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.
Ask students whether they have heard the terms Hispanics or Latinos, and to discuss the context in which they have heard them. Ask them to name countries which the people called Hispanics or Latinos come from. List those countries on the board.

Then, invite the class to brainstorm ideas to make a chart about the things that all Latinos have in common and the differences between them. Label the chart columns “Similarities” and “Differences” and fill them in with the ideas given by the students. You may want to suggest similarities, such as the language, the holidays, some foods, etc.; and differences, such as the skin, hair and eye colors, the accent, etc.

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 (pages 6–9), 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 “Hispanics, Latinos,” emphasize tone and voice. Ask students to listen with their hearts and to try to feel what the author is trying to convey. After reading the poem, you may want to ask students:

What do you think the poet wants us to feel, or think as we read this poem?
CRITICAL / MULTICULTURAL / ANTI-BIAS PHASE

Why do you think that the poet says: “We claim with pride all that unites us”? Why do you think that we should be proud of our origins?

CREATIVE / TRANSFORMATIVE PHASE

How could you show your family that you are proud of your origins? How could you show your friends and other people?

What would you like to learn about your culture? What would you like to learn about the cultures of others?

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.

For instance, after they read “Hispanics, Latinos,” ask them what they think the ending ans means. Ask them to “extract” the name of the country from each of those national names. Put them in a chart in front of each national name.

To help students apply or extend their knowledge of the new vocabulary, elicit how, while in Spanish, inflectional endings change the meaning of words by denoting gender and number, in English, endings usually only denote number. Ask students whether the national names in this poem are used in singular or plural form. Make a chart listing all the national names and have students complete the chart by giving the singular form of each national name.

RELATED VOCABULARY

The poem “Hispanics, Latinos” offers students the opportunity to learn or practice words related to nationality, identity, and diversity. 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 40.

Where Are You From? Encourage students to match countries with nationalities.

I Am Proud! Motivate students to declare their pride in their heritage (whether American, Hispanic, or another culture) by filling in each letter of the corresponding word from the word bank.

Always United Invite students to complete and illustrate a poem to affirm their unity and friendship.
**ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES**

You may also want to take advantage of the discussion about nationality, identity, and diversity, and the illustrations in the book to teach additional words, such as the following: proud, American, Mexican-American, Cuban-American, born, raised, community, collaboration, cooperation.

**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 boys, girls, friends, together, united.

**REFLECT AND CLOSE**

**Oral Language Development**

Motivate students to research and draw a picture of an artifact, picture, item of clothing, craft, fruit, or anything else that is representative of the cultural heritage of one of the countries mentioned in “Hispanic, Latinos.” Encourage them to share the item with their classmates, and discuss its significance (and use, if applicable) in that country’s native culture.

See pages 155–158 for a comprehensive Assessment of this lesson.

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

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**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BILINGUAL**

Motivate students to write a persuasive paragraph about why it is important, useful, and wonderful to be bilingual! To use this as a guided writing activity, guide a class discussion in which students—both bilingual and non-bilingual—draw from their own experiences to explain why being bilingual could be important or interesting. Write their ideas on the board. Then, engage them in creating the paragraph collectively, keeping in mind that it should be persuasive. Have students copy the paragraph and illustrate it on their own.

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

**COUNTRIES AND NATIONALITIES**

Use Activity Sheet 43 to encourage students to cut out the cognate cards. Read the names of the countries and nationalities in English and Spanish, and motivate students to find the ones that most resemble each other, and color code the cards accordingly. Motivate students to play a memory game with the color-coded cards, and to create new ones if their nationalities are not represented in the activity sheet. Point out that whereas in English, adjectives of nationality are capitalized, in Spanish they are not. Point out also that in Spanish, adjectives of nationality must agree with the gender of the thing or person described.

**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.
Cross-Curricular Connections

**Math**

**Clap and Count** Motivate students to compare and contrast the number of lines and verses in two of the poems in the book. You may want to ask them to decide what kind of stanzas each poem has based on their number of lines. Refer to the Poem Structure section on page 129 of this guide to teach them the different types of stanzas. Then, encourage them to clap and count each time they discover a rhythm, and to compare those numbers as well. Provide students with a visual aid by displaying the chosen poems on a large overhead chart, and highlighting the accentuated words to mark the rhythm.

**Social Studies**

**National Flags** Motivate students to help you to create a list of the Latin American countries represented in Laughing Crocodiles. Then, add the names of the rest of the countries that make up Latin America. Point to all of the countries on a map. Motivate students to use an encyclopedia or the Internet to see what each country’s flag looks like, and to discover what its symbols represent. Assign one country to each student, and ask them to draw that country’s flag, and to create a label for it that includes the name of the country to which it belongs, and the significance of its colors and/or symbols.

**Home Connection**

Let your students’ families know that the class is engaged in reading poems that emphasize cultural identity. Motivate parents to talk about the beautiful landscapes, animals, or architecture of their native land, or about anything else that they think makes their homeland special—whether it is the United States or another country! Send home Activity Sheet 46.

**Hands-on Project**

**Gift Poems** Motivate students to choose some of their favorite poems from this book and to copy them onto index cards. You may ask them to write their own original poetry. Encourage students to decorate the cards with drawings, colored paper, and any other pretty materials available. Encourage them to write dedications to their recipients, and to give their beautiful gift poems to family and friends!

**Technology Connections**

**The Maya** Help students log on to http://www.smm.org/sln/ma/ There, they can go on a “Maya Adventure” to see photos of important sites of Maya culture, and read more information about Maya history. Students can even print out and keep their own log book of their adventure. Encourage students to explore the site and to ask questions about words or topics they don’t understand. Finally, point out the locations mentioned on the site on a map of Mexico and Central America.

**Extend the Lessons**

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 ideas to integrate Laughing Crocodiles with other titles of the collection.

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

Review pages 36 to 45 to show how nature can be a source of inspiration for people. Invite students to examine their class, school, home, and community environments to note what things of beauty surround them. Discuss what in these environments inspires them.

**Book Title:** One, two, three. Who can it be!  
**Series:** Language

Explain that the word “folklore” has two parts: folk, which means “people” and lore, which means “knowledge.” “Folklore” means “people’s wisdom.” That knowledge is passed down from parents to children through storytelling, poetry, songs, sayings, and proverbs. Picture walk through One, two, three. Who can it be! to identify the popular wisdom or moral each character in the stories represents.