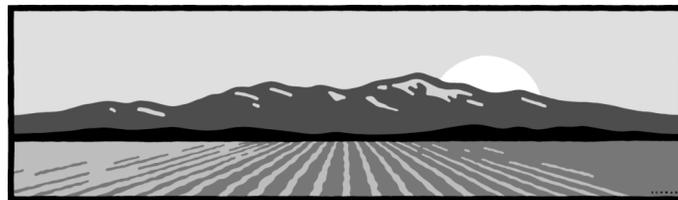


CALIFORNIA WRITING PROJECT  
TEACHER-TO-TEACHER CURRICULUM RESOURCES

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*CALIFORNIA STORIES UNCOVERED  
IN THE CLASSROOM*

WRITING OUR HERITAGE, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR PROMISE



C A L I F O R N I A  
S T O R I E S

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*The California Council for the Humanities*

A JOINT PROJECT OF THE CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES  
AND THE CALIFORNIA WRITING PROJECT AND PART OF COUNCIL'S  
STATEWIDE *CALIFORNIA STORIES UNCOVERED* CAMPAIGN

LIVING IN CALIFORNIA: EXAMINING LANGUAGES  
ACQUIRED AND LANGUAGES LOST

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Students reflect upon languages—the ones they and/or their family have acquired—as well as the ones lost. Questions students consider: What does it mean to be bilingual? What does it mean to be monolingual? What does it mean to lose your first language? What does this mean for individuals, for children, for families, for grandparents? What does this mean for building and sustaining bridges across generations?

Genre: Multigenre opportunities: autobiographical and reflective responses, letters, persuasive essays, opinion pieces, and poetry.

Recommended grades: 4-6 English learners

### Overview

As the teacher of English Language Development students in an immersion setting, I find my students adapting to the language and culture of the United States. This, of course, is my ultimate goal. Unfortunately, generally speaking, it is at the expense of their home or heritage language.

By third and fourth grade, I begin to see the uneasiness of students speaking their home language during “Student-Led Parent Conferences,” for example. Students have great difficulty communicating about their learning in their home language because their academic work is mostly in English. Not only do they have trouble, I feel their anxiety about having to speak their home language in front of their peers. But students are also having increasing difficulty with and conflicts about brokering, that is, translating for their parents. All of these factors contribute to making what should be a proud experience— parents and students discussing learning and progress— an uneasy, uncertain one.

And I wonder, how many lost conversations are there in families because they can no longer fully understand each other? Parents and grandparents do not yet (or may never) speak enough English, and their children are now beginning to lose the only language that may keep them connected! My goal for this project is to bring this issue to their awareness. I want to help my students gain awareness of the consequences of losing a connection to their family, their roots, and their heritage.

California is and has been the land of opportunities for my students. I want them to acculturate and love their country as first, second, and third generation immigrants. But I also want them to keep the language and culture that will allow them to communicate with their parents, grandparents, and extended family. I want to help them realize that they can have both, that bilingualism is not a hindrance but a strength. They will realize, when they are older, that it is a strength, not only at a personal level, but also at the professional levels that are still ahead of them.

## Objectives

### Students will:

- create shared conversations about text
- learn a range of ways to think about text, in conversation and in writing
- explore their thinking about issues through multiple genres
- enlarge the classroom community of writers to include parents and other family members
- see language as a bridge that connects and sustains generations
- see being bilingual as a bridge that connects and sustains a bicultural family.

## Applications to California English-Language Arts Academic Content Standards

### ☐ Fourth Grade

#### Reading Comprehension

- 2.2 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text
- 2.3 Comprehension and Analysis of Grade-Level-Appropriate Text
- 3.0 Literary Response and Analysis

#### Writing

Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view based upon purpose, audience, length, and format requirements.

Create multiple-paragraph compositions.

Use traditional structures for conveying information.

Write fluidly and legibly in cursive or joined italic.

- 2.0 Students write compositions that describe and explain familiar objects, events and experiences.

#### Written and Oral English Language Conventions

- 1.0 Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

#### Listening and Speaking Strategies

- 2.0 Students listen critically and respond appropriately to oral communication. They speak in a manner that guides the listener to understand important ideas by using proper phrasing, pitch, and modulation.

### ☐ Fifth Grade

#### Reading Comprehension

- 2.3 Discern main ideas and concepts presented in texts, identifying and assessing evidence that supports those ideas.
- 3.7 Evaluate the author's use of various techniques (e.g. appeal of characters in a picture book, logic and credibility of plots and settings, use of figurative language) to influence readers' perspectives.

**Writing**

Write responses to literature.

Write narratives.

**Written and Oral English Language Conventions:**

Students write and speak with a command of standard English conventions appropriate to this grade level.

**Listening and Speaking**

1.0 Students deliver focused, coherent presentations that convey ideas clearly and relate to the background and interests of the audience. They evaluate the content of oral communication.

<b>Teaching Sequence</b>
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**□ Setting the stage—exploring language differences**

Note: I learned from the work of Janet Angellilo to take advantage of reading aloud in class regularly in order to create shared conversations, model different types of thinking about text, and provide a springboard for new thoughts. Angellilo suggests giving students time during a read-aloud to stop and say, sketch, think, jot, chart or write, so they can clarify the reading and capture their thinking. I'll build in these stopping points for my English learners because they provide language scaffolding and support for my students' thinking and writing.

**□ Read aloud #1**

- “My First American Friend” by Sarunna Jin, is the true story of a six year-old girl who moved to the United States from China, knew no English, and felt completely out of place until a classmate reached out to her. The two became fast friends in spite of their language differences.
- Give students time to “stop and think”

Note: Teacher models what good readers do while reading by “thinking aloud,” that is saying aloud the things readers would want to talk about with other people if they were there and modeling what internal conversations good readers have as they are reading— their questions, connections, predictions, etc.

- Create guiding questions that offer support and keep the students focused on the topic.
- “Stop and talk”—The teacher pauses during the reading to discuss the text at places where students might make predictions or connections and prompts them to join in.
- “Stop and chart”—I chart the ideas that students are exploring and thinking about, again making connections and predictions but also wondering why something happened, and questioning the text. As I chart contributions, I may add the names of the students who made contributions, as well the specific examples from the text they are referencing.

**☐ Read Aloud #2**

- “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” by Gloria Anzaldua is an excerpt from her book, *Borderlands-La Frontera: The New Meztiza*. I found this excerpt anthologized in *Braided Lives: An Anthology of Multicultural American Writing*. This is a hard passage conceptually for my students because it is an essay, but it is developed through anecdotes of when Gloria was not allowed to speak Spanish, through proverbs mothers tell their children, in Spanish, of course, and through discussions of getting rid of accents and which dialect of Spanish is proper. The content is made less difficult because all of my students understand the examples, whether they speak Spanish, Chinese, or Korean.
- Give students time to “stop and think.”  
Create guiding questions that offer support and keep the students focused on the topic.
  - Stop and talk
  - Stop and chartAgain, I chart the ideas that groups of children are discussing.
- Any other poems or stories that explore some of these issues could work just as well, and if you have no text to read-aloud, students could share their own experiences, or ones they have heard from relatives, or even those they have observed.

**☐ Revisit “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”**

- Ask students to do a ten minute Quickwrite on this prompt: “Who is to say that robbing a people of its language is less violent than war?” (Ray Gwin Smith, as quoted in the essay.)
- Give time for students to share in pairs and then in small groups.
  - Bring the group discussions to a whole group conversation and discussion.
  - Continue charting the many ideas that will emerge from this provocative discussion.

**☐ Extending the discussion and the connections**

- The whole class is now ready for a philosophical discussion  
(Note: see information in the project by Norma Mota-Altman—Americanization and Success.)
  - What is language? How does it help us connect to each other? Within our families? Across generations?
  - I add questions to take advantage of points raised, all to guide the student’s thinking toward reflection on what it means to lose a language and culture.
- Give students time to “stop and think”
  - “Stop and write”
  - “Stop and talk”
  - Pair share and share in small groups
  - Students may pick a note-taker to write down “golden lines” (best ideas, wonderings, questions, etc.)
  - Bring the discussion back to the whole group.
  - “Stop and chart”

**☐ Read-aloud #3**

- “Nachito’s Teachings” — This story can be found in the fourth grade Open Court Reading Program.
- Use the same stop and think, talk, write, chart strategies to guide the discussion.

**❑ Working through writing centers**

Table One:	Have you ever wondered what life lessons or traditions your grandparents have yet to teach you? Write a friendly letter to your grandparent(s). Ask about her and/or his immigration experience? Some questions to ask: Why did you immigrate to this country? How did you make it here? Who did you leave behind? What was your dream for your life here? Did it come to be? Was it worth what you left behind?
Table Two:	Write a reflection on your own experience as a second language learner. What was difficult? How did you feel when your teachers could not understand you? Did/Does having a teacher that speaks your language help you? If you are not bilingual: How, do you think, being bilingual helps you as a student? Does it hurt? Why? Why not?
Table Three:	Write a persuasive essay: How does being bilingual or monolingual help you as a learner? Persuade me by clearly supporting you opinions.
Table Four:	Do one or both your parents speak English? How does this make your feel? Why? You may respond in the genre of your choice. (i.e. poem, reflection, friendly letter, narrative, etc.)

Note: It is up to you as the teacher how much time is spent on these pieces. These are meant as brainstorming, scaffolding, and background-building activities. I use Writing Workshop time to take one or more of these pieces through the stages of the writing process.

During Writing Center time, I divide students heterogeneously in four groups. They rotate clockwise with their group every 25 minutes. I make sure that the necessary materials (paper, “in basket,” pencils, etc.) are available at each table.

The centers are organized so that students have the opportunity to explore different aspects of these issues through different genres. Students have all been exposed to each of these genres through writing and reading. I may tailor these centers to reflect the writing ability and writing/language proficiency of my students. If your students are not comfortable with one of the genres, explicitly teach that genre and allow students to practice it several times before making it a Writing Center activity.

My job as the teacher, during rotations, is to support students in one center and/or to walk around the room and support students’ progress. I may also focus my efforts on one of the centers and support their work by modeling, providing additional scaffolding for the genre and students’ thinking, or by providing the vocabulary needed to communicate their thinking.

**❑ Setting the stage for more writing**

- I write the following questions on the board:
  - What does it mean to live in Los Angeles?
  - What does it mean to be bilingual/monolingual?
- In cooperative groups students, work through the following:
  - “Stop and talk” about the questions.
  - “Stop and jot” responses from the group.
  - “Stop and chart” as a whole class, and I often add the names of students to show who contributed which ideas, as well as “Golden Lines.” Golden Lines are exemplary sentences that show thinking.

**❑ Ask students to do a ten minute Quickwrite:**

Write a personal narrative/reflection in response to this prompt:

“Tell us about your language experience in Los Angeles, California. You may also want to write about your parents’ or grandparents’ experience and how that affects you”

Students Pair Share and provide feedback for their peers.

In cooperative groups, answer this question— How does your language experience compare to that of your parents/grandparents? Create one Venn diagram per group, and one student shares the group's Venn diagram with the class.

Create a Venn diagram as a class.

### ▪ Culminating writing activity:

Note: I have adapted the following activity from writing exercises developed by poet and teacher Sister Helena Brand of Maryhurst, Oregon. (Writing Across Cultures by Edna Kovacs)

#### Writing Echo Poems

Writing an echo poem begins with responding to a piece of writing or a series of questions, but doing so in segments or by lines. Each response to a line or answer to a question is a line of what ultimately comprises a poem.

To develop the echo poem for this project, I read the following questions aloud— all of them, slowly, so that students can build context and sort out possibilities for what will answer the questions for them. I usually do this by reading the questions from a list on an overhead transparency so that students can not only hear the questions but also read them and follow along. The second time I read the questions, I do so one question at a time, allowing time for students to respond in writing and in complete thoughts.

Questions:

What is your story?

Who are you?

What is your name?

What does your name tell about yourself?

What does it tell others about you?

If you could give yourself a different name, what would it be? What does this new name mean?

What would it tell about you?

Where were you born? Where did you come from? City? Town?

Where did your grandparents come from? Mother's side? Father's side?

What is your nationality?

What language(s) do you speak at home?

What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in? Ethnic/ American?

How do you celebrate your birthdays?

How do you celebrate holidays?

Describe a memorable family meal?

Who are your favorite relatives?

What are your favorite foods?

Have you any ethnic traits that you are proud of? Hide? Why?

- After students have responded to all the questions, I re-read the questions, giving time for students to revise their responses. As students do this, I walk around the room and make myself available for support. In the meantime, I look for a student piece that captures the essence of this activity.
- With the student who wrote that piece, I read each question and allow for the student to read his/her response, line by line. Then the student reads the poem (in progress) is alone. Classmates may then provide feedback. I then provide time for students to revise their own poem. This piece is then taken through the revision and editing stages in preparation for publishing.

**Homework:**

Students are to choose one person from their family and help him/her work through the questions and create an echo poem. The poem may be written in Spanish or English. I translate the questions to help my students communicate with their parents. I may also help parents by providing feedback, in writing, or by offering suggestions, through my students.

Family members create a final piece. I edit it and resubmit it for their approval. Final products are then posted in the classroom—student and family member's, side by side. Some pieces are in English, but many are published in Spanish. During conferences, students and parents share their pieces with one another, as writers.

**Student/Parent Samples****What is Your Story? by Jossie (Student)**

I am a student, a daughter, and a granddaughter.

My name is Jossie.

My name means I am shy.

It reminds people of the restaurant Yoshinoya.

If I had another name it would be Daisy. It means flower. It tells people I am sweet.

I was born in L.A. in a city.

Both of my grandparents come from Mexico.

I am an American Citizen.

I speak Spanish at home.

I grew up in a big community.

I make parties by eating Mexican food.

I celebrate Christmas by eating tamales.

We mostly eat sopes, tacos, and menudo. My favorites are the tacos.

My favorite relative is my cousin Ysabel.

I am proud of my laugh, my food and my skin.

**Silvia (Parent)**

Yo soy una mamá, una hija, una ama de casa.

Mi nombre es Silvia.

Mi nombre les dice que soy Silvestre.

Mi nombre les dice a otros que soy libre o que tengo libertad.

Yo no me cambiaría el nombre porque me gusta mucho.

Lo mismo.

Yo nacì en Zapotitlàn, Guadalajara, Mèxico,

Mis abuelos vinieron de Mèxico, de Zapotitlàn.

Mi nacionalidad es Mexicana.

Yo hablo el Español en casa.

Yo crecì en un vecindario ètnico.

Yo celebro mi cumpleaños con una comida, platicando con mis amigos.

Yo celebro las vacaciones viajando, visitando a la familia fuera del país.

Una comida favorita de la familia es la birria, comida preparada a base de carne, chile rojo y condimentos.

Mis parientes favoritos son mis hermanas.

Mis alimentos favoritos son la carne de pollo, poca carne roja, los vegetales, y las legumbres.

Yo estoy orgullosa de mis pozos, o hoyos, en las mejillas al sonreir.

### **My Life Story by Raul**

I'm a brother, a son, a cousin, a friend, a neighbor, and a soccer player.  
My name is Raul like my dad and so they call me Jr.  
My name means confusing because my name is confusing and it's hard to say in English. I would rather be called Raul in Spanish.  
My name reminds me of a pianist called Raul like me.  
If I could change my name it would be Mesu. It's a Chinese name and it means calm water. Maybe it was a Chinese kid's name and that name was old.  
I was born in East Los Angeles in a hospital here in the U.S. on Cesar Chavez St.  
My grandparents from my Dad and Mom's side came from Jalisco and Puebla.  
I am an American Citizen because I was born here in the U.S.  
The languages I speak at home are Spanish with my parents and English with my cousins.  
I grew up in a neighborhood with nice cousins.  
I celebrate my birthdays with a jumper, cake, food, balloons, and games.  
I celebrate holidays like Christmas with my cousins with tamales, chapurrado, pozole, and fun.  
The tamales and chapurrado are good cause they drop good in your stomach.  
My cousins are my favorite relatives cause they're like true friends.  
My favorite foods are pizza, tacos, and peaches.  
I'm proud of myself and how I speak my language.

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### **Raül (Parent)**

Yo soy un hombre trabajador y me gusta jugar soccer.  
Mi nombre es Raül.  
No se el significado de mi nombre.  
No se que dice mi nombre acerca de mi persona, no lo se, nunca me lo han dicho.  
Soy Pastor para poder cuidar a mis hijos siempre.  
Acerca de mi persona, este nombre diría que como el pastor, cuido a mi rabaño.  
Yo nacì en Tepezaca, Puebla, Mèxico.  
Mis abuelos son de España y de Mèxico.  
Mi nacionalidad es Mexicana.  
En casa, hablo Español.  
Yo crecí en un vecindario Mexicano.  
Yo celebro mi cumpleaños pasando un buen rato con mi familia.  
Yo celebro mis vacaciones dedicandole tiempo a mi familia.  
Una comida memorable para mi familia es el pozole.  
Mis parientes favoritos son mis hermanos, mis primos, mis compadres, y mi mamá.  
Mis alimentos favoritos son el pozole, los frijoles, y las milanesas.  
Yo soy orgulloso de ser Mexicano y no lo escondo.

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### **Who I am by Joyce**

I am a student, a sister, a daughter, a granddaughter, and a writer.

My name is Joyce.

My name tells that I'm joyful.

It tells others I'm happy.

I like my name. I don't want to change it.

I was born in Los Angeles.

My grandparents on both sides came from Asia.

I am an Asian American.

I speak Cantonese and English at home.

I grew up in an American neighborhood.

We celebrate Christmas by having Chinese food.

One memorable meal that I ever had was Teriyaki chicken and rice.

I love all my relatives.

My favorite food is dumplings.

I'm proud that Asians are hard working people.

We always take pride of what we do in our lives.

### **Susan (Parent)**

I am a daughter, a mother, and a teacher.

My name is Susan.

After I immigrated to the U.S., my uncle helped me to find an American name to match my Chinese name. Ever since then, I started to use Susan as my name until now.

I was born in Taiwan. Both sides of my grandparents come from China. I am an Asian American. I speak English and Chinese at home. I grew up in a neighborhood where many military families lived around each other in a small city

As I was growing up, we didn't really have birthday parties. We normally would have cake and dinner together to celebrate the birthday. When there was a special holiday, we would also have a family dinner together. Therefore, family dinners play an important part of our culture.

My favorite relatives were my uncle and aunt who were kind enough to support and help my whole family immigrate to the U.S. I am thankful for their helpfulness. After we came to the U.S., all my brothers and sisters had the opportunity to attend college and get a good education. Therefore, my uncle and aunt were our most caring and helpful relatives.

One ethnic trait that I'm proud of is that being Chinese we believe family plays an important part of our lives. We believe that family is the root of everything. We always like to have dinner together as much as we can. No matter how busy everyone gets everyday, we still try to get together at the end of the day to unite with our family members. I still try to carry on this tradition.

**Teaching Sequence Continued**

- **Write an autobiographical or reflective response:**

**Prompt:**

Describe your language. If you are bilingual, what language is the voice in your head? What does it mean to be bilingual? What does it mean to be monolingual? What does it mean to not speak the language of your ancestors? What does it mean to lose one language?

- **Read Around:**

Students will sit in a circle. I keep time in 5-7 minute intervals. Students pass their paper to the person sitting to their right. Each student reads the piece silently. He/she responds to it in writing. The process is repeated until everyone has responded to all of the pieces of writing.

Note: Students are encouraged to respond in the way they are “moved.” There is no right or wrong response. It may be in the form of a question, a comment, an anecdote, etc.

Of course, it is up to the teacher and the class how much time is spent on these pieces. Writing Workshop time may be needed to take one or more of these pieces through the entire writing process, all the way to publishing. Often, I decide to collect them and create an anthology of autobiographical essays for future students to enjoy.

### Recommended Instructional Resources

- ❑ Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." *Braided Lives: An Anthology of Multicultural American Writing*. St. Paul: Minnesota Humanities Commission, 1991.
- ❑ Beatty, Patricia. *Lupita Manana*. New York: HarperTrophy, 2000
- ❑ Jin, Sarunna. *My First American Friend*. Austin, TX: Raintree-Steck Vaughn Publishing, 1996.
- ❑ Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Super Cilantro Girl*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2003
- ❑ Kovacs, E. *Writing Across Cultures: A Handbook on Writing Poetry and Lyrical Prose*. Hillsboro, Blue Heron Publishing, 1994.
- ❑ Lord, Bette Bao. *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1984.
- ❑ Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *Esperanza Rising*. New York: Scholastic Books, 2000.
- ❑ "Nachito's Teachings," *SRA Open Court Reading Program, Level 4, Surviving, 2000*.

### Recommended Professional Resources

- ❑ Angelillo, J. *Writing About Reading*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann 2003.
- ❑ Oliver, E.D. and S. Zimmermann. *Mosaic of Thought: Teaching Comprehension in a Reader's Workshop*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann 1997.

### About the Teacher Consultant

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