

**«Ahora empieza una nueva vida para ti»:
migración y desplazamiento en el mundo hispanohablante /
“Now a new life begins for you”:
*Migration and displacement in the Spanish-speaking world***

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Abstract

This unit for students of upper level Spanish focuses on migration and displacement across the Spanish-speaking world. It integrates literature, poetry, music, and film to explore diverse migration experiences, including North African migration to Spain, Latin American migration to the United States, and internal migration within Spain and Latin America. Key texts include Enrique Páez’s novel *Abdel*, poems by Honduran adolescent girls, and flamenco songs, culminating in the film *La misma luna*. The curriculum emphasizes cultural authenticity and proficiency in Spanish, aligning with ACTFL standards for language learning. Each week of the four-week unit is structured with thematic readings, discussions, and activities, building towards two summative assessments: a personal response and an extended essay on human rights and migration issues. By fostering critical analysis and empathy, the unit prepares students for AP and IB exams while encouraging deeper engagement with global migration complexities and their societal impacts.

Key words

AP Spanish Language and Culture, Central America, children’s literature, discrimination, displacement, film, Honduras, IB Spanish, immigration, incarceration, Latin America, migration, militarized global apartheid, Morocco, music, North Africa, poetry, Spanish, Spain, xenophobia

Unit content

Unit goals

My intention with this unit is to expose my students to the complexities of migration in the Spanish-speaking world. My high school students in Philadelphia are primarily exposed to external migration from Latin America—chiefly Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Central America—to the continental United States. I cannot blame my students, however, considering how polarizing and prevalent the issue is in our national political discourse. According to data collected by the Pew Research Center in

April 2024, nearly two-thirds of supporters of one of the two major candidates for president supported a concerted effort by law enforcement to deport undocumented immigrants. Conversely, only roughly one in ten supporters of the other major candidate expressed support for the same measure (Pew, 2024). Furthermore, reporting by CNN highlights that immigration ranks second among “top problems” identified by voters, with 18% of voters identifying immigration as the “top problem” in the United States. This statistic is up from the previous presidential election cycle, when the issue ranked 15th with only 1% of surveyed voters identifying immigration as the country’s most important issue (CNN, 2024). Compounding this issue are the stories of caravans of migrants from Central America or the calls to build a wall at the southern border with Mexico.

This parochial view of migration fails to capture the complex, multifaceted reality of migration and displacement in the Spanish-speaking world. Thus, this unit explores these complexities across the Spanish-speaking world. In order to paint a more accurate picture of migration in the Spanish-speaking world, I orient this unit via two axes. First, migration can be external or internal, so we will explore both types of migration. In other words, migration from one country to another versus migration within a country. Secondly, the Spanish-speaking world is not just the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America. Spanish is spoken in nearly two dozen countries across four continents.

Given the level of linguistic competency in Spanish required for a meaningful analysis of the topic in the target language, I have designed this unit for my Spanish 4. This course is co-sat with Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Language and Culture and International Baccalaureate (IB) Spanish B. Enrique Paez’s 1992 children’s novel *Abdel* will serve as an anchor text, and I will pair the chapters with other shorter texts (a book of poems titled *Counting time* and a collection of flamenco songs). Then students will view the 2007 film *La misma luna* (*Under the Same Moon*). In total, the unit covers roughly three to four weeks of the school year.

Migration

Human beings have migrated from time immemorial. The reasons are myriad, and migration transcends our societal divisions. Migration comes in many forms. It can cross international borders or remain within them. Migration is why languages have jumped continents, and why the one I teach—Spanish—is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world with about 500 million native speakers, and roughly 100 million second language speakers. Across four continents (the Americas, Europe, and Africa), Spanish is the official language in 20 countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Uruguay, Venezuela), one dependent territory (Puerto Rico), one partially-recognized state (Western Sahara), and it is locally recognized in at least three English-speaking countries

and territories (the United States, Belize, and Gibraltar) (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020).

The Spanish-speaking world

This unit introduces students to various migrant groups within the Spanish speaking world. Covering all groups would be virtually impossible, so I have chosen four groups for my students to analyze. I incorporate two axes for selecting these groups. The first axis is situational: internal versus external migration. The second axis is geographic: the transatlantic dichotomy Spain versus *Hispanoamérica* (how Spanish refers to the Spanish-speaking Americas). However, modifications due to time constraints may require teachers to synthesize groups or eliminate texts in order to make the unit work for them.

Beginning with external migration in Spain, this unit focuses on external migration into Spain from North Africa. Moroccans constitute the largest group of foreign-born residents in Spain according to the Spanish *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (National Statistics Institute, or INE). Morocco and Spain have a shared history spanning over a millennium due to the narrowness of the Strait of Gibraltar. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, at least some piece of land has been colonized by people on the other side. At its narrowest, the *Estrecho* spans only 13 kilometers (or 8.1 miles, 7.0 nautical miles) between Punta de Tarifa in Spain and Point Cires in Morocco. So close are these two countries that in 711 the governor of Tangier, Tariq ibn Ziyad, effortlessly slipped into Visigothic Hispania with 7,000 men, because the locals assumed that they were merchants. It would take nearly eight centuries for the entire Iberian Peninsula to return to complete European control. In that time, the cultures of what would become these two countries—especially in Andalusia in southern Spain—were fluid. Spain was a gateway to Europe for the Arab world and a gateway to the Arab world for Europe. Andalusian art, architecture, and guitar is often confused with Moroccan art, architecture, and guitar. Since the Early Modern period, however, Spain has maintained some sort of colonial presence in Morocco. This presence has diminished drastically over the centuries leaving just two cities, Ceuta and Melilla, under Spanish control in Morocco. The borders of these cities with the rest of Morocco is often the scene of violence perpetrated by Spanish National Police and Civil Guard forces against North African and West African migrants attempting to enter Spain. Although considered by many in the Global North to be a relatively stable country in the Global South by northern standards, unequal economic development, slow social progress, scarce civil rights protections and just some of the reasons for migration from Morocco to Spain. The first irregular migration across the *Estrecho* occurred in the late 1980s in *pateras* (or small, flat-bottom boats typically used to taxi sailors from larger ships). At present, nearly one million Moroccans reside in Spain according to the INE.

According to the Spanish Interior Ministry, roughly 97% percent of undocumented migration to Spain occurs via boats, pateras, and other watercraft. In 2023, the number of “irregular” maritime entries into Spain was nearly 53,000. Nearly three fourths of these crossings occur between North Africa and the Canary Islands, while the rest of these maritime crossings occur between North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula. (Ministerio del Interior, 2024). The journey between Africa and Spain is not without its risks. The United Nations’ International Organization for Migration cites at least 1,413 migrants died or disappeared crossing via pateras and other small watercraft in 2023 alone, with nearly one third of these deaths occurring in the western Mediterranean. In other words, one undocumented migrant died every 19 hours attempting to cross the Mediterranean in 2023 (IOM, 2024). These numbers mirror those of undocumented land crossings into the United States from Mexico (IOM, 2023).

With respect to internal migration in Spain, I have chosen to focus on the Spanish Roma who describe themselves both with the exonym *gitano* and the endonym *calé*. I will note that the literal translation in English of the exonym—which I will not use here—is considered a slur to many Roma outside of Spain. The terms *gitano* and *calé*, however, are not considered offensive to Spanish Roma. However, to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding, I will use the endonym *calé*. In his 2018 work *Historia del pueblo gitano en España*, David Martín Sánchez posits that the Calé have been part of all the events in the history of Spain since the 15th century. For example, during the reign of Ferdinand VI the Great Roundup of 1749 was carried out, which attempted to wipe out the Calé and led to the mass incarceration of up to 12,000 people. And yet, this persecution contrasts with the exaltation of freedom, honor and beauty that were associated with Calé culture during Romanticism. The Calé arrived in Spain during the final stages of the *Reconquista* in the 15th century and shortly before the expulsion of the Sephardí (Iberian Jews) and Moriscos (the descendants of Iberian Muslims whom the Spanish Crown forced to convert to Christianity). The Reconquista was the series of military campaigns by Iberian Christian kingdoms during the late Middle Ages against the Muslim kingdoms of Iberia, known as al-Andalus, following the Umayyad conquest of Visigothic Hispania in 711. The Reconquista culminated in the 1492 conquest of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, who later issued expulsion edicts to non-Christians. These edicts gave Jews and Muslims one of two choices: convert to Christianity and stay or maintain their faith and leave or face execution in Spain. It is theorized that some Moriscos escaped to the caves of the Sierra Nevada of Granada where the Calé were living. The Calé accepted these outsiders into their community and brought them into their fold. From this intermingling, it is further theorized that Flamenco was born. The most widely-recognized calé contribution to Spanish culture is undoubtedly Flamenco music and dance. The lyrics of Flamenco are poetry of oppression, heartache, joy, loss, and romance. These lyrics often tell the story of the hardships of the Calé in Spain. Romani people have a long history of persecution, displacement, and incarceration throughout Europe, and the Calé are no exception. In his book *Sueños y sombras sobre los gitanos*, Ismael Cortés proposes that the multiple forms

of discrimination against the Calé people are possible thanks to a symbolic system of ethnic-racial hierarchization. These forms of discrimination are chiefly exclusion, marginality and poverty. This symbolic system, enshrined in law, has the capacity to regulate relations between Roma and non-Roma people, both at the social level and at the institutional level. He argues that the various mechanisms that allow discrimination against the Calé people in Spain possess a historical, institutional and media dimension—and that they continue to this day. For example, although Calé people represent only 1.57% of the total population of Spain, they account for over 8% of incarcerated people in Spanish prisons. Calé women are especially overrepresented: nearly 14% of all women incarcerated in Spain are Calé.

Switching gears to cross the Atlantic, as for internal migration within the context of Hispanoamérica, we look at Central Americans—specifically Guatemalans and Hondurans—are one of the fastest-growing Hispanic communities in Philadelphia. They reside primarily alongside other Latinos, chiefly North and South Philadelphia (WHYY, 2021). Recently, Central American migration has come to the forefront of the discussion surrounding undocumented immigration to the United States. Many—if not most—of these migrants are refugees fleeing political and criminal violence in their communities brought on by the interventions of the United States in Central America of the second half of the 20th century. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, gang violence, gender-based violence, poverty, and other insecurity have displaced more than 1 million Central Americans. Roughly two-thirds of these refugees have sought asylum in neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2024). However, some of these migrants make their way to the cities looking for work. Others have to leave families behind, leaving their children in the care of families and outreach organizations. In this unit, students read a selection of poems from poet Spenser Reece’s 2017 book, *Counting time like people count stars*, a collection of poems in English and Spanish penned by the teenage girls at Nuestras Pequeñas Rosas (*Our Little Roses*), a home for orphaned and displaced girls in San Pedro Sula in Honduras.

Finally, this unit examines external migration to the United States from Latin America, specifically Mexico. Like Morocco and Spain, the relationship between the United States and Mexico is fraught with war, colonialism, and changes in immigration law that complicate former systems of cyclical migration across the border. Mexico and much of the Southwestern and Western United States were part of the vast Spanish Empire until the early 19th Century, when Mexico declared its independence. Eventually the border between the United States and Mexico shifted farther south after the Mexican American War of the 1840s. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war, those former citizens of Mexico were afforded protections of their land, their Spanish language, and their Catholic religion. Unfortunately, only the last of these three was honored—freedom of religion is enshrined in the United States Constitution. In the late 19th century, labor shortages in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 resulted in the recruitment of Mexican workers by railway companies. Consequently,

border patrols were established to deter Asian workers from circumventing the law via the southern border. When quotas were set for Southern and Eastern Europeans and East and South Asians immigrating to the United States in 1921 and 1924 respectively, Mexicans were excluded from these quotas, but their migration began to be regularized through visas simply to stop other groups from using the southern border as a conduit to the United States. This positive view of Mexican migrations did not shift until the Great Depression, when Mexicans were viewed as competition for jobs during the economic turmoil of this era. The War on Drugs complicated matters further. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024)

Militarized global apartheid

In her book *Militarized global apartheid*, Catherine Besteman describes “an emergent new world order” centered on race that restricts mobility via intensive security and militarization (2020, p. 1). She defines militarized global apartheid as “a loosely integrated effort by countries in the global north to protect themselves against the mobility of people from the global south” (pp. 1-2). By “global north,” Besteman is referring to those economically powerful countries and regions with higher Human Development Index (HDI) scores such as the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (2020). The countries outside of this group pertain to the “global south.” Apartheid itself is an Afrikaner word meaning “separateness,” which was used to describe the period of racial segregation in South Africa from 1948 to 1990. Besteman describes it as “a legal edifice that mandates, constructs, and enforces the supremacy of one racial group over another” (2020, p. 15). This was certainly the case in South Africa, however its use has evolved. The South African model has inspired the various iterations of apartheid that we currently witness across the globe. Today it can be used to describe all sorts of segregation: ethnic, religious, social, economic, linguistic. This unit’s analysis of apartheid focuses primarily on its economic nature. For Besteman, global apartheid “accommodat[es] demands for the flexible models of accumulation inherent to neoliberal capitalism and the creation of a multiracial cosmopolitan elite whose mobility is relatively unfettered because of their class standing.”

Each one of these migrant communities stand witness to the history, evolution, or consequences of Militarized Global Apartheid. In the case of my classroom, Spanish is both a community and global language. On the one hand, communities of Spanish-speaking Philadelphians exist in the south, north, and northeast of the city. On the other hand, Spanish is spoken on both sides of the Atlantic on four continents. It is truly a global language that requires an international lens when studying its cultures. The goals of my unit are twofold. First, I wish to provide my students with such a lens. Secondly, I want my students to be able to compare and contrast not only these four migrant

communities but also to compare and contrast their own communities with the four we will study in this unit.

Content objectives

By the end of this unit, I want students to possess a better understanding of complex nuances of migration and displacement in the Spanish-speaking world. I want them to be able to make connections between the Spanish-speaking world and their own lived experiences or those of their communities. Most importantly, I want them to consider the reasons for migration and the barriers to it.

My unit is ultimately one that strives to improve my students' linguistic competency in Spanish and cultural competency of Hispanic cultures. The topic in a way becomes a vessel to allow me to teach reading and writing skills, while also presenting culture. Some critical components of the unit are understanding migration through texts, exposure to a variety of text types, thinking critically about migration, and expressing and arguing one's point via an extended essay. All of these skills are necessary not only for their respective IB and AP exams, but also for college readiness. Furthermore, the unit exposes students to a reality to which they might not otherwise have been exposed, thus making them better prepared to effect change in the future.

Essential Questions:

1. Why do people migrate?
2. What does migration look like in the Spanish-speaking world?
3. How is it similar or different to what migration looks like in my own community?

Big Ideas:

1. Migration, displacement, and incarceration
2. Borders
3. Militarized global apartheid

Assessment

As part of the already embedded procedures in my class, I employ formative assessments to track student progress and development by way of participation and class activities. A summative assessment will consist of students crafting an extended essay on migration supported by class materials and discussions, which serve as sources of evidence and support for their arguments.

Teaching strategies

This unit is intended for upper-level Spanish. In my case, it is designed for my Spanish IV Honors course, which is co-sat with Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish Language and Culture and International Baccalaureate (IB) Spanish B. These students are almost always high school seniors. Occasionally, I have one or two juniors or heritage speaker sophomores. In sum, these students typically possess intermediate low to mid proficiency on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale or higher—although learners at this level should ideally be intermediate high to Advanced low. This means that my learners can comfortably discuss themselves or other familiar topics using at least two time frames while being understood by a sympathetic listener. A reading-heavy unit will be a stretch for them—albeit a healthy one—and one that pushes them closer to their target of intermediate high. An integral goal in the IB curriculum is for students to make connections with the cultures of the target language with their own culture. My unit seeks to do just that. Furthermore, this unit aims to improve my students' reading proficiency in Spanish to prepare them for their exams at the end of the year by incorporating authentic, target-language texts and exposing them to tasks that mirror those on their exams.

Academic standards

At present, neither the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) nor the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) have officially adopted academic standards for 'foreign' or global and critical languages. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania failed to adopt its proposed standards in 2002, and nothing has been implemented officially. However, both PDE and SDP recommend using World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages developed by American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). This unit incorporates these standards. The following ACTFL World-Readiness Standards apply to this unit: Interpretive Communication, Presentational Communication, Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives, and Making Connections. Under Interpretive Communication, students will understand, interpret, and analyze texts in Spanish. In a world language classroom, ideally the target language should be utilized as much as possible. This input should be comprehensible and meaning bearing. In other words, learners should understand most of the language used and must attend to that language. In my classes, virtually all instruction—with the exception of grammar explanations—is conducted in Spanish. This includes all class materials, texts, instructions, and activities. With respect to Presentational Communication, students will “present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate” on the topic of migration in the Spanish-speaking world. In this unit, students craft an extended essay on the topic of migration in the Spanish-speaking world. As for Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives, my students will investigate the practices and perspectives regarding migration in the Spanish-speaking world. Students will use Spanish to investigate, explain, and reflect on trends and attitudes in the Spanish-speaking world with respect to migration, displacement, and incarceration. Ultimately, this standard leads to that of Making Connections. Finally, for Making Connections, students will make connections

between types of migration in the Spanish-speaking world as well as their local community. This unit explores four different contexts, so students have multiple ways to make connections both globally and locally.

Instructional methods

This unit is decidedly a reading unit. Second language units and lessons typically focus on one of the four basic language skills: speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Although this unit undoubtedly features elements of all of these skills (sharing out, quick-writes and comic strip narrations, listening to music, etc.), reading is the primary focus with a final task that involves writing. For the purposes of this unit, choosing appropriate texts presents three questions: How many texts, what kinds of texts, and in what language? I will answer these questions in reverse order. First, when teaching a second language, learners should engage with as authentic a text as possible. This means that my texts should be in Spanish and originally written in Spanish. This requirement thus rules out bilingual texts and translations. Furthermore, the limits on time make it more advantageous that I teach both culture and language with the same text. In other words, if I chose texts in English, I would only be addressing the cultural objectives at the expense of the linguistic objectives. Secondly, teaching three upper-level courses in one section places time constraints on my units. AP and IB have separate yet similar objectives, so my units need to marry these curricular goals. Furthermore, I should not spend longer than a month on this unit. Consequently, I am choosing to focus on one text—a children's novel—to anchor the unit, and I incorporate other texts (poetry and song, for example) and finally a film from the other migrant groups to enhance the unit. Finally, after considering the aforementioned planning restraints, I would like to focus on one text—or body of texts—per migrant group.

The unit is anchored on one core text, Enrique Paez's 1996 children's novel *Abdel*, which tells the story of a young Berber nomad named Abdel, who, with his father, abandons their nomadic life in search of increased economic opportunities and political freedoms across the Strait of Gibraltar in Spain. After arriving in Spain on a patera, Abdel and his father finally find work with a Spanish business owner, only to be exploited by him. Eventually they are caught by the police, and Abdel is sent to a juvenile detention center, where he comes to trust a social worker. The novel ends somewhat abruptly and without a pleasant resolution, and Abdel has to make a decision that no child should ever have to make. The story is said to be based in a diary kept by Abdel in Spanish, which he shares with a Spanish social worker for her to read and edit his language. The suggested age for this text is 10-13 years, which makes it perfect for the proficiency level of my learners. It is mature enough for my high school students to not feel babied, yet its language is simplified enough for them to not feel overwhelmed. This text represents the context of external migration from North Africa to Spain.

Complimenting the anchor text are two sets of readings highlighting internal migration. The first set of texts comes from *Counting time like people count stars*, a collection of poems in Spanish and English edited by poet Spencer Reece. These poems are authored by Honduran adolescents in a home for girls in San Pedro Sula. I have chosen five poems: “Los antepasados” (*The Ancestors*), “El pastor” (The Shepherd), “Mi Honduras” (My Honduras), “La bella y la bestia” (*Beauty & the Beast*), and “Pronto” (*Soon*).

The second corpus of text are flamenco songs that pair with the topics of several chapters. Some of these are smaller fragments that come from the lyrics of *cante jondo*, a vocal style within flamenco usually limited to a singer called a *cantaor* (if male) or *cantaora* (if female) and an accompanist on guitar. The fragments come from *Gypsy cante*, a collection of *cante jonde* selected and translated by Willie Kirkland. Because they are fragments, they do not have titles, but they come from pages 1, 6, 7, 10-14, 44, 45, and 97 of the 1999 edition of his book. The others are distinct songs in their entirety, which I have chosen for thematic similarities in order to prime my learners before we read a chapter. These songs have music videos available on YouTube, which students can view to enhance their understanding of the text. These songs are: “Al tercer mundo” by Israel Fernández, “Papeles mojados” by Chambao, “Volando voy” by Camarón de la Isla, and “Juro que” by Rosalía. These songs narrate both hardship and joy, and they can be read like poetry or enjoyed performed. All but two songs are written by Calé artists. Together these two corpora are paired individually with the thirteen chapters of *Abdel* as sort of vignettes to prime my students before reading a chapter.

The culminating text of this unit is the 2007 film *La misma luna* (*Under the Same Moon*) by Mexican director Patricia Riggen. The story revolves around Rosario, an undocumented immigrant in the United States, who has left her nine-year-old son, Carlitos, behind in Mexico. Rosario works as a domestic worker in Los Angeles and calls Carlitos weekly from a payphone. Meanwhile, Carlitos lives with his sick grandmother and aunt and uncle, who try to exploit him for the money Rosario sends. When his grandmother dies, Carlitos decides to flee his relatives and encounters coyotes who offer to transport him across the border. Despite a successful crossing, he gets separated from the smugglers and embarks on a journey with fellow immigrants. Along the way, he forms a bond with another migrant worker. Together, they search for the payphone where Rosario calls, but encounter challenges. Like the novel *Abdel*, the film ends without resolution. Eventually, Carlitos spots his mother at a bus stop, but before they can reunite, the scene cuts to credits. The film highlights the hardships faced by undocumented immigrants. *La misma luna* and *Abdel* share many of the same themes, and they will serve as the basis of the students’ final extended essay for the unit.

Classroom activities

For the purposes of this unit, choosing appropriate texts presents three questions: How many texts, what kinds of texts, and in what language? I will answer these questions in reverse order.

First, when teaching a second language, learners should engage with as authentic a text as possible. This means that my texts should be in Spanish and originally written in Spanish. This requirement thus rules out bilingual texts and translations. Teaching a translation would rob my students of the opportunity to interact with authentic cultural artifacts from the Spanish-speaking world. Furthermore, the limits on time make it more advantageous that I teach both culture and language with the same text. In other words, if I chose texts in English, I would only be addressing the cultural objectives at the expense of the linguistic objectives.

Secondly, teaching three upper-level courses in one section places time constraints on my units. AP and IB have separate yet similar objectives, so my units need to marry these curricular goals. Both AP and IB require students to express themselves and organize their thoughts orally and in writing. This unit seeks to improve students' writing skills as part of the summative assessment. Due to time constraints and the host of topics a teacher should ideally cover in these courses, I do not wish to spend longer than a month on this unit. Even a month is a long time, but I believe that the end result is worth it. Consequently, I am choosing to focus on one text—a children's novel—to anchor the unit, and I will incorporate texts (poetry and song, for example) from the other migrant groups to enhance the unit.

Finally, after considering the aforementioned planning restraints, I decided to focus on one text—or body of texts—per migrant group. I anchor the unit with the children's novel *Abdel* (1994) by Enrique Páez. This novel tells the story of an adolescent boy from North Africa who crosses the Mediterranean Sea with his father in a *pateta* to reach Spain for a better life. I enhance my students' reading of *Abdel* with at least two textual corpora. The first is *Counting time like people count stars*, an anthology of poems authored by Honduran adolescents in a home for girls in San Pedro Sula. The second comes from the lyrics of x different flamenco songs as well as fragments of lyrics from *cante jondo*, a vocal style within flamenco usually limited to a singer called a *cantaor* (if male) or *cantaora* (if female) and an accompanist on guitar. These songs narrate both Calé hardship and joy, and they can be read like poetry or enjoyed performed. The last text is the film *La misma luna*, which depicts the hardships faced by Latin American immigrants crossing into the United States via the southern border with Mexico.

For the most part, each lesson follows the same format as a typical lesson from my class. First, students complete a “Do now” activity that I call the *Entrada* (or “entrance” in Spanish). Then, the lesson follows an “I do, we do, you do” sequence. Finally, the lesson ends with an exit ticket that I call the *Salida* (or “exit” in Spanish).

Unit sequencing

During the first of four weeks, the teacher introduces students to the topic and the class begins its reading of *Abdel*. Day 1 commences with an introduction to the thematic unit. The teacher provides students with unit-specific vocabulary related to migration, government, and social justice. On Day 2 students begin by listening to Israel Fernández's song "Al tercer mundo" before diving into Chapter 1 of *Abdel*, where the narrative begins to unfold. The song also has a music video on YouTube, which is helpful in activating schemata for language learners. Day 3 continues an analysis with "Papeles mojados" by Chambao alongside Chapter 2 of *Abdel*, enriching students' understanding of the novel's themes and characters. On Day 4, students read the poem "Mi Honduras" from *Counting time*, followed by Chapter 3 of *Abdel*. Day 5 concludes the week with Camarón de la Isla's song "Volando voy" and Chapter 4 of *Abdel*. Finally, students complete a vocabulary check for understanding as one of two main formative assessments.

During Week 2, the students continue their reading of *Abdel*, with a chapter dedicated to each day. On Day 6, students read the poem "Pronto" from *Counting time*, followed by Chapter 5 of *Abdel*. Day 7 continues with another poem from *Counting time*, "La bella y la bestia," followed by Chapter 6 of *Abdel*. Day 8 follows the same pattern with "Los antepasados" from *Counting time* then Chapter 7 of *Abdel*. On Day 9, the class switches gears slightly with a reading of *cante jondo* from pages 10-13 of *Gypsy cante* followed by Chapter 8 of *Abdel*. The week culminates in a creative writing assignment—the second of two main formative assessments—on Day 10 following a reading pages 1 and 96 of *Gypsy cante* and Chapter 9 of *Abdel*.

During Week 3, the class finishes its reading of *Abdel* with the exception of the novel's brief epilogue. On Day 11, students read the poem "El pastor" from *Counting time* followed by Chapter 10 of *Abdel*. On Day 12, the class analyzes Chapter 11 of *Abdel*. On Day 13, the class returns to *cante jondo* from pages 44-45 of *Gypsy cante* and then a reading of Chapter 12 of *Abdel*. On Day 14, the class listens to the song "Juro que" by Rosalía and then reads the final chapter (Chapter 13) of *Abdel*. Finally, on Day 15, students begin viewing the film *La misma luna*.

During Week 4, the class concludes the unit. First, students continue viewing *La misma luna* on Day 16. On Day 17, they finish the film followed by a reading of the brief epilogue of *Abdel* and a discussion of the two works. The last three days are dedicated to the summative assessment. On Day 18, students write the shorter personal response assignment. Finally, on Day 19 and Day 20, students write their extended essays.

Formative assessment

With the exception of the reading comprehension questions that might arise throughout the readings, the unit has two main formative assessments. The first is a vocabulary check-in at the end of Week 1. This assignment requires students to contextualize the unit vocabulary. The second is a creative writing assignment at the end of Week 2 that asks students to either assume the role of Abdel from the novel or write the assignment about themselves. Both assignments feature student choice, and both assignments allow students to practice the skills needed for the two summative assessments at the end of the unit.

Vocabulary check-in

At the end of Week 1 on Day 5 of the unit, students complete a vocabulary check for understanding. The teacher provides them two options to demonstrate their understanding of the unit's vocabulary within the graphic novel *Abdel* by Chechu Ramírez and Paco Vílchez. Option A requires that they narrate the images from pages 5-10, crafting 8 to 12 sentences in Spanish that incorporate the unit's vocabulary. This option challenges students to describe visually what unfolds in those pages using the new vocabulary they have acquired. Alternatively, Option B instructs students to label the images from these same pages with 8 to 12 unit vocabulary words and provide their own definitions in Spanish. This option emphasizes precision in understanding and applying vocabulary within the visual context of the graphic novel. Both tasks seek to assess students' comprehension of the specialized vocabulary pertinent to the unit while fostering their ability to express themselves effectively in Spanish. These exercises promote both linguistic proficiency and interpretive skills.

Creative writing

This formative assessment provides students a choice between two creative writing tasks at the end of Week 3 on Day 10. For either option, students can choose to write from their own perspective or assume the role of Abdel from Enrique Páez's novel. Option A invites students to write their own *cante jondo*. Their text must consist of four lines, with each line being between four and eight words in length, with the entire fragment totaling between 15 and 25 words. As for Option B, the task prompts students to compose an "I am from" poem. Students use descriptive language and other imagery to express cultural and emotional connections in order to explore their personal identity and origins. Both tasks encourage students to either empathize with the main character of the novel or insert themselves in the larger conversation.

Summative assessment

The summative assessment consists of two written works, which mirror the writing prompts on the AP and IB exams. The first assignment is a shorter, 150-word

written response. The second assignment asks students to develop an extended response of 250 to 400 words, and it gives them the option of one of two prompts.

In the shorter personal response writing prompt, students are asked to provide a personal response after reading the novel *Abdel* and watching the film *La misma luna*. The prompt directs students to express their opinion using at least 150 words, comparing and contrasting attitudes, situations, and circumstances related to migration in Spain and the United States. They are required to cite examples discussed in class. To fulfill this assignment, students are expected to delve into critical analysis and reflection based on their engagement with both the literary and cinematic works. Firstly, they must consider the portrayal of immigrant experiences in *Abdel* and *La misma luna*, focusing on how these narratives depict challenges, aspirations, and societal perceptions. Secondly, the prompt prompts them to draw parallels and distinctions between Spanish and American cultural perspectives on immigration. As part of the prompt, they are asked to read a perspective that states: "In Spain, no openly xenophobic political party holds power. Nonetheless, recent reports on racism and intolerance indicate that 60% of the population associates "immigrant" with "criminal." Additionally, there's an observed rise in racist attitudes among younger demographics." This context serves as a comparative backdrop against which students can explore attitudes in the United States. They might contrast Spain's political landscape with America's, considering policies, societal attitudes, and media representations of immigrants. Although additional outside research is not required, another teacher could add this component in order for students to further develop their responses. Students are encouraged to support their opinions with specific examples from the texts discussed during the unit that address external migration: *Abdel* and *La misma luna*. This could involve referencing episodes from *Abdel* that highlight discrimination towards Moroccans or their resilience in the face of these obstacles, comparing these with scenes from *La misma luna* that depict similar or contrasting themes in the context of undocumented Mexicans in the United States. Furthermore, they might analyze how these cultural portrayals influence public opinion and policy-making in the United States and Spain. Essentially, the assignment aims to foster critical thinking, heighten cultural awareness, and boost linguistic proficiency among my learners to better prepare them for their exams later in the year. By synthesizing their understanding of the novel, film, and classroom discussions, students offer a nuanced perspective on immigration attitudes in Spain and the United States, contributing to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural perceptions and challenges.

The longer, extended essay or composition presents students with two options. Students choose one of the two prompts and develop a written response of 250 to 400 words. The first option tasks the student with crafting a speech on human rights for a forum organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In the prompt, students are instructed to read Articles 1, 11, 13, and 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights prior to writing. The use of these articles serves as a foundational framework for discussing fundamental human rights such as equality, freedom from

discrimination, the right to asylum, and the right to seek a safe haven from persecution. Then, students integrate examples from the texts studied in class, which involves referencing specific texts and selecting concrete episodes in order to explore themes related to human rights, migration, discrimination, or social justice. In the assignment, students are expected to adopt a formal and persuasive tone. They are encouraged to meticulously plan their content, structuring the speech with an introduction that presents the main idea, an argumentation section that provides reasons supporting their stance on human rights, and a conclusion that reinforces their opinion. These formal remarks should be titled, include a formal signature, and be dated. By incorporating these examples, students demonstrate their understanding of the themes from the unit by illustrating how migration relates to human rights.

Overall, the assignment aims to develop students' ability to articulate complex ideas in Spanish, demonstrate comprehension of human rights concepts through practical application, and engage critically with global issues such as migration and social justice. By addressing an international audience at the IOM forum, students are challenged to think globally and advocate persuasively for the protection and promotion of human rights in the context of migration.

Resources

Works cited

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Instructional bibliography

Camarón de la Isla. (1979). Volando voy [Song]. On *La leyenda del tiempo* [Album]. Universal Music Spain.

José Monje Cruz (1950-1992), better known by his stage name Camarón de la Isla, was a renowned Calé flamenco singer and pivotal figure of the flamenco renaissance of the late 20th century. This song lauds the ambulatory—albeit romanticized—nature of the Calé, and it is paired with Chapter 4 of *Abdel*.

Chambao. (2023). Papeles mojados [Song]. On *Con otro aire* [Album]. Sony BMG Music Entertainment Spain.

This song by flamenco fusion group Chambao poignantly depicts the struggles, aspirations, and heartaches faced by North African migrants crossing the Strait of Gibraltar into Andalusia.

Fernández, I., Del Morao, D., & Pional. (2023). Al tercer mundo [Song]. On *Pura sangre* [Album]. Universal Music Spain.

Paired with Chapter 1 of *Abdel*, this bulería critiques global inequality and the very term “the Third World” itself. Many of its themes foreshadow those seen later on in the students’ reading of *Abdel*.

Kirkland, W. (1999). *Gypsy cante: deep song of the caves*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books.

Students will analyze the fragments of text from pages 1, 10-13, 44, 45, and 96 of this collection of cante jondo. The fragments appear in their original Andalusian Spanish. For readers of the ACTFL Advanced Mid (and upward) level, this should not be an issue. However, intermediate level readers may need the text glossed or an intralingual translation into a more standardized Spanish.

Paéz, E. (1996). *Abdel* (3. ed.). Ediciones SM.

This children's novel serves as the anchor text of the unit. The other shorter texts—poems and songs—are paired with its chapters as vignettes to prime learners before reading the chapter.

Ramírez, C., & Vílchez, P. (2015). *Abdel*. Madrid: Dibbuku.

Images from pages 5-10 of this graphic novel are used for a narration task as a formative assessment and check for understanding.

Reece, S., Howe, M., Rodriguez, L. J., & Blanco, R. (2017). *Counting time like people count stars: poems by the girls of Our Little Roses, San Pedro Sula, Honduras*. San Fernando, CA: Tía Chucha Press.

This collection of poems in English and Spanish is edited by poet and Episcopal priest Spencer Reece. The following are used in this lesson: “Los antepasados,” “El pastor,” “Mi Honduras,” “La bella y la bestia,” and “Pronto.”

Riggen, P. (Director). (2007). *La misma luna* [Film]. Fox Searchlight Pictures.

This 2007 film in Spanish and English highlights the hardships faced by undocumented immigrants. *La misma luna* and *Abdel* share many of the same themes, and they will serve as the basis of the unit's summative assessment.

Rosalía (2020). *Juro que* [Song]. Columbia.

This 2020 single by Catalan singer Rosalía expresses the narrative voice's anguish over a lover's imprisonment. The song is paired with Chapter 13 of *Abdel*.

Appendix

Standards

This unit is aligned with the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages World-Readiness Standards. These standards are designed to support instruction and development of content knowledge related to modern languages and their cultures. This unit seeks to expand upon these standards by introducing critical discussions around migration, displacement, and incarceration. The following ACTFL World-Readiness Standards apply to this unit:

Interpretive Communication: Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

Presentational Communication: Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.

Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives: Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied. Students will investigate the practices and perspectives regarding migration in the Spanish-speaking world.

Making Connections: Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.

Unit Sequencing

[Unit Calendar](#)

Formative Assessment

Vocabulary Check-In Task

Elige una de las dos tareas:

- a. Narra las imágenes de las páginas 5-10 de la novela gráfica *Abdel* de Chechu Ramírez y Paco Vílchez. Escribe entre 8 y 12 oraciones en español utilizando el vocabulario de esta unidad.
- b. Etiqueta las imágenes de las páginas 5-10 de la novela gráfica *Abdel* de Chechu Ramírez y Paco Vílchez con el vocabulario de esta unidad. Escribe entre 8 y 12 definiciones en español utilizando tus propias palabras.

Creative Writing Task

[Graphic organizer](#)

Elige una de las dos tareas. La voz narrativa puede ser tu mismo o que fueras Abdel de la novela de Enrique Páez.

- a. Escribe un cante jondo narrando los sentimientos: sean de alegría, amor, celebración, dolor, pena, sufrimiento, tristeza, etc. Debe ser de cuatro líneas de entre cuatro y ocho palabras cada línea con un total de entre 15 y 25 palabras.
- b. Escribe un poema «Soy de» siguiendo el patrón.

Summative Assessment

Graphic organizer

Personal Response (150 words)

Después de haber leído la novela *Abdel* y haber visto la película *La misma luna*, lee el siguiente fragmento y expresa tu opinión usando como mínimo 150 palabras. Compara y contrasta las actitudes, las situaciones y las circunstancias sobre este tema en la cultura española y en la estadounidense. Cita ejemplos de lo trabajado en clase.

En España ningún partido político abiertamente xenófobo gobierna. Sin embargo, los últimos informes sobre racismo e intolerancia indican que el 60% de la población identifica "inmigrante" con "delincuente". Asimismo, se observa un aumento de actitudes racistas entre la población más joven.

Extended Essay (250-400 words)

Realiza una de estas tareas. Escribe entre 250 y 400 palabras.

- a. Lee los Artículos 1, 11, 13 y 14 de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos. Piensa en los casos de los textos que hemos leído y redacta un discurso sobre los derechos humanos para un foro organizado por la Organización Internacional para las Migraciones.
 - Incluye un título, firma y fecha.
 - Usa un tono formal y persuasivo.
 - Planifica bien los datos que vas a incluir e incluye una presentación de la idea, una argumentación del tema con razones y una conclusión que confirme tu opinión.
 - Cita ejemplos de lo visto en clase.
- b. Eres periodista de la CNN en Español y tu editor quiere que montes un reportaje sobre la migración y el desplazamiento en Estados Unidos, Hispanoamérica y España. Entrevista a tres de los personajes de los textos que hemos leído (o visto en el caso de la película). Redacta el texto de la entrevista con la que vas a participar en el concurso.
 - Incluye un título, firma y fecha.

- Usa un tono personal y semiformal.
- Planifica bien las preguntas y ofrece respuestas detalladas. Asegúrate de que sigues un orden y una progresión lógica para evitar ser repetitivo o incoherente.
- Cita ejemplos de lo visto en clase.