Solito, Solita: Crossing Borders with Youth Refugees from Central America Curriculum

At a Glance:

Introduction 2
A Letter from Our Narrators 3
Una carta de nuestros narradores 4
Preface for Educators 5
Curriculum Map 6
Lesson Plan: Asylum and Sanctuary 8
Lesson Plan: Truth and Storytelling 12
Lesson Plan: Cultural Wealth 17
Lesson Plan: Liberation 21
Lesson Plan: Taking Action 26
College-Level Curriculum 31
Discussion Questions 33
Solito, Solita Podcast 34

Introduction to *Solito, Solita: Crossing Borders with Youth Refugees from Central America* Curriculum

The fifteen oral histories in *Solito, Solita: Crossing Borders with Youth Refugees from Central America* detail the experiences of young refugees fleeing their countries to seek safety and security in the US. While the narrators represent thousands of people migrating from Central America, most of them travel alone. These stories shed valuable light on the day-to-day realities of what these young people have faced on the way: violence, abuse, abandonment, and more. The stories also highlight bravery, hope, community, and resilience. In these times of xenophobia and fear-mongering, it's crucial to forge space for, and foster a more nuanced, empathy-based understanding of migration, immigration and refugee issues. *Solito, Solita* co-editors Steven Mayers and Jonathan Freedman have harnessed the power of oral history and given us a firsthand glimpse into the experiences of young people struggling for a better life across the border.

Voice of Witness Curriculum Specialist, Anna Yeung, collaborated with *Solito, Solita* narrators Soledad Castillo, Gabriel Méndez, and various community education partners to create a set of lesson plans that are culturally relevant for students who have direct experience with the issues presented in the book, as well as students and teachers encountering them for the first time. Soledad and Gabriel have written a letter of introduction to teachers and students, explaining the significance of these lesson plans and what they hope classrooms and communities will take away from their stories.

In the lesson plans that follow, we invite teachers and students to deepen their understanding of migration, asylum, and refugees through the lens of personal narrative. The goal of the lessons is to humanize the narrators in the book, and challenge students to think critically about what they believe about Central American refugees. We have designed the curriculum to be as flexible and inclusive as possible for older middle school, high school, and college students. The lessons can be done as a unit, individually, or as separate activities. We have included tips and strategies to support English language learners and Special Education students, as well as a preface for teachers that offers strategies and activities for creating a more open and respectful learning environment before engaging in the lessons. Finally, we have put together a list of discussion questions that would be ideal for a facilitated group discussion or a book club, and a handful of project ideas suited for college undergraduate courses.

Alongside the narratives, the lessons weave together unifying themes such as asylum and sanctuary, oppression and liberation, cultural wealth, and truth and storytelling. There are multiple points of entry and opportunities for oral history and other creative projects. The lessons are also an invitation for action. We hope that teachers and students feel empowered to take these ideas and go further. Voice of Witness books and curriculum create an opening for teachers and students to better understand narrators and the issues they face, and explore the intersections of education, solidarity and advocacy.

Our thanks to Soledad Castillo and Gabriel Mendez for their dedication and expertise; June Jordan School for Equity in San Francisco and Ellen Fletcher Middle School for their valuable feedback; *Solito, Solita* co-editors Steven Mayers and Jonathan Freedman; East Bay Sanctuary Covenant; Vanessa Morales of Haverford College for her translations; and Grace Ebron and the PUENTE Project for their guidance and partnership.

With respect,
The Voice of Witness Education Team

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A Letter from Our Narrators

Soledad Castillo and Gabriel Méndez

We decided to share our stories with Voice of Witness after being inspired by reading the book series and seeing ourselves reflected in the narrators. Reading the stories gave us hope to not feel so lonely anymore. Sharing our experiences was a way toward healing, and we felt like it was our duty to tell society what happened to us so others can relate and learn.

This book means a lot to us. When we read the book now, we can see how strong and resilient we really are. This book helped us accept and love ourselves, and we would never be the people we are today without our experiences. We hope the lesson plans inspire students to tell their own stories, share their own experiences, and stand up for the others around them. The activities are an excellent way to gain more knowledge about yourself, your classmates, and your communities.

To the teachers, please think about some of your students who might be going through similar trauma. Let them know ahead of time about the sensitive material, and the support they might need. Do not doubt your students' stories. Instead, tell them about why they deserve to grow as honorable members of society, and create more opportunities for them to hear real stories from real people.

To the students, this book contains a lot of emotional experiences. Think about the people you can trust. It's important to have someone on your side and be open to talking about your reactions and feelings. Don't be shy! Sharing our stories is a path to healing and accepting who we are. You are all strong and powerful individuals. Please take advantage of this opportunity to learn. You are the future leaders, so stand up and take ownership of the direction you want to go.

Remember, you are never *solito, solita.* You will always have a family within your classroom.

In solidarity,

Soledad & Gabriel

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Una carta de nuestros narradores

Soledad Castillo y Gabriel Méndez

Decidimos compartir nuestras historias con Voice of Witness después de inspirarnos al leer la serie de libros y vernos reflejados en los narradores. Leer las historias nos dio la esperanza de compartir nuestras historias con otros que se puedan verse reflejados en ellas, para decirles que en la vida sí existen las segundas oportunidades. Compartir nuestras experiencias fue sanador mental y espiritualmente. Sentimos que es y será nuestro deber contarle a la sociedad lo que nos pasó para que otros puedan relacionarse y aprender sobre historias reales.

Este libro significa mucho para nosotros. Cuando leemos el libro ahora, podemos ver cuán valientes y resistente somos realmente. Este libro nos ayudó a aceptarnos y amarnos a nosotros mismos, y no seríamos las personas que somos hoy sin lo que hemos vivido. Esperamos que los planes de lecciones inspiren a los estudiantes a contar sus propias historias, compartir sus propias experiencias y defender a los demás a su alrededor. Las actividades son una excelente manera de obtener más conocimiento sobre uno mismo, sus compañeros de clase y sus comunidades.

Para los maestros, piensen en algunos de sus alumnos que podrían estar pasando por un trauma similar. Hágales saber de antemano sobre el material sensible y el apoyo que pueden necesitar. No duden de las historias de tus alumnos. En cambio, cuéntales por qué merecen crecer como miembros honorables de la sociedad y creen más oportunidades para que puedan lograr el sueño americano.

Para los estudiantes, este libro contiene muchas experiencias emocionales. Piensen en aquellas personas en las que pueden confiar. Es importante tener a alguien de su lado y estar abierto a hablar sobre sus reacciones y sentimientos. ¡No sean tímidos! Compartir nuestras historias es un camino para sanar y aceptar quienes somos. Todos ustedes son individuos fuertes y poderosos. Por favor, aprovechen esta oportunidad para aprender. Ustedes son los futuros líderes, así que levántense y aprópiense de la dirección que desean seguir.

Recuerden, nunca estarán solito, solita. Siempre tendrán una familia dentro de sus aulas.

En solidaridad,

Soledad y Gabriel

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Preface for Educators

The stories in *Solito, Solita* are powerful because of the openness with which the narrators share their experiences. While inspiring and informative, their stories can also be triggering for students who find the narratives all too relatable. In seeking healthy debate and relevant content for your classrooms, it is important to ensure first and foremost that students feel safe. If you have not done so already, we recommend that before engaging this curriculum, you spend time intentionally building community together. Below are some tips and resources for building a safe classroom community.

- Model vulnerability and risk-taking. It is often difficult for students to share deeply personal experiences or different viewpoints. Sharing your own stories, beliefs, and wonderings will let students know it is safe to share theirs.

- Spend time building community. This Transformative Week Activity Guide compiled by Amber Lancaster and other educators at June Jordan School for Equity contains many activities that can be adapted for a variety of classrooms.

- Try the community building activities developed by two teachers from Amos Alonzo Stagg High School in *Where Our Stories Intersect: An Educator's Toolkit for Starting Conversations About Empathy and Outrospection*.

- Share potential triggers with students before each lesson and offer an alternative space and assignment for students who may not be willing or able to participate.

- Offer "office hours" to students who want to talk. This will also help deepen your relationship with them.

- Alert school wellness services (school psychologist, counselors, nurse) and create a system for students to easily access these services as needed.

- Before starting the unit, ask students to journal about their feelings on immigration—this will give you information and help you talk to students beforehand if necessary.

- Co-create classroom norms with your students.

- Use talking circles as a way to talk through ideas, surface emotions, and address conflicts.

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Solito, Solita Curriculum Map

Themes	Asylum & Sanctuary	Truth & Storytelling as Resistance	Cultural Wealth
Language	English	English	English
Standards	RI.9-10.1, 2, 7; W.9-10.4, 7, 8, 10; SL.9-10.1, 3; L.9-10.1, 2, 6; RH.9-10.1, 6, 9; WHST.9-10.4, 7, 9, 10.	RI.9-10.1, 6; W.9-10.4, 10; SL.9-10.1, 4, 6; L.9-10.2, 6; RH.9-10.2, 6, 9, 10; WHST.9-10.4, 9, 10.	RI.9-10.2, 3; W.9-10.2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10; SL.9-10.1, 4; L.9-10.1, 2, 3, 6; RH.9-10.2, 4; WHST.9-10.2, 4, 5, 7-10.
Recommended Narrator(s)	Josué Nieves Rosa Cuevas Noemi Tun Adrián Cruz	Jhony Chuc Pedro Hernandez Gabriel Méndez	Isabel Vásquez Ernesto González
Student Objectives	Students will be able to explain the root causes for the unrest in Central America that has led to migration to the US. Students will be able to apply the Declaration of Human Rights and tenets from the UN Refugee Convention to Central American migrants.	Students will be able to explain the power of storytelling as a tool for countering dominant narratives. Students will be able to participate in meaningful conversations to engage in the process of creating oral histories.	Students will be able to define Tara Yosso's theory of cultural wealth and identify their own cultural wealth, as well as the cultural wealth of members of their community. Students will engage in oral storytelling as a way to counter dominant narratives about their community.
Ethnic Studies-Aligned Topics	• Migration and Displacement • Civics, Human Rights, and Government • Systemic and Institutional Inequality	• Identity • Autoethnography • Dominant Narratives and Counternarratives • Resistance and Liberation	• Community and Cultural Wealth • Deficit vs. Asset-Based Mentality • Dominant Narratives and Counternarratives

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Theme	Liberation	Taking Action	
Language	English	English	
Standards	RI.9-10.1, 2, 3; W.9-10.2-5, 10; SL.9-10.1, 6; L.9-10.2, 4, 6; RH.9-10.2, 4, 8; WHST.9-10.4, 5, 10.	RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.4, RI.9-10.5; W.9-10.4, W.9-10.10; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4; L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2, L.9-10.6; RH.9-10.2, RH.9-10.6; WHST.9-10.4, WHST.9-10.10.	
Recommended Narrator(s)	Soledad Castillo	Gabriel Méndez Julio Zavala	
Student Objectives	Students will be able to define stereotype and analyze the effect of interpersonal and internalized stereotyping in their self-view. Students will be able to discuss and construct ways to liberate from stereotyping in their lives.	Students will be able to define resistance and solidarity and apply these terms to the actions of Central American migrants. Students will be able to practice active resistance against oppression by completing an action project to support Central American migrants.	
Ethnic Studies-Aligned Topics	● Interpersonal vs. Internalized Racism ● Stereotyping ● Resistance and Liberation	● Resistance and Liberation ● Civic Engagement and Human Rights ● Community Action	

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Solito, Solita Lesson Plan: Asylum and Sanctuary

Time Needed: 4 class periods.

Materials:

- Handouts and worksheets:
  - Describe, Infer, Synthesize (DIS) Worksheet
  - Prior Knowledge Inventory
  - Vocabulary Worksheet
  - Vocabulary Review
  - Optional: Notetaker for *VICE* video and station rotations
  - Optional: Discussion questions for Socratic Seminar
- Media and text:
  - Discussion Photo
  - *VICE* video: One Day in Usulután
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights original text or simplified version
  - 1951 UN Refugee Convention original text or simplified version
- Full narratives or suggested excerpts from *Solito, Solita*:
  - Josué Nieves:
    - "A child's mind" pp. 39-46
  - Rosa Cuevas:
    - "I don't have a happy memory there" pp. 183-187
    - "Maybe one day you can get to the other side" pp. 191-192
  - Noemi Tun:
    - "Little birds would start to sing when the rain stopped" pp. 97-102
  - Adrián Cruz:
    - "My mother was always good to me" pp. 143-147
    - "If I'm deported, I don't know what will happen" pp. 156-158

Objective:

- Students will be able to explain the root causes for the unrest in Central America that has led to migration to the US.
- Students will be able to apply the Declaration of Human Rights and tenets from the UN Refugee Convention to Central American migrants.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: RI.9-10.1, 2, 7; W.9-10.4, 7, 8, 10; SL.9-10.1, 3; L.9-10.1, 2, 6; RH.9-10.1, 6, 9; WHST.9-10.4, 7, 9, 10.

Essential Question(s):

1. What role did the US government play in the political and social conditions of Central America?
2. What responsibility does the US have to asylum seekers and refugees from Central America? To asylum seekers around the world?

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Day One

Defining Asylum & Sanctuary

Overview
In this lesson, students will use prior knowledge and collaborate with peers to define key vocabulary terms around immigration and displacement. Students will elaborate upon and apply these definitions throughout the unit.

Hook: Photo Analysis (15 minutes)
Step 1: Project discussion photo and pass out copies of the Describe, Infer, Synthesize (DIS) worksheet. **Step 2:** Model creating descriptions of the photo. Give students a few minutes to scrutinize the photo and write down every detail, including lighting, expressions, and positioning. **Step 3:** Ask students to share their descriptions. Make a list on the board. **Step 4:** Ask students to start making inferences based on what they see, using evidence from the image or their own background knowledge. For example, "*I think* the boy is watching TV *because* he is facing a screen and looking at it." Ask students to make inferences about the mood or tone of the image as well. **Step 5:** Have students respond to the prompt: *What is the photographer showing us about the experience of immigration? What does the photographer want us to understand? How does seeing this image make you feel?*
Prior Knowledge (10 minutes)
Step 1: Pass out copies of the Prior Knowledge Inventory. Give students time to complete independently. **Step 2:** Students find someone who scored themselves a 3 or 4 on each topic and write down their names. **Step 3:** Make a list of students who gave themselves 3 or 4. Remind students that as questions come up, they can talk to these "experts" to learn more or get help. **Step 4:** Collect papers. Tell students that you will create a list of their questions and make sure that they get answered at some point during this lesson.
Defining Key Terms (20 minutes)
Pass out copies of the Vocabulary Worksheet and review definitions with students. Ask students to fill in the other boxes on their own or with a partner.
Narrative Reading (15 minutes)
Read an excerpt from Josué Nieves' story and have students annotate to answer the following questions: *What is the narrator seeking sanctuary from? How do they describe their experience seeking asylum?*

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Day Two
Asylum Discussion

Overview
In this lesson, students will use an oral history narrative to discuss the need for asylum and the process of applying. Students will make personal connections to the narrative and will share opinions about government responsibility in providing asylum.

Check-in and Review (10 minutes)
Step 1: Hang a list of questions generated from the Prior Knowledge inventory on the board and remind students that we hope to answer these questions throughout this unit. **Step 2:** Project the Vocabulary Review onto the board. **Step 3:** Ask students to write the correct vocabulary word to match the situation.
Reading Rosa's Narrative (30 minutes)
Step 1: Read Rosa Cuevas' story. It can be done in whole or select excerpts. **Step 2:** Students highlight key passages as they read. Focus on evidence for following questions: *Rosa says that she plans to apply for asylum for herself and her family. Why did she leave El Salvador, and what from her experience demonstrates a need for asylum?*
Discussion (20 minutes)
Discuss the reading with students as a class or break them into small groups. If small groups, consider assigning one student to each role: ● Facilitator: Reads questions out loud and makes sure each person has a chance to respond. ● Notetaker: Jots down main takeaways from the discussion. ● Reporter: Shares out to the class what was discussed at the end. ● (Optional) Time Keeper: Watches the clock and warns group members when time is almost up. ● (Optional) Process Manager: Makes sure each member is participating and on track. Discussion Questions: 1. Why does Rosa want to leave El Salvador? 2. Review the definition of asylum. Rosa wants to apply for asylum once she gets to the US. Based on your understanding, would she qualify? Why or why not? 3. What stood out to you from Rosa's story? Share a quote and why that stood out to you. 4. Could you connect to Rosa's story? How so? 5. Do you think the US has a responsibility to help Rosa? Why or why not? (If needed or desired, the question could be reframed as, "What can people do to help Rosa?")

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If you have SpEd/ELL students, consider giving them the list of questions ahead of time so they can prepare. You can also offer sentence starters or choose specific questions for them to answer, and they can focus on single questions out of the five.

Exit Ticket: Review Questions (5 minutes)

Review the list of questions generated by students and ask if there are any questions that can be taken off the list. Cross off questions that have been answered by lessons so far.

Homework (optional)

Assign excerpts from Noemi Tun or Adrián Cruz's stories. You could assign one for the whole class, or have students choose. Students should write their responses to the same discussion questions:

1. Why did the narrator want to leave their home country?
2. Should the narrator qualify for asylum?
3. What stood out to you from their story? Share a quote and why that stood out to you.
4. Could you connect to their story? How so?
5. How should the US government respond to the narrator's desire to live in the US?

Day Three

Cause & Effect

Overview

In this lesson, students will investigate the root causes of the conditions forcing people to leave their homes in Central America. Students will corroborate their findings with evidence from oral history narratives and other primary and secondary sources.

Journal (5 minutes)

Have students journal and partner share on the prompt:

How did Rosa, Josué, and Noemi/Adrián's stories connect with each other? What was similar or different about their stories? What thoughts or questions came up for you?

Video Context in Central America (15 minutes)

Step 1: Share video with students, and use the optional Notetaker if needed.
VICE – One Day in Usultán (0:00-7:43)
Trigger Warnings: Graphic images, death, homicide, gang violence.

Step 2: Ask students to discuss what they saw in the video compared to the narratives they have read: *Why are people trying to leave their home countries in Central America?*

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Step 3: Explain to students that we will try to better understand the context for the experiences of the narrators from *Solito, Solita*. The goal is that students will be able to answer:

1. What are some of the root causes for the conditions in Central America?
2. What role did the US play in creating these conditions?

Station Rotation (35 minutes)

- Station A Vox: War on Drugs
- Station B VICE: US Involvement in Politics
- Station C CFR: Root Causes (Government corruption and rise of gangs)
- Station D The Wire: Gangs and US Economic Policies

Step 1: Students get into small groups. Assign each group to a station and explain that they will be rotating around each station.

Step 2: At each station, students have 8 minutes to read through the informational text and highlight examples that are similar to the stories they have already read. (Optional: use the provided Notetaker)

Step 3: A spokesperson for each group shares a connection between the narratives and the articles.

Exit Ticket: Review Questions (5 minutes)

Review the list of questions generated by students and ask if there are any questions that can be taken off the list. Cross off questions that have been answered by lessons so far.

Homework (optional)

Have students reread the narratives and highlight passages that demonstrate connections between today's lesson and the experiences of the narrators. They can also highlight things that differentiate, such as abuse or fighting for water rights, that may not have come up in the broader historical context.

Day Four

Human Rights

Overview

In this lesson, students will construct a definition of human rights based on the Geneva Convention and the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights. Students will then read an oral history narrative and identify examples of narrators' human rights being violated.

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Do Now (10 minutes)
Step 1: Students respond to the prompt: *How would you define human rights? If you were to create a list of human rights, what would be on your list? If someone is a refugee, what rights should they have?* **Step 2:** Have students share out their answers and use their responses to come up with a class definition of human rights. Write this definition on the board.
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (30 minutes)
Step 1: Split students into an even number of small groups. **Step 2:** Half the class will be given information about the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights. The other half will be given information about the Geneva Convention. Instruct students to work as a group to read, highlight key information, and summarize. **Step 3:** Reconfigure students into new groups. Each new group should have a partner pair from the previous group. Pairs act as experts to teach their new partners about what they learned. Students should take notes on what their partners teach them. **Step 4:** Come back together as a whole class and discuss: 1. How would we change our definition of human rights? 2. What surprised you about the list of human rights? What stood out to you? 3. What rights do refugees have?
Looking with a New Lens (15-20 minutes)
Step 1: Pair up students and assign different pairs to re-read Rosa, Josué, or Noemi/Adrián's narratives through the lens of human rights and rights of refugees. Ask students to make notes in the margins that would help answer the following question: *Are there any human rights or rights of refugees that are being violated?* **Step 2:** Ask each group to share out one example that they found of a human right being violated.
Exit Ticket: Review Questions (5 minutes)
Review the list of questions generated by students and ask if there are any questions that can be taken off the list. Cross off questions that have been answered by lessons so far.

Possible extensions: Socratic Seminar

Students can further their discussion and understanding of the role of human rights and the struggles facing migrants through a Socratic Seminar. For more detailed steps in leading a Socratic Seminar, a great resource can be found through Facing History and Ourselves and this additional list of discussion questions.

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Solito, Solita Lesson Plan: Truth and Storytelling as Resistance

Time Needed: 2 class periods.

Materials:

- Koosh ball or other small, soft object (optional)
- *StoryCorps* video: Noe Rueda
- Full narratives or suggested excerpts from *Solito, Solita*:
    - Jhony Chuc:
        - "It's beautiful in Chicujal" pp. 79-81
        - "We didn't live in misery" pp. 81-87
        - "Trying to kill me psychologically" pp. 92-95
    - Pedro Hernandez:
        - "Los Nudos" pp. 163-165
        - "La Hielera" pp. 166-168
        - "The debt is growing so much" pp. 169-171
    - Gabriel Méndez:
        - "I carried it all in my head" pp. 66
        - "Our eyes met" pp. 73-74
        - "People are more open-minded here" pp. 74-75
- Deep Conversation starter cards

Objective:

- Students will be able to explain the power of storytelling as a tool for countering dominant narratives.
- Students will be able to participate in meaningful conversations to engage in the process of creating oral histories.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: RI.9-10.1, 6; W.9-10.4, 10; SL.9-10.1, 4, 6; L.9-10.2, 6; RH.9-10.2, 6, 9, 10; WHST.9-10.4, 9, 10.

Essential Question(s):

1. What is your truth that needs to be heard?
2. What is the power of storytelling?

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Day One
Personal Narratives

Overview
In this lesson, students will read personal narratives and discuss how these stories humanize and empower the narrators and their communities. Students will be introduced to the idea that personal stories can act as counternarratives to challenge assumptions and combat stereotypes.

Community Building Activity (10 minutes)
Consider beginning class with a community building activity from the preface on page 5, such as "Rock-Paper-Scissor Throwdown," or creating community agreements. Remember to include time for debriefing after the activity.
Hook: Story Corps (10 minutes)
Step 1: Project Noe Rueda's story from *StoryCorps*. **Step 2:** After watching, ask students to reflect in a pair-share while answering the following questions: ● What could you relate to in Noe's story? ● What touched you about Noe's story? ● What does this story tell us about Noe's character? About his teacher? ● How does Noe's story challenge the stereotypes of inner-city youth?
Storytelling as Counter-Narrative (20 minutes)
Step 1: Discuss with students the importance of storytelling as a form of truth telling. There are often assumptions or stereotypes made about us and our communities throughout society. We will be practicing storytelling as a way to humanize and empower ourselves and our communities. **Step 2:** Read an excerpt from Jhony Chuc's narrative in *Solito, Solita* as a class. As students are reading, have them highlight key passages that stand out or feel relatable to them. **Step 3:** After reading, ask students to discuss as a class: ● What could you relate to in the Jhony's story? ● What touched you about his story? ● What does this story tell us about the kind of person Jhony is? About his relationships? ● What does this story tell us about the experience of Central American refugees? **Step 4:** Ask students to journal on the following questions: 1. Why do you think Jhony decided to tell a story about his experience? Why do you think Jhony wanted to share this particular story? 2. Who do you think he hoped would hear this? Why? 3. How did his story affect you?

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Narrative Reading (20 minutes)
Step 1: Read an excerpt from Pedro Hernandez's narrative in *Solito, Solita*. **Step 2:** Have students highlight key passages and write notes that answer the focus questions: 1. Why do you think this story is important to the narrator? 2. What do we learn about the narrator's character in this story? 3. Who do you think they hoped would hear this story? 4. What touches you about their story? 5. What surprised/challenged your thinking in this story? **Step 3:** After reading, have students share their responses to the focus questions above in a class discussion. Ask students to quote from the text directly to support their answers.

Day Two

Telling My Story

Overview
In this lesson, students will continue to discuss the ways in which personal stories can act as humanizing counternarratives. Students will practice oral history skills by creating a space for empathetic listening, sharing with bravery and vulnerability, and reflecting on the process.

Hook: M&M Icebreakers (10 minutes)
Step 1: Give each student a handful of M&Ms or other objects with a variety of colors. **Step 2:** In pairs or small groups, ask students to tell their partners about themselves using the colors they find in their handful: ● Red: What was the last dream you remember having? ● Orange: What was your favorite recess activity in elementary school? Why? ● Yellow: When was the last time you did something nice for someone? ● Green: How did you meet your best friend(s)? ● Blue: What is something you are scared of? ● Brown: What was the best meal you had?
Narrative Reading (20 minutes)
Step 1: Read an excerpt from Gabriel Méndez's narrative in *Solito, Solita*. Have students highlight key information and make notes that help answer the focus questions as they read:

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1. How did this story make you feel? What could you connect or relate to? What did you learn from their story?
2. What do you imagine is the impact of someone telling this story?
3. Did this story change what you believed or thought you knew about immigrants or migrants? How?
4. Who do you think should/needs to hear this story?

Step 2: Students share out their responses to the focus questions.

Deep Conversations (30 minutes)

Step 1: Explain to students that today will give us an opportunity to hear each other's stories after listening to, watching, and reading other people's stories.

Step 2: Pair up students and have them sit facing each other. If possible, they should be sitting without desks between them, knees almost touching.

Step 3: Give each student a Deep Conversation card and 2 minutes to read through the questions.

Step 4: Read the following instructions to students. You may also want to print up a copy and hand it to each student.

1. In pairs, choose someone to be Partner A and Partner B.
2. Partner A will ask Partner B questions first. Partner B will have 5 minutes to talk. Partner A should only be asking questions, Partner B should only be responding.
3. Partner A will ask questions in order. Partner A can ask follow-up questions but should never be adding to the conversation.
4. If you finish early, Partner A can start asking their own questions.
5. The goal is to give your partner a chance to speak uninterrupted and really be heard. You do not need to ask all the questions (it's okay if you do). If Partner B spends 5 minutes answering the first question, you have accomplished the goal.
6. After the 5 minutes are over, I will tell you to stop. Even if the conversation feels unfinished, stop your conversation.
7. Partners will then switch roles.
8. Before you start, I want to remind everyone again that every story is important and your partner is sharing a piece of themselves with you. Please honor that by being present and respectful while they are sharing and remember that whatever is shared stays between the two of you. You will not be sharing each other's stories with the class, or even with me.
9. Are there any questions?

Step 5: After answering any questions, set the timer for 5 minutes and allow the pairs to begin. Circulate the room to make sure that Partner A is not injecting themselves too much into Partner B's stories and support struggling pairs.

Step 6: Debrief the process with students. Ask them to share out to the class:

- What did it feel like to be the interviewer? What made it easy? What was difficult or uncomfortable? How did you deal with discomfort?
- What did it feel like to have someone listen to you? What made it easy? What was personally difficult, uncomfortable, or frustrating? How did you overcome that?

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- What did your partner do well as interviewer or narrator? What would you have liked your partner to do differently?
- What did you appreciate about your partner?

Step 8: Partners switch roles. Set the timer for 5 minutes again.

Homework: Reflection

Have students journal on at least 3-4 questions from this list:

- How did it feel to share your story with someone?
- What did you enjoy sharing? What was hard to share? What were you surprised you shared?
- Without breaking confidentiality, what did you appreciate about your partner's story? What surprised you?
- Did hearing their story change or reinforce what you believed or thought you knew about your partner?
- Why is it sometimes difficult to talk about our lives and experiences? What helps make that process easier?
- What new appreciation or understanding do you take away from the narratives from *Solito, Solita*? How did being in their shoes as storytellers affect you?
- Why does *your* story matter?

Potential Oral History Projects

To extend the theme of truth and storytelling, students could conduct interviews of a classmate. They could choose selections from the interview to transcribe into a storytelling narrative that might challenges the reader's assumptions about that classmate.

More detailed steps on conducting these interviews can be found in "Unit 2: How Do We Tell a Story?" and "Unit 3: How do we tell a story?" from Where Our Stories Intersect: An Educator's Toolkit for Starting Conversations About Empathy and Outrospection.

To expand on this interview project, students could exhibit their stories in many ways:

- Gallery walk or story exhibition
- Binding narratives into a class book
- Author's readings—students could host a reading for other students, teachers, and families
- Record narratives with StoryCorps to be archived in the Library of Congress

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Solito, Solita Lesson Plan: Cultural Wealth

Time Needed: 2 class periods.

Materials:

- Notebook, pens
- Handouts and worksheets:
  - Skills Assessment List
  - Tara J. Yosso's Cultural Wealth Theory original article or summary
  - Tara J. Yosso's Cultural Wealth Notetaker
- Full narratives or suggested excerpts from *Solito, Solita:*
  - Isabel Vásquez:
    - "Even with all that fear, she loved her daddy" pp. 109-113
    - "They are like a plague" pp. 113-116
    - "She checks her dolls with a little stethoscope" pp. 125-128
  - Ernesto González:
    - "They deported me for selling drugs" pp. 197-198
    - "Papi, don't get lost" pp. 198-200
    - "If I could call my family right now" pp. 201-203
- Optional videos:
  - (Washington Post) Trump press conference on migrant caravan
    - Trigger Warning: racism, xenophobia
  - (CBS Evening News) Report on Central American migrants from 10/19/2018
  - (NBC News) Report on Central American migrants from 11/17/2018

Objective:

- Students will be able to define Tara Yosso's theory of cultural wealth and identify their own cultural wealth, as well as the cultural wealth of members of their community.
- Students will engage in oral storytelling as a way to counter dominant narratives about their community.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: RI.9-10.2, 3; W.9-10.2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10; SL.9-10.1, 4; L.9-10.1, 2, 3, 6; RH.9-10.2, 4; WHST.9-10.2, 4, 5, 7-10.

Essential Questions:

1. What are my strengths and the strengths of the people I identify with, that others do not see?
2. What is the counter-narrative to what is said about me and the people I identify with?

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Day One
Individual Skills and Assets

Overview
In this lesson, students will surface their assumptions and values around their own individual skills and assets. Students will discuss the differences between an 'asset-based' and 'deficit-based' mentality using oral history narratives.

Introduction: Skills Assessment (20 minutes)
Step 1: Ask students to journal privately on the prompt: *What does it mean to be smart or talented? Would you consider yourself smart/talented? What are your strengths?* **Step 2:** Skills Assessment Activity. Ask students to stand up and gather over a line on the floor. One side is designated YES, the other NO. Ask students to move to the side that is appropriate for them. You do not need to use all of them, but it would be wise to think ahead about your students and consider which questions may elicit the most "yes" responses or allow every student to be able to answer "yes" more than once. **Step 3:** Debrief the activity with students by discussing the following questions as a class: 1. What does it mean to be smart? How do you know if someone is smart? 2. Which skills from the activity would be something that "smart" people can do? 3. Which skills from the activity would be valuable? Why don't you think ___ is a valuable skill? 4. Who gets to decide what is a valuable skill? Who gets to decide who is smart? The goal is to help students see beyond academics and grades as the only measures of intelligence and discover that traditional definitions of intelligence (such as IQ tests) can actually be misleading tools to perpetuate oppression.
Narrative Reading (25 minutes)
Step 1: Read excerpts from Isabel Vásquez's narrative. **Step 2:** Ask students to highlight key sections that stood out to them. After reading, have students share out examples. **Step 3:** Share the definitions of "deficit" and "asset" on the board. Ask students to share an example of a deficit they see in Isabel, or an example that society might see in her. Create a list of these things on the board. Then ask students to shift their mindset by reframing Isabel's deficits into an asset: Deficit: Isabel is a single mom. → Asset: Isabel must be really strong to be able to raise a child by herself.
Narrative Connection (15 minutes)
Step 1: Read an excerpt from Ernesto González's narrative. **Step 2:** Ask students to work individually or with a partner to annotate the text to answer the questions:

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- What are the narrator's assets?
- What deficits might society see in this person, or they see in themselves?
  What stands out to you, inspires you, or do you admire from this person's experience?

Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

Have students respond to the following questions:
- What is an asset?
- What is a deficit?

Day Two

Community & Cultural Assets

Overview

In this lesson, students will use Tara Yasso's Cultural Wealth Theory to examine the intelligences, skills, and assets present within communities. Students will apply theories of cultural wealth to current events related to migrant communities, and will reflect on the forms of cultural wealth present in their own communities.

Journal (5 minutes)

Ask students to journal on the prompt:
Think about someone in your family or community. What is your connection to this person? What stands out to you about them? Why are they special to you?

Cultural Wealth Theory (30 minutes)

Step 1: Briefly review the concepts of multiple intelligences, assets, and deficits. Explain that today's lesson will put these ideas together through the cultural wealth theory.

Step 2: Share copies of the synopsis of Tara Yosso's Cultural Wealth Theory. Read the introduction aloud together.

Step 3: Discuss Yosso's definition of cultural wealth. Ensure that students understand that "cultural capital" is, for learning intents and purposes, synonymous with "assets."

Step 4: In small groups, students read and fill out the Notetaker for each category of cultural wealth.

Step 5: Have students take out their copy of Ernesto González's narrative to finish reading. On the board, write the following list on poster paper:
- ASPIRATIONAL
- LINGUISTIC
- FAMILIAL

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- SOCIAL
- NAVIGATIONAL
- RESISTANCE

Give each group a stack of post-its. Instruct students to identify examples of cultural wealth that they see as they read and write each example on a separate post-it.
When groups are finished, one spokesperson for each group should share out the examples and add the post-its under the appropriate category.

Cultural Wealth in Current Events (15 minutes)

Watch the press conference and news reports and discuss the following questions:

1. What DEFICITS are being said about migrants?
2. What are the ASSETS you can see?
3. What CULTURAL WEALTH do you see these migrants possessing?

Journal Write or Pair-Share (5 minutes)

Ask students to either journal individually or share with a partner:

What deficits are said about you? What assets do you have? What cultural wealth do you see in your community?

Note: Students may have a hard time coming up with assets or cultural wealth. It may be helpful to provide copies of the skills assessment for struggling students, or refer them to the list of qualities that were created for Isabel and Ernesto.

Potential Oral History Projects

To continue the theme of cultural wealth, students could conduct interviews to learn more about the assets and cultural wealth within their community. This could be the person they identified in their journal from Day Two, or someone else they want to learn more about. They can transcribe selected portions of the interview to share with the class, and reflect on how the concept of cultural wealth has shaped the way they view Isabel, Ernesto, Central American refugees, their family, their community, and themselves.

For more detailed steps on conducting oral history interviews, check out "Field Guide to Conducting Oral History" in The Power of the Story: The Voice of Witness Teacher's Guide to Oral History.

To expand the oral history project, students could share their interviews in different ways:

- Story Exhibition: Students create visual representations of their narrators and share them alongside the interview transcript in a public exhibition.
- Book of Cultural Wealth: Create a class anthology by printing and binding copies of each student's interviews.
- "Portraits of Strength": 1-2 days of lessons on portraiture and photography/sketching skills, 2-3 days of work for students to practice skills and create a portrait of their narrator that captures their strength (or cultural wealth), and 1 day for a gallery walk.
    - Sample artwork for students:
        - Diego Rivera – *The Flower Carrier*
        - Leon Borensztein – Black Woman with Fox Shawl, San Francisco, California

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Time Needed: 3 class periods.

Materials:

- Full narrative of or suggested excerpts from Soledad Castillo in *Solito, Solita:*
    - "Why am I not dead instead of my grandma?" pp. 17-23
    - "No school, you have to work!" pp. 25-27
    - "Used clothes with holes in them" pp. 29-33
    - "We don't choose our families" pp. 34-37
- Identity Reflection Worksheet
- NPR article: "Teachers' Expectations Can Influence How Students Perform"
    - Suggested excerpt from article
    - Original text
- Pygmalion Effect diagram

Objective:

- Students will be able to define stereotype and analyze the effect of interpersonal and internalized stereotyping in their self-view.
- Students will be able to discuss and construct ways to liberate from stereotyping in their lives.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: RI.9-10.1, 2, 3; W.9-10.2-5, 10; SL.9-10.1, 6; L.9-10.2, 4, 6; RH.9-10.2, 4, 8; WHST.9-10.4, 5, 10.

Essential Question(s):

1. How do the beliefs of others affect how we see ourselves?
2. How do we liberate ourselves from society's expectations?

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Day One
Self Image & Beliefs

Overview
In this lesson, students will explore the beliefs people have about themselves and the impact self image can have on a person's life. Students will use an oral history narrative as a jumping off point for exploring students' own self-image in a reflective journaling activity and a class discussion.

Self-Evaluation (5 minutes)
Step 1: Give students an index card and ask them to describe themselves in 3-5 words. Make sure each student writes their name on the index card. When they are finished, collect all the cards. **Step 2:** Ask each student to write their name on a blank sheet of paper and tape these up in the back of the classroom.
Soledad's Excerpt (30 minutes)
Step 1: Read excerpts from Soledad Castillo's narrative. As students are reading, have them highlight key sections that answer the following questions: *What does Soledad believe about herself? What actions reflect this belief? How do others impact Soledad, both negatively and positively?* **Step 2:** As students are reading, ask them to go to the back of the classroom individually so they can have privacy and remain anonymous. Instruct each student to write one word that describes each person named on the paper. Remind students to be honest and kind.
Journal Write & Class Discussion (25 min)
Step 1: Pass each student's paper with the comments from their classmates back to them. Give students a moment to look and see what others wrote. **Step 2:** Pass back each student's index card with their self-descriptions. **Step 3:** Ask students to take time to reflect on the following prompts: 1) Do I see myself the same way others see me? What is similar? What is different? 2) Did any of your classmates' responses surprise you? Why or why not? 3) Were you more positive or negative about yourself, compared to the responses you received? **Step 4:** In a talking circle or whole class discussion, discuss the following questions: 1) Why is there a difference in how people see us versus who we really are? 2) What matters more: How others see you, or how you see yourself? 3) How does Soledad see herself? How does this affect her actions? 4) How do others in Soledad's life support her? How does this affect her actions?

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Day Two

Stereotypes & Identity

Overview
In this lesson, students will define 'stereotype' and will engage in an activity to uncover how stereotypes affect them and the other individuals in their classroom community. Students will connect their learnings about stereotypes to an oral history narrative, discussing how other's expectations of us can affect our life trajectory.

Do Now (5 minutes)
Step 1: As a class, define the term "stereotype." **Step 2:** Have students fill out the Identity Reflection individually.

Decision Time (10 minutes)
Trigger Warning: This may bring up feelings or memories for students depending on the questions. Please give students the option to sit out and just watch or to step out if they are feeling triggered. **Step 1:** Have all students stand up and move so there is an empty space in the middle of the room, bisected by a line taped to the floor. Designate one side as "AGREE" and the other as "DISAGREE". **Step 2:** Read a statement aloud and have students move to the side that corresponds with their experience. Once there, ask students to find a partner and share why they chose to be on that side. After partners have spoken, ask for a few students to speak out on what they discussed with their partners. ● I've had someone follow me in a store before. ● I don't have to worry about money. ● Someone has moved to not sit or walk near me. ● Most people assume I can speak English. ● I've had a stranger talk to me in a way that made me uncomfortable. ● Someone assumed that I was born outside of the US (even if it's true!). ● I trust the police. ● My family has different rules for me than my siblings/cousins of a different gender identity. ● My teachers believe in me. ● I worry about my weight sometimes. ● People assume that I am attracted to the other sex (even if it's true!). ● I've never had to wonder if I'll be able to get to where I want to go (e.g. into a building, up a flight of stairs, on a plane). **Step 3:** Debrief the activity with students. 1) What emotions were brought up for you? 2) How do you think your answer would be different if your identity was different? (i.e. if you were a different race, sex, etc.) 3) How does stereotyping play a role in your experiences?

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Expectations vs. Outcomes (15 minutes)
Step 1: Have students read the NPR article, "Teachers' Expectations Can Influence How Students Perform." As students read, ask them to highlight key passages that answer the focus questions: 1) What is the main idea of the article? 2) What information surprised you? **Step 2:** Debrief answers with students. Pass out copies of the Pygmalion Effect diagram to students and explain the effect of expectations on self-belief.
Soledad's Excerpt (20 minutes)
Continue reading from Soledad's narrative. As students read, ask them to highlight key sections that help to answer the focus questions: 1) What connections can you make between Soledad's experience and the article from NPR? 2) How did the expectations of others in Soledad's life affect her?
Exit Ticket (5 min)
Ask students to respond to the following prompt: 1) Give one specific example of an expectation or stereotype that others had of you. 2) How do stereotypes or expectations affect people's beliefs about themselves?

Day Three

Responding to Stereotypes

Overview
In this lesson, students will use an oral history narrative to identify self-defeating versus self-empowering behaviors. Then, in affinity groups, students will identify a stereotype they have all experiences, and will identify both self-defeating and self-empowering ways to respond to the stereotype.

Do Now (10 minutes)
Step 1: Hand each student a copy of this quote from Viktor E. Frankl: "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." For ELL/SpEd students, it may be helpful to allow them to preview the text in order to identify and define new vocabulary.

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Step 2: Have students respond to the following questions:

1) In your own words, what is Frankl saying?
2) In the last class, we discussed the effects of expectations and stereotypes and self-belief. What would it mean to choose your response to a stereotype or expectation?

Step 3: Debrief responses with students.

Soledad's Narrative (25 minutes)

Step 1: Finish reading Soledad's narrative. As students read, ask them to highlight key sections that answer the focus questions:

1) What are the stereotypes or beliefs about immigrants that Soledad faces? How does she empower herself and others to overcome these challenges?
2) How does Soledad's belief about herself change?

Step 2: Review responses with students. Define "self-defeating" and "self-empowering" actions. Give students an example using Soledad's experience.

- Self-defeating: Meant to solve a problem but actually causing the same or another problem; causing more problems than it solves. Preventing yourself from doing or achieving something.
    - Soledad's family expected her to die because of her illness → She wanted to die

- Self-empowering: Freeing yourself from what others believe of you by making positive choices for yourself. It requires believing in yourself.
    - There is a myth in the US that immigrants are bad people → Soledad worked to get an education in order to advocate for other foster youth and immigrants

Step 3: Discuss with students how it can be easy to find examples of how the support of others helped Soledad overcome her struggles, but Soledad's inner strength should be acknowledged too. Have students work with a partner to skim through Soledad's whole narrative (or the excerpts); you could also assign each pair a set of pages from Soledad's narrative. Ask students to identify examples of how Soledad's personal strengths helped her overcome the expectations put on her.

Step 4: Have each pair share out one example to the class. If other students did not identify that example, have them mark it in their books too.

Affinity Groups (20 minutes)

Step 1: Ask students to form small groups of 3-4 based on an affinity group (ethnicity, culture, sex, citizenship, language, etc.). In order to make sure there is a diversity of discussions, make sure there are only 1-2 groups of the same affinity. If there are too many of a particular group, challenge students to find a different part of their identity to form an affinity group around. This can be accomplished by creating posters with possible affinity groups and asking students to group themselves in that way. If a group organically forms around an identity that you hadn't thought of, you can always create a new poster for them in the moment.

Step 2: In their affinity groups, ask students to appoint one person as the facilitator. The facilitator helps

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to lead the conversation and makes sure that everyone in the group has an equal chance to share. Give each facilitator a slip of paper with the prompt to begin their group's discussion: *Identify a stereotype or expectation that they have all experienced.* Give students time to share within their group how they personally experienced that stereotype.

Step 3: Give each group a poster paper. On the paper, students write their affinity identifier (e.g. Latinx, Girls, Tagalog-speakers, Athletes, Queer) and the stereotype they experienced. Next, ask each group to create a T-chart and list examples of self-defeating and self-empowering actions.

Step 4:
Option 1: Have groups decide on a spokesperson. Each group's spokesperson shares out their poster with their classmates.

Option 2: If you are concerned about certain groups of students holding larger shares of the emotional labor by teaching their peers, instead of sharing specifics about their group's discussion, ask students to debrief the activity together: *What did they appreciate about speaking to others in an affinity group-only setting? What feelings came up? Why might it be important for people to have affinity spaces?*

Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

Pass back each student's Do Now so they can review the Frankl quote. Students respond to the following questions:

1) What is a stereotype or expectation that others have of you?
2) What will be your response so that you can free yourself from this stereotype/expectation?

Possible Extension: Liberation Personal Narrative

Students can extend their understanding of the effect of stereotype and self-belief through a narrative writing assignment using the suggested writing prompt:

> Describe an example of a stereotype that you have experienced. This can be a positive or negative stereotype. How has this stereotype impacted you, including your self-belief? How have or will you liberate yourself from society's expectations? Why is it important (to you or your community) to do so?

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Solito, Solita Lesson Plan: Taking Action

Time Needed: 3 class periods.

Materials:

- Resources for Hook activity:
  - The Wrap video: Black Lives Matter Mannequin Challenge
  - Black Lives Matter context presentation
  - Gallery Walk images
  - Gallery Walk Notetaker
  - Resistance Movement presentation
- Full narratives or suggested excerpts from *Solito, Solita:*
  - Gabriel Méndez:
    - "Adios, Honduras" pp. 67-70
    - "A terrible pang in my pounding heart" pp. 70-73
    - "I spoke up for human rights" pp. 77-78
  - Julio Zavala:
    - "The big stain on my life" pp. 205-210
    - "My counselors told me, 'You're changing'" pp. 216-219
    - "I call it my other self" pp. 220-222
- Yuri Kochiyama's biography and video

Objective:

- Students will be able to define resistance and solidarity and apply these terms to the actions of Central American migrants.
- Students will be able to practice active resistance against oppression by completing an action project to support Central American migrants.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: RI.9-10.2, RI.9-10.4, RI.9-10.5; W.9-10.4, W.9-10.10; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4; L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2, L.9-10.6; RH.9-10.2, RH.9-10.6; WHST.9-10.4, WHST.9-10.10.

Essential Question(s):

1. What is the role of hope in resisting oppression?
2. How can we take action against injustice?

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Day One
Resisting Oppression

Overview
In this lesson, students will use the theme of 'resistance' to make connections across a variety of social justice and human rights movements. Students will read an oral history narrative to discover some ways in which individuals encounter and resist oppressive forces.

Hook: Speaking Truth to Power (20 minutes)
Option One **Step 1:** Put the following names on the board. Ask students to share what they know or think they know about these people, what they have in common, what they saw on the news or social media about them. Remind students that "I don't recognize these names" is also an acceptable answer. Philando Castile - Sandra Bland - Alton Sterling - Trayvon Martin **Step 2:** Show the video of the Black Lives Matter Mannequin Challenge. **Step 3:** Have students discuss in partners, then share out to the class: *Who do you think made this video? What issue are they addressing? What is their message?* **Step 4:** Explain the connection between the names and the video. You can use this presentation to support student understanding. **Option Two** **Step 1:** Pass out copies of the Notetaker to students. Have students do a gallery walk and respond to the prompts in the notetaker about each image. Lunch counter sit-ins Women's March 2017 Farm workers' strike Peter Yew protests 1975 Protests for ethnic studies – school board meeting 1968 Airport strikes after "Muslim Ban" DREAMers at the White House **Step 2:** Debrief as a class: *What is happening? Who are these people? Where do you think they are? What are they trying to accomplish?* **Step 3:** Explain the context of each image to students. You can use this presentation to support student understanding.
Journal (10 minutes)

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Step 1: Discuss with students how marginalized people or oppressed groups find creative ways to make their voices heard because they are often left out of the discussion, and these are ways of resisting oppression and systemic injustice.

Step 2: Ask students to respond to the prompt: *What does it mean to "resist" something? What was a time when you resisted something? Is resistance seen as positive or negative?*

Step 3: After journaling, ask students to share out their responses. As a class, create a definition of "resistance."

Narrative Reading (25 minutes)

Read from Gabriel Méndez's story. As they read, students should highlight important information as they read that helps them respond to the following questions:

1) What are the obstacles or oppressive forces in the narrator's life?
2) How does the narrator resist against oppression?

Students can finish reading and annotating Gabriel's narrative for homework.

For ELL/SpEd students, consider using excerpts to shorten the assignment. You may also need to give them a chance to pre-read the text beforehand and offer some annotations that include vocabulary support.

Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

Ask students to respond on index cards:

1. What is resistance?
2. Provide an example of resistance from the narrative you read.

Day Two

Types of Resistance

Overview

In this lesson, students will distinguish between 'self-defeating resistance' and 'transformative resistance'. Students will read an oral history narrative to identify both types of resistance, and will discuss the important of hope in creating transformative change.

Journal: Transformation (10 minutes)

Step 1: Ask students to journal on the prompt: *How would you define "transformation"? What are examples of transformation that you have seen? Have you ever transformed? How?*

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Step 2: After students have had a chance to respond, review answers as class. As a class, create a definition of "transformation":

> Transformation (Merriam-Webster): to change in composition or structure; to change the outward form or appearance of; to change in character or condition: convert

Discussion: Hope & Transformative Resistance (15 minutes)

Step 1: Review the definition of resistance.

Step 2: Begin reading Julio Zavala's story, or suggested excerpts.

Step 3: Ask students to discuss in pairs: *What would I do if I were in Julio's shoes?* After talking with their partner, have students share out to the group. Make a list as a class. Remind students not to judge Julio's choices or each other's answers and ask students not to censor themselves or each other.

Step 4: Once you have created a list, choose a few responses and ask students to discuss with their partners: *What are potential consequences of the "paths of resistance" offered? Will this help or hurt the resistor in the long run? Their community?*

Step 5: Discuss with students the difference between "self-defeating resistance" and "transformative resistance":

> Self-Defeating Resistance: taking action that pushes back against oppression, but ends up working against or harms yourself or your community.
>
> Transformative Resistance: resistance to oppression that uplifts and transforms the resistor and their community. It requires hope and belief that things can be better.
>
> (Optional: Fatalist - someone who believes that things are fixed and people are powerless to change anything)

It is important to emphasize that transformative resistance does not mean immediate relief or change. Often times it can be the more difficult path, but one that effects more long-term change. You might compare it to a doctor rebreaking a poorly set bone—it hurts and doesn't seem like the best choice in the moment, but ultimately leads to growth and healing.

Analyzing Julio's Narrative (20 minutes)

Step 1: Have students finish reading Julio's narrative. While reading, ask students to highlight key passages that respond to the focus questions: *Where do you see examples of transformative resistance? Self-defeating resistance? Where do you see examples of hope?*

For ELL/SpEd students, consider using an excerpt to shorten the assignment. You may also need to give them a chance to pre-read the text beforehand and offer some annotations that include vocabulary support.

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Exit Ticket (5 minutes)
Ask students to respond: 1. What is transformative resistance? 2. What is self-defeating resistance? 3. Why is hope important in resistance?
Homework
Option 1: Re-read Gabriel's narrative and annotate with a new lens: *Where do you see examples of transformative resistance? Self-defeating resistance? Where do you see examples of hope?* **Option 2:** Finish reading Julio's narrative and annotations.

Day Three
Solidarity

Overview
In this lesson, students will explore the importance of community and solidarity in creating transformative acts of resistance. Students will reflect on the people in their lives who help them with difficult problems, and will read the biography of Yuri Kochiyama and discuss her work in solidarity with other people of color.

Community Building Activity (25 minutes)
Consider beginning class with a community building activity from the introduction on page 5, such as Dragon Tails or Magic Carpet or creating community agreements. Remember to include time for debriefing after the activity.
Debrief: Gabriel's Narrative (5 minutes)
Review Gabriel's narrative and ask students to share out how they saw hope and transformative resistance in his story.
Reflection (10 minutes)
Step 1: Students write and respond to the prompt of their choice: ● Think about a time when you had difficulty with something, and someone helped you. How did they help you? Why did they want to help? Why did you let them help? How did their help change your experience? ● Think about a time when you helped someone, even if you didn't need to. What was the issue the other person was facing? Why did you decide to help them? How did you help? What did your help do?

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Step 2: After writing, students share with partner or small group.

Discussion: Solidarity (20 minutes)

Step 1: Read the biography and share video about Yuri Kochiyama and discuss her work and her role in solidarity with other people of color.

Step 2: Discuss with students the impact of solidarity using the following discussion prompts:

- What are the challenges we see Gabriel and Julio face?
- Who are Gabriel and Julio's allies? How do others support them?
- What is solidarity? What does it mean to support others?

Definition of solidarity from the "ABC's of Social Justice": unity or agreement based on shared interests and objectives; long-term mutual support within and between groups.

Step 3: In a talking circle, ask students to share out ways that their class can show solidarity.

Possible Project Extensions

Actively Resist! You can extend the theme of solidarity and resistance by having your students take part in project(s) to support Central American migrants, such as:

- Creating protest art and writing an artist statement
- A letter writing campaign to local and federal government officials
- Organizing a student teach-in
- ...see the action guide from *Solito, Solita* (pp.257-258) and decide for yourself!

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Solito, Solita Ideas and Resources for College-Level Curriculum

At Voice of Witness, we strive to provide educators with a diversity of support and resources as they begin planning how they will use our books in the classroom. Below, we have outlined several potential assignments around which to center your teaching of *Solito, Solita*, as well as a list of suggested resources to pair with the book. We hope these assignments and readings will facilitate critical thinking, broaden literacy and language skills, increase cultural awareness and competency, and foster connection in the classroom and greater community.

Policy Analysis Paper
After reading a selection of narratives from *Solito, Solita,* students research 3-4 government policies that directly address undocumented immigrants and asylum. The purpose of a policy analysis paper is not to argue a particular view; rather, it is to explore the current, existing policies surrounding an issue. Papers should include evidence and analysis of the intent and outcomes of the specific policies.
Taking Direct Action
Using the stories shared in *Solito, Solita* as well as existing government policies (either from individual research or the previous Policy Analysis Paper), students can write letters to local government officials, Congress, their school administration, etc. to advocate for a particular policy change or new policy that reflects the needs of migrants from Central America.
TED Talk
Through a combination of narratives from *Solito, Solita* and independent research, students can create a presentation or speech that mimics the style of a TED Talk, in order to inform an audience about this nuanced topic. Speeches should have a central argument, supported by textual evidence as well as personal experience (personal to the student or the narrators in the book).
Argumentative Essay
Students can choose a position to defend regarding the role and responsibility of the United States in addressing the issues ongoing in Central America. Essays should explain the historical context of U.S. involvement in Central American conflicts and events, and the impact of this involvement. Students should reference the first-person experiences from *Solito, Solita* as well as other scholarly resources. Students might also consider referring to the UN's Declaration of Human Rights or the 1951 Refugee Convention to inform or defend their position.

We recommend the following supplementary resources to pair with *Solito, Solita:*

- *Immigrants for Sale*, a 2015 documentary by Brave New Films https://www.bravenewfilms.org/immigrantsforsale
- *Home is a Human Right: A Series on Immigration*, a 2018 documentary series by Brave New Films https://www.bravenewfilms.org/homeishuman

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- *Who is Dayani Cristal?*, a 2013 documentary produced by Gael García Bernal
https://www.whoisdayanicristal.com
- "5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S.," a 2018 fact guide from the Pew Research Institute
http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/28/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/
- "Trump says undocumented immigrants burden the safety net. He's wrong," a 2019 article from *Vox* by Alexia Fernandez Campbell
https://www.vox.com/2019/2/6/18213888/trump-undocumented-immigrants-fact-check
- *Immigration Battle*, a 2015 documentary by Frontline
http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/immigration-battle/
- *Open Veins of Latin America*, a 1998 book by Eduardo Galeano
https://monthlyreview.org/product/open_veins_of_latin_america/
- *Gangs of El Salvador*, a 2015 documentary from *VICE*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGG7lRJJkJk
- "'Borders First': A Dividing Line in Immigration Debate," a 2013 report from the Pew Research Institute
http://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/legacy-pdf/6-23-13-Immigration-Release-Final.pdf
- *The Far Away Brothers: Two Young Migrants and the Making of an American Life*, a 2017 memoir/biography by Lauren Markham
https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/534789/the-far-away-brothers-by-lauren-markham/
- *Icebox*, a 2018 film written and directed by Daniel Sawka
https://www.max.com/movies/3208b811-775e-402a-8bdd-5715b7b23c54
- *Enrique's Journey*, a 2007 book by Sonia Nazario
https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/120434/enriques-journey-by-sonia-nazario/
- *No Place to Hide: Gang, State, and Clandestine Violence in El Salvador*, a 2007 book by the International Human Rights Clinic
https://www.wola.org/sites/default/files/downloadable/Citizen%20Security/past/Harvard_Gangs_NoPlaceToHide.pdf
- "What Obama did with migrant families vs. what Trump is doing," a 2018 *Vox* article by Dara Lind
https://www.vox.com/2018/6/21/17488458/obama-immigration-policy-family-separation-border
- "The Surge in Unaccompanied Children from Central America: A Humanitarian Crisis at Our Border," a 2014 article from the Brookings Institute, written by Diana Villiers Negroponte
https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/07/02/the-surge-in-unaccompanied-children-from-central-america-a-humanitarian-crisis-at-our-border/
- "Maya," a 2018 report by the Minority Rights Group International
https://minorityrights.org/minorities/maya-2/
- "Living Across Borders: Guatemala Maya Immigrants in the US South," a 2011 article by William Brown and Mary Odem from Southern Spaces
https://southernspaces.org/2011/living-across-borders-guatemala-maya-immigrants-us-south

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- "Central America: Femicides and Gender-Based Violence," a summary of reports from the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies (including additional links) https://cgrs.uchastings.edu/our-work/central-america-femicides-and-gender-based-violence

Solito, Solita: Discussion Questions

1. The title of the book, *Solito, Solita*, is repeated by one of the narrators, Adrián Cruz, multiple times during his story. *"Solito"* means "alone" in Spanish. Throughout the book, narrators bring up this feeling of loneliness and isolation. What are some of the ways in which narrators express their isolation?

2. Though many narrators talk about feelings of aloneness, there are also many ways in which the narrators are supported by case managers, therapists, lawyers, kind strangers, and shelters like the *Casas del Migrantes*. What is the short- and long-term impact of allies and *compañeros* on Central American refugees?

3. Soledad Castillo says, "Many Americans think that we come here to take their jobs, to do bad things, to take advantage of the country." Are there examples of this from your experience? How do the stories in *Solito, Solita* respond to that sentiment?

4. Sexual abuse and violence are recurring issues described by many women in *Solito, Solita.* How can this issue be addressed on a community level? On a national and societal level?

5. Julio Zavala's narrative highlights the problem of youth who have been forced into gang life and violence by factors often beyond their control. As a result, they suffer various forms of trauma, including criminal records. What can be done to support people like Julio?

6. Family is an important factor for many of the narrators. How does family affect the decisions of the narrators? What is the role of family in their lives?

7. Gabriel Méndez discusses the struggles he faced because of his sexual orientation throughout his life and the colorism that one of his companions faced because of her dark skin during their journey to the US. How are the narrators impacted by the intersectionality of their identity?

8. Central American refugees are often discussed with a deficit-mentality by politicians and in the media. Do the stories in *Solito, Solita* challenge this notion? If so, how? What are examples of strength and cultural wealth that you see amongst the narrators in the book?

9. Narrators like Soledad and Gabriel describe their experiences as students in the United States. As of 2000, there are an estimated 2.5 million undocumented youth (under 18) living in the United States. What are some of the factors that impact their educational needs? What can schools do to support students like Soledad and Gabriel?

10. Were there themes or ideas from *Solito, Solita* that surprised or challenged you? Has your understanding and perception changed about Central American migrants? If so, how?

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Solito, Solita Podcast

This three-part podcast features interviews with co-editors Steven Mayers and Jonathan Freedman, and narrators Gabriel Méndez and Soledad Castillo. It was recorded at KCSF, the radio station at City College of San Francisco, moderated by Victor Tence and recorded and edited by Nikolas Harter.

Introduction: This urgent collection of oral histories tells—in their own words—the stories of young refugees fleeing countries in Central America.

Episode One: In this episode, co-editors Steven Mayers and Jonathan Freedman speak about what brought them to this project and their experience interviewing youth refugees.

Episode Two: Soledad Castillo fled poverty; sexual abuse; and abandonment in Tegucigalpa, Honduras at age 14. In this episode, she describes her experience seeking safety, pursuing her academic dreams, and sharing her story.

Episode Three: Gabriel Méndez fled poverty; sexual abuse; and threats from the Barrio-18 gang in Tegucigalpa, Honduras at age 14. In this episode, he discusses growing into his own identity and building a new life in the US.

For up-to-date information about *Solito, Solita,* our narrators, our education program and other books in our series, follow the Voice of Witness blog.

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