which means that they contain a selection of poems written by different poets. Explain that all those poets were born in Hispanic countries, or have Hispanic origins, so this is also an opportunity to get to know people who have enriched the culture of the millions of people who speak Spanish in the world.

Open the Gateways! Motivate students to create their own reduced version of the bulletin board in which they record notes, sayings, summaries, drawings, verses, citations from the books, elaboration, and amplifications that connect the knowledge learned as they read the Poetry books of Gateways to the Sun. Students may use this “map of learning” as the cover of a portfolio or a personal collection of work and activities developed throughout this unit.
LESSON 1: Latinos

EXPLORE
Motivate students to reflect on their cultural identity by asking them to say the names of their families’ countries of origin, and any languages they speak. If students do not know their families’ countries of origin, or if none of them are bilingual, let them know that they will be reading poems about some of the countries of origin of Spanish-speaking people, and also about the advantages of being bilingual. Tell them that being bilingual offers people a wider perspective on their surroundings, and on the world as a whole, as well as greater opportunities in the worlds of work, travel, learning, and relationships.

TEACH
Listening to Poetry

READ ALOUD
Since most of the poems in this book are relatively short, reading them aloud several times is an effective and enjoyable way to introduce them to students. Read all the poems in this section aloud, using intonation and pace to emphasize the meaning, feeling, rhythm, and rhyme of each poem. Then, ask students how they feel about the poems. For example, when reading “We Live Right Here,” emphasize tone and voice. Ask students to listen with their hearts and to try to feel what the author is trying to convey. Then, you may ask students:

What do you think the poets want us to feel or think as we read this poem?

PICTURE WALK
Invite students to look at the illustrations that accompany each poem and to talk about what they see, and about how that relates to the content of the poem. For example, after reading “We Live Right Here,” ask students to look at the illustration on pages 6 and 7, and ask:

The poem says that Latinos write poems to their grandmothers. Do you see a grandmother in the illustration?
**CREATIVE / TRANSFORMATIVE PHASE**

How could you learn more about your culture? Who could you ask about it? What makes you most proud of your culture? How could you show others that you are proud of your culture?

**APPLY**

**Vocabulary Development**

Use the following strategies to guide students to figure out the meaning of any unknown words that they encounter as they read each poem:

1. Tell them to explore the context and the illustrations to find clues to the meanings.
2. Ask them to check other places where the same word is used.
3. Suggest that they examine the structure of the words to see if they recognize word parts that can help them.
4. Encourage them to draw upon their prior knowledge so that every student feels compelled to contribute to the discussion.
5. When necessary, refer to a school dictionary. Read the appropriate definition aloud and discuss it with the class.

Use words in context and personalize their meaning by asking students to create their own statements using a pattern such as the following: We are... We live in... We have... We learn in the... We read... We listen to... We speak...

**DESCRIPTIVE PHASE**

To which cultural or ethnic group do the children, parents, and teachers in the poem belong? Which “two languages” do you think the characters in the poem speak? How does this poem describe Latinos living in the United States? What does it say about them?

**PERSONAL / INTERPRETIVE PHASE**

What other words or phrases would you use to describe Latinos living in the United States? Which Latino songs or traditions do you know? Sing them/talk about them.

**CRITICAL / MULTICULTURAL / ANTI-BIAS PHASE**

Why do you think the authors say that Latinos speak two languages so that others may understand them? Why do you think that it is important to be able to communicate with people who speak languages different from ours? Why do you think that it is important to know our traditions and our culture?

**RELATED VOCABULARY**

The poem “We Live Right Here” offers students the opportunity to learn or practice words related to language and literature. The following activities promote word study through inquiry and interactive strategies. They may be utilized for direct, guided, or modeled instruction, as well as for individual or collaborative group work. Use Activity Sheet 33.

**What Are We Doing?** Encourage students to learn multisyllabic words and to build gerund verb forms by adding -ing to roots of verbs that describe common activities. Ask students to illustrate the vocabulary to personalize and demonstrate understanding.

**What Word Do You Use?** Motivate students to define vocabulary words by matching each word with its definition.

**You Are a Poet!** Invite students to complete the sentences to create a poem.
ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES

You may take advantage of the discussion about community and the illustrations in the book to teach additional words, such as church, temple, neighborhood, neighbors, town.

For Language Learners: For younger students, or for those who are not thoroughly familiar with the language, you may want to work on simpler words, such as girl, boys, grandmother, houses, doll, ball, mountains, sky, clouds.

REFLECT AND CLOSE

Oral Language Development

Use the poem “I Have a Flower” on pages 10 and 11 to explain to students that good thoughts and actions are like flowers that grow in the garden of our hearts. Ask them to reflect on actions they have taken that are kind, generous, and have benefited someone else. Encourage them to talk about a time when they did something good, courageous, or noble. As students discuss their past actions, motivate them to complete the following statement:

When I __________, my flower grows.

See pages 141–144 for a comprehensive Assessment of this lesson.

Refer to pages 128–129 for ideas to teach basic concepts related to poetry.

ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES

For Language Learners: For younger students, or for those who are not thoroughly familiar with the language, you may want to work on simpler words, such as girl, boys, grandmother, houses, doll, ball, mountains, sky, clouds.

BEAUTIFUL WORDS

Explain to students that poetry often uses beautiful language to convey meanings, and that often, this language refers to beautiful emotions. Use Activity Sheet 36 to encourage students to create illustrations that convey what each card means to them. Help them to figure out the meaning of words whenever necessary, and point out cognates, such as generosity / generosidad, courage / coraje. Then, ask them to cut out the illustrated cards, and work in pairs or small groups to share them with each other and discuss their illustrations. Finally, ask them to name someone they know that displays the characteristics of each, or all, of the words.

ILLUSTRATED BILINGUAL DICTIONARY

Help students begin to build, or continue to create, their own illustrated bilingual dictionaries. List all words in the story that students have generated or asked about during the reading process. Encourage them to write the words and their corresponding Spanish terms along with a drawing of each item. Motivate older students, and those who have a better grasp of both languages, to add related words. Motivate students to work in bilingual pairs or groups whenever possible so they can contribute to each other’s language development.

STATEMENT OF DEDICATION

Inform students that authors and illustrators often dedicate their work to someone they love, admire, or respect, or to someone who supports or inspires them. Encourage students to write dedication statements to use later for their individual class work or projects. Motivate them to write the name of the person/s to whom they would dedicate their work, and a sentence or short paragraph that explains why they have chosen that person in particular.

The A Poet’s Journal: Letters offers additional writing activities that may help students to reach a better understanding of themselves.
HOME CONNECTION

National Holidays  Let your students’ families know that the class is engaged in reading poetry that emphasizes cultural identity. Motivate parents to describe a holiday from their country of origin (or the U.S.) to their children. Encourage them to discuss the significance of the holiday, how it is celebrated, and if possible, to place it into the country’s overall historical, or cultural, context. Send home Activity Sheet 39.

HANDS-ON PROJECT

Poetry Quilt  Motivate students to choose their favorite poem (they may choose one which does not appear in this book) and provide each with a square of colorful construction paper in which to write and illustrate the poem. Once all students have worked on their individual poems, bind all of the squares together with strips of colorful paper to make a class poetry quilt that all students can appreciate and enjoy anytime.

TECHNOLOGY CONNECTIONS

Homelands  Help students log on to http://www.geographic.org/countries/countries.html. The site provides basic information about all of the world’s countries, such as their languages, population, area, and climate. Motivate students to search for information about the countries they read about in the Homelands poems, or about their own families’ countries of origin. Make a classroom chart to record this information so that students can compare and contrast the different countries.

SOCIAL STUDIES

A Geographical Puzzle  Trace a map of North, South, and Central America, and paste it onto a large piece of cardboard. Cut along the countries’ borders to create a puzzle. Have students work in groups to recreate the map by putting the puzzle together, using a political map of The Americas as their guide.

ART

Paper Floral Arrangement  Point out to students that the book is full of beautiful illustrations of flowers. Ask students to discuss the flowers they find, and to describe them by color and shape. Then, help them to design their own flowers on a separate piece of paper. Create a bouquet of flowers out of students’ designs, and display it on your classroom door, bulletin board, or library. Encourage boys to acknowledge the wonders in flowers and to relate to flowers as “beautiful gifts of nature” rather than “women’s things.”

BOOK TITLES OF THE GATEWAYS TO THE SUN COLLECTION

The synergy among the books of Gateways to the Sun lends itself to a dynamic integration of learning across the genres. The following are just two suggested titles and activities to integrate Dreaming Fish with other titles of the collection. You will surely find many other connections as you work through the different series.

Book Title: The Quetzal’s Journey  Series: Hispanic Lands

Show students the beautiful illustrations depicting the diverse and beautiful geographical features, animals, and plants found in Latin America. Explain to students that nature has always been a source of inspiration to people. Many poems, songs, and works of art are created in response to nature’s beauty and generosity.

Book Title: Blue and Green  Series: Art

Invite students to compare the art in Blue and Green to the contemporary illustrations in Dreaming Fish. Guide students to notice how an artist can influence our understanding of or response to a poem, a story, a culture, or our environment. Explain to students that artists use pictures to convey meaning just like a poet uses words to express thoughts and feelings.