

**COMPARING CHILDHOOD IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES:  
A MULTIMEDIA LESSON PLAN FOR THE SPANISH CLASSROOM**  
by Kristen Tinch and Libby Isenhower

**Standards:** (from the Kentucky Standards for World Language Proficiency)

**N.CP** I can identify some basic cultural beliefs and values.

**NM.IR.2** I can recognize words, phrases, and characters when I associate them with things I already know.

**Learning targets:**

1. Students will identify cultural differences between the roles of children in Latin America and in the US.
2. Students will analyze the role of children in Latin America as portrayed in the poem "The Little Girl with Chocolates" by Hugo García González and the film *Que Tan Lejos*.
3. Students will synthesize ideas from discussion, the poem, and film clips to develop a short writing piece simulating themselves as breadwinners of their families.

**Resources:**

Texts:

García González, Hugo. "La niña de los chocolates." *This Tree is Older Than You Are: A Bilingual Gathering of Poems & Stories from Mexico with Paintings by Mexican Artists*. Ed. Naomi Shihab Nye. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995. Print.

*Qué Tan Lejos*. Dir. Tania Hermida. Vene Movies, 2006. DVD.

Additional Reading:

Lopez, Marta. "Our Alley." *Out of the Dump: Writings and Photographs by Children From Guatemala*. Ed. Kristine L. Franklin and Nancy McGirr. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1995. Print.

Printable Resources (see attached PDF):

Roles of Children graphic organizer

*Qué Tan Lejos* Viewing Guide

"The Little Girl with Chocolates" poem with annotation space

"La niña de los chocolates" poem with annotation space

Written Response Prompt

**Procedures:**

Day 1

Engagement: When students enter the classroom, there is a slideshow of photos of children in Central America scrolling from the following link: [http://libbyisenhowerphoto.com/?page\\_id=149](http://libbyisenhowerphoto.com/?page_id=149)

Students are instructed to watch the images and jot down their reaction to the content of at least three specific images. After 3-5 minutes, the teacher begins asking the students to share their thoughts about what they saw. The discussion can be driven by, but is not limited to, the following questions: Where do you think these images were taken? Is there anything in the photos that you found surprising? Which images do you identify with most? How are these images similar to or different from your childhood experience?

After students have shared their observations and thoughts, the teacher will distribute a graphic

organizer. The chart will be divided into three columns: Your Role, The Ideal Role, and Roles in Latin America. Students are directed to use the graphic organizer to identify their ideas about what their role is as a child/adolescent, the ideal role of children in our (United States) society and their predictions about children's roles in Latin America. The chart is simply a way to allow the students to write freely and candidly about how they see themselves, how they perceive childhood should be, and how they perceive childhood in the world outside their own. The teacher may collect the chart and review the students' notes and comments, especially for students who may not be comfortable speaking to their peers about their particular circumstances.

Once the students have filled in their own charts, they take turns sharing and discussing each of the areas on the graphic organizer. To help facilitate future discussion, the teacher makes an identical chart on a giant post-it, or poster board, and draws from the students' comments and ideas to fill it in. The teacher and class can refer back to this class chart later on day one, and again on day two of the lesson.

After filling in the graphic organizer, the teacher will distribute the poem "La niña de los chocolates." **Please see Adaptations/Options for ideas on adjusting this portion of the lesson for varying language/skill levels.** Students will preview the poem by first identifying words they already know by circling or highlighting them. Based on what they already know, the students talk about what they think the poem says. The students take turns reading each stanza of the poem aloud in Spanish. After the students have read, the teacher reads the poem aloud to them in Spanish. Then, the teacher asks some basic comprehension questions about the poem:

- ¿Dónde está la niña? (Where is the girl?)
- ¿Cómo es? (What is she like?)
- ¿Qué vende? (What does she sell?)
- ¿Cuántos años tiene? (How old is she?)
- ¿Qué es que tiene que hacer? (What is it that she has to do?)
- ¿Asiste a la escuela? (Does she go to school?)

After answering these questions, the teacher distributes the poem in English. Students volunteer to read each stanza. The teacher begins an analysis discussion of the poem with the following questions: Can you relate to this girl? What about her life is similar to or different from life in our town? Is her life as you predicted it might be for a child in Latin America?

At the end of day one, the teacher shows the clip from *Qué Tan Lejos* of the little girl in the bus station selling gum to Esperanza. (10:25-13:04) Students are assigned to write down their thoughts about the differences/similarities between the girl in the poem and the girl in the clip. This may be collected as an exit slip if desired. Students will share their thoughts at the beginning of class the next day.

## Day 2

Begin class by asking students to summarize the clip from yesterday. The most simple summary is this: A little girl selling gum in the streets tricks a bus passenger into buying \$10 worth of gum while she waits for her bus. Following the summary, students should discuss the following as a class: What are some major differences between the two girls? (education, class, age, temperament, etc.) What does the clip show us about childhood in Ecuador?

Instruct students to keep thinking about those differences as they view various clips from the film. Hand out the *Qué Tan Lejos* viewer guide to discuss Ecuador and the film itself. Students will look at the map of Ecuador to determine characteristics of the land and its geography. The teacher will ask students to guess where on the map the scene from the bus station took place. (Although the next portion of the lesson asks students to think about the geography of Ecuador, the focus of the lesson remains the theme of childhood in Latin America. Discussion of geography should be used as a tool to help students understand how life/childhood in Latin America is different due partially to geography).

Students will have 3 minutes to complete as much of 1, 2, and 3 as possible. Then, the teacher will provide supplemental information of each region from question 2:

**Amazon:** Rainforest and part of the Amazon River Basin. Ask students: Why do you think this region is not as populated with cities? (not an “urban” way of life, therefore there are few established towns)

**Highlands:** This is a mountain range that extends down the western side of South America. What is it called? (Andes Mountains)

**Coast:** What do you notice about the population of the coastal region? (much more populated) Why are coastal regions more populated? (necessity of trade and travel created more settled people there)

**Galapagos:** Where are the Galapagos on this map? (the islands to the left) A famous and controversial scientist traveled here from England to study the diverse range of animals on the islands. He wrote much of his book *On the Origin of Species* based on his research on the Galapagos. Any ideas who he is? (Darwin, did not “invent” the idea of evolution, but found evidence to support his claims while in the Galapagos).

The teacher finishes the conversation about geography with the following question: How might the geography of Ecuador affect the childhood of the people living there? Students should discover through discussion that geography plays a major role in culture (jobs, isolation, urbanization, etc.)

Students will then view a series of clips involving the journey of two women through the Andes region of Ecuador. After each clip, the teacher will ask some questions to aide in the general comprehension of the film’s plot, and provide some background information that the students miss in between clips. The student’s role while viewing is to write down any observations they have about the children in each clip. In some clips, the children are directly involved in the plot. In others, they are peripheral characters; but each instance provides a different picture about childhood in Ecuador. After all the students have viewed all the clips, they will discuss their observations about children, revisiting the roles they identified on day one and comparing the roles in the film to what they read in the poem. The viewing guide will guide these clips, but below are potential discussion questions for each one:

**Attending class (5:25-7:10):**

What did you notice about the classrooms? Outside the window, you got a view of the capital city, Quito. What was it like? (This is a good time to show students the modern Ecuador and dispel any misunderstandings about how “advanced” society is in South America).

The teacher will explain that María Teresa goes on a journey to stop her boyfriend’s wedding. In the next clip, students will see the first obstacle that she faces in her attempts to make it in time.

**Selling Gum (10:25-13:04)**

Where is María Teresa? Who approaches her and what does she want? What is the little girl’s strategy for selling gum?

**On the bus (17:00-19:35):**

Why was the bus stopped? (Teacher will explain that workers in the transportation industry often go

on strikes because of unfair working conditions, inequality in pay, etc).

The grandmother makes clear that it is probably an *indigenous* strike. What does indigenous mean? (native; people historically from Ecuador prior to the Spanish conquest). What does the grandmother's attitude toward the indigenous indicate about her class distinction? Describe the grandmother's relationship with her granddaughter.

The teacher will explain that the two women decide to hitchhike alone to make it to Cuenca. As students watch for the role of children based on social class, they should notice some of the national tensions creating the problem in the next clip. Students should notice how a political climate affects children.

### **Sheep herders (32:40-34:00):**

What are the women discussing? (the strike and the national problems)

Note that María Teresa's traveling companion is a tourist. Why is María Teresa so annoyed by her? (The tourist only sees the beauty of the country but doesn't realize that it has serious problems as well).

(If desired this is a good time to discuss the presidential history of Ecuador during this time. Prior to 2006, Ecuador had ousted 7 presidents in 10 years, creating much cause for unrest among the people).

What is bizarre about the sheep herders?

The teacher will explain that in the next clip, María Teresa separates from her companion to ride a motorcycle to her destination. Although they will meet up again, students should be aware that her companion is now traveling with a mystic character, Jesús. In this scene, students should continue watching for the role of children in this society.

### **The shopkeeper (52:00-53:40):**

Where are the little girl's parents? Why do you think they went there? (Spain; many possible answers--Murcia is often known as the "orchard of Spain," so it is possible that they went there for agricultural jobs). What is strange about the little girl's "job"?

Once students have finished viewing the clips, the class will reflect/discuss childhood in Latin America versus the United States. Remember, students will bring many items of discussion to the table, but the focus should remain **CHILDREN and CHILDHOOD**. The teacher will now ask the students to **synthesize** what they have learned from the poem, photos, and clips. This means they will combine the ideas from the different sources to create a new idea.

To finish class, students will use this synthesis to write in detail about how they would support their families if they were a ten-year old in the United States. A sample writing prompt follows:

Imagine you are ten years old again and you have the responsibility of providing income for your family. Considering your neighborhood, your skills, and your resources, describe a plan for making money. What skills can you use? Would you provide a good or a service? How might you advertise your business? Who are your clientele? How do you feel about being in the position of having to provide income for your family? Write a detailed paragraph in English providing an outline of your day providing for your family. You will be graded using the following criteria: focus/answering the question (25 points), details (10 points), creativity/resourcefulness (10 points), and grammar/spelling (5 points). Complete this before leaving class today.

### **Assessment:**

Assessment for this two day lesson is primarily formative. The teacher will direct discussion based on student understanding of childhood in Latin America and the United States. Students will complete a series of graphic organizers, viewing guides, and finally a short writing piece demonstrating their understanding of the differences between childhood in Latin America and the United States. See the

attached Printable Resources for these materials.

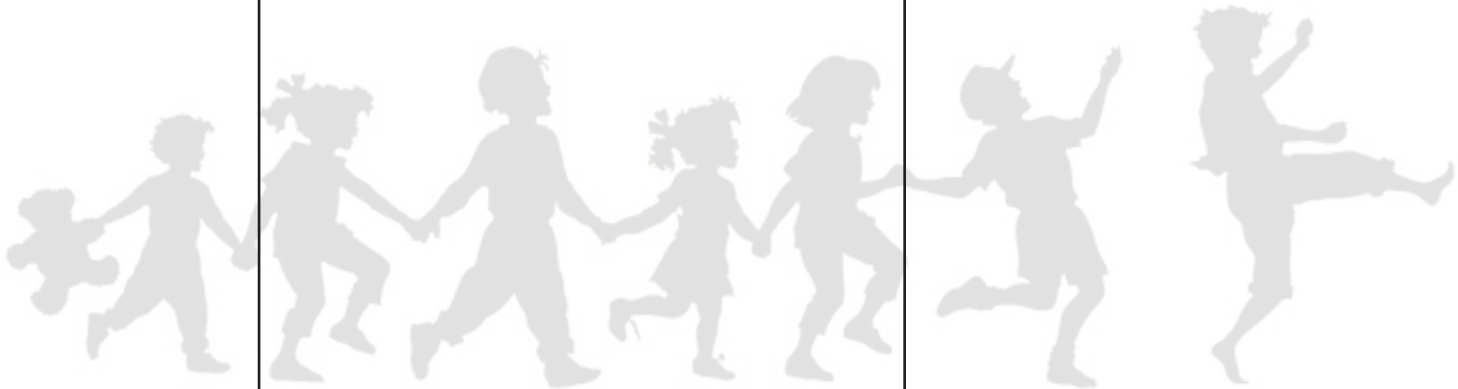
**Adaptations/Options:**

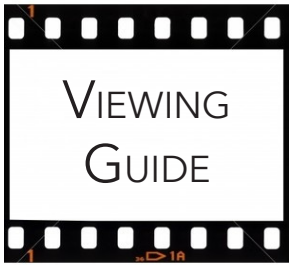
- Use any portion of the lesson/resources to tie in cultural/linguistic themes needed for your classroom.
- Stretch activities over the course of several instructional days as needed/depending on student needs.
- Use “La niña de los chocolates” poem in English or Spanish depending on level. Questions may also be posed in Spanish depending on the language abilities of students.
- The film may also be used without Spanish subtitles depending on the level of students.
- Many students may be motivated to see the entire film. Screen the film outside of class for extra credit.
- Have students research child labor laws and the historical/cultural differences between the United States and Latin America.



Directions: In the chart below, write down your ideas about what you think your role is as a child in your family/community, what you think is the perceived/ideal role of a child in our country, and what you think the role of children is in Latin America. Think of "role" in terms of what responsibilities children have: to study, to work, to play, to volunteer, etc.

YOUR ROLE	THE IDEAL ROLE	ROLES IN LATIN AMERICA





# QUÉ TAN LEJOS

Directed by Tania Herrida  
Ecuador (2006)

## Primero, hay que pensar en el país de origen.

First, we must think about the country of origin.

1. Considering the latitude and longitude of the country, what do you think Ecuador means in Spanish?

2. Ecuador has four distinct regions. What are they? (Be prepared to take some notes on each one!)

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3. The characters in Qué Tan Lejos will be making a journey from the capital city of Quito to Cuenca. Connect these cities. What mountain range will they be traveling through?



# QUÉ TAN LEJOS

Directions: Jot down any thoughts or ideas you have about each clip from the movie.

1



Attending class  
(5:25-7:10)

4



Sheep Herders  
(32:40-34:00)

2



Selling Gum  
(10:25-13:04)

5



The Shopkeeper  
(52:00-53:40)

3



On the bus  
(17:00-19:35)

ADDITIONAL NOTES





## LA NIÑA DE LOS CHOCOLATES

Hugo García Gonzalez

Camina con sus sandalias  
por la calzada una niñita.  
Su cabellera es larga y negra  
que se vuelve azul marino  
de tanto brillo.

Lleva puesto un vestido verde  
con siete flores en su pechera  
y con su mano sostiene  
una cajita de chocolates.

Sólo tiene seis años  
y sueña con ir a la escuela  
pero tiene que vender chocolates  
y cuidar de sus hermanos.

Con sus hermanitos  
y sus muñequitos, en el futuro,  
hará un equipo de fútbol  
pero antes irá por la calzada  
con sus sandalias  
vendiendo chocolates.

NOTES:



## THE LITTLE GIRL WITH CHOCOLATES

Hugo García Gonzalez

A little girl in sandals  
is walking on the avenue.  
Her hair, so long and black,  
shines and turns deep sea-blue.

She wears a green dress  
with seven flowers  
printed on the front  
and carries a box of chocolates.

At six years old  
school is her only dream  
but she must sell her chocolates  
and care for her brothers and sisters.

Someday she will play soccer on a team  
with her brothers, sisters and dolls.  
But for now she is selling chocolates  
walking in sandals on the avenue.

Translated by the author

NOTES:



## OUR ALLEY

Marta Lopez

Three little houses  
guard our alley.

Three little houses  
full of children:  
five in my house,  
three behind,  
four across the alley.

We share the alley:  
it's where we play,  
where we walk,  
where we listen  
to people who fight.

We share the alley,  
but the clothesline?  
No!

My sister climbs a pole  
to hang the wet clothes.  
Later  
she stands guard  
so no one steals  
the clothes.

We share the alley,  
but the clothesline  
is ours.

NOTES:

