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REDEFINING HIGH SCHOOL AMERICAN LITERATURE
IN A DIVERSE NATION

by
Nancy M. Vasquez

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
June 27, 2002

Approved by
Professor

Date Approved June 26, 2002

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ABSTRACT

Nancy M. Vasquez
Redefining High School American Literature in a Diverse Nation
2001-2002
Dr. Donna W. Jorgensen
Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate why high school students in America study American literature that includes a majority of writers of white western European descent and excludes writers of multicultural backgrounds. This study also analyzed if exposure to works by multicultural writers changes students' perceptions of what constitutes American literature. The participants included 3 classes of American literature students (N=44) and American literature teachers (N=6) in a predominantly white high school. The study included a combination of textbook content analysis, teacher interviews, and an intervention consisting of a Latino literature unit taught to student participants. Key ideas in teacher interviews and student pre- and post-intervention writing responses and class discussions were categorized and analyzed for dominant themes. Conclusions found that teachers teach based heavily on textbook content that is largely by white authors and is also chronologically based. The study also showed that students exhibit attitude changes toward American literature when exposed to multicultural literature but that long-term intense intervention may be necessary for permanent changes. The implications on American literature curriculum are discussed.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Nancy M. Vasquez
Redefining High School American Literature in a Diverse Nation
2001-2002

Dr. Donna W. Jorgensen
Master of Science in Teaching

This study evaluated the domination of high school American literature by white authors and analyzed attitude changes when students were exposed to multicultural American literature. Conclusions were that teachers rely heavily on chronology-based textbooks dominated by white authors and that students begin to change perceptions when exposed to multicultural pieces.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The ideas of American pride, patriotism, and unity have been at the forefront of the national consciousness since the nation's creation. The events of September 11, 2001 caused Americans to contemplate their cultural and national identities and renew their interest in these ideas of national pride and patriotism. For an educator, the implications of these issues for students must be examined in all subject areas. An examination of the United States as a diverse nation is certainly more relevant at the beginning of the twenty-first century than ever before.

The United States has a history of incorporating many cultures into its constantly changing population. This continues today as people from all nations, cultures, and languages move to the USA and make this nation their permanent residence. Twenty-five percent of the United States population in the year 2000 consisted of races other than white, and the white population contains many people of cultures other than western European descent (U.S. Census, 2000). For example, 12.5% of the population in the USA was of Hispanic or Latino descent regardless of race (U.S. Census, 2000). American culture has always been a complex mix of different peoples of many different cultures, races, and ethnicities.

Despite this cultural diversity, the literature appearing in textbooks and on reading lists used in American secondary schools is largely based on the canon—a traditional selection of works largely by white males of European descent. In a study by Applebee (1992), 99% of works studied in the high school English classroom were by white non-

Hispanic authors, and 91% of the authors were from a North American or British cultural tradition (as cited in Fairbrother, 2000, para. 9). As the Applebee (1992) study shows, the language arts curriculum virtually ignores the voices of other races and ethnic groups. Because high school literature textbooks take the form of anthologies, or collections that give an overview of the national literature, they by their very nature define what American literature in its entirety looks like. Through editors' choices of what to include or not include, the pieces presented come to represent the whole picture of American literature and what that literature means. By excluding multicultural writers among other factors, these textbooks as anthologies define American literature in ways that could be considered dubious. For example, some high school textbooks, such as the 1989 edition of *Adventures in American Literature* published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, begin with Puritan pieces as the first examples of American literature. It could be argued that the Puritans were not Americans in the sense of having been born in the United States; they were British colonists, and the land they settled was not even called America. However, pieces by William Bradford and Anne Bradstreet have become accepted parts of the American literature canon in textbooks. This invites the questions of how textbooks define American literature, how valid are these definitions, and why minority writers are excluded from these definitions.

Not only do American literature textbooks, by their selected content, define American literature, but teachers of this literature establish their own definitions by what they teach from the textbooks and as supplemental materials. Teachers can create their own definitions of American literature in much the same way as textbooks can—by choosing some pieces of literary importance to teach, rejecting others, and thereby

creating their own collections of writings that represent the entirety of American literature to the students in the teachers' classes. If teachers are selecting the same pieces from the canon represented in American literature textbooks, then they are perpetuating the same definition of American literature as that in the texts—a view dominated by white, western European authors.

Many national and state standards exist for all subject areas to promote effective pedagogical practices; these standards should serve as guidelines for what is taught in the classroom. Therefore, these standards in the language arts subject area should set the true definition of American literature as a guideline for teachers to follow. The standards addressing multiculturalism exist, but they are vague and never specifically address how much of this literature should be taught. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA) have instituted a list of standards aimed at the goal that “all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life’s goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society” (2001, para. 1). In these standards for all students, the NCTE/IRA (2001) includes Standard Nine, which states “Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles” (2001, para. 10). In New Jersey, the statewide Core Curriculum Content Standards for Language Arts Literacy (NJCCCS) (1998) include a reference to multicultural literature in Standard 3.4, which states that “a diversity of materials provides students with opportunities to grow...as they consider...diverse cultures and perspectives” (p. 3-10). Cumulative Progress Indicator 3.4.5 in the NJCCCS indicates that students should “Read

independently a variety of literature written by authors of different cultures, ethnicities, genders, and ages” (p. 3-10). The standards have been set both nationally and statewide for the teaching of multicultural literature, but do teachers follow these standards in reality in their classrooms? What is the commitment of teachers to multicultural literature?

Because of the content of the textbooks and what is taught in the American literature classroom, students may conceivably spend their entire school careers without studying the voices of multicultural groups such as African-Americans, Latino-Americans, Asian-Americans, and others. In predominantly white schools, students do not see many people of multicultural descent in their daily lives, and in the traditional American literature curriculum, they do not study works written by authors of different backgrounds. In predominantly non-white schools with students of African American, Latino American, and other backgrounds, students may never see a reflection of themselves or their ethnic history in the language arts classroom. For these students to become adults who understand the complex cultural makeup of the United States, it is imperative for schools to explore changing the direction of the traditional English curriculum and promote understanding of all American voices.

This researcher, a female of Hispanic descent, never experienced or read any literature by Hispanic or Latino/a authors until she took a college elective English class in Latino Literature of the United States. Having experienced at least 16 years of schooling without exposure to any literature of this ethnic background, she did not take this class until returning to college years after receiving her B.A. in English. In the class, students were exposed to a variety of poetry, memoirs, and novels by writers of Latino

background--all of the pieces rich in the themes and literary elements that constitute great pieces of literature studied from the canon. This led the researcher to consider, as a pre-service teacher, why this happened to her and many other students in the United States: why do students almost never hear the voices of minority populations? This is a complex question that requires consideration from many different angles; after all, multiple elements create the educational experience of the American student. This researcher focused on three elements to explore this question: textbooks used in the language arts classroom, beliefs of English teachers, and students of American literature.

Exploration of these three elements led the researcher to three research questions. First of all, do high school American literature textbooks include multicultural literature in their definitions of American literature and how much of this type of literature do they include? As part of this question, have language arts textbooks changed over time in their content devoted to authors of multicultural background? Second, how do teachers of high school American literature define American literature and do they teach multicultural literature both from the textbook and/or as supplemental materials in their classes? Finally, how do students perceive American literature and can this perception be altered through exposure to multicultural literature? When considering these questions, the researcher drew the following hypotheses:

H₁ – Because of textbook contents, high school students are exposed at a significantly higher rate to works by authors of white western European descent.

H₂ – Teachers of high school English define and teach American literature based on works in the traditional canon, written by authors of white western European background.

H₃ – High school American literature students define American literature based on the traditional western European canon.

H₄ – After exposure to multicultural works outside the canon, high school American literature students will define American literature differently from the traditional western European canon.

Operational Definitions

This study will often refer to **multicultural literature**. In this study, this will refer to literature corresponding to Cai and Bishop's (1994) definition of Parallel Culture Literature: works "written by authors from a corresponding cultural group [e.g., African Americans writing African American literature] to 'represent the experience, consciousness, and self-image developed as a result of being acculturated and socialized within those groups'" (as cited in Wolf, Ballentine, & Hill, 1999, p. 135-136). For the purposes of this study, this will mean works written by authors who are living or who have lived in the United States but who are from an ethnic or racial background other than white western European. Any references to **multiculturalism**, the use of the adjective **multicultural** in conjunction with any other word, the use of the words **diverse**, **diversity**, and **minority** use the same definition given above.

When referring to the **traditional canon**, **the canon**, or **the canon of American literature**, the study indicates works by males and females of white western European descent that traditionally dominate high school textbooks. Specific pieces in the canon will be discussed during the study as older and current edition high school American literature textbooks are evaluated for content.

The term **supplemental materials** refers to any novels, films, musical pieces, or other pieces used by teachers in the classroom that do not appear in the textbook being used in the class.

Reading list refers to the choices of novels and other long literary works that teachers may choose to teach as supplemental materials; this list is part of the language arts curriculum.

When the researcher refers to student responses as **hostile**, this means that students demonstrated anger or opposition to the material being taught. **Personally unresponsive** means that the student did not relate the material to his or her emotions or experiences; **personally responsive** means that the student related the material to his or her emotions and experiences.

Chapter 2 – Review of Related Literature

Many educators have commented on the importance of including multicultural literature in the English and language arts classroom. Fairbrother (1998) emphasizes the necessity of including literature of minority ethnic groups in the curriculum: “There is joy in acknowledged, validated, celebrated diversity.... We as English teachers should bring that joy and that exploration to our classrooms in the literature we read, the stories we elicit, the questions we pose and answer” (p. 61). Shaheen (1999), a participant in the Making American Literatures project at the University of California, Berkeley, argues that the notions of American and American literature must change in light of the increasing diversification of society. The Downingtown, PA School District, a “predominantly white, conservative district” (Robinson, 2001, p. 68) recently implemented a multicultural literature program to include works by authors of many different backgrounds. This happened because Robinson and other educators in the district believed that “in order to create students who value democratic principles and are truly world citizens we must allow them to experience as directly as possible the new worlds contained in the literature of diverse cultures. Anything less makes us incomplete” (p. 72).

Godina and McCoy (2000) explore the inclusion of multicultural literature further and discuss the inclusion of specific cultures; they discuss the teaching of Chicana and Chicano literature in the curriculum using the concepts of “emic” and “etic” understanding (p. 172). Chicana/o literature, or writings by those “who recognize their

indigenous Mexican ancestry” (Godina & McCoy, 2000, p. 172), can be understood from two student perspectives: from an “insider” viewpoint of one who has experienced the culture of the literature (emic) or from an “outsider” viewpoint of one who has not experienced the culture (etic) (Godina & McCoy, 2000). Analyzing emic and etic teacher perspectives toward Chicana/o literature, the researchers concluded “we shared familiar topics that allowed us to bridge differences through discussion” (Godina & McCoy, 2000, p. 177). By combining these experiences, the researchers hope the “myriad of cultural clashes” (Godina & McCoy, 2000, p. 178) between mostly white teachers and an increasingly diverse student body may be addressed. Morales (2001), drawing from the Godina and McCoy discussion, suggests using Chicana/o films in high school classes in addition to traditional printed literature to give students perspective on this culture—something she was never given as a Chicana student.

The commentary is plentiful on the subject of including multicultural literature in the classroom, but as critic Auciello (2000) argues, “no body of research exists to prove the benefits of these curricular reforms” (p. 89). This is not entirely accurate. Research has been conducted in recent years on using multicultural literature in the classroom—not large numbers of studies, but enough to provide a basis for understanding the effectiveness of teaching these types of works and to suggest improvements for the future in both teacher preparation and pedagogy methods for teaching multicultural literature.

In a preliminary study from the National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning at the State University of New York at Albany, Jordan and Purves (1993) found that 89 secondary students, after reading assigned multicultural pieces from Hispanic, Native American, and Chinese writers, “have problems understanding what

they read, but these they see as problems with the writer or with themselves as readers, not as problems in their cultural knowledge” (p. 21). As a result, students experience little change in their attitudes or discourse involving multicultural texts; they make the text fit “their own view of the world” (Jordan & Purves, 1993, p. 21-22) rather than developing new understandings of other authors’ backgrounds and cultures and therefore perpetuate stereotypes and other erroneous information about other cultures. This, the researchers found in educator interviews, is because teachers in the language arts classroom do not have sufficient factual background on the cultures involved in the texts and “few teachers possessed the necessary training or support needed to teach the texts as cultural artifacts” (Jordan & Purves, 1993, p. 22). Therefore, Jordan and Purves found that teachers of literature are generally “unwilling...or unable to supply appropriate information” (p. 22) about multicultural literature and choose to rely on the canon for classroom materials.

In a qualitative study detailing some of the problems faced while teaching multicultural literature, Ketter and Lewis (2001) explored the attitudes of middle school teachers in a predominantly white rural community toward teaching this type of literature. The school had recently experienced a confrontation with an African American parent over a piece of African American literature being taught in her child’s classroom, and discussion over this incident revealed the widely varying beliefs teachers hold toward the purposes and relevance of teaching multicultural literature (Ketter & Lewis, 2001). In their conclusion, the researchers hold that the teaching of multicultural literature is a complex issue that must be explored carefully in the context of community and that success “only comes through long-term, open-minded, and respectful dialogue among

parents, teachers, administrators, and concerned citizens of each unique community” (Ketter & Lewis, 2001, p. 183).

Other studies have focused on the teaching of multicultural literature and found it to be effective in helping students develop views of self and of the world. Athanases (1998) found that tenth grade students in two low-income urban high schools explored their own developing self-identities through the study of multicultural novels, autobiographies, short stories, essays, plays, and poems by African American and other culturally diverse authors as well as works from European authors. The students’ identification with “women and people of color as authors and as strong, thoughtful, and complex literary characters” (Athanases, 1998, p. 292) helped them explore their own lives. In a study conducted in collaboration with the University of Nevada at Las Vegas and two high schools—one in Nevada and one in Hawaii—the researchers found that ninth grade students personally identified with a multicultural novel studied in class and were willing to then critically examine and research other cultures (Bean, Cantu’Valerio, Senior, & White, 1999).

Other researchers have studied multicultural literature in the classroom and made suggestions for how teaching this can be made more effective. Webster (2001) found that honors ninth grade students in a racially and ethnically mixed high school responded more critically to these kinds of literatures when they were made aware of their own cultural backgrounds and understandings. Burroughs (1999) found that students responded better to multicultural pieces when they were taught in tandem with pieces from the traditional canon—not just taught in isolation from the rest of the works usually studied.

The commentary and research presented here begin to address the research questions posited in Chapter 1 by exploring how teachers and students perceive American literature. Commentary, as seen in the literature presented, shows that some teachers feel passionately about multicultural literature as an important and necessary part of the American literature curriculum. However, in practice, as shown in the Ketter and Lewis (2001) study, teachers bring a wide variety of views about multiculturalism to their classrooms, making the teaching of multicultural literature a complicated issue that subdues the optimism shown by the educators commenting on the benefits of multicultural literature in the American literature classroom. As the Jordan and Purves (1993) study showed, teachers in many cases are uninformed and untrained about multiculturalism and therefore are unwilling to teach something they do not know and are rejecting multicultural literature as part of their perceptions of American literature. This mix of opinions shows that teachers do indeed define American literature in different ways, thus addressing the second research question and leading to further inquiry into how these attitudes affect what teachers teach and how students develop their own definitions of American literature from what they have been taught.

This leads to the third research question about how students define American literature. Again, the literature reviewed reveals some optimism about the positive effects on student self-concept through the study of multicultural literature, and students could identify with the literature presented when taught pieces from authors of diverse backgrounds. These findings reveal positive results for students from exposure to multiculturalism, but suggestions from the researchers indicate that improvements can be

made in the teaching of this type of literature and making it more meaningful for students. This suggests an ongoing process of refining pedagogy and redefining American literature in the classroom—an invitation to further study the research question of what students' perceptions of American literature are and how educators may change those perceptions.

The literature reviewed supports the questions that the researcher is asking in this study but addresses each question separately. The studies reviewed focus on teacher or student attitudes toward multicultural literature but do not combine the evaluation of both in one study. To establish correlations between teacher and student attitudes, these must be explored in one environment. The researcher will be looking at the same issues presented in this literature but will be studying them within the same school setting to determine any relationships that occur among textbooks, teachers, and students in regards to multicultural literature.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

As a Hispanic student, this researcher never read any literature of her heritage until her return to college several years after receiving a B.A. degree in English, and the only reason she was exposed to it then was through her choice of an elective course in Latino literature. It was not taught as part of a required literature course; without consciously choosing this course, she would never have experienced any literature of Latina/o or Hispanic writers. Considering that the population of the United States in the year 2000 consisted of more than 10 percent Hispanics or Latinos, the researcher had to wonder why the literature of these cultures is not taught in the American literature classroom. This prompted her to undertake a three-pronged qualitative study to evaluate the causes and effects of this omission on American literature texts, teachers, and students.

Studies and commentary presented in the Review of Related Literature show a body of published work on various facets of teaching multicultural literature—the attitudes of teachers toward these types of literature, the attitudes of students when presented with multicultural pieces, and suggestions for future pedagogical methods to facilitate learning of multicultural literature. However, this researcher wanted to tie all of these dimensions together into one study to gain an overall picture of the process of including or excluding multicultural literature from the American literature curriculum—thus the three research questions on textbooks, teachers, and students and the attitudes

toward American literature. This addresses the question of how American literature becomes defined in the ways it does by all involved in the educational process.

Participants

The participants in this study were students at a predominantly white high school in southern New Jersey. The high school's ethnic distribution among its population of 1402 students in the 2001-2002 school year was 79% Caucasian, 16% African American, 3% Hispanic and Latino American, .3% Native American and Alaskan Native, and 2% Asian and Pacific Islander American. All percentages have been rounded off to the nearest whole percentage point. The high school is located in an area rapidly undergoing transformation from a rural agricultural community to a highly developed professional community. Students at the school are of widely varying socioeconomic backgrounds from working class to upper class professional families.

This researcher student taught at this high school and chose to use three of her classes from her student teaching assignment as the population of convenience to participate in the study. All three of these classes were eleventh grade Language Arts Literacy III Honors classes; in this high school, the designation of honors meant that these students were enrolled in the most academically rigorous track available to students in Language Arts Literacy III. The Language Arts Literacy III curriculum consisted of a chronological survey of American literature. Because of the rigor of the honors curriculum, students in these classes read six novels from an approved list throughout the school year in addition to reading pieces from the textbook, producing two research papers, and reading three novels from an approved reading list the summer preceding the school year. This curriculum provided an ideal opportunity for the researcher to evaluate

the types and variety of content taught and teacher and student perceptions of the overall picture of American literature.

There were 44 participants among the classes (N=44); one class contained 16 student participants (n=16), the second and third contained 14 students each (n=14, n=14). The ethnic breakdown of the entire sample was 86% Caucasian, 7% African American, 2% Hispanic and Latino American, and 5% Asian and Pacific Islander American. All percentages have been rounded off to the nearest whole percentage point. The population to which this sample was relevant was the entire eleventh grade class at the high school. The eleventh grade class at this high school consisted of 366 students during the 2001-2002 school year and had an ethnic background breakdown of 81% Caucasian, 14% African American, 3% Hispanic or Latino American, .3% Native American and Alaskan Native, and 1% Asian and Pacific Islander American. All percentages have been rounded off to the nearest whole percentage point. This sample was chosen as a population of convenience because of the accessibility the researcher had to these classes on a daily basis; therefore, the sample is not a stratified representation of the ethnic breakdown of the entire high school population and the eleventh grade class and is not random (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

Due to student absences, there were discrepancies in sample numbers between the beginning and end of the study. In the entire sample (N=44), there are nine responses missing due to student absences on pre- and post-intervention days from illnesses and various student activities such as student council and Engineering Academy events. In the pre-intervention writing response, 37 students participated, and in the post-intervention

writing response, 42 students participated. Thirty-five students participated in both pre- and post-intervention writing responses (n=35).

Teachers in the Language Arts Literacy Department at this high school were also interviewed during the study. The researcher interviewed six teachers in the department who taught Language Arts Literacy III during the 2001-2002 school year, and all of these teachers were of Caucasian ethnic background. These teachers were chosen because of their teaching positions in the high school the students in the sample attended; this provided continuity and an overall picture of the attitudes toward American literature in this school from a teacher and student perspective.

Procedures

This was a three-part study prepared and conducted by the researcher between November 2001 and April 2002. The third research question focusing on how students perceive American literature and whether their perceptions could be affected by exposure to multicultural literature was the most complex and time-consuming so the researcher undertook development of it first.

Initially, the researcher decided to choose literature for a unit plan that introduced students to the literature of Latino/a writers who have experienced life in the United States. She chose pieces that she read in her college level Latino Literature of the United States class for possible inclusion; among these pieces were selections from *Silent Dancing* by Judith Ortiz Cofer (1990), *Macho!* by Victor Villaseñor (1991), and *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez (1991). All of these pieces were selected to be appropriate for a high school audience based on reading level (How

difficult would it be for a high school audience to read?), thematic relevance (What could an educator teach about the Latino experience and literature from this piece?), controversial content and language (Does it contain any inordinate amounts of violence, sexual content, and profanity?), and interest level (Would the content and themes appeal to and be relevant to teenagers?) and could encompass anywhere from a two week to month long unit depending on the time allowed. Since the researcher was not sure how, where, and when she would be able to implement the unit, she made it flexible and chose many pieces of literature to include. The objectives and activities of the unit were designed based on the Tyler (1949) model of curriculum development as well as in consultation with the researcher's thesis advisor (see Appendix A).

Since the pieces chosen are ones not generally included in high school textbooks, the researcher then started contacting publishers by facsimile, letters, and telephone for copyright permissions to photocopy 100 copies of each piece of literature (see Appendix B). During this process in January 2002, she also consulted in a face-to-face meeting with her cooperating teacher at the high school in which she was student teaching. The two decided that the researcher could present the Latino/a literature unit for two weeks during March to the three Language Arts Literacy III Honors classes under the researcher's tutelage. The researcher also obtained a copy of the American literature textbook in use at the high school and chose two Latina pieces from the text to use in the unit.

During January and February, the researcher obtained enough copyright permissions from publishers to compile the final unit (see Appendix C). Not all of the original pieces chosen could be used. Some publishers or agencies were charging fees for the use of the material that were not affordable to the researcher, and some did not

respond at all until April and were not cooperative when asked to expedite the process. The researcher's cooperating teacher and the Language Arts Literacy department instructional supervisor/department chairperson approved the final lesson plans, and the researcher produced the photocopies of approved pieces. Letters to parents and guardians were also sent home with the students in the participating classes a week prior to the start of the unit; these letters explained the researcher's project and its purpose. These letters also welcomed any questions from parents and offered them the opportunity to express any concerns they may have had about the project (see Appendix D).

The unit was presented during March 2002 to the three classes. On the first day, as a pre-intervention writing response, students were asked to individually produce a writing response to the following question: What is your definition of American literature? The question was presented verbally by the researcher and written on the board at the front of the room. To assist students with writing, the researcher also presented the following four prompts verbally as well writing them on the board: Who writes it? What kinds of materials does it include? What major ideas does it include? and What characteristics does it have? The students were given 10 minutes to respond, and they handed their responses to the researcher at the conclusion of that time. After receiving the responses, the researcher facilitated a 20-minute class discussion on the writing topic of: What is the definition of American literature? Responses to the discussion were recorded on an overhead projector transparency with the words AMERICAN LITERATURE in a circle in the center and four arrows and titles radiating from the circle stating WHO? WHAT KINDS OF MATERIALS? WHAT MAJOR IDEAS? and WHAT CHARACTERISTICS? (see Appendix E). A student volunteer was

recruited to record responses on the transparency, and the researcher would ask for clarification or restatement of responses. This process of writing and discussion was reproduced in all three classes. All classes were held in the same classroom, one in the early morning and two in the early afternoon.

The next two weeks were devoted to covering the intervention unit with the participants and introducing the students to Latino/a culture through the assigned pieces and class discussions. The researcher kept a handwritten journal of field notes during the course of the unit; these notes recorded students' general reactions to the pieces and level of engagement. The unit concluded with the post-intervention writing response and class discussion with new overhead transparencies—a replication of the pre-intervention writing response and discussion. The researcher then analyzed and categorized the responses from the pre- and post-intervention writing responses to evaluate whether the participants had changed their perceptions of American literature from prior to the presentation of the unit on multicultural literature. To analyze the data, the researcher reduced the data to key phrases and ideas from class discussions, interviews, field notes, and writing responses and developed categories of student attitudes based on emerging patterns and themes evident in the key ideas uncovered (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The researcher combined these categories developed from key ideas to present an overall picture of student attitudes toward American literature after study of multicultural literature.

Independently of the Latino/a literature unit, the researcher addressed the other two research questions of her study. First, the researcher obtained photocopied textbook tables of contents to address the first research question—Do high school American

literature textbooks include multicultural literature in their definitions of American literature and how much of this type of literature do they include? This researcher obtained these tables of contents to evaluate the numbers and percentages of multicultural pieces included by textbook publishers in comparison to literature from the canon. The researcher obtained these tables of contents from the high school participating in this study, textbook publishing company sales representatives, and members of her thesis advisor's undergraduate education classes completing their field experiences in various high schools located throughout southern New Jersey. These textbooks were published by various publishers at different times over the past thirty years; the evaluation of textbooks from different years across more than two decades was to answer the second part of the first research question, which asked if American literature texts have changed over time in their multicultural literature content. Among the texts evaluated were editions of *The United States in Literature* by Scott, Foresman, & Co. (1976), *Literature: American Literature* by McDougal, Littell & Co. (1989) and *Adventures in American Literature: Pegasus Edition* by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1989), *Literature: The American Experience* by Prentice Hall (1999), and *Elements of Literature: Fifth Course* by Holt, Rinehart and Winston (2000).

Also independent of the student and textbook research, the researcher interviewed teachers in the Language Arts Literacy Department of the high school in which the student study was taking place. She prepared these interviews to answer the second research question—How do teachers of high school American literature define American literature and do they teach multicultural literature both from the textbook and/or as supplemental materials in their classes? Each teacher of Language Arts Literacy III was

issued a request letter about the interviews in their school mailboxes by the researcher (see Appendix F). No teacher asked refused to be interviewed for this study. The researcher devised interview questions to evaluate teachers' attitudes toward American literature as well as find out what these educators were actually teaching. The five interview questions asked were: How do you define American literature? Do you feel the current curriculum sufficiently addresses diversity issues? What do you teach from the text? What do you teach as supplemental materials? and What are your favorite pieces and why are they your favorites? The interviews were conducted face-to-face in the school building on teachers' free periods and after school. The researcher took field notes on paper to record each response, and the responses were then categorized. By evaluating teacher responses for key phrases, ideas, and philosophies, the researcher was able to create typologies or categories based on common meanings and themes among the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The researcher was then able to draw conclusions about teacher attitudes toward American literature from these categories.

Data Analysis

This study was primarily qualitative with some limited quantitative data, primarily in the textbook analysis. The research in the teacher and student portions of the study was completed in the form of open-ended responses, so there were no numbers to quantify responses as in a Likert scale survey. Responses had to be evaluated and analyzed on an individual basis, but there were patterns that emerged as the individual responses revealed similarities in attitudes among students and teachers. The researcher derived these common themes from key phrases and ideas from interviews and writing

responses and created categories based on these similarities and emerging patterns. These categories and patterns resulted in an inductive analysis approach that allowed the researcher to take individual responses, draw conclusions about the research questions from this data, and test the research hypotheses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The textbook tables of contents were analyzed using both a ratio of multicultural pieces to the entire piece count of the textbook and another ratio of canon pieces to entire piece count; this was calculated for each table of contents. These ratios were then divided to provide percentages of multicultural literature and canon literature for each text. These calculations allowed the researcher to analyze how much of each textbook is devoted to each type of literature and draw conclusions based on these findings. These findings were arranged in chronological order beginning with the oldest text; this allowed the researcher to draw conclusions on how textbooks have changed over the course of the last few decades.

Second, the teacher interviews were evaluated qualitatively using the field notes taken by the researcher. The responses were categorized by question and then by similarities in answers to that particular question. For example, if two of the teachers mentioned multiculturalism in response to the first interview question about their own definitions of American literature, then those two responses would be categorized together. The categories with the most responses were then analyzed for how they relate to the second research question, or how teachers in this high school define American literature and whether or not they teach multicultural literature from the text or as supplemental materials. Trends were seen in the teachers' responses—similarities among teachers in beliefs toward the canon and multiculturalism as well as beliefs about the

ways in which American literature should be taught—and evaluated to draw conclusions about overall current educational approaches to defining American literature in this high school. In addition, conversely, some responses were so different from one another that they defied easy classification and consensus and allowed the researcher to analyze the teaching of American literature from widely varying individual teacher opinions and beliefs.

Finally, the researcher qualitatively analyzed the student responses from both pre- and post-intervention writing responses. To analyze writing responses from each student, the researcher read each response and picked key phrases from each piece that summarized the main ideas that the student highlighted. These key phrases were then categorized by similarities; for example, if several students emphasized authors of the canon as integral parts of American literature, then these responses were categorized together. This categorization was performed separately for both pre- and post-intervention writing responses, so pools of data were created for each set of both pre- and post-intervention responses. The categories with the largest numbers of responses would then be evaluated and used to draw conclusions on two facets: the attitudes of these students as a group toward American literature prior to being exposed to a unit solely on multicultural literature and the attitudes as a group after the exposure. By categorizing the data, the researcher could not only analyze attitude change but could also evaluate exactly which topics students emphasized when they discussed American literature before and after the unit. These topics were compared with the dominant topics noted in pre- and post-intervention class discussion results and the topics and attitudes noted in the field note journal kept by the researcher. This analysis was compared qualitatively with

the categories of teacher interest for possible comparisons and relationships between the two parts of the study.

The student data was also analyzed by evaluating each student's responses both before and after the presentation of the Latino/a unit. Instead of group analysis, each student's responses from the pre- and post-intervention writing responses are compared to each other to evaluate changes in attitudes toward multicultural literature; for example, if a student mentions nothing about multiculturalism in the pre-intervention response and does mention diversity in the post-intervention response, that was classified as a change. Each response was classified in one of four ways: change with positive attitude toward multiculturalism, change with negative attitude toward multiculturalism, no change with no mention of multiculturalism in either response, and no change but with discussion of multiculturalism in both pre- and post-intervention responses. Each response was classified and then tallied to determine which category had the most students and therefore determined if the multicultural unit changed students' perceptions of American literature and addressed the third research question of changing student attitudes through instruction.

Findings from each of these categories provided an overview of the picture of American literature in the high school studied by the researcher—a picture of how textbooks, teachers, and students interact to create the definition of American literature that dominates schools and how this may be changed in the future.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Results

For this study on the changing definitions of American literature, the researcher collected data by evaluating the content of high school American literature textbooks, by interviewing teachers, and by analyzing the attitudes of students toward American literature before and after study of a unit on multicultural literature. The researcher decided to organize the findings and results of this study in a manner reflecting the educational process of teaching literature. The textbook findings are presented first, as the content of these books is the primary source of much of what is taught in the American literature classroom. The results of the teacher interviews are reported next, as teachers choose what to teach from the text and from supplemental materials in American literature classes. Findings related to students are reported last; the students' experiences are the outcome of what is taught by the teacher from the text and from supplemental materials.

Textbooks

The researcher reviewed the content of five textbooks (N=5) ranging in publication dates from 1976 to 2000. The texts analyzed were editions of *The United States in Literature* by Scott, Foresman, & Co. (1976), *Literature: American Literature* by McDougal, Littell & Co. (1989) and *Adventures in American Literature: Pegasus*

Edition by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1989), *Literature: The American Experience* by Prentice Hall (1999), and *Elements of Literature: Fifth Course* by Holt, Rinehart and Winston (2000). These textbooks have been chosen from the major publishers of educational materials in the United States. The researcher calculated the total number of pieces in each text, the number of pieces by canon authors, and the number of pieces by multicultural authors. In all of the texts, canon pieces dominated the textbooks with a smaller number of multicultural pieces in each. The results of these calculations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Numbers of Canon and Multicultural Pieces in American Literature Textbooks (N=5)

Textbook	Total pieces	Canon pieces	Multicultural Pieces
1976 – Scott, Foresman, & Co.	254	219	35
1989 – McDougal, Littell	266	221	45
1989 – Harcourt Brace Jovanovich	241	206	35
1999 – Prentice Hall	195	143	52
2000 – Holt, Rinehart, & Winston	236	180	56

The researcher then calculated two ratios for each textbook: the numbers of canon pieces to total pieces and the numbers of multicultural pieces to total pieces. From these ratios, the researcher then derived the percentages of both canon pieces and multicultural pieces in the total composition of each textbook. In all textbooks, the percentages of

canon pieces are much higher than the percentages of multicultural pieces, but the proportions of multicultural pieces become higher in the newer textbooks. These results are reported in Figure 1.

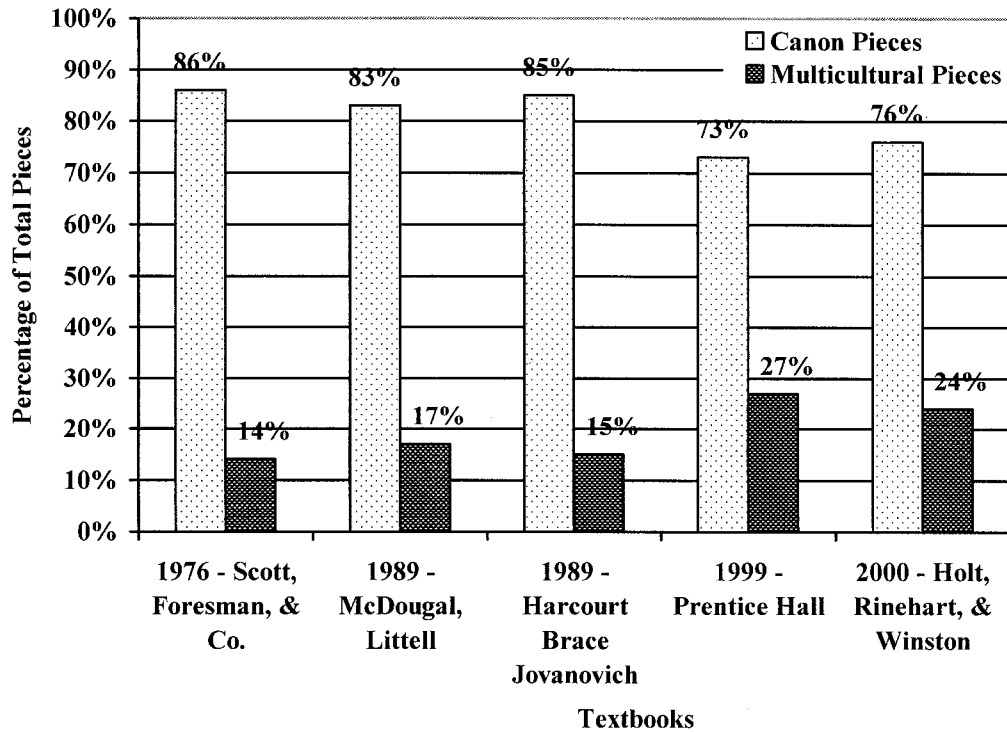


Figure 1. Percentages of canon and multicultural pieces in American literature textbooks (N=5).

Based on the textbooks evaluated, these findings show that there has been an increase over 24 years in the percentage of representation given to multicultural literature in high school American literature textbooks. The largest increase in percentage of total pieces devoted to multicultural literature was between the 1989 texts and the most recent versions from 1999 and 2000. For example, in the two textbooks from Harcourt Brace publishing companies, the 1989 Harcourt Brace Jovanovich text and the 2000 Holt, Rinehart, & Winston text, the percentage of multicultural pieces rose from 15% in 1989 to 24% in 2000. The numbers of multicultural pieces in each text did not necessarily

change over time, but the proportions of multicultural pieces in relation to the total number of pieces in the texts did increase.

Teachers

The researcher interviewed six teachers of American literature classes in the high school in which the study took place. The teachers participated in the interview voluntarily, and each interview took place face-to-face in the school at the interviewed teacher's convenience. Each teacher was asked five questions, and the researcher took field notes on the responses and categorized the responses by similarities in key ideas.

In response to the first question, how do you define American literature, 4 categories emerged among responses: nationality of the writers, the advent of American literature, specific authors, and themes. Four participants defined American literature based on the nationality of the writers. One teacher responded that American literature is "by Americans about Americans." Two others defined American literature as literature that is "by American citizens" and "written by American writers." Two of the interviewed teachers further defined American by stating that American writers may be immigrants who are "not necessarily born here." The other two who focused on the nationality of the writers did not further define the concept of American while answering this question.

Also in response to the first question, 3 teachers focused on the advent of this type of literature as part of their definitions of American literature. Two stated that American literature began with the Puritans' writings, and one teacher asserted that American literature began with Mark Twain's novel *Huckleberry Finn* and that all prior literature

was merely an imitation of European literature and not uniquely American. Three teachers also mentioned specific authors as part of their definitions of American literature; all authors mentioned were part of the canon—names like Steinbeck, Emerson, and Thoreau. Finally, 2 teachers discussed themes as part of their definitions; Romanticism, Transcendentalism, and traditionalism were specifically mentioned. The teacher citing traditionalism as a theme further defined this as the emphasis on “traditional American subjects and topics” such as the ones in Steinbeck’s writings. This emphasis may not be surprising considering that all of the teachers interviewed were Caucasian and that they teach in a school that is predominantly white; the canon represents the status quo. The content of the textbook reflected these beliefs as well, so these teachers were influenced also by the content of the textbooks.

Three categories emerged in responses to the second interview question about whether or not the current curriculum sufficiently addresses diversity issues; these categories include a lack of representation in the textbook, the lack of time to cover multicultural literature, and an emphasis on the value of the canon. Two teachers addressed the lack of multicultural pieces in the currently used textbook (the 1989 McDougal, Littell text analyzed in the Textbook portion of this chapter). One teacher stated that “teachers don’t take advantage of resources” outside the textbook and therefore do not cover multicultural literature; the teachers cover Native American literature and Phyllis Wheatley “just to say we did it” but do not go beyond that. This again may reflect that the student body in this high school is predominantly white and that people of other ethnic backgrounds do not necessarily hold a place of importance in the American literature curriculum. In addressing the issue of time to cover multicultural

literature, this teacher did concur that there is a better selection of multicultural literature in the text within the contemporary literature units but that “we rarely get to this.” A second teacher addressed the issue of the lack of time when she stated that the American literature curriculum should include African-American writers such as Hughes and Angelou if time permits, but the curriculum is already so crowded that this is often impossible. This teacher went on to discuss a Harlem Renaissance poetry unit she taught one year but discarded the next because “it took too long.” These comments may reflect possible weaknesses in the use of chronological organization to teach American literature and may indicate the need to look for a different way to organize the American literature curriculum.

Two teachers expressed belief in the Western canon as the source of the American literature curriculum. The same teacher who spoke about including African-American writers if time permits also discussed her belief that the content of American literature classes “should be traditional” and include works by Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Thoreau as the basis of the curriculum. Another teacher interviewed stated that she does not believe that the curriculum sufficiently covers multicultural literature but that she also “believe[s] in the Western Canon” as a source of curriculum. She also commented that it “is subjective as to what great literature is” and what should be covered in the American literature classroom. These comments again reflect teachers’ concurrence with textbook content and lead to an American literature curriculum that includes very little multicultural literature. Again, in a predominantly white high school, the backgrounds of the canon writers are the same as the majority of the student body; no students may be challenging the dominance of the canon or wondering why they do not see their

backgrounds reflected in the American literature curriculum. Teachers' beliefs in the canon may never be seriously questioned.

The third question in the interview asked what these teachers teach from the textbook, which in this school is the 1989 edition of *Literature: American Literature* published by McDougal, Littell. One category emerged in the answers among the 6 participants, which was emphasis on chronology. Five teachers in their responses emphasized the chronological study of pieces from the text. Two teachers mentioned that their choices of pieces from the text are based on historical periods, "a chronological study," and "a history of the times." One other teacher mentioned specific literary movements such as the Romantic Movement as indicators of what she teaches from the text. These three teachers did not mention any specific writers in response to this question. Two teachers who also emphasized chronology in their discussion mentioned specific writers and pieces in chronological order. One teacher listed many writers beginning with Jefferson, continuing with Poe, Emerson, and Whitman, and ending with Twain. Another teacher who discussed chronology presented a briefer list beginning with Patrick Henry and also listed Dickinson and Whitman. All of the teachers who discussed the chronological study of American literature from the textbook discussed writers who produced work before 1900 and periods prior to the start of the twentieth century. This again may indicate the limitations of teaching American literature from a chronological perspective. As well, one teacher named multicultural writers; he discussed Douglass and Negro spirituals in his list of what he teaches from the textbook.

In response to the fourth interview question regarding what supplemental materials are taught by the teacher, 3 categories emerged, which were devotion to the

reading list, deviations from the reading list, and inclusion of multicultural literature. All 6 teachers interviewed named materials from the school's reading lists as supplemental materials used in their American literature classes. From the reading list selections, 5 teachers named *Of Mice and Men* by Steinbeck and four teachers named Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* as supplemental pieces taught in their classes. Two teachers each named Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Chopin's *The Awakening* as well. None of the teachers interviewed ignored the reading list in response to this question. However, 4 out of the 6 teachers interviewed discussed supplemental materials used in their American literature classes other than pieces from the reading list. For example, two teachers use the film version of Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* in their classes, and one teacher uses the film *Cool Hand Luke* in his classes as an example of Christ imagery in literature.

Four teachers also mentioned multicultural pieces as part of the supplemental materials they teach in their American literature classes. Two teachers mentioned multicultural pieces from the school's reading list—Hurstun's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*—as pieces they teach. Two other teachers use multicultural supplemental materials outside of the prescribed reading list. One teacher uses Hispanic and Latino poetry from an anthology she possesses, and one teacher uses rap music during a unit on the Harlem Renaissance. The small percentage of multicultural pieces used as supplemental materials parallels the small percentages of these pieces found in the American literature textbooks. Teachers interviewed did not see this literature in the textbook and also did not see the need to seek it out for their classrooms. Only 2 teachers used multicultural supplemental materials outside of the prescribed reading list, and only 2 used prescribed supplemental materials.

The fifth and final question in the interview involved asking the teachers what are their favorite pieces to teach and why they are favorites. The category that emerged here was enthusiasm about the canon. Each of the 6 teachers interviewed named Steinbeck pieces, both *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, as favorites. The reasons for choosing Steinbeck varied from one teacher's response of "It's my personal favorite" to three other teachers' responses about the themes of "loss and burden," "disabilities," "a group struggling against a larger group," and the reminder "not to be apathetic" in Steinbeck's work. All other writers mentioned were from the canon, such as Salinger, Whitman, and Fitzgerald, except for one response for Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. This domination of the canon again may reflect the predominantly white population of the high school as well as the canon-based textbook. However, there was a minority population at the high school that may never have seen literature either from the textbook or in supplemental materials that reflected their backgrounds.

Overall, the most dominant trends that emerged from the interviews were perceptions on the part of teachers that American literature is based on a chronological progression of literary periods much like that reflected in the textbook and an emphasis on canonical supplemental materials (see Table 2 for dominant key idea categories of teacher interviews). As part of this chronology, teachers, due to time constraints, emphasize the early periods of American literature and discuss very little about contemporary periods and works. Even teachers' favorites to teach are works from the canon that are generally at least 50 years old. There is also a great emphasis by teachers of American literature on teaching pieces from the canon with some multicultural representation; they see the need to teach multicultural literature but still devote the

majority of class time to the canon.

Table 2

Dominant Key Idea Categories of Teacher Interviews (N=6)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>
Reading list supplemental materials	6
Steinbeck favorites	6
Chronological study	5
Supplemental materials not on reading list	4
Multicultural supplemental materials	4

Students

The students in the sample (N=44) consisted of three classes of eleventh grade Language Arts Literacy III Honors students. The writing response and class discussion data were collected before (pre-intervention) and after (post-intervention) study of a unit on multicultural literature; the field note data produced by the researcher occurred during both pre- and post-intervention writing responses, during pre- and post-intervention class discussions, and during the unit studied. The pre- and post-intervention writing responses consisted of having students give their personal definitions of American literature. The researcher gave students four prompt questions given verbally and written on the board to help them answer this. The four questions were Who writes it? What kinds of materials does it include? What major ideas does it include? and What characteristics does it have? A class discussion followed each pre- and post-intervention writing response period; the discussion was based on the same question and prompts and was recorded on overhead

transparencies by a student volunteer while the researcher facilitated the discussion (see Appendix E). During these pre- and post-intervention writing responses and discussions and while teaching the unit, the researcher kept a journal of field notes to record student responses and attitudes. The researcher analyzed the pre-intervention writing responses and class discussions for key phrases and ideas; she then classified these key ideas by similarity. The researcher has organized the discussions of these categories by which writing prompt and class discussion question the students were addressing when discussing the key idea in that category.

In discussing who writes American literature, the first prompt question, in the pre-intervention writing responses, two categories emerged: the nationality of the writers and specific canon authors. Eleven students discussed the fact that American literature is written by Americans; none of the students offered any further clarification of what they meant by using the term American. Fifteen students named specific authors in their responses while discussing who writes American literature, and 14 of these students named canon authors exclusively when naming American authors. The authors mentioned in 12 of these responses were Steinbeck and Fitzgerald, and 5 other students mentioned Emerson and Thoreau. One student mentioned Hurston, an African American author.

In the pre-intervention class discussion about who writes American literature, these ideas of American writers and canon authors were also dominant. In one class, the students declared that “everyone” and “all different cultures” produce American literature, but named Steinbeck, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Twain when naming specific writers. Another class specified that Americans write American literature, and

that American meant those with American citizenship and the ethnic groups of Irish, Polish, and Italian. This class also named all canon authors; they named Thoreau, Dickinson, Hawthorne, Steinbeck, and Poe in the discussion. This class also stated that American literature is produced by “people that have something to say.” The third class stated that American literature is produced by American writers, and the students specified that this could mean people born in the United States or immigrants of such ethnic backgrounds as Italians, Nigerians, and Polish. This class also specifically named African American authors as a part of who writes American literature and named Hurston as an American writer. This class also named King, Franklin, Ginsberg, Steinbeck, and Fitzgerald as American authors. Overall, the students focused on the same categories in both writing responses and class discussions: focus on the nationality of the writers and focus on the writers of the canon.

In the pre-intervention writing responses to the second prompt, only one category emerged, which was an emphasis on genres. Ten students discussed specific genres in the pre-intervention writing responses when discussing what types of materials are included in American literature. The most commonly named genres in all the responses were poetry, novels, and dramas; 3 students mentioned autobiographies. Students did not mention any specific works or further define these genres. In the class discussions, students also mentioned specific genres but added some specific pieces and gave more detail than they did in the pre-intervention writing responses. In one class, the students named historical fiction as a type of novel in American literature and named *The Grapes of Wrath* by Steinbeck as an example of historical fiction. This class discussed exclusively fiction such as the aforementioned historical fiction as well as war based

fiction, adventure literature, and short stories. Another class also named genres but gave some more specific information such as mystery, romance, and science fiction as types of fiction. The only class that discussed materials beyond genres also mentioned ideas such as the American Dream, the past & future, hardships, struggle, and civil rights, slavery in response to the question of what kinds of materials constitute American literature. With the exception of the class discussion just presented, individual students and classes focused on genres as the kinds of materials that make up American literature; students generally did not give more specific answers to this question. The students in these classes were clearly defining American literature by authorship; they were very interested in presenting specific authors but not specific pieces or types of pieces.

The pre-intervention writing responses on the third and fourth prompts about what major ideas are included in American literature and what characteristics constitute American literature included 5 categories: history, abstractions, culture/society, struggle and hardship, and literary movements. (The researcher decided to combine the discussions of the third and fourth prompts because the answers produced for these two questions were difficult to differentiate in many cases.) Seventeen students in the pre-intervention writing responses characterized American literature as being about time periods in United States history. Fifteen students characterized American literature as being about abstract concepts such as freedom, truth, pride, love, hate, thoughts and feelings, religious values, sadness, change, patriotism, and ethics/morals. Nine students characterized American literature as being about life in America and American culture and society. Nine students discussed American literature as literature about struggle and hardship, and six students described American literature as being about literary

movements such as Romanticism, Naturalism, and Realism.

The pre-intervention class discussions on the ideas and characteristics of American literature included the same 5 categories as the individual pre-intervention writing responses. One class focused on events past/present, abstractions such as ideals and American spirit, culture, and literary movements such as Realism and Transcendentalism. Another class discussed abstractions such as freedom, oppression, and equality as well as discussing American literature's focus on the past. The last class also discussed history, American society, as well as abstractions such as hate, The American Dream, love and morals/ideals. All categories from the individual responses emerged in the class discussions, but students gave no elaboration in the writing responses or in class discussion for any of these concepts and gave no specific examples or support of these ideas.

The results of the pre-intervention revealed some interesting relationships among the textbook, teacher interviews, and student data analysis; the student emphases in both pre-intervention writing responses and class discussions were on authorship and history (see Table 3 for dominant key idea categories of student pre-intervention writing responses). This virtually mirrors the attitudes found in the teacher interviews earlier in this chapter. For example, the 6 teachers interviewed all discussed Steinbeck in their definitions of American literature; the students mentioned Steinbeck in their definition of American literature. The textbook presents a chronological survey of American literature. As well, teachers focused on chronology in their definitions of American literature; students focused on American literature as a reflection of American history and literary movements. The pre-intervention writing responses and class discussions revealed that

the attitudes of these particular students reflected what they have been taught.

Table 3

Dominant Key Idea Categories of Student Pre-intervention Writing Responses (n=37)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>
About U.S. history	17
About abstractions	15
Specific canon authors	15
By Americans	11
Specific genres	10
About American culture and society	9
About struggle and hardship	9
About literary movements	6

In her field note journal, the researcher noted that all students enthusiastically participated in the pre-intervention writing responses and class discussions. No one seemed hostile or expressed any negative opinions about the class proceedings. However, once the unit began after the pre-intervention writing responses and class discussion, the researcher found she ran into 3 categories of responses: hostile, personally unresponsive, and personally responsive. The researcher created these categories after evaluating her field journal from the entire unit and deciding which responses dominated the unit. Some students were openly hostile to the unit for differing reasons. One Caucasian male student in a class discussion about a piece from Villaseñor's *Macho!* classified the Latino/a literature being studied as "another Elian Gonzalez, let 'em in across the border, boo hoo story—more of the same crap we always see." Another Caucasian male student asked at the end of the unit, "Isn't this supposed to be an American literature curriculum; why are

we studying Spanish stuff in it?” This comment came after multiple discussions on the unit as a representation of Latino-American literature. A Caucasian female was angry that her class had to do this “extra stuff” and asked, “Are we going to have to cram everything else in the rest of the year because we did this extra stuff?” These students reacted hostilely to this unit they perceived as meaningless, inconsistent, or as a repetition of what they always do. The comment on the sameness of the content was puzzling considering that these students see very little or no Latino/a literature in their American literature curriculum.

The students who were not hostile for the most part fit into the category of personally unresponsive during class discussions and activities during the unit. These students were willing to discuss the literary devices such as imagery and symbolism in the pieces but were unwilling to become personally engaged with the narratives and themes in the pieces. Even when prompted in a class discussion by the researcher, the students in all classes were unwilling to relate to the literature or discuss how they felt about the themes and messages in the pieces. Many of the students in these classes are in their third or fourth year of formal study of the Spanish language but seemed unknowledgeable about and uncomfortable with Spanish-speaking cultures and issues in these cultures. All the students completed the assignments with proficiency but without personal enthusiasm.

The students who did express personal responses to the literature were several students of minority backgrounds in the classes. During a class discussion on the immigrant experience in a piece from Cofer’s *Silent Dancing*, 2 African American female students, 1 Asian American female, and 1 Latina female student shared their personal

understandings of the protagonist's experience. The Latina and Asian American students discussed the difficulties of growing up in bilingual households, speaking English at school and another language at home. One of the African American female students discussed the difficulties of being one of the only African American students enrolled in honors classes; she commented that she is "too black for whites and too white for blacks" and that differing cultural expectations cause her much frustration. The other students in the class became distinctly uncomfortable during these discussions; they averted their eyes and declined to comment on the statements from their peers.

This unit gave multicultural students a chance to speak about their concerns and lives but was regarded as foreign material by the majority of Caucasian students. This is not surprising in a school and community that was predominantly white and in which students had never had much exposure to multicultural literature and culture. The students' experiences with literature from the canon were the majority of what they had read and discussed; teachers reinforced this by teaching almost exclusively from the canon. The student belief that this Latino/a unit was "extra stuff" echoed a teacher when she said that the Harlem Renaissance unit "took too long" and was abandoned for the next year. Even when learning the Spanish language, students do not become engaged with cultures and issues they do not experience on a daily basis. The students of diverse backgrounds do live in these cultures and therefore became engaged with the literature and seemed to welcome the opportunity to present aspects of their lives, but their peers regarded the unit as unnecessary and even unwanted.

At the conclusion of the unit, the researcher replicated the pre-intervention writing response assignment and class discussions for post-intervention data analysis. The

researcher categorized key ideas and phrases from the post-intervention writing responses and class discussions in the same manner she categorized the pre-intervention writing responses and class discussions.

In response to the first prompt about who writes American literature, 3 dominant categories emerged in the post-intervention writing response: diversity of writers, specific authors of the canon, and the nationality of the writers. Nineteen students cited ethnic diversity of writers as an indicator of who writes American literature; only 5 students did so in the pre-intervention writing response. Thirteen students cited specific authors, and all of the authors cited were from the canon, such as Steinbeck and Fitzgerald. As compared to 11 students in the pre-intervention writing response, 10 students in the post-intervention discussed American literature as being by Americans. The post-intervention class discussions revealed the same 2 categories. In one class, the students stated that “all nationalities” write American literature, but they also named Salinger, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Twain as representative writers of American literature. In the second class, students discussed writers of American literature as a “melting pot” and as diverse but named Poe, Thoreau, and Hawthorne as writers of American literature. The final class included Native Americans, immigrants, and “Everyone!” as writers of American literature but named Steinbeck, Franklin, and Hemingway as authors of American literature. These reactions in the post-intervention writing responses showed an increased awareness of diversity in American literature but also revealed continued perception of the canon as the representation of American literature.

The students’ responses to the second prompt about the materials included in American literature generated one category of specific genres. As in the pre-intervention

writing responses, this category dominated students' discussions of this prompt; however, in the post-intervention writing responses, 18 students discussed specific genres such as poetry, drama, and novels in comparison to 10 in the pre-intervention writing responses. The post-intervention class discussions also followed the same pattern; all classes discussed specific genres as far as what materials are included in American literature. The classes did include more genres than they had in the pre-intervention class discussions; one class generated a list of genres including haiku, essays, songs, and epics in addition to the fiction forms of romance, mystery, and horror they had stated in the pre-intervention class discussion. Another class included mass communication in their post-intervention class discussion about materials in American literature. It appears that exposure to the unit on multicultural literature perhaps caused students to think more specifically about the wide range of forms in American literature.

Student post-intervention writing responses to the third and fourth prompts about the ideas and characteristics included in American literature revealed 4 categories: abstractions, history, struggle and hardship, and group experiences. Twenty-two students discussed abstract concepts like democracy, freedom, the American Dream, hope, loneliness, love, thoughts and feelings, pride, ethics, and independence in their post-intervention writing responses, which were seven more responses than the 15 in the pre-intervention writing responses. Twelve students discussed American literature as being about the past and events in U.S. History; this was a smaller number of students than the 17 students who discussed history in the pre-intervention writing responses. In their post-intervention writing responses, 12 students discussed hardship and struggle as ideas that characterize American literature; this was three more than the 9 responses about hardship

and struggle in the pre-intervention writing responses. As well, a totally new category of ideas emerged in the post-intervention writing responses; 11 students stated ethnic group experiences as a major idea and characteristic of American literature.

The post-intervention class discussions revealed the same 4 categories in the responses to the third and fourth prompts about the ideas and characteristics of American literature. One class discussed truth, history, obstacles, and social commentary as characteristics of American literature. Another class shared many abstractions like equality, freedom, and philosophy as well as comments on struggle, prejudice, accepting differences. This class also commented on problems, issues in American society in their post-intervention discussion. The final class also discussed abstractions such as ideas & messages and pride; the students also commented on struggle and not belonging as well as social concerns. The students in the post-intervention writing responses and class discussions focused more on ideas rather than history and struggle rather than literary movements.

In the post-intervention writing responses and class discussions, students shifted their definitions of American literature to include more discussion of abstract ideas rather than discussions of history and authorship (see Table 4 for dominant key idea categories of student post-intervention writing responses). As well, responses focused on diversity much more than in the pre-intervention writing responses; however, this focus was tempered by a continued allegiance to writers of the canon. Students also discussed more types of American literature than they did prior to the unit. This suggests the beginnings of changing attitudes toward American literature, but that the old perceptions still persist. In a short period of intervention like the Latino/a unit, old perceptions of a lifetime of

schooling may be difficult to dispel, but long-term intervention may be effective if shifting attitudes may be seen in only two weeks.

Table 4

Dominant Key Idea Categories of Student Post-intervention Responses (n=42)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of responses</u>
About abstractions	22
Diversity of writers	19
Specific genres	18
Specific canon authors	13
About U.S. history	12
About hardship and struggle	12
Ethnic group experiences	11
By Americans	11

The final stage of analysis for student responses was the evaluation of individual student's pre- and post-intervention writing responses for change. Because of student absences during either the pre- or post-intervention writing responses, this sub-sample consisted of 35 students who participated in both writing responses (n=35). Both writing responses were evaluated for each student to determine change in attitude toward definitions of American literature prior to and after study of the multicultural unit. The researcher developed 4 categories to denote these changes: change with a positive attitude toward multiculturalism, change with a negative attitude toward multiculturalism, no change and no mention of multiculturalism in either response, and no change but with discussion of multiculturalism in both pre- and post-intervention responses. Fourteen

students changed with a positive attitude toward multiculturalism, 19 students demonstrated no change with no mention of multiculturalism in either response, and 2 students demonstrated no change but with discussion of multiculturalism in both pre- and post-intervention writing responses. See Table 5 for results.

Table 5

Change in Pre- and Post-intervention Writing Responses (n=35)

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of students</u>
Change with positive attitude	14
Change with negative attitude	0
No change with no discussion	19
No change with pre- and post-intervention discussion	2

The researcher also used the above numbers to calculate the percentages of students who changed their attitudes over the course of the multicultural unit. Figure 2 demonstrates the percentages of students who demonstrated change or did not demonstrate change. No students changed their attitudes negatively from the pre- to post-intervention writing responses.

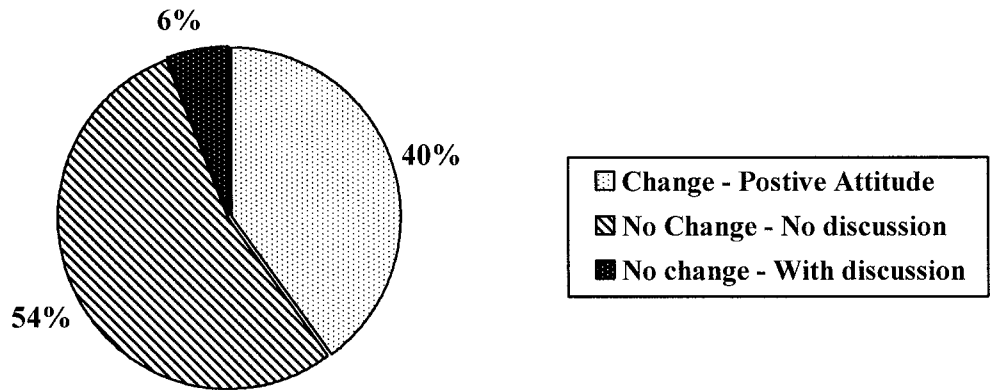


Figure 2. Percentages of students who demonstrated change or did not demonstrate change from pre- to post-intervention writing responses (n=35).

A larger percentage of students did not change their attitudes in the pre- and post-intervention writing responses than did change their attitudes. This demonstrates that the two-week Latino/a unit presented by the researcher was effective in changing individual attitudes in less than half the sub-sample. However, the whole group pre- and post-intervention writing response and class discussion analysis revealed shifts in attitudes. This suggests to the researcher that the process of changing students' definitions of American literature is a long one. A two-week intervention may instigate some initial changes, but permanently changing long-held beliefs among high school students is a process that will take much longer and will require more intense interventions. However, this study shows that change is possible but not guaranteed.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

At the beginning of this study, the researcher wanted to determine how the elements of the process of teaching American literature—textbooks, teachers, and students—combine to define American literature for high school students. The data collected from textbook analysis, teacher interviews, and student writing responses and class discussions revealed that there is concurrence among the attitudes of teachers and students as well as in the content of textbooks as to what the definition of American literature is. The study also revealed that perhaps these definitions are flexible and can be changed, but this process of altering perceptions is a long and complicated one with no short-term solution.

The relationship among the data in these findings—the similarities among textbook data, teacher interview data, and student data—reveals above all the influence that educators and textbooks have on the educational process. Teachers' beliefs are heavily influenced by the resources they have available to them—the textbook as a primary one and the reading list as a secondary one. If the text is full of canonical works, that is what teachers teach; if they are given a reading list of these works, they teach these as well. And, as revealed in the discussions about favorite pieces, this is the material that teachers value, like, and respect. The students' responses reveal their concurrence with the attitudes of the educators who teach them this literature; their responses parallel their teachers' in many ways. However, when presented with a perspective on American

literature outside of the canon, students begin to discuss American literature in a different way.

In the survey of the content of 5 textbooks, the researcher discovered that there has been an increase in percentage of multicultural pieces from 1976 until 2000. The 1999 and 2000 texts included over 24% and 27% multicultural pieces—a definite increase from 1989 editions in which 15% and 17% of the contents included multicultural pieces. The two texts published by Harcourt Brace publishing companies, the 1989 Harcourt Brace Jovanovich text and the 2000 Holt, Rinehart, & Winston text, increased their proportions of multicultural pieces from 15% in 1989 to 24% in 2000. The major textbook publishers are changing their content to reflect a more diverse definition of what constitutes American literature, which was something that this researcher wanted to see.

Even though this study revealed that textbooks are changing, problems remain. In the high school in which the study took place, the teachers of the American literature curriculum were still using the McDougal, Littell textbook from 1989, one that has a 17% multicultural piece content. Due to budget constraints, high schools cannot afford to replace very expensive literature texts very often and may end up using the same textbooks for up to 15 years and perhaps even beyond that. To add to this, textbooks published were most likely compiled and edited at least 1 year prior to the release date. Therefore, teachers and students derive their studies of American literature from books that could be almost 2 decades behind societal changes in population and attitudes. As well, no pieces written in the past decades can possibly be included in a textbook published before the writings were produced. This means that students may be taught material that was compiled and written before they were born.

Teacher attitudes largely reflected belief in the textbook despite its age. In the teacher interviews the researcher conducted, 2 teachers expressed that the textbook does not include enough multicultural pieces, but no teacher expressed dissatisfaction with the textbook as outdated or unsuitable for classroom use. As a matter of fact, the interviews revealed that teacher perceptions of American literature are based largely on a chronological sequence like that presented in the 1989 text still in use; 5 out of 6 teachers interviewed discussed chronology while discussing what they teach in their American literature classes. Teachers in this school followed the textbook in their American literature classes and apparently accepted the text's organization and materials as an acceptable definition of American literature. Teachers were using materials that were at least 13 years old during this study and did not question the use of these materials.

Of course, teachers are expected to teach from the textbook as part of the school's curriculum, and teachers could not reasonably be expected to outright reject a textbook used in their high schools. However, teachers did have the opportunity in this high school to exert some flexibility in the supplemental materials they chose to teach, and most of the teachers chose pieces from the canon as supplemental materials. The teachers who did choose to use multicultural supplemental materials chose minimal amounts of almost exclusively African American pieces; only 1 teacher indicated that she used Hispanic and Latino poetry. Not only did the teachers follow the textbook, but they also followed the pattern of multicultural representation found in the textbook when choosing supplemental materials in their American literature classes. The high school is currently in the process of choosing new textbooks, so it would be interesting to note if these patterns of teaching change when new texts have been chosen.

The lack of multicultural literature in the classroom may not be surprising in light of the fact that the high school in which the study took place is predominantly white or Caucasian. The largest number of minority students in the school are African American, and African American literature was the multicultural literature most chosen by teachers to use in their classrooms. Despite the age of the text and changes in society, teachers in this school had a comfort level with what they were teaching—after all, they had been teaching it for many years from a text that had been around for some time—and experienced no clash between the ethnic backgrounds of their students and the content of their American literature classes. The canon fit nicely with this school’s population as well as the teaching population; all of the teachers interviewed were white. Perhaps representation of other cultures in American literature classes besides African American was not an issue that emerged; one of the teachers interviewed even said that she “had never thought about it before” when questioned about multiculturalism in American literature. If it had not been an issue raised, teachers of American literature had never been compelled to change what they teach, seek out multicultural materials to teach in their classes, or attempt to seek a more updated textbook that addresses population changes.

The implications of this for students are enormous. Students are expected to be prepared in high school for the workplace, higher education, and the general responsibilities of adult life. When students are not seeing and hearing voices of those from different ethnic backgrounds, the argument could be made that they are not being prepared for interaction with a population that looks very different ethnically from what they saw in their predominantly white high school. From the data collected by the

researcher, students in American literature classes reflected the same beliefs that were found in the textbook and teacher interviews. In the pre-intervention writing responses and class discussions, students emphasized chronology and canon authors in their definitions of American literature just as their teachers and textbook did. In the pre-intervention, students in this high school followed the lead of what they had been taught and what they had read and did not express much knowledge of multiculturalism within the American literature curriculum. The question remains, is this exclusion of other cultures helping students prepare for a world full of people of different backgrounds?

Perhaps part of the answer to this question could be seen in the researcher's field journal of reactions during class discussions during the presentation of the Latino/a unit. The few students of multicultural backgrounds in the classes identified strongly with the issues presented in the multicultural literature, particularly the issues of living a bilingual or bicultural life and not belonging in a world dominated by one race or culture. These students were given an opportunity to voice issues that were important to them and gave other students in the classes the opportunity to hear different viewpoints from those of diverse backgrounds. Without the unit on multicultural literature, these students may never have had the opportunity to voice these ideas and give their classmates a chance to understand what it is like to be from a minority ethnic background. Exposure to multicultural literature may help students of all backgrounds understand one another more and be more prepared to deal with people of multiple backgrounds in the future.

Since students' definitions of American literature in this study prior to the intervention unit so closely mirrored the attitudes of their teachers and the content in the textbook, the researcher had to determine if this exposure to multicultural literature

would change student perceptions. The results of the post-intervention writing responses and class discussions were mixed. The whole group post-intervention writing responses and class discussion analysis revealed that many more students focused on diversity than in the pre-intervention writing responses and class discussions. However, the individual pre- and post-intervention writing responses comparison showed that 54% of participating students did not change their attitudes toward their definitions of American literature. Why were these results so mixed?

The researcher posits that part of the answer to this question lies in the fact that the intervention was so short-lived and isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Because of time constraints and the fact that the researcher would only be with the students for a short period of time, the unit was restricted to two weeks in duration and Latino/a literature. The researcher did teach some African American literature in the context of another short unit after the Latino/a literature unit but did not have the opportunity to perform any pre- or post-intervention research in that case. Students were given only a small taste of one aspect of the array of multicultural literature available in American literature, and this may have contributed to the lack of definite change in many of the students. Burroughs (1999) concluded in his research that students responded better to multicultural literature when it was presented in tandem with more familiar material from the canon, and the researcher in this case could not feasibly do this due to lack of time. However, the researcher concurs with Burroughs that this may be the best way to present multicultural literature.

Another reason why the Latino/a unit generated mixed results may be the nature of students in the participating classes. The researcher noted while conducting the unit

and in other observations that many of these students were resistant to doing anything desired of them. There was a natural rebelliousness that accompanied class activities. For example, of the three classes, one class included two students who would constantly question the researcher's planning and motives with such questions as "Why are we doing this?" or "Why are you making us do this?" Another of the three classes included students who liked to debate and argue many issues. No one questioned the researcher's planning as in the other class, but the students would not hesitate to debate matters of controversy and would rebel against whatever they thought an authority figure, in this case the researcher, wanted them to do. Since the researcher was teaching a multicultural literature unit, most students figured that the researcher wanted to open their minds to multicultural ideas, and perhaps decided to rebel and not reveal any change in perception. The researcher drew these conclusions from observations of class behavior and comments from students, and considering that the students who did not change their attitudes from pre- to post-intervention responses almost exclusively came from those two classes, the explanation may be feasible.

Despite the mixed results, there is cause in this study to encourage the further expansion of the use of multicultural literature in American literature classes. In the group post-intervention writing responses and class discussion data analysis, students focused on different ideas than they focused on in the pre-intervention writing responses and class discussion. They were more willing to discuss abstractions and diversity; focus on abstract ideas such as freedom, love, and democracy may open students' minds for more critical thinking skills about American literature than very literal focus on chronology and historical events. The focus on diversity showed that students were more

willing to include multicultural literature in their definitions of American literature than they were prior to the Latino/a unit. These changes from short-term intervention may be more pronounced in long-term intervention.

There are several considerations for the teaching of American literature that can be drawn from the data in this study. First, the chronological study of American literature should be evaluated. The teaching of American literature this way leaves very little flexibility in the curriculum; in the teacher interviews, teachers discussed the time factor as a contributor to the lack of multicultural literature in their classes. For example, 1 teacher rejected a Harlem Renaissance unit because it “took too long.” As well, many teachers of American literature do not get to contemporary works in American literature; this leaves many immigrant and multicultural writers out of the pieces studied in these classrooms. Much multicultural literature has been produced in the past 50 years, and the chronological survey often leaves no room for coverage of works from this time period in the American literature classroom. If the American literature curriculum were organized thematically or some other way, then teachers would have more time to cover works from all time periods rather than just the early periods of American history.

These changes to organization would require dramatic shifts in thought for textbook publishers. Those who publish textbooks would have to change how they organize their texts; all texts evaluated in this study were organized chronologically. The researcher did not have time in the course of this study or access to other textbooks to evaluate every text published from 1989 to the present, but the cross-section examined did represent some of the most popular publishers of educational materials. This cross-section most likely represents the majority of other textbooks, which would also be

organized chronologically. Teachers teach from the textbook, so changing the organization of the texts would be a place to start changing how educators teach American literature. Simply including more multicultural literature in the texts will not help if teachers do not get to teach it because they get bogged down in the early periods of American history and never make it to more modern periods. New textbooks already are including more multicultural pieces, but publishers can go one step further.

Perhaps teachers should deviate from the organization of the textbooks and teach the content of the text in different ways by creating their own thematic units from the entirety of American literature. This does not guarantee that teachers will necessarily pick more multicultural pieces to teach, but it will certainly eliminate the “I don’t have time” excuse. Teachers can demonstrate greater creativity and flexibility in what they teach in American literature.

Secondly, school districts should make it a budgetary priority to replace American literature textbooks frequently. Teaching students from outdated textbooks that do not reflect the reality of the national population is doing students a great disservice. As seen in this study, the textbook content drives what is taught in these classrooms, and this should encourage the purchase of books regularly as texts include more multicultural literature.

Finally, teachers should be including multicultural literature in their classrooms on a regular basis throughout the school year. If a short term intervention like this study generated some positive results, long term intervention may generate even better results. The inclusion of multicultural literature in the curriculum and exposing American literature teachers to multicultural pieces through workshops, in-services, and department

meetings will encourage these teachers to look at multicultural pieces and include them in their classes. This also will require some more funding for the purchase of multicultural literature supplemental materials. The inclusion of multicultural pieces along with pieces from the canon throughout the year will expose students to a variety of ethnic backgrounds and will eventually, with time, become a regular part of the curriculum rather than being considered extra material to be covered when possible but rejected when time runs short.

The most important conclusion drawn by the researcher is that literature education and defining American literature in the classroom are complicated processes that involve many people and resources. Textbooks, teachers, and students all interact to create the reality that is American literature. No one can simply tell teachers to include multicultural literature in the curriculum and expect instant changes in student attitudes; texts and supplemental materials need to be considered also. Each factor is affected by the others, and in a predominantly white high school, it is much easier for educators to stay with the status quo and not attempt to make textbooks, teachers, or students change definitions of what constitutes American literature. The only way these definitions will change is if all participants in the educational process view multicultural literature as a necessary and vital part of the American literature curriculum. This Hispanic student who experienced 16 years of education without reading any Hispanic or Latino literature fervently hopes that there will be a day when educators see multicultural literature this way. She hopes that the time will come when participants in the educational process value multicultural literature and begin redefining American literature for the 21st century so that it reflects all who are American.

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Appendix A

Latino Literature Unit Plan

Latino Literature Unit Plan

Objective

The student will be able to describe, in class discussions and writings, attitudes and problems of Latino/as when arriving in the United States.

NJCCC Standard

NJCCCS 3.4.28 –

Analyze how the works of a given period reflect historical events and social conditions.

NJCCCS 3.4.5 –

Read independently a variety of literature written by authors of different cultures, ethnicities, genders, and ages.

NJCCCS 6.5.15. – Analyze how various cultures have adapted to their environments.

Learning Experiences

Students will keep response journals and participate in class discussions on the pieces read.

Small groups will read portions of works and present them to the class, emphasizing theme and author reactions to American culture.

Assessment

A formal essay on major themes in Latino literature will be assigned at the completion of the unit.

Materials, etc.

Journals

Copies of Pieces to be read

<u>Objective</u>	<u>NJCCC Standard</u>	<u>Learning Exp.</u>	<u>Assessment</u>	<u>Materials, etc.</u>
The student will be able to research Latino advertising and present written and verbal analysis to the class on cultural differences among various ethnic groups in the United States.	<p>NJCCCS 3.1.15 – Speak before a group to defend an opinion and present an oral interpretation.</p> <p>NJCCCS 3.3.15 – Understand that written communication can affect the behavior of others.</p> <p>NJCCCS 3.5.13.— Choose and use multiple forms of media to convey what has been learned.</p> <p>NJCCCS 3.2.13 – Evaluate media techniques and messages.</p>	Students must research advertising in the U.S. geared toward Latinos and compare it to advertising geared toward the “mainstream” in a written project and presentation.	Projects will be graded A-F on a scale considering elements of preparation, presentation, and academic quality.	<p>Computers with Internet access</p> <p>Magazines geared toward a Hispanic/Latino audience</p> <p>Sample television commercials geared toward Hispanic/Latino audience</p>
The student will be able to articulate in writing his or her own definition of “American literature” based on pre- and post-unit knowledge of literature by people living in the United States.	<p>NJCCCS 3.3.2. – Write from experiences, thoughts, and feelings.</p> <p>NJCCCS 3.4.29 – Understand the study of literature and theories of literary criticism.</p>	Students will keep written log before and after the unit to record their perceptions of American literature before and as they read the pieces.	The log will be checked for completion only and given credit for completeness.	Notebook or Journal for log

Pieces Covered in Unit

- Pages 111-124 of *Macho!* by Villaseñor
- Pages 177-201 of *Family Installments* by Rivera
- Pages 61-67 and Pages 124-137 from *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood* by Cofer
 - Pages 194-196 – “Nuyorican Lament” by Vando (in *Hispanic American Literature*, ed. Kanellos)
 - Pages 251-253 – “AmeRican” by Laviera (in *Hispanic American Literature*, ed. Kanellos)
 - Page 811 – “Guitarreros” by Paredes (in *McDougal, Littell Literature*, ed. Johnson)
 - Page 817-818 – “My Mother Pieced Quilts” by Acosta (in *McDougal, Littell Literature*, ed. Johnson)

Appendix B

Requests to Publishers for Copyright Reprint Permissions

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO:	Permissions Department	FROM:	Nancy M. Vasquez
FAX NUMBER:	713-743-3080	DATE:	January 2, 2002
COMPANY:	Arte Publico Press	TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER:	3
RE:	Copyright Permission Requests		

URGENT FOR REVIEW PLEASE COMMENT PLEASE REPLY PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

I am a graduate education student at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ working on my Master's of Science in Teaching degree. As part of my graduate project, I am going to be teaching a unit on Latino literature to eleventh grade students. The purpose of my project is to evaluate attitudes of high school students toward American Literature when the "typical" curriculum is infused with multicultural literature.

I would like your permission to photocopy the following pieces published by your company as part of my unit. I will be copying a maximum of 100 copies of each piece. I would also respectfully request that any fees for the use of this material be waived. The information follows:

Selection #1

Author: Judith Ortiz Cofer

Book: *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood*

ISBN: 1-55885-015-5

Copyright Date: 1990

Pages to be Reproduced: Pages 61-67; Pages 124-137

Term of Use: March-April 2002

Cost of Use: Classroom Use, so there will be no charge

Selections #2 and #3

I found these poems in an anthology called *Hispanic American Literature: A Brief Introduction and Anthology* (ISBN: 0-673-46956-5), which is edited by Nicolas Kanellos and is published by Allyn & Bacon/Longman/Pearson Publishing. I contacted this book's publisher and was informed that your company holds the rights to these two poems. However, I do not know in which books of yours these poems originally appeared. I can only provide the author and the title of the poems.

Author: Gloria Vando -- Poem: "Nuyorican Lament"

Author: Tato Laviera -- Poem: "American" (Same Term of Use and Cost of Use as above)

If you need any more information, please contact me at the address, fax number, phone number, or e-mail address below. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours Truly,

Nancy M. Vasquez
Nancy M. Vasquez

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Permission Department FROM: Nancy M. Vasquez
FAX NUMBER: 919-933-0272 DATE: January 3, 2002
COMPANY: Algonquin Books TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 1
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To Whom It May Concern:

I am a graduate education student at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ working on my Master's of Science in Teaching degree. As part of my graduate project, I am going to be teaching a unit on Latino literature to eleventh grade students. The purpose of my project is to evaluate attitudes of high school students toward American Literature when the "typical" curriculum is infused with multicultural literature.

I would like your permission to photocopy the following pieces published by your company as part of my unit, and I also respectfully request that any fees for reproduction be waived. The information follows:

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Title: *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

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Please contact me as soon as possible at the address or phone number below with permission information. Thank you for your time.

Yours Truly,

Nancy M. Vasquez
Nancy M. Vasquez

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

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FAX NUMBER: 212-387-0546	DATE: January 3, 2002
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NOTES/COMMENTS:

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a graduate education student at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ working on my Master's of Science in Teaching degree. As part of my graduate project, I am going to be teaching a unit on Latino literature to eleventh grade students. The purpose of my project is to evaluate attitudes of high school students toward American Literature when the "typical" curriculum is infused with multicultural literature.

I would like your permission to photocopy the following pieces published by your agency as part of my unit, and I also respectfully request that any fees for reproduction be waived. The information follows:

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Title: *The House on Mango Street*

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Nancy M. Vasquez

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HC Book Author: Edward Rivera
HC Imprint: William Morrow and Co.
Page numbers: Chapter 9 - "Digging In" - pages 177-201 from Penguin Books paperback edition

Book Title: High School Classroom/Research Use - Not a book
Publisher: N/A
Binding Format: My book will be published in hardcover
Distribution: ,,
Print Run: For use in graduate thesis research-Maximum 100 copies
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Appendix D

Parent Permission Letter

February 23, 2002

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a student teacher working until May with [REDACTED], your child's Honors Language Arts Literacy III teacher. As part of my graduate program at Rowan University, I am required to complete a research project/thesis to receive my Master of Science in Teaching degree. In an increasingly diverse nation, it is important for students to read, understand, and discuss literature by writers of differing ethnic backgrounds and traditions. Therefore, my project is on the inclusion of multicultural writers in the American literature curriculum, and for project research, I will be teaching a unit on multicultural literature to your child's class. Your child will be required as part of the unit to respond individually in writing to the pieces studied and to general questions posed in class. They will also be responding verbally to questions posed in class discussions. Portions of their responses may be used in my thesis, but no names will be revealed at any point in my writings. Any quotes will be reported in complete anonymity.

I assure you that your child will not be harmed by this project, and the material I am teaching is academically sound and within curricular guidelines for Honors Language Arts Literacy III. Anything I will be teaching is going to be approved by [REDACTED] as well as my Rowan University faculty supervisor prior to presentation in class.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me [REDACTED] [REDACTED], and I will do my best to address any of the concerns you may have. If you do not want your child's responses included in the thesis, please contact me at the same number.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to working with your child this spring!

Yours truly,

Nancy M. Vasquez
Master of Science in Teaching Student
Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

Appendix E

Pre- and Post-intervention Class Discussion Transparencies

Culture of the time
write what they know

Actual experiences
↳ not alot of myths/legends

everyone
↳ all different kinds of pep.
↳ all different cultures
Europe
WASP
Steinbeck
Fitzgerald
Hemingway
Twain

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS?

WHO?

AMERICAN LITERATURE

WHAT MAJOR IDEAS?

WHAT KINDS OF MATERIAL?

• events past/present
reflect American Spirit
ideals
revolution

• person experiences
heterogeneous

Realism

Transcendentalism

Mocking Bird
Grapes
Angles

Historical Fiction
↳ Grapes of Wrath

Romanticism

Novels

War based books
↳ Killer Angles

Adventure Lit.

Short Stories

↳ Poe

- plot, twist, shock

- Fitzgerald
- Thoreau, Dickenson, Hawthorne, Steinbeck, Poe
- people that want to educate ~ class, race
- people that have something to say
- Americans ~ citizenship ~ Irish, Polish, Italian

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS?

AMERICAN LITERATURE

WHAT MAJOR IDEAS?

- can't change past
- freedom ~ oppression
- equality

WHAT KINDS OF MATERIAL?

- national "scourges"
- war, American Dream
- Past & Future ~ Hardships, struggle
- pioneering, pilgrimage, civil rights, slavery
- romanticism, realism
- historical fiction
- novels

PRE-TEST

- unique characters
- morals/ideals
- love ♡
- conflict
- climax + plot
- imagery
- death ☹
- life/rebirth ☺

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS?

AMERICAN LITERATURE

WHAT MAJOR IDEAS?

- history
- American society
- pride/nationalism
- bringing out the best in a person
- religion
- personal experiences
- The American Dream
- HATE
- greed
- sex

King
Franklin
Ginsberg
Steinbeck
Fitzgerald

(Native) → born in the U.S.A. ✓

WHO? Americans ☹

- Immigrants (Italians, Nigerians, Polish)
- Women + men
- African Americans (Hurstson)

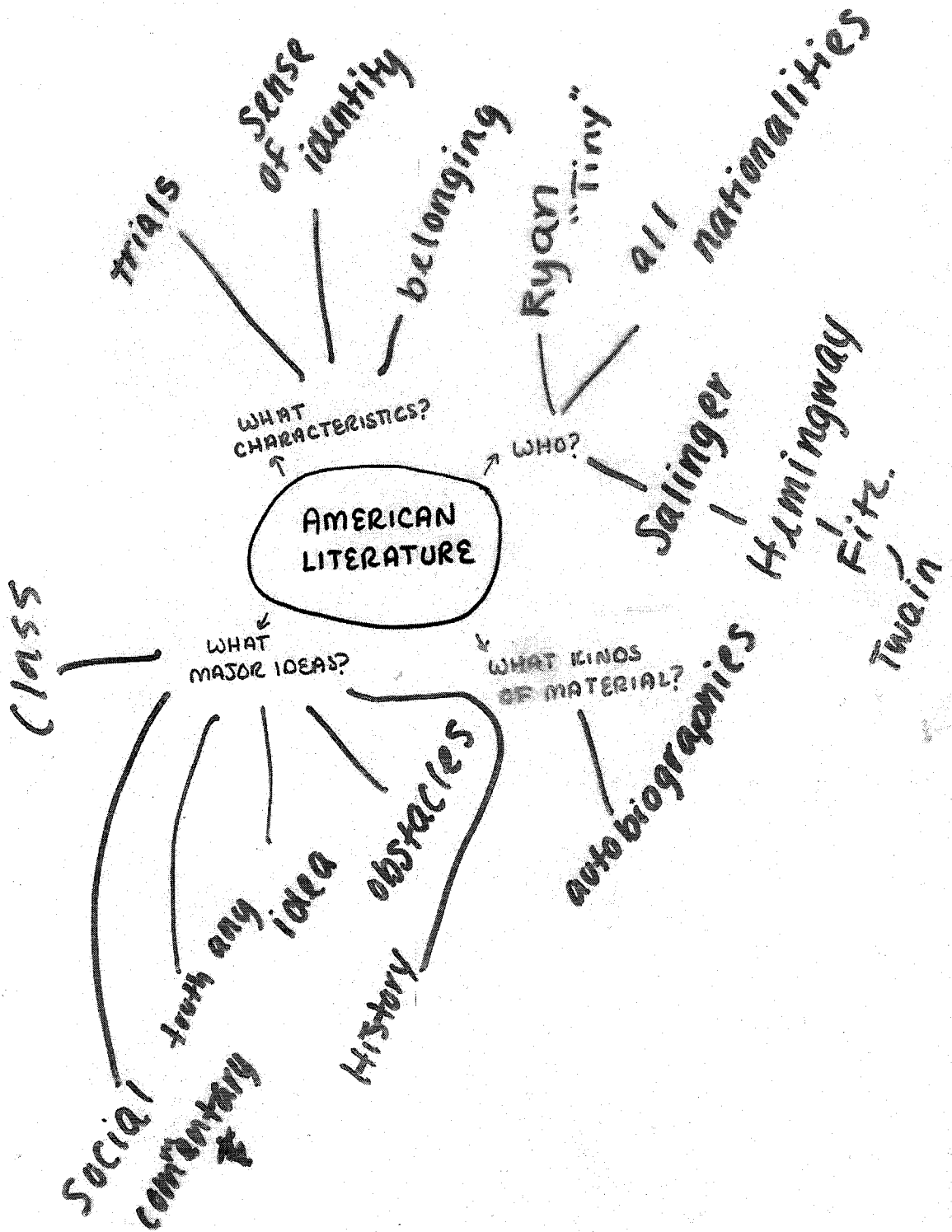
WHAT KINDS OF MATERIAL?

- Fiction/non-fiction
- biographies/autobiog
- Sci-fi
- mystery
- romance

- American society/culture

- children

PRE-TEST



staying
power

→ plot twists to
problem issues, Am. society
→ purpose
→ point -
drive
home point

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS?

AMERICAN LITERATURE

→ WHO?

Americans -
cultural views - → diverse society
"melting pot"

purpose -
message

- Poe
- Thoreau
- Hawthorne

WHAT MAJOR IDEAS?

WHAT KINDS OF MATERIAL?

- Equality
- Freedom
- Prejudice
- Struggle
- accepting differences

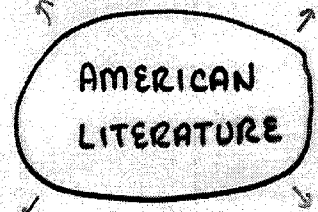
- mass communication
- whatever they want to use

- depends on era, life lived

↓
philosophy, class, economy

- literary devices (imagery)
- ideas + messages
- symbolism
- thought-provoking
- PRIDE!

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS?



WHO?

- Americans
- people
- Native Americans
- Immigrants
- children

WHAT MAJOR IDEAS?

- struggle
- not belonging
- Social Darwinism
- American Dream
- naturalism
- social concerns
- transcendentalism

WHAT KINDS OF MATERIAL?

- poems
- Fiction / non
- novels
- Haiku
- epics
- short stories
- plays
- essays
- songs 🎵
- science fiction
- mystery, adventure, drama
- ♥ romance, horror "
- tragedy ☹

- Johnny Steinbeck
- Ben Franklin
- Hemmingway
- Everyone!

Appendix F

Teacher Interview Request Letter

February 24, 2002

Dear English Department Faculty Member,

By now, you have all gotten to know me as [REDACTED] student teacher until May. You have all been so kind to me, but now I am going to ask you for further kindness! As part of my Master of Science in Teaching program, I am required to complete a project/thesis. My thesis topic is on the inclusion of multicultural writers in the American literature curriculum, and as part of my research, I would like to interview all of the English teachers [REDACTED] who teach Language Arts Literacy III. This interview will be painless and will not take much time; I know we are all extremely busy and cannot afford to spend time on anything in addition to the zillion things we are already doing.

Any responses used in my thesis will be completely anonymous; your privacy will be protected at all times during and after the interview. With your permission, I may tape (on audiocassettes) the interviews for easier reporting, but if done, this will also be completely anonymous and heard only by the interviewer. If you prefer the interview not to be recorded, this will be fine also.

If you would like to refrain from being interviewed, please let me know. If you will be interviewed, please let me know what time and day is convenient for you. I am available during 4th Period (my prep), 6th Period (my lunch), and after school on most days. These interviews can be scheduled any time between March 4 and the middle of April.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Nancy M. Vasquez