

# LA POESÍA DE LAS AMERICAS

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## **Overview**

This topic concerns poetry of the 21<sup>st</sup> century written by Afro-American poets and translated into Spanish. Students of Level II Spanish will further enhance their appreciation of Afro-American poetry through the lens of Spanish Translation. Students will be able to transfer their knowledge of poetic texts written in English and make comparison with the study of those in Spanish. Furthermore, Students will be exposed to similarities and differences in poetic structure and interpretation of poetry written in Spanish versus Anglo poetry through the specifically chosen literary selections . This practice affords students an additional opportunity to apply their Spanish Level II reading skills . The literary selections will present a varied perspective on Afro-American culture.

The unit will be written with reference to the five standards for foreign Language acquisition as set forth by the ACTFL – Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons and Communities. (See Appendix) The core curriculum of the School District of Philadelphia requires that students continuously engage the four linguistic skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing as prescribed for foreign language learners.

The unit will be a series of ten lessons taught over a period of twenty days either consecutively or at intervals allocating approximately two days for each lesson. Before each lesson, students will be required to scan the text for familiar words or cognates that will help them anticipate the content. Strategy and graphic organizers will be provided to allow students to decide how to approach the material and to jot down thoughts. The teacher will also guide the students as to what to expect before they begin reading and give extra insights to help the reader get the most out of each selection. In addition the teacher will discreetly use relevant visual and aural stimuli including reproductions of art and music to assist the student in experiencing the diversity of the Afro-American world while reinforcing the language acquisition skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Students will be encouraged to question through an investigation; including but not limited to, the structure, use of vocabulary, punctuation and diacritics : What makes poetry so appealing? Why does it live on? Is there any connection to other art forms such as music, painting, dance? Why has it been a source of fascination for poets and readers both learned and illiterate alike? Does poetry communicate a message to the human mind about the nature of life, about consciousness, about existence, about “the dynamic of the universe-Love?”<sup>1</sup>

## **Rationale**

In our Spanish textbook *¡Buen Viaje!*, the readings give information on various Hispanic heroes, festivals, food customs, and family events in addition to exploring vocabulary by making connections to science, geography, mathematics, the arts, and technology development. The School District of Philadelphia policy emphasizes that students make *connections* in all subject areas. These are areas, it is assumed, in which students have some background based on their knowledge gained from those requisite disciplines and can therefore grasp without much difficulty the cognates that are presented in the Spanish Lecturas and Historietas.<sup>2</sup> Since in *¡Buen Viaje!* there is not much poetic discourse at this linguistic level, and more so, particularly on the theme of Afro-American poetry with its undisclosed but abundant diversity, the opportunity to create lessons in Spanish within a curriculum unit is captivating. The unit will be designed to be presented over a period of twenty school days.

“La Poesía” aims at illustrating some of the themes presented in The Anthology of Afro-American Poetry edited by Arnold Rampersad and also where possible to refer to similar poems from Afro-Hispanic poets. The decided course is as a result of my perusal of the Anthology. The path chosen will be to paint a portrait of people with the main thrust being to illuminate the themes of “sorrow, joy and triumphs”. Many Afro-Hispanic poets such as Cuba’s Nicolás Guillén<sup>3</sup> and Uruguay’s Pilar Barrios<sup>4</sup> and Paulo de Carvalho-Neto<sup>5</sup> write about African American life and culture from within the Diaspora. Some of the issues of black (North American)culture: Africa, Slavery, South versus North, Black Man ,Woman and Child, Family and Love, Religion and Death as illustrated in Rampersad’s Anthology are also articulated by the Afro- Hispanic poet and thus finds resonance in the Americas: the Hispanic World.

Though the expression and articulation of “black poetry” may be sung in a rhythm and tune different to that of the “Afro Hispanic” version and though the length of stanzas may be dissimilar or vary, there is common ground in the variety of poetic forms and the captivating use of words in both tongue.

## **Objectives**

Students will know how to read short poems in Spanish using high frequency, productive vocabulary that they can readily understand with guidance from the Teacher/Leader. Each poem will recycle some familiar vocabulary and incorporate new words thereby enabling students to read and learn - in Spanish – about the fascinating “black” Afro-

American and Afro-Hispanic culture.

The poems will introduce students to the cultural, socio-political and historic complexities of the “black’ experience in America dating roughly from 1900 to 2000. Students will be able to make comparisons and identify contrasting and similar features between the Afro-American and Afro-Hispanic groups.

The exposure to Afro-American and Afro-Hispanic Culture through poems in the target language will provide progressive practice in thematic, contextualized vocabulary, *connections* to other disciplines and a variety of instructional activities that reinforce skills and concepts.

- Students will be able to synthesize information drawing on prior knowledge and experience.
- At the end of reading and or performing each poem, students will engage in activities with interesting and varied but realistic formats which will further stimulate and enhance all the Spanish they have encountered to date.
- Students will write responses in Spanish to questions posed in the target language as well as discuss and share their answers.
- Students will learn “some of the more controversial and intimate aspects of black American” and Afro-Hispanic experience and then report on their findings in the target language.

The variety of instructional activities will amalgamate strategies for students of varied learning styles and abilities. Activities will include materials that cater to the needs of special students.

## **Strategies**

Students will look for biographical and other background information concerning the poet and poetry being studied. Students will engage in pre reading activities such as:

- Skimming the poems for cognates
- Scanning the footnotes for meanings of new vocabulary
- Listing new vocabulary
- Looking for clues to context such as photos/pictures

Students will ask and answer questions in the target language such as:

1. What makes poetry so appealing?

2. Why does it live on?
3. Is there any connection to other art forms such as music, painting, dance?
4. Why has it been a source of fascination for poets and readers both learned and illiterate alike?
5. Does poetry communicate a message to the human mind about the nature of life; about consciousness; about existence; about “the dynamic of the universe; -Love?”<sup>1</sup>

Students will read the poems and answer questions in the accompanying ACTIVIDADES. Students will be encouraged to use the internet as a source of up-to-the-minute information on culture, reference sources, news, topical information and organizations such as museums that provide relevant online exhibits, archives etc.

Students will engage in performance of the poetry and recording of the performance.

## LA POESÍA DE LAS AMERICAS

### Classroom Activities

#### POEMAS

#### SECCIÓN 1 AFRICA

### La geografía de mi Padre

AFAA M. WEAVER

Desfilaba la Costa Azul,  
saltando los trenes de distancia corta de Niza a Cannes,  
traspasar el laberinto de calles de Monte Carlo  
a la colina que mira a la ciudad.  
Una mujer me alimentó paté en la tarde,  
llamandome desde su puesto para ofrecer más  
Al desayunar me hablaba en francés con un viejo  
de lo que amaba sobre América - la Kennedys.

En las playas caminé y miré  
las mujeres tomar el sol y nadar sin brasier,  
amante mi casa y está tan lejos de ella.

En un teléfono mirando a África en el Mediterráneo,  
Llamé a mi padre, y me faltan, dijo,  
"Estás en casa hijo. Ándale, cruzar el mar!"

#### ACTIVIDAD 1

(A) Lea el poema en una voz alta. Busque las palabras familiares y los cognados.

(B) Busque todas las denotaciones de las palabras que no sabes.

#### ACTIVIDAD 2

Dé en inglés la denotación y las posibles connotaciones de las siguientes palabras.

1. distancia
2. laberinto
3. puesto
4. viejo
5. brasier
6. en casa
7. cruzar
8. desfilaba

#### ACTIVIDAD 3

Las siguientes frases: <<los trenes cortos>. <<casi en casa, mi hijo>> <<venga, cruce el mar>> se pueden ser útiles para una comprensión más profunda o una interpretación diferente del poema. Busque las frases en las estrofas y compare y describa los significados.

#### ACTIVIDAD 4

¿Qué imágenes visuales se asocian con un lugar como éste? Navegue por internet y busque información sobre La Costa Azul. Haga un dibujo para ilustrar sus pensamientos.

## ACTIVIDAD 5

### ESTRUCTURA DE VOCABULARIO

El desfile      el salto    la mirada    el alimento    la llamada    la oferta    el desayuno

El amor      la caminata

Dé el infinitivo del verbo que se deriva de la lista de los sustantivos en el vocabulario.

## ACTIVIDAD 6

Complete las siguientes oraciones con la forma correcta de las palabras de la lista de vocabulario.

1. Los puertorriqueños, los italianos y los irlandés tienen ..... en la ciudad de filadelfia.
2. Voy a hacer.....sobre la silla.
3. En Estados Unidos una persona en la playa pública da .....de sorprende cuando hay una mujer sin brasier.
4. Se necesita ir de compras para .....

## ACTIVIDAD 7

¿COMPRENDISTE?

¿Cómo son las estrofas conectado al título del poema? Escriba para explicar en un párrafo de cinco frases, por lo menos.

O

Reorganice las palabras en unos de los versos de modo que es posible comprenderlas más fácilmente.

## En Los Campos de Sr. Turner

Sam Cornish

propiedad de Benjamin  
Turner yo aprendido todavía  
para leer  
al lado de mi arado en la oración  
yo recé e yo esperé

los negros siempre han confiado  
para mí por que siempre he esperado  
de un signo

he oído un fuerte mover  
en los cielos  
la serpiente se suelta  
Cristo ha acostado el yugo

### ACTIVIDAD 1

**A** Lea el poema en una voz alta. Busque las palabras familiares y los cognados.

**B** Completa las siguientes frases con la forma correcta de los verbos en el paréntesis.

1. Cuando voy a la tienda,..... una cosa y es mi propiedad.(comprar)
2. En la sala de clase estudiamos y .....todos.(aprender)
3. En los campos.....mi arado para mover la tierra.(usar)
4. En la iglesia la gente..... En la parada ellos.....para el autobus.(rezar/esperar)
5. Tengo que.....la música para bailar.(oir)
- 6.No.....la trompeta tan fuerte.(tocar)
7. En el jardín,Eva .....la manzana de la serpiente. (tomar)
8. La cadena del perro.....y.....(soltarse/escaparse)
9. Los criminales han.....sus pistolas.(acostar)

### ACTIVIDAD 2

Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

- 1.¿Que significa <<propiedad>>?

2. ¿Quién es o Qué es la propiedad?
3. ¿Qué lee?
4. ¿Cuál es la connotación de <<arado>>?
5. ¿Por qué dice:<< yo recé e yo esperé>>?
6. ¿Qué significa:<< los negros siempre han confiado..... ..un signo>>?
7. ¿Qué significa:<< en los cielos>>?
8. ¿Cuál es un <<serpiente>>?
9. ¿Qué significa:<<el yugo>>?

### ACTIVIDAD 3

A Lea el fragmento del poema :

**Canto para un muchacho negro americano del sur**  
Paulo de Carvalho-Neto

En los galeones negreros  
vino  
engrillado en sus sentinas  
sin un adiós a la tribu  
ni a la manigua.

B Completa las siguientes frases con la forma correcta de los verbos en el paréntesis.

1. En la manigua,.....los miembros de una tribu y flora e fauna también.(vivir)
2. La policía va a.....al ladrón y ..... le.(atrapar/engrillar)
3. Los esclavos.....en la sentina de los galeones y .....al caribe y las americas.(viajar/venir)

### ACTIVIDAD 4



1. ¿Cuáles son las imágenes de la esclavitud se muestran aquí?
2. ¿Cómo se comparan con las de <<Los Campos del Sr. Turner>>?
3. ¿Qué historia se puede contar?

### SECCIÓN 3 SUD VS. NORTE

## **Hemos Adorado Nunca** Sam Cornish

hemos adorado  
nunca  
uno al otro  
tenemos  
solamente  
esta casa  
esta calle  
estos vecindarios  
malinterpretar  
nosotros mismos  
este alimento  
estos sueldos  
no es  
amor  
pero  
algo  
más profundo  
que el miedo  
que hace  
me llamas  
hermano  
en un extraño  
ciudad  
de hombres  
blanco

ACTIVIDAD 1

**A** Lea el poema en una voz alta.

**B** Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Qué palabras sugieren que el orador no está cómoda con su existencia?
2. ¿Por qué el poeta escribe las palabras en esta forma?
3. ¿Se superponen las frases?
4. ¿Sugiere el poema una ubicación particular, un lugar, una región?
5. ¿Cómo se utiliza el término “amor”? ¿Es amor físico?
6. ¿Cómo se utiliza el término “miedo”?
7. ¿Qué es significado por "usted me llama hermano en una ciudad extraña de hombres blancos"?

## ACTIVITY 2

**A** Lea el poema en una voz alta.

### **Tinieblas** Angela Weld Grimké

Hay un árbol, por día,  
Que, por la noche,  
Tiene una sombra,  
Una mano enorme y negra,  
Con los dedos largos y negros.  
    Todo durante del anochecer,  
Contra la casa del hombre blanco,  
    En la poca brisa,  
La mano negra arranca y arranca  
    A los ladrillos.  
Los ladrillos son el color de sangre y muy pequeño.  
    ¿Es una mano negra,  
    O es una sombra?

1. ¿Qué significa el título <<TINIEBLAS>>?
2. ¿Qué es la colocación del poema?

3. Haga una lista de palabras del poema en columnas para indicar: EL TIEMPO y EL LUGAR. Uselas para describirlas o hacer las conexiones y referencias que el poeta está mostrando.
4. ¿Sugiere el poema una ubicación particular, un lugar, una región?
5. ¿Hay un evento en la historia reciente que este poema alude a?
6. ¿Cuál es la "oscuridad" en este poema?
7. ¿Capta usted emocionalmente, la poeta y "dibuja" usted adentro la escena como si usted está en sitio?

#### SECCIÓN 4 EL HOMBRE NEGRO

### **Robeson en Rutgers**

Elizabeth Alexander

Difícil de imagen, pero estos árboles Goliat  
 son más altas aún que Robeson. Afuera  
 gran ventanas de placa en esta sala de conferencias,  
 Él, imagino le corriendo por los campos de otoño,  
 ver a sus muslos negros que bombea la maquinaria  
 a través de líneas de pintura- tiza.

Amaba a la mujer

En el laboratorio, Eslanda, que vio orden  
 en natación círculos en diapositivas pulgadas de ancho, que  
 hizo fotografías. Ella, imagino su de pie  
 en la oscuridad, dirigido por una luz roja, papel de baño  
 en caldo, extracción de imágenes. ¿ Hizo sonreír esta mujer  
 para ver oscurecer papel blanco, para tirar de mojado  
 de los productos químicos el rostro tótem de Paul Robeson?

#### ACTIVIDAD 1

Lea el poema en una voz alta.

Busque las palabras en el poema que no son familiares y haga una lista.

#### ACTIVIDAD 2

Dé el infinitivo para las siguientes palabras:

imagen corriendo bombea amaba vio hizo dirigido

### ACTIVIDAD 3

Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Quién fue Paul Robeson?
2. ¿Cuál fue su relación con la universidad de Rutgers?
3. ¿Qué sugiere el poeta con el uso de las palabras: Goliat, la maquinaria, el tótem?

### ACTIVIDAD 4

Lea el fragmento del poema en una voz alta:

#### **La leyenda maldita**

Pilar Barrios

(Fragmento)

Raza negra, noble raza;  
raza humilde, sana y fuerte,  
generosa y adnegada,  
hecha a todos los rigores.  
Como sientes inquietudes,  
sabes también de dolores  
del pasado y del presente.

### ACTIVIDAD 5

La primera estrofa, establece el tono en el recuento del legado de las pruebas y tribulaciones, así como destacando los puntos fuertes del pueblo negro.

¿Qué palabras o frases ilustran <<la fuerza>> en el poema?

¿Cómo comparar a la representación de <<la fuerza>> en Robeson en Rutgers?

#### SECCIÓN 5 LA MUJER Y EL NIÑO

#### **Maternidad**

Georgia Douglas Johnson

No llame a mi puerta, niñeta,  
Dejarte en no puedo;

Tú no sabes este mundo lo que es  
De crueldad y pecado  
Espera en la eternidad serena  
Hasta que yo venga a ti.  
El mundo es cruel, cruel, niñaeta ,  
No puedo dejarte pasar.

No llame a mi corazon, niñaeta,  
No puedo aguantar el dolor  
De prestar oídos sordos a tu llamada,  
Una y otra vez.  
No sabes los monstruo hombres  
Que habitan en la tierra.  
Sea quieto, quieto mi niño cielo  
No te puedo dar a luz.

### ACTIVIDAD 1

Lea el poema en una voz alta

### VOCABULARIO

llamar to call    saber to know    esperar to wait    venir to come  
poder to be able to    habitar to live, inhabit    ser to be

### ACTIVIDAD 2

A continuación hay una lista de palabras y frases que se usan simbólicamente en la poesía. Explíquelas.

Mi puerta    la eternidad serena    venga a ti    el mundo es cruel    mi niño cielo  
No puedo dejarte pasar    oidos sordos a tu llamada    no te puede dar a luz

### ACTIVIDAD 3

Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Quién es la oradora en el poema?
2. ¿Con quién habla ella?
3. ¿En su opinión, por qué dice ella: <<no llame a mi puerta>> y <<no llame a mi corazon>>?

4. ¿Quiénes son <<los monstruo hombres>>?
5. ¿Porqué es <<el mundo cruel>>?

#### ACTIVIDAD 4

Escriba un párrafo o dos para explicar el significado del título con el contenido del poema.

### SECCIÓN 6 LA FAMILIA Y LA EXPRESIÓN DE CARÍÑO

#### **Secretos familiar**

Toi Derricotte

Dijeron a mi prima Rowena no casarse a  
Calvin —era demasiado joven, sólo dieciocho,  
Y era demasiado oscuro, demasiado demasiado oscuro, como si  
había sido lavada en lo que queríamos  
a eliminar de nuestras manos. Además, no hizo descendiendo  
de una buena familia. Dijo que iba a  
ser abogado, pero no creemos completamente.  
La noche se fugaron al hotel Gotham,  
toda la casa susurró— como si nos avergüenza a  
contarlo a nosotros mismos. Mi tía y el tío  
se apresuraron al Gotham para implorar—  
no podíamos imaginar sus manos sobre su!  
Las familias son concebida de muchas maneras.  
La noche mi primo Calvin se echó  
abajo en su, ese ídolo con su piel de oro  
se rompió Y muchos de los dioses que nos encantó  
en secreto, fueron liberados.

#### ACTIVIDAD 1

Lea el poema en una voz alta

#### VOCABULARIO

Casarse to marry      había sido lavada had been washed      no hizo descendiendo he  
didn't come      abogado lawyer      como...a nosotros mismos as if we were  
ashamed to tell it ourselves      no podíamos imaginar we couldn't imagine  
se echó abajo en su lay down on her      nos encantó en secreto we loved in secret

#### ACTIVIDAD 2

(a) Busque el significado de los verbos siguientes en el diccionario: dijeron queríamos eliminar iba creemos se fugaron susurró fueron se apresuraron implorar concedida se rompió

(b) Dé el infinitivo de los verbos conjugados.

### ACTIVIDAD 3

Hay un secreto en este poema. ¿Que es?

¿Cómo son los temas de la familia y el amor ilustrado?

### ACTIVIDAD 4

Lea el fragmento del poema en una voz alta.

## **Canto para un muchacho negro americano del sur** Paulo de Carvalho-Neto

Abuelito  
gramillero  
díselo, díselo tú  
a este muchacho americano  
cómo era el bantú.

### ACTIVIDAD 5

Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Hay símbolos de la familia y el amor en este fragmento?
2. ¿Hay un secreto en este poema. ¿Que es?
3. ¿Los secretos en los dos poemas siguen siendo secretos?

### ACTIVIDAD 6

Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Tienes un secreto?
2. ¿Puede describirlo en términos de poética?
3. ¿Será no más un secreto?
4. ¿Puede ser escondido en un poema, un secreto?

## Señora y el Ministro Langston Hughes

El reverendo Butler vino por  
Mi casa la semana pasada.  
Él dijo, ¿Tienes  
Un poco de tiempo para hablar?

Dijo, me interesa  
En tu alma.  
¿Se ha guardado,  
O tu corazón es piedra-frío?

Dije, reverendo  
Yo te tendré saber  
Fui bautizado  
Hace tiempo.

Dijo, ¿Qué has  
Hecho desde ?  
Dije, ninguno de tu  
Asunto, amigo.

Dijo, Hermanita  
¿Has reincidido?  
Dije, Se sentía bien —  
Si yo lo hice!

Dijo, Hermanita  
Llega la hora de morir,  
El señor seguramente  
Te preguntará por qué!  
Voy a orar  
Para ti!  
Adiós!

Me sentí un poco lo siento  
Hablé de esa manera  
Después Rev. Butler  
Se fue—  
Así que no estoy en ningún humor  
De pecar hoy



## ACTIVIDAD 1

Lea el poema en una voz alta.

### VOCABULARIO

Vino came    dijo said    alma soul    se ha guardado has it been saved  
piedra frío stone cold    te tendre saber I'll have you know  
hace tiempo long ago    desde since    asunto business  
has reincidido have you back-slid    se sentía bien it felt good    Llega la hora de morir  
come time to die    un poco lo siento a little sorry    en ningún humor de pecar in  
no mood to sin

## ACTIVIDAD 2

Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Cuál es el contexto de este poema?
2. ¿Quiénes son los que están hablando?
3. ¿De qué hablan ?
4. ¿Cuál es la actitud de cada orador?

## ACTIVIDAD 3

En sus propias palabras, escriba un resumen de este poema en español.

O

Describa la manera en que el poeta ha usado el ritmo de las palabras y frases para crear la calidad de tono y humor del poema.

## ACTIVIDAD 4

Dibuje un boceto para ilustrar la localización física y las actitudes del " Madam" y " El Minister"

## LECTURA ADICIONAL

Judith Ortiz Cofer .- *Grace está en la línea para el sábado confesión* (en << Corona Triple>> . véase biblio.).

Lea y compare los poemas.

SECCIÓN 8 LA MUERTE

**Velorio**  
Langston Hughes

Dile a cada llorona  
Lamentar en roja —  
Porque no hay ningún sentido  
siendo extinto.

Odio a morir de esta manera con el silencio  
Por encima de todo como un sudario.  
Prefiero morir donde la banda toca  
Ruidosa y clamorosa.

Prefiero morir la manera que yo vivía—  
Ebrioso, alborotado y alegre!  
Dios! ¿Por qué me maldición tanta  
Me hace morir de esta manera?

ACTIVIDAD 1

Lea el poema en una voz alta.

VOCABULARIO

Llorona – mourners    siendo extinto – being dead    odio – I hate    sudario – shroud  
la banda toca – the band plays    ruidosa y clamorosa – noisy and loud  
yo vivía – I lived    ebrioso – drunk    alborotado – rowdy  
me maldice – curse me    haciendome morir – making me die

ACTIVIDAD 2

Haga dos listas: uno con verbos en el infinitivo y uno con verbos conjugados del poema.

ACTIVIDAD 3

Conteste las siguientes preguntas:

1. ¿Cuál es el esquema de rima de este poema?
2. ¿Quién es el orador en este poema?
3. ¿Es un poema comico o serio?
4. ¿Es la música clamorosa y ruidosa cuando alguien se muere?
5. ¿Cuál fue el carácter de la persona cuando vivía?

## LECTURA ADICIONAL

Judith Ortiz Cofer *Cuando Usted Viene a Mi Funeral* (en << Corona Triple >> / véase biblio.)

Lea y compare los poemas.

## SECCIÓN 9 LA MÚSICA

### **Jazzonia**

Langston Hughes

O, árbol de plata!  
Oh, ríos brillantes del alma!

En un cabaret de Harlem  
Seis <<jazzers>> de cabezas-largas tocan <sup>1</sup> .  
Una bailarina cuyos ojos son desvergonzado<sup>2</sup>  
Levanta alta su vestida seda de oro.

O, árbol de canto!  
Oh, ríos brillantes del alma!

¿Eran los ojos de Eva  
En el primer jardín  
Sólo un poco demasiado audaz? <sup>3</sup>  
¿Era Cleopatra  
En su vestido de oro hermosa?

O, árbol brillante!  
Oh, plata ríos del alma!

En un remolino de cabaret  
Seis <<jazzers>> de cabezas-largas tocan.

## ACTIVIDAD 1

(a) Lea “Jazzonia” en una voz alta y busque el ritmo (sílabas enfatizadas y átonas) lo que da este poema la calidad de música. ¿Hay otro aspecto del poema que crea una calidad de música?

## VOCABULARIO

### Verbos

tocar to play(instruments),to touch    bailar to dance    levantar to raise  
cantar to sing    ser to be    brillar to shine

### **Sustantivos**

la plata silver    el oro gold    el alma the soul    el ojos the eye    el jardín the garden  
el vestido the dress    el remolino the whirlwind

### **Frases**

<sup>1</sup> Seis <<jazzers>> de cabezas-largas - six long-headed jazzers

<sup>2</sup> cuyos ojos son desvergonzado – whose eyes are bold

<sup>3</sup>demasiado audaz – too bold

Langston Hughes(1902-1967) fue un líder influyente en el renacimiento de Harlem. Él es considerado como uno de los poetas más revolucionarios del siglo 20 por su uso pionero de música negra y de discurso vernáculo.

### **ACTIVIDAD 2**

- (a) ¿Qué referencias que hace el poeta a la naturaleza? ¿Cómo varían las referencias?
- (b) ¿Cuál es el significado de <<Oro>> y <<Plata>>?
- (c) ¿Qué instrumentos se han "jugado" y en qué contexto?
- (d) ¿Cuál es el significado por el poeta de la referencia a la mujer?

### **ACTIVITY 3**

Lea <<Palma sola>> en una voz alta. ¿Qué palabras sugieren el escenario?

### **Palma sola Nicolás Guillén**

La palma que está en el patio  
nació sola;  
creció sin que yo la viera<sup>1</sup>  
creció sola;  
bajo la luna y el sol,  
vive sola

Con su largo cuerpo fijo,  
palma sola;  
sola en el patio sellado,  
siempre sola,  
guardián del atardecer,  
suená sola.

La palma sola soñando,  
palma sola,  
que va libre por el viento,  
libre y sola,  
suelta de raíz y tierra,  
suelta y sola;  
cazador de las nubes,  
palma sola,  
palma sola,  
palma.

## VOCABULARIO

### Verbos

nacer to be born    crecer to grow    bajar to lower    fijar to fix,fasten  
sellar to seal,enclose    guardar to guard, keep, stay    soñar to dream  
soltar to set free,untie,loosen    cazar to hunt

### Sustantivos

la luna moon    libre free    el raíz (pl. Raíces) root    la tierra earth, soil  
el atardecer late afternoon

### Frases

<sup>1</sup> sin que yo la viera - without my seeing it

### ACTIVITY 4

¿Qué frases ilustran la soledad del árbol?

¿Cómo interactúan el ritmo y la repetición de las palabras?

¿Cómo son utilizados personification y metáfora en el poema?

¿De qué manera es el árbol en cautividad? ¿De qué manera es libre?

### ACTIVITY 5

Hughes y Guillén usan <<el árbol>>en su poema. ¿Se puede comparar las similitudes y las diferencias?

#### ACTIVITY 6

Navigue por internet y busque los conexiones entre Langston Hughes y Nicolás Guillén.

Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989) es uno de los más famosos poetas cubanos. Él es poeta nacional de Cuba. Su poesía ilustra la herencia africana de la gente cubana y también la historia étnica de la isla. En muchas de sus obras se puede encontrar el ritmo de <<son>>, un tipo de música de origen africano y español. Este poema pertenece al género llamado poesía negra. La repetición de palabras y frases que le da al poema una calidad musical característica de la poesía negra.

#### SECCIÓN 10 ¡TE TOCA A TI!

Escoja una de las siguientes tres tareas de escritura. Usted puede utilizar PowerPoint, fotos, sonido, interpretación o cualquier otra adición artística que aumentarán su presentación. Tiene dos semanas para preparar una presentación a la clase.

1. Busque biográfico y otra información de fondo a por lo menos cinco de los poetas y la poesía que usted se ha encontrado y escriba ensayos cortos sobre ellos.
2. Escoja un mínimo de dos poemas por dos poetas diferentes y escriba un ensayo de por lo menos 500 palabras que describe por qué su selección es tan atractivo a usted.
3. Escriba un ensayo de por lo menos 1000 palabras que responde a las preguntas siguientes:
  - (a) ¿ por qué persiste la poesía ?
  - (b) ¿ Por qué ha sido una fuente de fascinación para poetas y lectores aprendido y analfabetos igualmente?
  - (c) ¿Está allí cualquier conexión a otros medios de expresión artística como la música, la pintura, el baile?
  - (d) ¿Comunica la poesía un mensaje a la mente humana sobre la naturaleza de la vida, sobre la conciencia, sobre la existencia, sobre el amor

## **Annotated Bibliography / Resources**

### Anthologies in English

Aragon, F. ed. *The Wind Shifts* New Latino Poetry (Tucson, U of Arizona Press, 2007)

A collection of poetry by twenty-five Latino writers of Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Cuban descent among others. They are “a generation of poets that follow those more established poets of the nineteen nineties.” Themes deal with social and political issues that delve into race, sex, gender, death, “the interior lives of mothers, healers, things”.

Cruz, V.H., Quintana, L.V., Saurez, V. *PaperDance* Latino Poets (N.J., Princeton Academic Press, 1995)

This gathering of poets represent the Latino voices from across the entire United States. Their backgrounds are not only the usual Chicano, Puerto Rican and Cuban but also the Guatemalan, Ecuadorean and Colombian. They all ‘sing’ on the theme of the American Dream and “the struggle to define, redefine and attain it.”

Rampersad, A. ed., Herbold, H. assoc. ed. *The Oxford Anthology of African American Poetry*, (OUP, NY, NY. 2006)

A portrait of a people through verse that illustrates their “sorrow, joys and triumphs”. It includes selections by poets such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Paul L. Dunbar and Rita Dove among others. The poems are grouped under the themes of Africa, The South, Slavery, The Black Man, Woman and Child, Music, Death, Religion and more.

### Bilingual Anthologies in English & Spanish

Olivares, J and Vigil-Pinon, E. eds. *Deacde II: A Twentirth Anniversary Anthology 1972- 1992* (Texas, U of Huston, Arte Público Press, 1993)

A publication celebrating the works of twenty-seven youthful and new Hispanic poets who communicate from a contemporary perspective. They give a broader and original view of Latino-American literature.

### Bilingual Anthologies in English & Spanish Translations

Negron-Mutaner, F. ed. *Shouting in a Whisper/Los Límites del Silencio* Latino Poetry in Philadelphia (Chile, Asterion Press 1994)

This collection consists of works by ten authors representing backgrounds from Puerto Rico, Colombia, Chile and Cuba. The themes are as varied as

the writers and consist of subjects such as homo-eroticism, skin color, marginalism, dual identity, lack of identity and language.

### Books and in English

Carper, T. & Attridge, D. *Meter and Meaning*, an introduction to rhythm in poetry  
(Routledge, N.Y., London 2003)

This book emphasizes the value of reading poetry aloud in order to experience the “use of rhythm”. It demonstrates the ‘beat-off beat’ method of analyzing poetry as a way to comprehending the important connection between “meter and meaning”. It commences with easy to follow simple exercises, proceeding to more advanced examples, in poems dating from all periods.

Lewis, M.A. *Afro-Hispanic Poetry 1940-1980*, From Slavery to “Negritud” in South American verse. (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1983)

In the introduction, the author lists as many terms for ‘black poetry’ as he is cognizant. They include “mulatto poetry”, “literature negrista”, “poesia negra” and “La poesia negroide” among others. Later on he presents an analysis of selected volumes of ethnic poetry by nine major writers of African descent emanating from Peru, Colombia, Ecuador and Uruguay.

Olinger, P. *Images of Transformation in Traditional Hispanic Poetry*  
(Delaware, Juan de la Cuesta-Hispanic Monographs, 1985)

The author presents a study of folk song that he states originated from as far back as the first millennium and became popular during the middle ages on the Iberian peninsula. He indicates that the remnant of this “lyric poetry” is only the *estribillo* (refrain). Olinger raises the question: “What makes this poetry so appealing. Why does it live on? He postulates: “The folk song of any people reflects their cosmic vision”.

Oliver, M. *A Poetry Handbook*, A prose guide to understanding and writing Poetry (Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1994)

This book is primarily concerned with the craft of writing poetry. It provides a variety of options for producing poetry from the initial idea or theme up to the process of reproducing the thought in words. It demonstrates concern for the needs and problems faced by the beginning writer/student.



Smart, Ian, I Nicolas Guillen *Popular poet of the Caribbean* (University of Missouri Press 1990 )

This book postulates an Afrocentric critique of Guillen's "Mulatez" or dual European and African influence/conflict in his works making him a "true Caribbean or West Indian" artist.

#### Books in English and Spanish

Castro-Paniagua, F. *English-Spanish Translation, Through a Cross-Cultural Interpretation Approach* (University press of America ,Inc.2000)

This author stresses the importance of the translator being aware of his own and different cultures in order to make "the proper decision in regards to cultural considerations". His indications are that the challenge in translation lies in bring able to essentially maintain the message of the original poem across languages.

#### Poems in English

Gonzalez,R. ed. *Touching The Fire Fifteen Poets of Today's Latino Renaissance*(Doubleday 1998)

The poetry is mainly in English with some poets choosing to add a line or two in Spanish between the others. There are ten poems by each poet. The poems illustrate "a confidence of language, shattering ,emotional honesty and rhythms of a vibrant culture".

#### Poems in Spanish and English

Duran,R.,Cofer,J.,Firmat,G.P., *Triple Crown Chicano,Puerto Rican,and Cuban-American Poetry*(Arizona, Bilingual Press 1987)

Contains poetry by three poets from Hispanic America: Roberto Duran of Mexican-American heritage whose style is influenced by "the relationship between brown and white peoples",Judith Ortiz Cofer of PuertoRico who is fascinated with "death and desire" and the Cuban American Gustavo Perez Firmat who struggles with the virtue of wrting and expressing himself in both Spanish and English.

#### Multimedia Sites

[www.english.illinois.edu/maps](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps)

[www.nortonpoets.com](http://www.nortonpoets.com)

## Audio/Visual Sites

[www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)

[www.youtube.com/poets](http://www.youtube.com/poets)

## Web Sites

[www.artstor.org](http://www.artstor.org)

[www.Poets.org](http://www.Poets.org)

[www.fortunefalls.com/op19/](http://www.fortunefalls.com/op19/)

[www.rpo.library.utoronto.ca](http://www.rpo.library.utoronto.ca)

[www.pw.org](http://www.pw.org)

## Festivals / Events

Puerto Rican Day Parade – The Philadelphia Parade first organized on July 25, 1953 by a Quaker group- Philadelphia Friends Neighborhood Guild. In 1964, organized by the Puerto Rican group - Concilio

## Organizations

Philadelphia Folklore Project

Taller Puertorriqueño

Aspira

## Museums and Special Collections

Afro-American Museum

Philadelphia Museum of Art

## **Bibliography for students**

Cisneros, Sandra. *Hairs/Pelitos*. New York, Random House 1997, with illustrations by Terry Ybanez

The humorous descriptions of the many types of hair in one girl's family, illuminating the diversity among us all.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991

Esperanza Cordero, a girl coming of age in the Hispanic quarter of Chicago, uses poems and stories to express thoughts and emotions about her oppressive environment.

Garza, Carmen Lomas, et al. *¡Avancemos ! Lecturas Para Todos*. McDougal Littell 2007

A series of cultural readings ranging from Quinceañera to Vacations abroad in Costa Rica with additional literature such as an abridged version of Don Quijote and poetry by Pablo Neruda, Academic and Informational Reading and Test Preparation Strategies

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *Family Pictures / Cuadros de Familia*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press 1990

*The author describes in bilingual text and her painting, her experience growing up in a Latino community.*

Whitaker, D.S. *The Voices Of Latino Culture* Readings from Spain, Latin America

and the United States (Iowa, Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co. 1996)

. This selection of writings delineates the development Latino culture in the United States from the time of the Spanish arrival through to the present day. The African presence in Cuba is describe both by Gertrudis de Avellaneda and Nicolás Guillén.

## **Appendix – Standards**

The Standards for Foreign Language Learning listed below are those as set forth by ACTFL. The lecturas and the activities which follow them in the *Unit* aim principally to meet the standard of *Connections* in which students read and gather information about another discipline.

In addition, students as a matter of course are provided with the skills they need to create language for both written and spoken communication. Suggestions are made for students to use their language skills in their immediate community and more distant ones.

### COMMUNICATION *Communicate in Languages Other than English*

Standard 1.1 Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2 Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3 Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

### CULTURES *Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures*

Standard 2.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2 Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

*CONNECTIONS Connect with Other disciplines and Acquire Information*

Standard 3.1 Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2 Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its culture.

*COMPARISONS Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture*

Standard 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2 Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

*COMMUNITIES Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home and Around the World*

Standard 5.1 Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2 Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment

#### **END NOTES**

<sup>1</sup>*Oliver, Mary-A Poetry Handbook*

<sup>2</sup>Historieta – Short Stories

<sup>3</sup>Palma sola

<sup>4</sup>La Leyenda maldita

<sup>5</sup> Canto para un muchacho negro americano del sur

*Afro-Hispanic Poetry 1940-1980, From Slavery to “Negritude” in South American Verse*

Pg.22-23 <<Canto para un muchacho negro americano del sur>>Paulo de Carvalho-Neto

Pg. <<La Leyenda Maldita >> Pilar Barios

## TRANSLATIONS

# THE POETRY OF THE AMERICAS

### POEMS

#### SECTION 1 AFRICA

### **My Father's Geography**

A<sub>F</sub>AA M. W<sub>E</sub>AVER

I was parading the Côte d'Azur,  
hopping short trains from Nice to Cannes,  
following a maze of streets in Monte Carlo  
to the hill that overlooks the ville.  
A woman fed me pâté in the afternoon,  
calling from her stall to offer me more.  
At breakfast I talked in French with an old man  
about what he loved about America—the Kennedys.

On the beaches I walked and watched  
topless women sunbathe and swim,  
loving both home and being so far from it.

At a phone looking to Africa over the Mediterranean,  
I called my father, and, missing me, he said,  
“You almost home boy. Go on cross that sea!”

#### ACTIVITY 1

- (A) Read the poem in aloud voice.
- (B) Look for the meanings of the words that you don't know.

#### ACTIVITY 2

Explain the meaning of: “the short trains”, “maze of streets”, “the Kennedy's”, “loving both home and being so far from it”, “At a phone looking to Africa over the Mediterranean”

#### ACTIVITY 3

What visual images can one associate with a place like this? Surf the Net and look for information about the “Côte d'Azur”.

#### ACTIVITY 4

Draw a sketch to illustrate your impression of the setting of the poem.

#### ACTIVITY 5

Complete the following sentences by filling the blanks with the correct form of the word chosen from the poem.

- 1 The Puerto Ricans, the Italians and the Irish have .....in the city of Philadelphia.
- 2 I am going to .....over the chair.
- 3 In the United States a person on a public beach gives a .....of surprise when there is a topless woman.
- 4 Nowadays one no longer needs to go looking for a .....to make a .....

#### ACTIVITY 6

Did you understand?

How are the stanzas connected to the title of the poem? Write a paragraph of about five phrases to explain.

Using either lines 1-8 or 9-14 of the text write a “Found Poem” that best illustrates an idea from the poem.

## SECTION 2 SLAVERY

### **In Mr. Turner’s Fields**

Sam Cornish

property of Benjamin  
Turner i still learned  
to read  
beside my plow in prayer  
i prayed i waited

blacks have always trusted  
me for what i have always waited  
for a sign

i heard a loud move  
in the heavens  
the serpent was loose  
Christ has lain down the yoke

#### ACTIVITY 1

Read the poem in aloud voice.

#### ACTIVITY 2

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the significance of “property”?
2. Who or what is property?
3. What is he/she reading?
4. What does the word “plow” connote?
5. What is meant by “ i prayed,i waited”?
6. What is the significance of “blacks have.....a sign”?
7. What is the significance of “in the heavens”?
8. What is a serpent?
9. What is the “yoke” and how is it “lain down”?

#### ACTIVITY 3

**A** Read the fragment of the poem:

### **Song for a Black American Boy from the South**

Paulo de Carvalho-Neto

In the slaver galleons  
you came  
shackled in its bilge

without a goodbye to the tribe  
or to the jungle.

**B** Answer the following questions:

1. What is a galleon?
2. What is the “bilge”?
3. What is the connection between bilge and a street?
4. In this poem, what can bilge also be a reference to?
5. What is a tribe?
6. What is a jungle? How does the poet use the term in this poem?

#### ACTIVITY 4

What are the images of slavery expressed here?

How do they compare to those in Mr. Turner’s Fields?

What story can one relate after reading both these poems?

#### ADDITIONAL READING

Lucille Clifton *slaveship (Every Eye Shut Ain’t Asleep: An Anthology of Poetry by African Americans Since 1945-Little, Brown and Co., 1994)*

#### SECTION 3 NORTH VS. SOUTH

### **We Have Never Loved**

Sam Cornish

we have  
never  
loved  
each other  
we  
have



only  
this house  
this street  
these neighborhoods  
to misunderstand  
ourselves  
this food  
these wages  
it is  
not love  
but  
something  
deeper  
than fear  
that makes  
you call me  
brother  
in a strange  
city  
of white  
men

#### ACTIVITY 1

**A** Read the poem in a loud voice.

**B** Answer the following questions:

1. What words suggest that the speaker is not comfortable with his existence?
2. Why does the poet write the words in this form?
3. Do phrases overlap?
4. Does the poem suggest a particular location, place, region?
5. How is the term “love” used? Is it physical love?
6. How is the term “fear” used?
7. What is meant by “you call me brother in a strange city of white men”?

#### ACTIVITY 2

**A** Read the poem in a loud voice.

## **Tenebris**

Angela Weld Grimké

There is a tree by day,  
That at night,  
Has a shadow,  
A hand huge and black,  
With fingers long and black.

All through the dark,  
Against the white man's house,

In the little wind,  
The black hand plucks and plucks

At the bricks.  
The bricks are the color of blood and very small.

Is it a black hand,

Or is it a shadow?

**B** Answer the following questions:

1. What does the title "TENEBRIS" mean?
2. What is the setting of the poem?
3. Make a list of words under the columns that suggest : TIME and PLACE and use them to describe the connections and or references that the poet is making.
4. Does this poem suggest a particular location, place or region?
5. Is there an event in recent history that this poem alludes to?
6. What is the "darkness" in this poem?
7. Does the poet capture you emotionally and "draw" you into the scene as though you are on the site.

SECTION 4 THE BLACK MAN

**Robeson in Rutgers**

Elizabeth Alexander

Hard to picture, but these Goliath trees  
are taller still than Robeson. Outside  
vast plate windows in this lecture hall,  
I imagine him running down autumn fields,  
see his black thighs pumping that machinery  
across chalk-painted lines.

He loved the woman  
in the lab, Eslanda, who saw order  
in swimming circles on inch-wide slides, who  
made photographs. I picture her standing  
in darkness, led by red light, bathing paper  
in broth, extracting images. Did this woman smile  
to watch white paper darken, to pull wet  
from the chemicals Paul Robeson's totem face?

ACTIVITY 1

Read the poem in a loud voice.

ACTIVITY 2

**A** What words does the poet use to set the TIME and PLACE

**B** What is the significance of the following:

1. Goliath
2. "black thighs .....chalk-painted lines."
3. Eslanda
4. "bathing paper in broth"
5. "to watch white paper darken"
6. "totem face"

**The Damned Legend**

Pilar Barrios

(Fragment)

Black race, noble race;  
humble race, healthy and strong,  
generous and unselfish,  
made from all the hardships.  
As you feel uneasiness

you also know of pains  
of the past and present.

#### ACTIVITY 1

Read the fragment in a loud voice.

#### ACTIVITY 2

This fragment (the first stanza) establishes the tone of the poem in recounting the legacy of trials and tribulations as well as emphasizing the strengths of black people.

What words and or phrases in the poem illustrate “strength”?

How does it compare with the representation of “strength” in Robeson at Rutgers?

### SECTION 5 THE MOTHER AND CHILD

#### **Motherhood**

Georgia Douglas Johnson

Don't knock on my door , little child,  
I cannot let you in;  
You know not what a world this is  
Of cruelty and sin.  
Wait in the still eternity  
Until I come to you.  
The world is cruel, cruel, child,  
I cannot let you through.

Don't knock at my heart, little one,  
I cannot bear the pain  
Of turning deaf ears to your call  
Time and time again.  
You do not know the monster men  
Inhabiting the earth.  
Be still, be still, my precious child,  
I cannot give you birth.

#### ACTIVITY 1

Read the poem in a loud voice.

## ACTIVITY 2

The following is a list of words and phrases that are used symbolically in the poem. Explain them.

My door      the still eternity    I come to you    the world is cruel      my precious child  
I cannot let you through      deaf ears to your call      I cannot give you birth

## ACTIVITY 3

Answer the following questions:

1. Who is the speaker in the poem?
2. With whom is she speaking?
3. In your opinion, why does she say: “Don’t knock at my door.” and “ Don’t knock at my heart.”?
4. Who are “the monster men”?
5. Why is the world “cruel”?

## ACTIVITY 4

Write a paragraph or two in order to explain the significance of the title with the contents of the poem.

### SECTION 6 THE FAMILY AND LOVE

#### Family Secrets Toi Derricotte

They told my cousin Rowena not to marry  
Calvin— she was too young, just eighteen,  
& he was too dark, too too dark, as if he  
had been washed in what we wanted  
to wipe off our hands. Besides, he didn’t come  
from a good family. He said he was going  
to be a lawyer, but we didn’t quite believe.  
The night they elope to the Gotham Hotel,  
the whole house whispered— as if we were ashamed  
to tell it to ourselves. My aunt and uncle  
rushed down to the Gotham to plead—  
we couldn’t imagine his hands on her!  
Families are conceived in many ways.  
The night my cousin Calvin lay

down on her, that idol with its gold skin  
broke, & many of the gods we loved  
in secret were freed.

Read the fragment of the poem :

**Song for a Black American Boy from the South**  
Paulo de Carvalho-Neto

Grandpa  
gramillero  
tell it to him  
to this American boy  
how the bantu were

ACTIVITY 1

What are the symbols of family and love in this fragment?  
How are the themes of family and love illustrated?  
Are there secrets in both poems? What are they? Do they remain secrets?

ACTIVITY 2

Think of a secret you have. Can you express it in poetic terms? Will that give it away?  
Can you hide a secret in a poem?

ADDITIONAL READING

Robert Hayden *Those Winter Sundays*

SECTION 7 RELIGION

**Madam and The Minister**

Langston Hughes

Reverend Butler came by  
My house last week.  
He said, Have you got  
A little time to speak?

He said, I am interested  
In your soul.  
Has it been saved,  
Or is your heart stone- cold?

I said, Reverend,  
I'll have you know  
I was baptized  
Long ago.

He said, What have you  
Done since then?  
I said, None of your  
Business, friend.

He said, Sister  
Have you back-slid?  
I said, It felt good—  
If I did!

He said, Sister,  
Come time to die,  
The Lord will surely  
Ask you why!  
I'm gonna pray  
For you!  
Goodbye!

I felt kinder sorry  
I talked that way  
After rev. Butler  
Went away—  
So I ain't in no mood  
For sin today.

### ACTIVITY 1

Read the poem in a loud voice

### ACTIVITY 2

Answer the following questions:

- 1 What is the poem about?
- 2 Who are the speakers?
- 3 What do they talk about ?
- 4 What is the attitude of each speaker?

### ACTIVITY 3

Draw a sketch to illustrate the physical location and the attitudes of the speakers.

### ACTIVITY 4

How does the poet use rhythm of words and phrases to suggest the mood and tone of voice of the speakers.

### ADDITIONAL READING

Read and compare:

Judith Ortiz Cofer .-Grace Stands in Line for Saturday confession (in Triple Crown/see biblio.)

## SECTION 8 DEATH

### **Wake**

Langston Hughes

Tell all my mourners  
To mourn in red—  
Cause there ain't no sense  
In my bein' dead.

I hate to die this way with the quiet  
Over everything like a shroud.  
I'd rather die where the band's a-playin'  
Noisy and loud.



Rather die the way I lived—  
Drunk and rowdy and gay!  
God! Why did you ever curse me  
Makin' me die this way?

#### ACTIVITY 1

Lea el poema en una voz alta.

#### ACTIVITY 2

Answer the following questions:

1. What is the rhyme scheme of this poem?
2. Who is the speaker in this poem?
3. Is the poem comical or serious?
4. When someone dies is the music loud and noisy?
5. What was the character of the person when alive?
6. Have you any thoughts about death and what happens after we die?

#### ACTIVITY 3

Based on your response to question 6 in Activity 2 write a paragraph or two as an explanation.

#### ADDITIONAL READING

Read and compare:

Judith Ortiz Cofer *When You Come to My Funeral* (in Triple Crown/see biblio.)

#### SECTION 9 MUSIC

### **Jazzonia**

Langston Hughes

O, silver tree!  
Oh, shining rivers of the soul!

In a Harlem cabaret  
Six long-headed jazzers play.  
A dancing girl whose eyes are bold  
Lifts high a dress of silken gold.

Oh, singing tree!  
Oh, shining rivers of the soul!

Were Eve's eyes  
In the first garden  
Just a bit too bold?  
Was Cleopatra gorgeous  
In a gown of gold?

Oh, shining tree!  
Oh, silver rivers of the soul!

In a whirlwind cabaret  
Six long-headed jazzers play.

#### ACTIVITY 1

- (a) Read "Jazzonia" aloud and find the rhythm (the pattern of heavy and light stresses) that gives this poem its musical quality. Is there another aspect of the poem that creates a musical quality?
- (b) What references does the poet make to nature? How does he vary the references?
- (c) What is the significance of "gold" and "silver"?
- (d) What instruments are being "played" and in what setting?
- (e) What is the significance of the reference to women by the poet?

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was an influential leader in the Harlem Renaissance. He is considered to be one of the most revolutionary poets of the 20th century for his pioneering use of black music and vernacular speech.

#### ACTIVITY 2

Read aloud "The Lonely Palm Tree". What words suggest the setting?

## The Lonely Palm Tree

Nicolás Guillén

The palm tree that is in the patio  
was born alone;  
it grew without my seeing it,  
it grew alone;  
under the moon and the sun,  
it lives alone.

With its long body stationary,  
lonely palm tree;  
alone enclosed in the patio,  
always alone,  
watchman of the dusk,  
it dreams alone.

The Palm tree is only dreaming,  
lonely palm tree,  
it moves freely through the wind,  
free and alone,  
free from root and soil,  
free and alone;  
huntress of the clouds,  
lonely palm tree,  
lonely palm tree,  
palm tree.

### ACTIVITY 3

- (a) What phrases illustrate the solitude of the tree?
- (a) To what end does the rhythm and the repetition of words interact.?
- (b) How are personification and metaphor used in the poem?
- (c) In what ways is the tree captive? In what ways is it free?

### ACTIVITY 4

Both Hughes and Guillén use “the tree” in their poem. Can you compare the similarities and differences?

#### ACTIVITY 5

Surf the Internet and look for connections between Langston Hughes and Nicolás Guillén.

Nicolás Guillén (1902-1989) is one of the most famous Cuban poets .He is considered the National Poet of Cuba. His poetry illustrates the African heritage of the Cuban people and the ethnic history of the island. In many of his works one can find the rhythm “son ” a type of music that originated in Cuba with the combination of the rhythmic elements of Spanish song, guitar music and the African Bantu and Arará percussion instruments. The “son” was combined with other elements and heard in America in Salsa music. The Lonely Palm belongs to a Afro-Caribbean genre known as << poesía negra>> or “black poetry” in which the “son” is prominent. The repetition of phrases that gives the poem a musical quality is characteristic of << poesía negra.>>

#### SECTION 10 IT’S YOUR TURN

Choose one of the following three writing assignments . You may wish to use powerpoint, photos,sound,performance or any other artistic addition that will enhance your presentation. You have two weeks to prepare for a presentation to the class.

1. Look for biographical and other background information concerning at least five of the poets and poetry you have encountered and write short essays about them.
2. Choose a minimum of two poems by two different poets and write an essay of at least 500 words describing why your selection is so appealing to you.
3. Write an essay of at least 1000 words that responds to the following questions:
  - (a)Why does poetry live on?
  - (b)Why has it been a source of fascination for poets and readers both learned and illiterate alike?

(c) Is there any connection to other art forms such as music, painting, dance?

(d) Does poetry communicate a message to the human mind about the nature of life, about consciousness, about existence, about Love?