

This implementation plan is a draft for a set of lessons to be delivered, in the form of a written curriculum, to students who participate in a distance learning school. The lessons will be included in a new American Literature course for 11th grade students at Oak Meadow School.

This semester-long American Literature course centers on the theme of the American dream. These lessons will become part of the course material taught by myself and other Oak Meadow teachers in our distance learning school, but when published, they will be available for independent use by homeschooled students and charter schools.

Oak Meadow course materials are developed through a process of collaboration between a teacher/writer, the Curriculum Director and the High School Director. What follows is a first step in that process. It is based upon material from the 2016 Immigration Institute, but permissions, citations, and bibliographical information have not been fully included or finalized in this draft.

The American Dream

What is the American Dream? Over the course of this semester we will read works of history and literature that explore and question the basis and reality of the American dream.

Throughout the course, you will be creating a project to be presented to your peers at the end of the semester.

This project could be a video of a theatrical adaption that is scripted by you, or it could be a project based on interviews with members of your family, or from your neighborhood, concerning family history.

Through the study of our first book, *The Circuit, stories from the life of a migrant child*, you will be introduced to several approaches for adapting literary works, which will prepare you to create a theatrical adaptation.

You will also work with interview material that will prepare you to create a presentation of yours or another's family history.

Lessons 1 and 2: History, the Border, and Origins

Here is some background information on immigration that will give you an historical context for the stories in *The Circuit*.

This background material, “Tug-of-War: Mexican Immigration to the United States” by Barbara Prillaman, is excerpted from:

http://teachers.yale.edu/curriculum/viewer/initiative_14.03.03_u

Emma Lazarus's infamous words visible at the base of the Statue of Liberty are:

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses, yearning to breath free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

These words represent the collective memory of our country, one built on the philosophy of welcoming all immigrants no matter who they are, what they look like, or where they come from. Historically, the United States continues to be the leading country of immigrant arrival numbers at about 20 per cent currently of world immigrants. Over the years, they have come from around the world to escape poverty, war, natural disasters, political and religious oppression. They've come to the United States for economic opportunities, social mobility, freedom, and sanctuary.

Following is a selection of policies/Acts that were influential in detailing a racial basis for admitting people into our country. These include the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Immigration Act of 1921, Immigration Act of 1924 and the Immigration Act of 1965.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882

Large-scale Chinese migration to the U.S. began in the late 1840s as many came to America to find their fortunes in the gold mines. They also worked diligently on the railroad systems to connect both coasts of the continent. Their completion in

1869 meant Chinese laborers were not limited to California or the West coast but could move throughout the nation. This alarmed labor leaders. Additionally, as their presence was felt with increasing numbers, many Americans became concerned.

Due to financial pressures of sending money back home and paying off those who helped them get to America, it was the perception that the Chinese would work for wages that were lower than the Americans. Additionally, there were cultural misunderstandings and ignorance. Most Chinese, just as with other recently arrived immigrant groups, lived in the same area of the city. Because this population was comprised of mostly men, outsiders had social concerns and exaggerated tales of their activities. "Some advocates of anti-Chinese legislation therefore argued that admitting Chinese into the United States lowered the cultural and moral standards of American society. Others used a more overtly racist argument for limiting immigration from East Asia, and expressed concern about the integrity of American racial composition."

History has seen this argument time and again, usually focusing on Asians and Latin Americans, including Mexicans. This was the first law to exclude an entire group of people from one country. It stated that no Chinese workers could enter the United States for ten years. It was renewed two times – each after ten years (Geary Act in 1892) – until it became indefinite in 1904. According to the Federal Judicial Center, "The 1884 law set out the requirements for the certificates and the definitions of exempt Chinese in much more detail and gave the U.S. consuls in China new responsibilities for enforcing the exclusion law." In 1917, the Senate passed a bill to ban all peoples of Asia, although the Philippines was not included in this newly created "Asiatic Barred Zone."

The Immigration Act of 1921 and The Immigration Act of 1924/ The Johnson-Reed Act

The Immigration Act of 1921 was the first that limited the numbers of European immigrants to the United States. With this Act, a temporary quota system was established in which the United States limited the number of people coming from specific countries. There was a 3% cap on people arriving from all countries in the world based on the 1910 census numbers with the aim of limiting immigrants to only those countries in Western and Northern Europe.

The 1924 Act was the first comprehensive restriction law. All groups of people were mentioned in some way including Asians who were not limited but banned. For the first time, there were limited numbers of people who were allowed to

enter and these numbers were based on who was favored or not. This law was important for two reasons. According to historian Mae Ngai, "it drew a new ethnic and racial map based on new categories and hierarchies of difference" and "it articulated a new sense of territoriality, which was marked by unprecedented awareness and state surveillance of the nation's contiguous land borders." All Asians except for those from the Philippines, since it was a Protectorate to the United States, were excluded "on the grounds that they were racially ineligible for naturalized citizenship."

While arguing for a different quota system, the act's sponsors, Albert Johnson and David Reed, stated that the previous quotas had been based on the numbers of foreign-born in the population but not those born in America. When these quotas were calculated using numbers from the 1920s, they reflected those who were favored (84 per cent from northern and western Europe) versus those who were not (16 per cent from southern and eastern Europe). The new law "restricted immigration to 155,000 a year, established temporary quotas based on 2 percent of the foreign-born population in 1890 census, and mandated the secretaries of labor, state, and commerce to determine quotas on the basis of national origins by 1927." However, numerical limits were not imposed on countries of the Western hemisphere. Overall, this Act helped to solidify the importance of "race" within our framework regarding immigration and citizenship. This law also established our Border Patrol which we have seen develop over time towards our South.

Immigration Act of 1965

At a time in which our nation was engaged in a Civil Rights Movement trying to ensure equal rights for all, immigration legislation was also moving towards the same goals. The Immigration Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, ended the national origins quota system that had been in place since the 1920's. A preference system based on the skills immigrants would bring with them or on family reunification was established. According to the Web Chronology Project, "More specifically, immigrants are accepted according to following preferences: unmarried adults whose parents are American citizens, spouses and offspring of permanent residents, gifted professionals, scientists, and artists. The last preferences are the following: married offspring of American citizens, siblings of adult citizens, skilled/unskilled individuals of occupations lacking workers in America, and refugees from either communist (or communist-controlled) countries, or those from the Middle-East." 31

Numerical restrictions on visas were set at 170,000 per year for the Eastern Hemisphere with a maximum of 20,000 per country and 120,000 per year for the Western Hemisphere. These numbers did not include immediate family members of current U.S. citizens nor special immigrants.

The smaller limit on Western hemisphere numbers also reflected the growing concern of Mexican migration across the U.S. – Mexico border. The Act's sponsors and President Johnson never thought that the 1965 Immigration Act would completely reconfigure immigration the way that it has where people from Latin American and Asia account for the majority of the immigration to the United States today.

Mexico and the United States: An Intertwined History – the Beginning

Mexico and the United States share a unique past, an interesting relationship that has been based on change over time, a type of tug-of-war between the two countries for land and labor.

Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821. These lands included what is now considered: California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. Movement throughout the southwest at this time was pretty free in nature. Many settlers traveled south into the territory to establish themselves. In fact, as Americans began to move west in large numbers, they also moved into the Texas territory (Tejas) belonging to Mexico, as it had not established a strong border control. Governor Ann Richards, highlighted in the Ken Burns series, *The West*, states:

I think it was an opportunity for adventure for them.

A lot of people came to Texas because they were running from the law or running from a bad family situation, a bad marriage. Texas was filled with, shall we say, fringe society.

But it was also filled with a lot of people who really did want something more than what they had and thought they might find it on the frontier.

To try and curb this, Mexico passed the Immigration Act of 1824. There was concern about culture clashes between the two groups of people and the fact that Americans were also bringing their slaves to the areas as well. Numbers of foreigners steadily increased, as did concern for those numbers, so in 1830 a more strict law "curtailing" immigration was passed. This did not, however, stop people from coming into the area that then created an entire group of undocumented immigrants of Anglo foreign nationals. Overall, the people of

Tejas did not feel supported by their government so 'far away' in Mexico City and, after a number of battles, Tejas, won independence from Mexico to become the Lone Star Republic. Confusion ensued regarding the southern part of its border – what belonged to whom? Texas in 1845 was admitted as a state into the Union.

The Mexican government was eager not to lose any additional lands, so it campaigned to populate the northern parts of the territory (California and Nuevo Mexico) by offering land grants. The newly appointed President Polk aimed to fulfill Manifest Destiny. Texas became part of the Union within his first year of presidency. He also sent troops to the disputed border of Texas and due to an incident on April 25, 1846, Congress declared war which lasted from 1846-1848.

Following the defeat of the Mexican army and the fall of Mexico City, in September 1847, the Mexican government surrendered and peace negotiations began. The war officially ended on February 2, 1848, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo adding 525,000 square miles to United States territory to include all or parts of present-day Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Mexico also gave up all claims to Texas and recognized the Rio Grande as America's southern boundary.

In return, the United States paid Mexico \$15 million and agreed to settle all claims of U.S. citizens against Mexico. Mexicans on the "middle ground area" could become citizens of the United States or move south. 80,000 Mexicans were granted citizenship. This was after a debate that ensued between John Calhoun and John Dix in Congress (1848) as to whether Mexico should become part of the United States. After the Mexican War, ideas differed as to what should happen to Mexico and the people. The acquisition of this land could mean an area for slavery and/or mineral/land wealth. Calhoun and Dix used race as to support their arguments, though they differed in their opinions. Calhoun was against the incorporation of these people as they were not of the "white race." Dix disagreed, saying that we should acquire the Mexican territory, looking to use this as a measure to secure peace in the area. He noted that it is inevitable that "our population is destined to spread itself across the American continent, filling up, with more or less completeness, according to attractions of soil and climate, the space that intervenes between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans." He pointed out that the "aboriginal peoples" need to "give way" to this destiny.

Land disputes and political tensions remained high for the six years after the end of the War. Additionally, from the latest agreement between the two countries, The United States had agreed to protect Mexico from Native American attacks. Mexico wanted monetary compensation for those who had suffered.

Furthermore, American citizens were entering illegally into Mexico at great numbers, causing rebellions and trouble in their quest for land. "The Gadsden Purchase, or Treaty, was an agreement between the United States and Mexico, finalized in 1854, in which the United States agreed to pay Mexico \$10 million for a 29,670 square mile portion of Mexico that later became part of Arizona and New Mexico. Gadsden's Purchase provided the land necessary for a southern transcontinental railroad and attempted to resolve conflicts that lingered after the Mexican-American War."

Twentieth Century Entanglements – More Recent Action

The historian, Stephen Pitti, believes that Mexican immigration is very different from any other group of people, as it has been a constant back and forth for over one hundred years and has become an "institutionalized migration". In this back and forth, the Bracero Program has been of the most importance. This Guest Worker Program impacted individuals, families, towns on both sides of the border), and U.S. – Mexico relations. Later, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and the California State Proposition 187 also both had a strong impact on the same groups of peoples who were part of the Bracero Program.

The Bracero Program

The Bracero (translated from Spanish as manual laborer) Program was an agreement between Mexico and the United States that was implemented in 1942 and ended in 1965. It served as a Guest Worker Program, or workers who are given special permission to come to a country (the United States) from another (Mexico) to work for an agreed upon amount of time.

From 1942 through 1965, over 4,600,000 Mexican men in 28 states 38 labored in the agricultural industry and railroads. The agreement began during World War II, in response to wartime labor shortages and increased agricultural labor demands to provide food to feed the public as well as the troops. We needed workers so we looked towards Mexico to assist us. For the farms and companies who supplied the positions, it was a winning situation in that the Mexicans became preferred workers.

The program was not without controversy. As in the past, Americans were fearful of having to compete with Mexicans for "jobs and lower wages." However, according to the Bracero Project, a collaborative effort amongst the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and News Media, the George Mason University, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Brown University, and

the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas at El Paso, in theory, the Bracero Program had safeguards to protect both Mexican and domestic workers: for example, guaranteed payment of at least the prevailing area wage received by native workers; employment for three-fourths of the contract period; adequate, sanitary, and free housing; decent meals at reasonable prices; occupational insurance at employer's expense; and free transportation back to Mexico at the end of the contract. Employers were supposed to hire braceros only in areas of certified domestic labor shortage, and were not to use them as strikebreakers.

The government (Consulates) was to oversee the working and living conditions of these laborers including payment in which they were to receive an equitable wage according to where they were sent. This was not always the case. There were many violations of the terms, and many of the Bracero workers were exploited because of their vulnerability due to language differences, and their distance from home in unfamiliar areas. Also, those overseeing the program were far from where the workers were located.

Additionally, farms especially became dependent on Mexican migrant workers as an inexpensive workforce. After living here for so long, Mexican workers became accustomed to their new environments and did not want to leave. And, although they were told that their transportation back to Mexico would be paid for, it was not.

In the 1950s, when economic times began to worsen, there was another backlash centered on Mexicans. This was referred to as Operation Wetback and was reminiscent of the repatriation efforts that occurred during the Great Depression when 400,000 people were sent back to Mexico, including almost half who were already U.S. citizens. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) looked for undocumented workers to send back to Mexico. It is estimated that 1,000,000 people were sent back to Mexico, including U.S. citizens who were children of the undocumented workers.

Even after the Bracero Program ended, farms and corporations still claimed a need for this labor force. In response, the government created what is referred to as a H-2A Visa that allows for a variety of people to enter the United States for a limited time period as "specialty workers, farm workers, non-agricultural workers, trainees, and family members of those with H-2A Visas." Afterwards, beginning with the 1965 Act, the government responded by beginning to limit the visas in the Western Hemisphere, having Mexicans compete with all those vying for the visas, including Cubans. However, despite all, there was still a need for the

Mexican labor force, and they still came whether they had documentation or not. It was commonly known as a "clandestine guest worker program."

Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)

This law, also known as the 1986 Amnesty, with the aim to control illegal immigration, was referred to as the "three-Legged Stool" because of the three main parts: legalization for undocumented immigrants, employer sanctions, and heightened border enforcement. It enabled 1,300,000 undocumented immigrants the opportunity to apply for legal status if they met certain requirements. One set of qualifications included "that they lived and maintained a continuous physical presence in the U.S. since January 1st, 1982, possess a clean criminal record, and provide proof of registration within the Selective Service." Additionally, applicants were required to have a minimal knowledge of U.S. history and the English language or be enrolled in a course of study.

The law also included sanctions, financial and otherwise, for employers who hire undocumented workers. The I-9 Form was introduced for employers to confirm a worker's identity and eligibility for employment in the United States. It also called for increased border control. It is significant in that it remains in effect today – almost thirty years later. However, some things did not turn out as expected. First, many more immigrants were processed than expected. Numbers exceeded initial thoughts. Although employers were now required to ask for certain legal documents to hire employees there was still some flexibility in the type of documents. This being the case, there was widespread fraudulence of documentation.

More recently, the government is having a small percentage of employers use an E-Verify system that uses "immigration and social security databases to determine whether new hires are authorized to work." Due to recent legislation, many more will be required to use this system instead of the IRCA paperwork I-9 one. Lastly, as seen since IRCA, funding for border enforcement has increased dramatically from hiring new staff to manage and patrol to creating more fences and other barriers.

California State Proposition 187

In November of 1994, voters in California passed Proposition 187, also known as the "Save Our State" initiative, at a two to one ratio. There was an overwhelming

concern with the economic hardships undocumented people placed on the state and the peoples' tax dollars. This proposed legislation denied health care, education, and welfare to the undocumented persons in the state of California. It made law enforcement personnel, teachers, social service, and health care workers responsible for verifying the legal status of their clients. If they were found to be undocumented migrants, these providers were to deny them services and report them to the authorities.

Right after being signed into law, various civil rights groups filed lawsuits to prevent the legislation to come into effect. In 1997, Federal District Courts deemed the proposition an "unconstitutional attempt by the government of California to regulate immigration, contrary to the supremacy clause and preemption doctrine." In the following year came the definitive Federal District Court ruling that overturned major provisions. Afterwards California went through a governor election resulting in new leadership, Gray Davis, who sought to mediate an end to the suits rather than continue with a lengthy appeal process. By 1999, both sides including the state of California had agreed to end the litigation, preventing the major controversial provisions – denial of services to undocumented migrants and turning in suspected unauthorized migrants to federal and state authorities – to go into effect.

This particular legislation saw an incredible amount of legal and social protest that galvanized civil rights groups across California and our country. This is important as we continue to see this type of response – the Dream Act and the most current border issues.

Discussion questions will follow.



Read the first story from *The Circuit*, “Under the Wire.”

1. What do you know about the author, Francisco Jimenez, based on reading the dedication and Acknowledgment that begin his book?
2. What are some of the dreams of California initially held by Francisco and his family, and where did they come from?

In the stories of *The Circuit*, the narrator, Francisco is mostly recounting his new life in California as it happens, and he is not thinking of where he came from. For one thing, his entire family is with him, and he is not looking back.

But as an adult, in the first story, he remembers Mexico and crossing the border. In order to cross into California undetected, he and his family did not bring much with them but their language and their memories of home; but from this, they brought with them a real perspective on their new life in California.

And while the events in this collection of stories took place in the past, their truths are still relevant to today's world.

The following photograph of the US/Mexican border (as well as the photograph above) was taken at the exhibition, *Border Cantos*, at the San Jose Museum of Art, in 2016. The original photographs are the work of the photographer Richard Misrach.



An essay written by assistant curator, Rory Padeken, accompanied the San Jose exhibition:

“We are constantly drawing the world together in terms of resemblance and recasting,” noted writer Rebecca Solnit. “And it is the job of artists to draw the lines anew to startle us, wake us up, see the secret route there or where we’ve always been.” (from Rebecca Solnit, “Drawing Constellations,” in *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007, p166.) In their collaborative project, *Border Cantos*, photographer Richard Misrach and avant-garde composer Guillermo Galindo reframe mainstream discussions and media coverage of US-Mexico border issues by giving presence to the thousands of undocumented individuals who cross into the United States each year....

Misrach began photographing the 1,969-mile border between the United States and Mexico in 2004...and has captured the diverse styles of the fence as it cuts through the empty desert, grassland, and rugged mountain passes. Since he began collaborating with Galindo, he has turned his revelatory lens on the varied, mutually dependent communities of the borderlands and focuses on found objects that reveal traces of human journeys through the desert landscape.

In early 2014, Misrach was roaming the borderlands near Brownsville, Texas, when he noticed a “trace of the future”: children’s belongings littering the arid landscape....That summer, news broke out about the surge of unaccompanied minors migrating to the United States since winter of 2013. During this period, the US Customs and Border Protection agency apprehended 52,193 children, representing a 99% increase from the previous year. Suddenly, Misrach’s relatively straightforward images of a toddler’s blue velcro-strapped shoes, a girl’s tweezers, and a backpack containing a small lipstick compact found scattered through the desert became a haunting and somber portraits of young, vulnerable human lives.”

You can view some aspects of the exhibition here:

<http://bordercantos.com>

Assignment:

Do you know when your family first came to the United States? What do your parents, or your grandparents, remember?

One possible project for this semester is to find out as much as you can about your family history, through interviews, through records, through genealogical sites, and to begin to assemble a presentation of experiences

that you discover through photographs, memorabilia, family lore, name changes, dates, and languages.

You could present this as a chronology of events or a story based on your family tree.

For now, your assignment is to find a family member or neighbor interested in exchanging with you, and design and conduct an interview based on the following interview process from Ping Chong + Company:

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

An interview is like a journey down a river. Each question takes you down a different branch of the river; each branch yields its own stories. When you begin, you never know where you might end up.

1. FACT QUESTIONS:

- Nearly every interview begins with some sort of fact question, also known as a ‘direct question’—the beginning of the journey down the river.
- This type of question can also provide a ‘warm-up’ for the interviewee. It can offer a break from open-ended questions. And it can signal a switch to a new topic—a new branch of the river.
- This type of question usually yields a “yes” or “no” answer, or a short answer.

—Example: “*Do you like fishing?*” — “*Yes.*”

—Example: “*Where were you born?* —*Boston*

2. FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- You ask for more details about the fact you just learned. These questions give you a longer answer—you’re continuing down this branch of the river.
- This type of question often begins with *Who, What, Where, Why, How, Did you?*

Example: “*Why do you like fishing?*”

Example: “*If you were born in Boston, how did you end up in Maine?*”

3. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- This type of question invites more detail about the topic you are discussing, and should be framed broadly
 Example: *“Tell me more about what it’s like to spend a day on the water fishing?”*
 Example: *“How did you feel about moving to Maine when you were a teenager?”*

SAMPLE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:

- *Please share any unique or unusual stories about your family’s history*
- *Was there a person in your life who had a profound influence on shaping the person you are today? If so, please give an example of how they influenced you. What is your earliest memory?*
- *Who raised you and who lived in your home(s) growing up?*
- *Please share the names and some background of the people who raised you.*
- *Do you have siblings? Did you grow up with your siblings?*
- *What language did you speak growing up? What language(s) do you speak at home now?*
- *Do you have memories/experiences of feeling like an outsider/other in the community you grew up in? In your current community?*
- *Where/with whom have you found a sense of belonging or support?*
- *Where is “home” for you? If “home” is not where you currently live, what do you miss?*
- *Did you have a relationship with grandparents/family elders growing up? Please share their names and backgrounds.*
- *Do you know how your grandparents met? Are there any stories about their history?*

- *Was there a person in your life who had a profound influence on shaping the person you are today? If so, please give an example of how they influenced you.*
- *Please share any unique or unusual stories about your family's history*
- *What are some holiday, festival, or cultural traditions that you experienced growing up, including foods? (wedding ceremony, naming ceremony, harvest festival, etc). Do you currently observe/celebrate them?*
- *If not born in your current city, how long have you lived there, and what brought you there?*
- *What do you like about living in your city? What do you dislike about living in your city?*
- *Please list 6-10 names that are common names in your culture OR family history Please also note if the name has any special meaning (eg: Rosa means Rose, Hakim means wise, Aiko means beloved), or if it is the name of an important religious, cultural or, political figure.*
-
- *Also, if you grew up in a family or community where nicknames were common, please provide examples of names and their nicknames.*
- **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?**
- *In the space below, please write what you think of when you think of your country/place of birth or community.*
- *These impressions can be anything that comes to mind: smells, sights, people, traditions.*
 - **Examples:**
 - *I think of my grandmother cooking gallo pinto and the smell of onion and cilantro. . .*
 - *I think of how the light looks at 11:30pm during the White Nights. . .*
 - *I think of the chanting of the call to prayers. . .*
 - *I think of the wildflowers that grew in the empty field behind my house. .*

Lesson 3: Setting

The second story, “Soledad” is partly about being left alone as a child. Keeping in mind the feelings that thread through the story, your assignment is to design a stage setting with items at hand. For instance, you don’t need an old jalopy; you could “make” one from an old table, so that the inside of the *Carcachita* could be under the table, and the roof could be the tabletop.

Either draw this stage setting, or assemble one and photograph it for this assignment.

Lesson 4: Creating short scenes with dialogue

“Inside Out” is about Francisco’s first day of school. “Embarrassed and nervous, I rolled at the caterpillar in the jar. I did this every time someone looked at me.” (14)

1. Do you remember your first day of school? Complete the following: “I remember my first day of school...”
2. What are two surprising things that happen to Francisco at the end of the school year?
3. Retell part of the story, in dialogue, by writing short scenes of at least two of the following:
 - a. His first time in the classroom (16-17)
 - b. The playground (Curtis and Arthur are introduced)
 - c. The caterpillar and the picture book of butterflies
 - d. Art class
 - e. The green jacket and Curtis
 - f. The cocoon
 - g. May 23rd: the classroom; the playground; the bus.

Lesson 5: Endings and significant objects

1. “Miracle in Tent City” and “El Angel do Oro” each come to a definite conclusion. As with many of the stories in *The Circuit*, the meaning or understanding is to be discovered in the final lines. Write several paragraphs about the endings of these two stories, using specific details and direct quotations from the book to support your observations.
2. “Christmas Gifts, ”Death Forgiven” and “Cotton Sack” are about disappointment and powerlessness in the face of reality.

At the end of “Cotton Sack” the narrator states, “I knew then I had not yet earned my own cotton sack” (72)

Choose an object that represents something you wish for that is as significant as the cotton sack was to Francisco. This would be something that holds a meaning for you, something that you want but have not attained, and then write a paragraph about it.

Lesson 6: Adaptations

The stories, “The Circuit,” “Learning the Game” and “To Have and to Hold” center on hard truths and losses; the final loss occurs in “Moving Still.”

In this concluding lesson, we will study adaptations strategies that can be used to transform narrative fiction into a live performance:

Adaptation Strategies for Using Live Performance to Explore Narrative Fiction

Matthew Spangler, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Performance Studies
San José State University

Six adaptation strategies:

- 1) **For third person narration: fuse the narration with the point(s) of view of the character(s).** The stage play of T.C Boyle’s novel *The Tortilla Curtain* does this. Candido, América, and Delaney perform narration that applies to their respective points of view with the emotional attitude of their

characters at that particular moment in the story. The narration serves as a kind of internal monologue. A decision to make it whether to leave the third person tense or change it to first person (as *Tortilla Curtain* does).

2) For third person narration (another strategy): create a single character for the narrator, a character outside the story itself. Start by asking the following questions of the story's narrator: (a) Who would know this information? (b) Who would want to tell this story and why? (c) What is the narrator's attitude toward the story's characters and events? Some common choices: a nosy neighbor; an older version of one of the characters in the story; a sympathetic, or not, outsider. Think of the narrator in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*.

3) For first person narration: split the narration into two or more "I" voices.

Start by identifying the contradictions in the narrator's voice and create separate characters from these contradictions. A common strategy is the creation an older and younger self (Act I of my adaptation of *The Kite Runner* does this). But the split doesn't have to be based on age; it could be based on any division within the character.

4) For first person narration: no split. The narrator moves between speaking to the audience and playing moments of dialogue with other characters on stage (Act II of my adaptation of *The Kite Runner*). Think of the relationship between soliloquy and dialogue in Shakespeare's plays.

5) For first or third person narrator: choral scripting. This is different from the other strategies discussed here in that there is relatively little, or maybe even no consideration of character. Instead of a focus on character, the script is written based on the musicality and rhythm of language, like a piece of music, with the actors' voices being the musical instruments. Repetition can be very effective.

6) For first or third person narrator: images. Tell the story through a series of three visual images created with your bodies. You should give each image a title, which will serve to distinguish it from the others and tie it back to the story. For example: in image number one, two actors hug while a third actor stands off to the side. One of the actors in the embrace says, "Home." In image two, one actor leaves the embrace and hugs the third actor, and says, "Away." In image three, the first actor (the one left alone) crawls into a ball on the floor and tires to make himself as small as

possible, while the other two actors face out, and hold hands, as is preparing for a new life together. Together, they say, "Together." The actor on the floor says, "Forgotten."

Assignments:

1. In "The Circuit," there are moments when the narrator is more descriptive, and others where he is more actively involved in the story.

Choose a passage where the narrator's voice can be split into two or more voices, and then write the scene according to adaption strategy #3.

Or, choose a part of the story where the narrator moves between describing what is happening to him and being more actively engaged in dialogue with other characters, and then write a scene according to strategy # 4.

2. In the story, "Moving Still," Francisco decides to understand and memorize the part of The Declaration of Independence that speaks directly to the American dream:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; and to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed" (129)

Francisco says, "I was determined to memorize the lines from the Declaration of Independence and recite them perfectly, without forgetting a single word. I took the text and broke it down, line by line." (131)

Create your own adaption of "Moving Still" by dramatizing the pull, as well as the hard reality, of the American dream, through using Strategy #5, choral scripting and repetition.

