

“Passage” Lesson Plans      Designed by Ariana Brown, Jesús Valles, and Saba Khan Vlach 1  
Upper Elementary

Poem used: “Passage” by Ariana Brown

Designed for upper elementary students (grades 4 through 6) with an emphasis on bilingual  
Mexican/Mexican-American students

One-week unit (7 days)

TEKS Grade 5 ELA: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/ch110a.html> - 110.7

### TEKS Objectives (5<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA)

1) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, discussion, and thinking--oral language. The student develops oral language through listening, speaking, and discussion. The student is expected to:

**(A) listen actively to interpret verbal and non-verbal messages, ask relevant questions, and make pertinent comments;**

**(B) follow, restate, and give oral instructions that include multiple action steps;**

**(C) give an organized presentation employing eye contact, speaking rate, volume, enunciation, natural gestures, and conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively; and**

**(D) work collaboratively with others to develop a plan of shared responsibilities.**

(4) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking--fluency. The student reads grade-level text with fluency and comprehension. The student is expected to use appropriate fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody) when reading grade-level text.

(5) Developing and sustaining foundational language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking--self-sustained reading. The student reads grade-appropriate texts independently. The student is expected to self-select text and read independently for a sustained period of time.

(6) Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses metacognitive skills to both develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts. The student is expected to:

(A) establish purpose for reading assigned and self-selected texts;

(B) generate questions about text before, during, and after reading to deepen understanding and gain information;

(C) make, correct, or confirm predictions using text features, characteristics of genre, and structures;

(D) create mental images to deepen understanding;

(E) make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society;

(F) make inferences and use evidence to support understanding;

(G) evaluate details read to determine key ideas;

(H) synthesize information to create new understanding; and

(I) monitor comprehension and make adjustments such as re-reading, using background knowledge, asking questions, and annotating when understanding breaks down.

(8) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--literary elements. The student recognizes and analyzes literary elements within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse literary texts. The student is expected to:

(A) infer multiple themes within a text using text evidence;

(B) analyze the relationships of and conflicts among the characters;

(C) analyze plot elements, including rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution; and

(D) analyze the influence of the setting, including historical and cultural settings, on the plot.

(9) Multiple genres: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--genres. The student recognizes and analyzes genre-specific characteristics, structures, and purposes within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts. The student is expected to:

(A) demonstrate knowledge of distinguishing characteristics of well-known children's literature such as folktales, fables, legends, myths, and tall tales;

(B) explain the use of sound devices and figurative language and distinguish between the poet and the speaker in poems across a variety of poetic forms;

(C) explain structure in drama such as character tags, acts, scenes, and stage directions;

(D) recognize characteristics and structures of informational text, including:

(i) the central idea with supporting evidence;

(ii) features such as insets, timelines, and sidebars to support understanding; and

(iii) organizational patterns such as logical order and order of importance;

(E) recognize characteristics and structures of argumentative text by:

(i) identifying the claim;

(ii) explaining how the author has used facts for or against an argument; and

(iii) identifying the intended audience or reader; and

(F) recognize characteristics of multimodal and digital texts.

(10) Author's purpose and craft: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses critical inquiry to analyze the authors' choices and how they influence and communicate meaning within a variety of texts. The student analyzes and applies author's craft purposefully in order to develop his or her own products and performances. The student is expected to:

(A) explain the author's purpose and message within a text;

(B) analyze how the use of text structure contributes to the author's purpose;

(C) analyze the author's use of print and graphic features to achieve specific purposes;

(D) describe how the author's use of imagery, literal and figurative language such as simile and metaphor, and sound devices achieves specific purposes;

(E) identify and understand the use of literary devices, including first- or third-person point of view;

(F) examine how the author's use of language contributes to voice; and

(G) explain the purpose of hyperbole, stereotyping, and anecdote.

(11) Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--writing process. The student uses the writing process recursively to compose multiple texts that are legible and uses appropriate conventions. The student is expected to:

(A) plan a first draft by selecting a genre for a particular topic, purpose, and audience using a range of strategies such as brainstorming, freewriting, and mapping;

(B) develop drafts into a focused, structured, and coherent piece of writing by:

(i) organizing with purposeful structure, including an introduction, transitions, and a conclusion; and

(ii) developing an engaging idea reflecting depth of thought with specific facts and details;

- (C) revise drafts to improve sentence structure and word choice by adding, deleting, combining, and rearranging ideas for coherence and clarity;
- (D) edit drafts using standard English conventions, including:
  - (i) complete simple and compound sentences with subject-verb agreement and avoidance of splices, run-ons, and fragments;
  - (ii) past tense of irregular verbs;
  - (iii) collective nouns;
  - (iv) adjectives, including their comparative and superlative forms;
  - (v) conjunctive adverbs;
  - (vi) prepositions and prepositional phrases and their influence on subject-verb agreement;
  - (vii) pronouns, including indefinite;
  - (viii) subordinating conjunctions to form complex sentences;
  - (ix) capitalization of abbreviations, initials, acronyms, and organizations;
  - (x) punctuation marks, including commas in compound and complex sentences, quotation marks in dialogue, and italics and underlining for titles and emphasis; and
  - (xi) correct spelling of words with grade-appropriate orthographic patterns and rules and high-frequency words; and
- (E) publish written work for appropriate audiences.

(12) Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--genres. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful. The student is expected to:

- (A) compose literary texts such as personal narratives, fiction, and poetry using genre characteristics and craft;
- (B) compose informational texts, including brief compositions that convey information about a topic, using a clear central idea and genre characteristics and craft;
- (C) compose argumentative texts, including opinion essays, using genre characteristics and craft; and
- (D) compose correspondence that requests information.

(13) Inquiry and research: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student engages in both short-term and sustained recursive inquiry processes for a variety of purposes. The student is expected to:

- (A) generate and clarify questions on a topic for formal and informal inquiry;
- (B) develop and follow a research plan with adult assistance;
- (C) identify and gather relevant information from a variety of sources;
- (D) understand credibility of primary and secondary sources;
- (E) demonstrate understanding of information gathered;
- (F) differentiate between paraphrasing and plagiarism when using source materials;
- (G) develop a bibliography; and
- (H) use an appropriate mode of delivery, whether written, oral, or multimodal, to present results.

## Passage

By Ariana Brown

With my hands, I make a hole in the dirt. The burial site  
is any mouth which calls me out of my name (negra, prieta, mayate),  
or doesn't name me at all. Ariana, a Greek name, meaning holy.  
say it in English, or Spanish, & my body does not disappear.

2015 was the first year in which Mexico included Afromexicans  
in the national census, despite having been a country for 500 years.  
& I don't know whether to blame white tears, or the first tree pulped  
for paper, or the ocean, or god, or gold, or the whip or holy book.  
or Las Siete Partidas, colonial laws stating  
the children of enslaved black men and free indigenous women  
would be born free.

& because most of my grandparents' country thinks  
this happened so long ago that I cannot possibly exist,  
the man at the carnicería speaks to me in English,  
even though I started the conversation in Spanish.  
& the number of times I've been asked if I'm Puerto Rican  
when I grew up in a Mexican neighborhood  
three hours from the border.

I take a good look at the census: document that mocks me,  
holder of indisputable truth. a white man & his measuring tape.  
blood counter. fraction distributor: half this, a quarter  
that—my body is not an equation. Mathematics are for colonizers.  
My body is a legacy of burying what cannot be reckoned with.

Forget that black people have been in Mexico as early as the conquest:  
the first African slave in 1519 brought by Cortés,  
Esteban, the black slave in 1520 who drew the first map of Texas,  
Vicente Guerrero, the black president of Mexico in 1829  
who issued the Emancipation Proclamation—

but I guess it's complicated  
when a country that wants to believe itself mestizo  
cannot account for each kink, ash & West African accent  
swaying near the coast. It's easier to call them liars, ghosts.

The 2015 census counted 1.4 million Afromexicans,  
mostly in the Costa Chica.  
I can't imagine a safe place to be black.  
I know my freedom is tied up in theirs.

I take every cautious eye, whispered slur, throw them in the fire  
they deserve. take every hand out of my hair,  
every ‘you don’t look Mexican’, every time I lost my accent  
and thought I lost myself too. I push it all into the earth.  
urge it to transform. & out of my mouth  
falls my stumbling Spanish. Today I don’t apologize  
for its awkwardness. It’s complicated.

So I build a righteous grave. Hold the census  
& its ancient ink, stain my fingers as black as god will let me.  
& I bury the census while singing my ancestors’ songs. No one  
should need a piece of paper to prove they belong.

For a Spanish translation of this poem, please visit [www.arianabrown.com/resources.html](http://www.arianabrown.com/resources.html). Video  
of this poem can be found on YouTube.

1. Day 1, Warm Up (30-45 minutes)

1. Write down everything you know about slavery. (2 minutes)

Discussion

2. Close your eyes...Can you think of anyone in your family who is dark-skinned or has Afro-textured hair? Please share. (2 minutes)
3. How do you think this society treats Black people? How do you know this? (2-3 minutes) (micro or macro level examples) (Make a Chart)
4. What do you think is the relationship between Black people and Mexican/Mexican American people in America? Why? (2-3 minutes) (micro or macro level examples)
5. What is racism? (2-3 minutes) (may need to give some think time before having students share ideas). Note: *Teacher should have a definition ready to share with students. The definition must address racism as a systemic reality - a macro level reality that is not about 1:1 relationships and prejudice towards one another. Racism is systemic oppression AND People of Color cannot enact racism towards White people because they are not members of the dominant group nor do they have the power of the dominant group.*

Artistic Response

6. Draw a picture of “racism” (5-10 minutes)
7. Turn and talk with a partner about your image of racism (3-5 minutes) Whole group share: What are some big ideas you and your partner think about racism? (2-3 minutes) (Make a Chart)
8. Introduce the Unit: Purpose, Goals, and Participation Expectations

2. Day 2, Circle check-in (30-45 minutes)

1. Round I. Circle formation: Students check in, “Tell us your name, and then, on a scale of 1-10, tell us how you’re doing today (1 being not too great and 10 being awesome)”
2. Round II. Have students share their thinking from Day 1 about the relationship between Black people and Mexican/Mexican American people. Teacher shares what teacher noticed about the conversation in Day 1.
  - a. Then, brainstorm with students: “How would you define what it means to be Mexican?” (Make a chart together) (At this point – there are three charts created: 1) Treatment of Black People 2) What is Racism? 3) What does it mean to be Mexican?)
3. Round III. Students respond in circle:
  - a. *What do the words “moreno/a,” “prieto/a” and “negro/a” mean to you?*
  - b. Have you ever called anyone that, or has someone called you those things? How did it make them/you feel?
  - c. Do you feel like the words are positive or negative? Why or why not?
  - d. Can Mexican people be Black people?
4. Restate the purpose and goals of this unit with students.



3. Day 3, Defining Racism and History of Racism (Lecture and Discussion, 45-60 minutes)

- I. Opening (10 minutes)
  - a. Review definition of racism
  - b. Share the idea of the **narrative arc** from past to present – *we must learn history to understand why things are the way they are today*. Provide well-known examples (e.g., moments from the Civil Rights movement). Point out that often people want to believe that moments live in isolation and that once something is “fixed” the problem goes away, but that is not true. Here the teacher can provide the example of segregation (past to present – the law says segregation is not allowed today, but people of different races continue to live apart, shop apart, attend church separately, etc.).
- II. Post Guiding Questions (Digitally or Chart Paper):
  - a. How does racism (specifically anti-Blackness) affect the language we use to describe Black people and dark-skinned people?
  - b. Why do we think it is better to be light-skinned than dark-skinned?
  - c. How can history help us understand how Black people arrived in Mexico?
- III. Resources to share on Afro-Mexicans (30 minutes)

Provide copies to read aloud to students. Before reading, plan to share/teach vocabulary from the resources as necessary. As you read and discuss, bring students’ attention back to the three guiding questions

  - a. Read Aloud and Discuss: Colin A. Palmer’s *African Legacy in Mexico: A Legacy of Slavery* <http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/legacy/almleg.html> and/or
  - b. Read Aloud and Discuss: Arlene Gregorius’ *The black people erased from history* <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35981727>
  - c. Watch and Discuss: Video Clip: “Heroes of Color – Episode 2 / Gaspar Yanga” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp3PQ-Z9hQ>
- IV. Generative round and closing: In your small groups, reflect on and respond to the question: “*Now that you know how Black people ended up in Mexico, how would you describe what it means to be Mexican?*” Provide students 10 minutes to discuss this question in small groups, and close today’s work with a whole group share.

4. Day 4, **Watch/Read “Passage/Pasaje” by Ariana Brown**

Open class with the following pre-assessment. This can be completed independently or in partnerships. Have students record their ideas in a readers’ or writers’ notebook.

- I. Come up with some positive words/phrases to describe Black people and dark-skinned people. These words/phrases can be in English or Spanish. You can be as creative as you want, so feel free to use metaphors and similes.
- II. Think of a personal story or experience with racism. When was the first time you saw someone being anti-Black or making fun of someone who is dark-skinned? How did you feel? How did the person experiencing racism feel?

**Introduce Ms. Ariana Brown.** Share: <http://www.arianabrown.com/>

Say: *Ms. Ariana will become a member of our community of readers, writers, poets, and activists.*

Before watching and reading *Passage/Pasaje*, provide background on the **national census**.

Link: <https://www.census.gov/>

This is important.

**Watch:** [Click here to watch “Passage.”](#)

(Provide a hard copy for each student in English and Spanish. It can be added to the students’ poetry folders, reading notebook, or writer’s notebook. The Spanish text is available for download in the Teacher Poems PDF at <http://www.arianabrown.com/resources.html> for \$1 USD)

5. Day 5, **Watch/Read “Passage/Pasaje” by Ariana Brown**

- I. Spend today watching, reading, and discussing this poem (again). After watching the poem again, have the students share what they are feeling. Ask them to explain why they are feeling this way.
- II. Divide the class into small groups (6-9). Assign each group one or two stanzas to read and analyze for meaning. After discussing their assigned stanzas in small groups, have the students share their thinking to the class.
- III. Ask the students to think about questions they still have after reading *Passage* again.

6. Day 6, Reflection questions for small and whole group discussion. These are possible reflections questions. Please add additional questions based on your students responses.

- I. What is the poem about? Why do you think the author wanted to write this poem?
- II. This poem talks about personal experiences and shares a little bit about Mexican history. What does the author want to say about her experiences and the history of Black people in Mexico?
- III. How would you connect the readings about Black people in Mexico and Brown’s poem, “Passage/Pasaje”? How do you see the story of Gaspar Yanga fitting with these stories?

7. Day 7, Unit Conclusion, Instructions for Written Response (Poem or Short Story)

- I. Look back at your quick-write and your pre-assessment responses. Thinking about Brown’s poem, the readings, and the video we watched, create your own poem or short story about what it means to be Mexican. Start simple first. If you want, try including the positive words you wrote down earlier to describe Black people and dark-skinned people. If you want, you can even include some of the history about Yanga and the other Afro-Mexicans we read about. Grow your work from there.

You may consider adding one more day to the unit for further composition and/or art. I encourage all teachers to make time for students to share their work in some manner with each other.