

Lesson Plan: Imágenes de las Brigadas Internacionales Spanish

Lesson Plan

Title	Imágenes de las Brigadas Internacionales
Subject	Spanish
Level(s)	IV / V (Intermediate High / Advanced Low)
World Language Standards	This lesson meets all ACTFL standards. Students will be communicating in all modes (Standards 1.1 – 1.3), gaining information about Spanish cultural perspectives through its products and practices and perhaps comparing them to their own cultural perspectives (Standards 2.1, 2.2 and 4.2) through original Spanish poetry (Standard 3.2), which will allow them to connect to history and social studies (Standard 3.1). They will also be actively engaged in comparing how language works (Standard 4.1). This will all hopefully propel them, and at the very least, prepare them to participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world (Standards 5.1 and 5.2)
Keywords	International Brigades, Spanish perception of International Brigades, Capa, Rafael Alberti, Pablo Neruda, Spanish poetry, Chilean poetry, geography vocabulary, proper use of nouns and adjectives, advanced feelings vocabulary
Essential questions	How can one express admiration and gratitude for those who perform noble acts? (This lesson also puts to students two essential virtues: nobility, seen here as the courage to risk your life for others, even those to whom one has no ties, and right admiration, seen as the grateful and joyous praise of this nobility, perhaps even leading one to emulate it.)
Synopsis	This lesson will expose students to two poems directed to the International Brigades (IB), one by the Spaniard Rafael Alberti and the other by the Chilean Pablo Neruda. Students will study necessary vocabulary for the two poems, including words related to language and feelings, and use that vocabulary correctly to write captions to two Robert Capa photos of men in the IB. As part of studying the vocabulary for these poems, students will learn to look at word endings carefully in order to help them use nouns and adjectives correctly, a struggle that intermediate language learners often have (ex., 'I am proud' is correct, 'I am pride' is not.) Students will then compare the poems, and see how both poets characterize the men who came from afar to fight in defense of the Spanish Republic.
Standard Alignment(s) used	
Recommended Teacher Background	The teacher may wish to amplify his or her background knowledge on the Spanish Civil War and the involvement of the International Brigades, beginning with the ALBA website: http://www.alba-valb.org/history/spanish-civil-war . For more information on the American volunteers, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a unit of the International Brigades, see Peter Carroll's <i>The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War</i> , published by Stanford University Press. For more on Rafael Alberti, see http://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/alberti/ and for more on Pablo Neruda, see http://www.neruda.uchile.cl/
Connection to other disciplines	This lesson offers connections to history (the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades), art (photography) and English (grammar, word study, creative writing and literary analysis).

Number of
class periods

Standards

Targeted Common Core Standards for 11th and 12th graders include:

Objectives	Standards addressed
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1
Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4
Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement). (*These particular rhetorical devices are not present in the poems, but navigating poetic language certainly ties into this strand.)	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6

Primary Sources

- [Imágenes de las brigadas internacionales](#)

Procedures

Pre-Assessment, Activation of Prior Knowledge:

Necessary prior knowledge would be an intermediate-high to advanced-low language level and some experience reading literary texts. Some knowledge of the Spanish Civil War or twentieth century Spain would be preferred, but not required. This lesson would fit nicely into a historical unit on twentieth-century Spanish civilization, a thematic unit on war, conflict or heroism, or a literary unit on reading poetry.

Lesson Activities:

1. Lead-In/Hook:

Present students with the Capa photographs and then ask them to imagine what the men are thinking. Have them look up any of the unknown words from the vocabulary list and then write as many thought bubbles as they can.

2. Step by Step:

1. Share thought bubbles among students. Help with any language issues that arise. Explain to students that the men are in the International Brigades. Give any background information you find necessary on the Spanish Civil War and the involvement of the International Brigades. Revisit the students' thought bubbles and allow students to write more if the background information has inspired them to do so.
2. Distribute "Vocabulario para Alberti" to them. Have students work through the vocabulary in Part I, getting practice with their dictionaries. Some of the vocabulary will be familiar to them from the previous step. You may wish to have them do other practice, such as writing original sentences or quizzing each other on the words. You may wish to select some of the vocabulary to be active vocabulary for them and suggest to them that they only learn the rest of the vocabulary for recognition, rather than for mastery.
3. Next, the students will move on to the Word Study Section. In addition to finding the meanings of the words, students should also identify the part of speech of each word and see the relationship between the pairs of words. We will build on this word study when preparing the vocabulary for the Neruda poem.
4. When students are prepared with their vocabulary, remind them of the context of the International Brigades and explain to them that they are going to read a poem by the Spanish author Rafael Alberti. You may want them to predict what kinds of things they might read. How might the Spanish feel towards the IB members? A particularly incisive class may come up with some great answers to this question that would lead deeper into the history of the war and foreign involvement in it.
5. When you're ready to read the poem, you may want to follow up silent reading with reading the poem aloud. Although the vocabulary is not particularly challenging, the demands of the poetic genre may mean that some assistance is in order. Encourage pair and classwork to decode the text before moving on to comprehension questions. In a unit on poetry, students could also be asked to study the more formal elements of the poem. It contains four strophes of four alejandrinos each, with a consonant rhyme scheme of ABAB CDCD EFEF GHGH, which is slightly violated in lines 14 and 16, perhaps to add to the climax of the poem.
6. Students will need significant discussion and some teacher assistance to answer the comprehension questions. For question one, guide them to look at line 7 "las mismas raíces ... el mismo sueño" so that the students understand that the IB volunteers saw themselves as part of a class of those chosen to defend freedom, a class that transcended race or international borders (see also line 2). Also send them to lines 3-4 which point to an inevitable death no matter the city, countryside or highway; Alberti here shows that these men chose to give their lives for their values. One of the Americans who fought and died in Spain, Sam Levinger calls his young life before he committed to the Spanish cause "useless" in his ALBA archived letters. For question two, lead them to look beyond "muy lejos" in line 1, although that word is clearly important, we see more detail in lines 5 and 6. Call students' attention especially to question three, ask them to think about what it means to be buried away from home. Be sure they understand all the sacrifice that implies. They will find textual answers in lines 11 and 13. Question four should lead students to line 9, where it might be a good time to explore the meaning and rhetorical structure of lines 9-10 with the students. Many of the young men indeed knew little about Spain in particular, but fought for a cause they believed in when they saw the opportunity. ALB veteran Carl Geiser's letters offer one example of someone learning about Spanish customs on the fly. Students will be happy to reach the last question, with its comparatively straightforward answer, to be found in the final line of the poem. However, one may want to temper Alberti's vision with actual history.
7. When students have a firm grasp on the comprehension questions, ask them to synthesize what they have learned in the space below, generating a cohesive view of the portrait Alberti offers us of the IB fighters.

8. The vocabulary list for Neruda is a two-sided sheet. First, practice with the nouns, as above (See step b.) This may be a good time to make mention of articles in Spanish, as the list offers two occasions of two-syllable words that begin with a stressed 'a' and yet are feminine, as well as the word *frente*, which is used in the poem in the feminine, but due to its other meaning seems to hint at war. Moreover, they will see "el poeta" and "los camaradas" in the comprehension questions. Students can also practice with the adjectives on the second side. And, at some point you will want to explain to them how structures with *hacer*+(another infinitive)+(direct object) or *ver*(or another verb of perception)+(another infinitive)+(direct object) work. You may want to offer them model sentences, such as "La primavera hizo renacer las flores y los jardines", "Vi venir a Paco", "Oí entrar en la sala a alguien."
9. For the 'Estudio de palabras', have students not only look up the words but also find their adjectival form. Then, have them practice using adjectives in sentences with *ser* or *estar*, and the nouns in sentences with *tener*. Many times students are quick to reach for either form and need some help in remembering to use either the noun or the verb.
10. After a little practice with all of the vocabulary, have students revisit the Capa photographs and see if they can write better thought bubbles. You may even wish to have students nominate favorites and create cartoon or meme versions of the photos.
11. When students are ready for Neruda's poem, they may find his free verse easier to negotiate than Alberti's denser *alejandrinos*. Point out to them that they are reading the last three strophes of "Llegada a Madrid de la Brigada Internacional". The first three speak of Spain, rendered destitute by war. So it is that we begin reading with Neruda's apostrophe, as he turns to those he sees coming.
12. Have students first notice that each strophe is a sentence, and is meant to be read as such. Have them again work alone, in pairs and as a class to decode the poem and understand it well before moving on to the comprehension questions.
13. Distribute the comprehension questions and give them time to work alone and in groups. They will likely offer some interesting answers that go beyond the author's ideas, but here are some suggestions to offer if they get stuck. For question one regarding the fourth strophe, the repeated words include: *ojos*, *ver* and *venir*, emphasizing Neruda's (seeing the troops arrive and / poetic imagination of – which one?) the expectant hope the Spanish pinned on the help they got from abroad. In question two, the "mañana de niebla" calls to mind that fog burns off and is followed by a radiant day. The words used to create the second metaphor also involve the sun. Casting these fighters as bells ahead of the dawn refers to a faith in victory to come, which is later explicitly redeemed in line 45. For the answer to question three, refer not only to the double meaning of the word, but also to Neruda's deliberate choice to use (and emphasize, through an article and an adjective) the feminine form, thereby personifying Spain and evoking human compassion. Like in Alberti, the troops come from afar. Neruda also offers more detail in line 32. The final question on this strophe refers to Madrid falling and dying bit by beasts (referring to the Fascists). The fifth strophe refers to the universal whole that will benefit from the actions of the IB. It is also interesting to note many of those depicted are those who cannot defend themselves. Yes, 'el varón' is mentioned, but he is already fighting hard to defend the others and needs reinforcement. The final strophe shows the redemptive force of the soldiers' sacrifice. It opens up a new river of durable peace and hope in a valley of hard rocks of blood.
14. Be sure to spend adequate time allowing Neruda's rich use of imagery penetrate into your students' minds. As you finish discussion, begin to compare the two visions.

3. Closure:

Have students compare the two poems. They will find some similar vocabulary and thematic, (volunteers coming from *lejos*, the hope of the IB in the illumination of Madrid or rebirth of Castile, a second person direct address). You may also ask a few questions that help guide students to both similarities and differences.

¿Cómo caracterizan los poetas a los camaradas? (Alberti se enfoca en sus motivos, Neruda en su valentía)
¿Mueren los soldados en los dos poemas? (Para Alberti, sí, pero Neruda – quizá por el momento temprano en que enfoca su poema – deja abierta la posibilidad de que algunos sobrevivan) ¿Hay ilusiones grandes o visiones simplistas? (No. Hay respeto y hasta reverencia, pero los dos poetas saben que el final será triste para muchos de los combatientes.) You may wish to have students summarize this discussion as written work or an oral presentation.

It is hoped that students will gain some appreciation for the role of their fellow countrymen and others who fought to defend the Spanish Republic. If students are so motivated, they may write a similar poem of praise for someone whose sacrifices have meant something to them. This could also be a creative writing culminating exercise.

Differentiation:

Differentiation for various needs can be accomplished through modifying vocabulary lists, shortening readings, adapting questions, prompting students and forming discussion groups.

Post-Assessment

- Students may refine their answers to any (or any combination) of the questions and discussion prompts and prepare a written response or a spoken presentation.
- The instructor can read lines from the poems to the students (don't give them the visual clues that come from the format) and see if they can identify which poem they are hearing.
- Choose another poem or fragment of a poem for them to read and analyze alone or in groups. Other poems related to the International Brigades include "Homenaje a los americanos muertos en defensa de España" by Manuel Altolaguirre, "Al soldado internacional caído en España" by Miguel Hernández and "A Jaskel Honigstein, último caído de las Brigadas Internacionales" by José Herrera Petere.
- Formal assessment will depend on the unit of which this lesson forms a part. The instructor will have to decide if he or she wants to emphasize poetics, history, isolated language (vocabulary, grammar), whole language (thought bubbles, creation of a unique poem) or any combination of elements. He or she will have to see how this lesson interacts with other lessons in the unit and what bridges can be made.