

La Mission lesson plan

Overview

I developed this lesson plan for an ESL film class that I taught to international university students with high level English skills. Through viewing films set in the San Francisco Bay Area and other parts of the US, the students develop their English skills while exploring immigrant and multicultural experiences in the United States. (See the [Film and identity syllabus](#) for more information.) This lesson accompanies the viewing of *La Mission*, a film set in San Francisco and directed by Peter Bratt. The movie centers on the experiences of a Chicano father and the challenges he faces around learning that his son is gay. The gentrification of his Latin-American neighborhood and gang violence are also important issues addressed in the film. This lesson concludes with a quiz covering both this film and the preceding film, Spanglish, and then a teacher-led field trip to Balmy Alley, a famous block in the Mission District of San Francisco with extensive murals depicting Latin-American motifs.

Objectives

- Students will understand important vocabulary and concepts from the film.
- Students will understand key events and issues from the film.
- Students will analyze cultural and ethnic identities.
- Students will be able to identify some of the causes of gentrification.

Materials

All materials are accessible online with the links included except for two handouts on gentrification that are not included.

Length: The class meets 2 days a week / 2 ½ hours a day

Day 1

Previewing the film

1. Students discuss an introductory reading for the film (homework assigned before class) <http://sdgln.com/entertainment/2010/04/29/la-mission-red-carpet-celebrity-reception-and-charity-benefit-saturday-may#sthash.9MrgRVnw.dpbs>
2. Students bring written responses to the following questions:
 - *This article states that the people living in the Mission District in San Francisco included many “immigrant and low income families, to painters, poets, white hipsters, Latin b-boys and junkies.” Using a dictionary or Wikipedia, look up any words that you don't understand in this description of the neighborhood.*
 - *In the second paragraph, writer/director Peter Bratt describes his inspiration and motivation for writing “La Mission”. In one sentence, using your own words, summarize what he wanted to explore by making this film.*

Lecture on the Mission District

Students listen to a short lecture with slides on the Mission District past and present

Preview of key vocabulary from the film

Chicano	trendy	macho
bohemian	mainstream	homes (homeboy)
brown people	displacement	chale
la Raza	eviction	low rider
gentrification	slumming	

Students view 1st part of the film (40 minutes.)

Discussing stereotypes

1. Students generate their own understanding of characteristic/stereotypes of both Latinos and hipsters.
2. Students view images of stereotypes of both Latino and hipsters, and discuss and compare them.

www.latinheat.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Lalo-Stereotypes.jpg
dailyinfographic.com/evolution-of-the-hipster-infographic

HW

1. Read "Are Chicanos the same as Mexicans?" <http://www.mexica.net/chicano.php>
2. Read the definition of "hipster" at www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=hipster
3. Write a 100-200 word entry in your journal on the following prompt. *Both Chicano and hipster are terms that describe people who have grown up in the US culture. Choose one of these terms (either Chicano or hipster) and reflect on commonalities and/or differences with your own cultural identity. Discuss similarities and/or differences.*

Day 2

Analyzing different Latino identities

Students review the different identities described in "[Are Chicanos the same as Mexicans?](http://www.mexica.net/chicano.php)" and the definition of "hipster" at [Urban Dictionary](http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=hipster).

Exploring identity

1. Review different markers for identity
2. Discuss characters and identities in La Mission

<i>Che</i>	<i>father</i>	<i>Chicano</i>
<i>Jes</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>gay Latino teenager</i>
<i>Lena</i>	<i>neighbor</i>	<i>hipster</i>
<i>Jordan</i>	<i>boyfriend</i>	<i>gay teenager</i>
<i>Rene</i>	<i>brother</i>	<i>Chicano</i>
3. The teacher models this activity by giving a variety of words to define their identity such as ethnicity, nationality, relationships, job, personality, etc.
4. Then students do go around where they define key parts of their own identities

Analyzing passages from the film.

Students discuss the following quotes from the movie.

- *“Once all you hipsters and money makers get sick of slumming it in the mission, it'll still be here.”*
- *“You can take the man out of the Mission but you can't take the Mission out of the man. It's in the blood, Homes”*

Students view 2nd part of film (40 minutes)

HW

1. Read “Facts on Gentrification”
2. Read “The Process of Gentrification”
3. Write a 100-200 word entry in your journal on the following prompt. *Briefly summarize in your own words “The process of Gentrification”*

Day 3

Discussing gentrification

1. Students discuss the assigned readings.
2. In pairs students discuss the following quotes about gentrification from Peter Bratt, the director of La Mission.
 - *Well, I think it's important to recognize that the Mission District has been in a state of gentrification since the Ohlone people were the first inhabitants, when the first Spanish colonists arrived.*
 - *And yet because of the level of gentrification that's going on -- not unlike New York -- where I spent nearly the last dozen years, San Francisco's quickly become a city for the rich. And so the working class families, both Latino and otherwise that have been there for a couple of generations are being pushed out. That's creating a certain degree of resentment and external pressure on relationships and obstacles that the community is already facing.*

Students view the final 3rd part of the film (40 minutes)

Post-viewing discussion

Students review the following scenes from the movie and discuss the corresponding questions.

1. Review the scenes of both Che attacking the car driver and the gang banger attacking Jes.
*Compare both Che and the gang banger and their use of violence
Do you sympathize with one or the other or both? Why or why not?
What are their reasons for using violence?*
2. Review the scene when Jordan and Jes react to the gang banger's taunts
*Compare the reactions of Jordan and Jes in reacting to the gang banger's homophobia.
Why do you think they react differently?
How would you have reacted?*

Analyzing the film message

Students read this passage from Peter Bratt about his film and discuss the following questions.

“Before I sit down and write,” he says, “I first need to have a theme or ‘big idea’ burning inside. Once I have that, everything else – the main character, the location, and conflict – starts to magically come together. “Before I began La Mission,” he continues, “the consuming thought on my mind was the presence of violence in our daily lives and our almost unconscious acceptance of it. I was drawn to the idea of transformation, and the pain that often goes with it. What will it take on our part, each one of us, to affect real and lasting change? After all, it’s not easy to change, even when we know it’s for our own good. La Mission’s main character was the perfect vehicle for me to explore this idea.”

- *What message does the movie make about violence? Refer to examples in the movie.*
- *Do you think Che experienced a process of transformation? To what extent?*
- *What obstacles or difficulties did he encounter in transforming?*
- *What helped him in transforming?*

HW Prepare for quiz on the films Spanglish and La Mission.

Day 4

Students take quiz on Latin-American Experiences

Field trip to the Mission District

After taking the quiz, the students take a field trip led by the teacher to Balmy Alley, a famous block in the Mission District known for its extensive murals.

HW

1. Visit Balmy Alley with your teacher
2. Take a picture of a mural that interests you
3. Write a 100-200 word entry in your journal interpreting and/or critiquing the mural