

LATINO LITERATURE: TEXT AND CONTEXT IN THE US
COMMUNICATION, ARTS AND HUMANITIES
ENG 299

Class Topic

Latin@s in Labor: Two Stories Diverge

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Lesson Goals (Specifically, what will students learn?)

- To identify rhetorical strategies used to deliver visual arguments.
- To contrast texts that reflect Latina/o labor history with US social history.
- To analyze the circulation of Latina/o political activism within US public discourse.

Description

This 1-class lesson introduces students to Latina/o labor activism as part of a 5-week unit which will result in students creating 1.) a visual argument that employs the rhetorical strategies taught to them through the model texts; 2.) an informal oral presentation when students describe why they made their rhetorical choices for their visual argument, and 3.) a researched essay about Latina/o labor activism.

Today's lesson explores two conflicting stories: Lorraine Collett Petersen's and Ester Hernandez's through one iconic image: Sun Maid Raisin. The goal is for the students to understand how messages are "packaged" for consumption and begin the process of becoming producers of a visual argument. Key ideas: visual argument, iconography, social imagination.

Materials

12 Color copies of "[Sun Mad Raisins](#)" (1982) by Ester Hernandez.

12 color copies 8 ½ x 11 of [original Sun Maid Raisins advertisement](#) for production exercise. (click here for pdf file)

12 Black and White 8 ½ x 11 copies of the original advertisement for remaking and representing Ester Hernandez's story. Providing a choice for them to play with colors.

Three sets of Sharpie Markers

Sun Maid Raisin Boxes

AV Equipment:

Smart Board with document projector

Step One:

Distribute Sun Maid raisin boxes. Tell a story about what this box means to you--a childhood memory. Define ethos, pathos, logos. Which appeal(s) seem to be the strongest? Does it evoke an emotional appeal? An ethical appeal? Discuss as group. Share one or two stories. (7 minutes)

Step Two:

Show clip: “[Sun Maid Goes to Hollywood](#)” (2012). Synthespian Studios. Youtube. (34 seconds, view full-video)

Step Three: Provide the two opposing stories: (5 minutes)

Ester Hernández grew up in California’s San Joaquin Valley, where she unknowingly bathed in and drank polluted water and worked in an environment contaminated by pesticides. The Hernández family was actively involved in the struggle for farm workers’ rights, an issue of great concern to César Chávez.

Hernández created “Sun Mad,” a screenprint which appropriates the Sun Maid iconography and redefines this image to raise awareness about the effects of pesticides on agricultural workers. She had visited her mother in 1979, and read articles her mother had saved about “water contamination in the barrio.” After thinking about it for two years, and remembering her work as a farmhand, she focused her anger on the dangers of growing grapes for the raisin industry. "I focused on something personal, the Sun Maid box," she said. "Slowly I began to realize," she continued, “how to transform the Sun Maid and unmask the truth behind the wholesome figures of agribusiness. Sun Mad evolved out of my anger and my fear of what would happen to my family, my community, and to myself."

Original Source: Heyman, Therese Thau Posters American Style. Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1988.

Lorraine Collett Petersen grew up in California’s Fresno Valley. In May 1915, she was discovered drying her black hair curls in the sunny backyard of her parents’ home and asked to pose for a painting while holding a basket tray of fresh grapes. Her portrait first appeared on Sun-Maid packages in 1916.

The “About Sun Maid” describes the sunbonnet and time: “Sometimes we forget that in 1915 there were no electric hair dryers, that television would not be invented for decades to come, and that automobiles were not in every home. Life was much simpler, more rural, a lot less hectic and sunbonnets were still part of women’s fashion in California.”

About the color of the bonnet: “Lorraine Collett Petersen attended an event in San Francisco with a number of other girls as representatives of the recently formed raisin company. They handed out samples while wearing white blouses with blue piping and BLUE sunbonnets. As Lorraine would later tell, ‘it was only after we returned to Fresno that I was seen wearing my mother’s red bonnet in my backyard and it was the suggestion of the wife of an executive from the San Francisco Exposition that the bonnet color be changed from blue to red, because red reflected the color of the sun better’ ... Throughout the years Lorraine represented Sun-Maid well, including appearing on the syndicated television talk shows of the day.”

Original Source: “About Sun Maid.” Sun Maid Corporate Website, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.sunmaid.com>.

Step Four:

Small Group: Break class into groups of three. Distribute Sun Maid Raisins advertisement. Groups work for twenty minutes in imagining how Ester Hernandez would depict the Sun Maid Raisin Girl. How might she play with language? How might use different colors to signify new meanings? What images might she distort or recreate to represent her and her families experiences with agribusiness?

Have one member record these edits and revisions on the original advertisement to share in whole group. (20 minutes)

Step Five:

Whole Group: Discuss the choices the group made in “revising” the advertisement to address Ester Hernandez’s version of the story. (10 minutes)

Step Six:

Reveal Ester Hernandez’s “Sun Mad Raisins.” Wrap up. (5 minutes)

Lesson Plan Resources:

Vicki Ruiz, “Coloring Class: Racial Constructions in Twentieth-Century Chicana/o Historiography,” in *A Companion to Latina/o Studies*, eds. Juan Flores and Renato Rosaldo (2007), pp. 169-179. The purpose of this reading is to provide a foundation to students of the Civil Right struggles as part of a larger, profound narrative of negotiation and contestation within US historical/political narratives.

Zaragoza Vargas. “Latino Workers.” *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*. pp. 199 – 212. US National Parks. A series of essays organized thematically by topic and providing a historical overview of the topic. A nice resource for composition teachers to provide context for students.

[Farm Workers Movement Documentation Project](#). University of California at San Diego. An extensive collection of photos, archives, oral histories, essays, and art. Great resource for primary source artifacts.

[“About Sun Maid.” Sun Maid Corporate Website](#). History of the iconic imagery of Sun-Maid Girl, Lorraine Collett Petersen. A secondary lesson on language use, promotional material from a corporate website.