



## ***My name is Gabriela: The Life of Gabriela Mistral*** ***Me llamo Gabriela Mistral: la vida de Gabriela Mistral*** **Mini-Unit Plan**

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### **Meet the Designer:**

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### **Introducing the Mini-Unit:**

This unit is designed for classroom instruction in any integrated classroom in grades K-5, specifically in Springfield, Massachusetts. This lesson can be used in small groups of special education students, in full classes, or on grade level or school level teams.

### **Contextualizing the Picture Book:**

Brown, M. (2005). *My name is Gabriela: the life of Gabriela Mistral = Me llamo Gabriela Mistral: la vida de Gabriela Mistral*. (Parra, J. Illu.). Flagstaff, Arizona: Luna Rising.

#### **Library of Congress Genres:**

1. Mistral, Gabriela 1889-1957 - juvenile literature
2. Authors, Chilean - 20th century - biography - juvenile literature

#### **Summary:**

This is the story of Gabriela Mistral, a Chilean teacher and poet, and the first Latina Nobel Prize winner in the world. The biography is told as the story of her life, in the voice of Gabriela herself. The text is in both English and Spanish and woven with the illustrations to showcase life stages that are of high-interest to children, including her family, games she played when she was young, her career, and her travels. After the narrative, her story is complemented by a third person single-page

biography that highlights her legacy as a poet, teacher, and inspiration.

The illustrations in this book are so intentional. By gathering your class close to read and investigate each page, picture, and text, the VTS and WBA are integral to truly appreciating everything these images have to offer. Each animal, image, and symbol are meaningful and could result in an in-depth study.

Cultural themes in this book include education, language, family, poetry, writers, writing, travel, rural life, and poverty. While a nonfiction text, it tells about Gabriela Mistral's life in a story, with many pointed images and experiences that would be common among many children of the world. The author makes it a point to help children SEE themselves in books, which is particularly uncommon experience for children of Latin@ background, especially students with a Chilean heritage. As most children can identify with playing with siblings, going to school or learning with their family, or imagining what goes on in the world beyond their own place, the authors offers many entry points in this book.

### **Awards:**

2006 International Latino Book Award <http://lascomadres.com/latinolit/latino-book-awards/>  
From the website, the International Latino Book Award is awarded to the best achievements in Spanish or Portuguese literature annually.

### **Author Monica Brown:**

[www.monica-brown.net](http://www.monica-brown.net)

Author's official website, including her biography, book list, and more.

<https://www.teachingbooks.net/interview.cgi?id=119>

Interview with Monica Brown on her life and writing books by Teaching Books.Net (with free trial).

<https://www.teachingbooks.net/pronounce.cgi?aid=3483>

Monica Brown soundbite on how to pronounce her name and her name meaning. This is particularly perfect for this book, where the main character changes her name.

<http://labloga.blogspot.com/2007/09/interview-with-childrens-book-author.html>

Interview with Monica Brown on her research process for writing books, by La Bloga. Brown discusses her process for research, her plans for upcoming books, writing bilingual books, and her inspirations.

<https://megmedina.com/2012/10/03/here-come-the-americas-awards-q-a-with-author-monica-brown/>

Interview with Monica Brown on what inspired her to turn to writing, and how she turns non-fiction books into "stories." Brown also discusses what life is like as being on the forefront of an emerging Latina writer's culture and her recent trip to Peru.

### **Illustrator John Parra:**

<http://www.johnparraart.com/>

Illustrator's official website, completely family friendly, with art from so many Latinx books, including Round is a Tortilla and others. Images in high definition showcase acrylic on wood as his

preferred artistic method.

<https://latinosinkidlit.com/2015/01/15/in-the-studio-with-illustrator-john-parra/>  
Interview with John Parra on his personal artistic style by Latinos in Kid Lit, with images of his studio and texts he's worked on. He discusses what helped him develop a personal style, and his method to incorporate intentional symbolism. Parra also discusses his use of skin tone color.

<https://www.teachingbooks.net/pronounce.cgi?aid=3485>  
John Parra soundbite on how to pronounce his name. This is particularly perfect for this book, where the main character changes her name.

<http://blaine.org/sevenimpossiblethings/?p=3156>  
Interview with many images of his original artwork where he discusses his road to illustrator publication and how he structures school visits.

### **Gabriela Mistral**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/gabriela-mistral>  
Poems in Spanish and English, with biography.  
The poems are of varying difficulty and length; select for your students at their level. There is also an excellent biography which is at an adult reading level, for more background information.

## **Learning Experiences:**

### **Learning Experience Design #1: Chile landscape exploration**

Gabriela Mistral was born in Vicuña, Chile and grew up in a small Andean village called Montegrande, in Chile. Montegrande: Monte = mountain, grande = big. These large mountains were a foundation for Gabriela's upbringing. Mountain life was a unique, rural experience.

Look at the page beginning "When I was a little girl..." that describes where Gabriela grew up.  
Discuss:

- \* Why did the illustrator choose to use a two-page spread?
- \* What perspective does this image offer us as readers?

Use VTS strategies to analyze this two page spread.

Using VTS questions, analyze this page and record on chart paper:

- \* What's going on in this picture?
- \* What do you see that makes you say that?
- \* What else can you find?
- \* What do the words say?
- \* What kind of land is this?
- \* What do you see that is alive, and is it growing?
- \* Think about WHEN this picture is happening, are there satellite TVs and electric cars?
- \* What else happens at this TIME of the setting?

Look specifically at the characters:

- \* Who do you think is in this picture? What from the text might give you that hint?
- \* Who is not in this picture? Why aren't they there?  
(Teacher note: Gabriela's father was a teacher and left his family before Gabriela was 3, never to return.)
- \* How do you relate yourself to the character or illustration?
- \* Make your body look like the character's body. How do you feel?

## **Multimodal Families and Communities Connections:**

### **Research "Beyond the Andes"**

Research and look at maps, videos, and images of Chile and the Andes Mountains at home, at school, and at the library. Ask your family members to imagine with you: "When I couldn't sleep I would look up at the mountains and wonder what could be beyond them? Zebras with polka dots? Rainbow-colored flowers? Angels reading books?"

After showing your family an image, reading a description, or watching video of the Andes, work with them to imagine a scene that might happen "beyond the Andes." Sketch, draw, or color this scene at home and bring it into school to share.

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/chile>

Tourist and web guide to Chile, including rural and urban images, restaurants, historic information, and video footage.

<https://www.google.com/earth/>

Google Earth 3D view, which allows the viewer to see depth and topographical features. Amazing detail, though high detail requires a wide bandwidth and reliable internet.

<http://www.livescience.com/27897-andes-mountains.html>

Specific information about the Andes Mountain Range at a child-friendly level of reading. Images are included and provide an accurate picture to compare to other places.

### **Compare to "Beyond My Place"**

Have students work with families to identify an area of their family's history that they remember distinctly. For example, some families may have come from a different area of the country that is plains, with rows of farmland. Others may have come from islands, surrounded by the sea. Some local families may take trips to memorable places, like a beach, hiking, or watching a sunset from a specific rooftop, etc. Ask families to research and look at maps, videos, or images of their other location. Ask family members to imagine with you: "When I couldn't sleep I would look up at the \_\_\_\_\_ and wonder what could be beyond them?" Work with them to imagine a scene that would happen "beyond my place." Then, sketch, draw, or color this scene at home to share with the class.

These images can be compared and contrasted, discussed at length with children as they develop their own understanding of place and placemaking.

### **Additional Multimodal Opportunities:**

Art modalities can be varied using the found maps, images, or scenes created from this lesson.

- \* Consider using pastels as the illustrator does.
- \* Create string art using nails and yarn on wood or cardboard. See this video for step-by-step how-to directions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ov5QAUApas4>

### **Creating Multimodal Interdisciplinary Opportunities:**

A public gallery of art can be put up in school hallways, malls, or local political office/library/community space. A family picture and short written summaries can be displayed next to each piece, in a museum style.

### **Learning Experience Design #2: Poetry and Music**

Some people say songs are poems put to music. Look at the page where Gabriela is in a circle and singing with her friends beginning “In our pretend class we sang songs like:...”

Using VTS questions, analyze this page and record on chart paper.

- \* What’s going on in this picture?
- \* Why is this happening?
- \* What do you see that makes you say that?
- \* What else can you find?
- \* What can you find that is similar to your life?
- \* What can you find that is very different from your life?
- \* What do the words say?

Look specifically at the characters:

- \* How do you relate yourself to the character or illustration?
- \* Make your body look like the character’s body. How do you feel?
- \* How might the characters be feeling? What makes you say that?

The song on this page is:

“The baby chicks are saying,

Peep, peep, peep.

It means they’re cold and hungry.

It means they need some sleep.”

Make a rhythm for this song. How does it sound?

Add clapping or shakers to the song. Does it sound like a dance?

Is this song loud or quiet? Is it slow or fast?

Dance around to the song. What does your dance look like?

Think of a song that you know well. On a large chart paper, write out the words to the song.

Discuss together: How does it look?

Would you write it in a paragraph or in stanzas?

How do you see it being punctuated, if at all?

Work together to read the text of the song without singing it. Then sing the song, paying attention to how you’ve written it.

Is the rhythm of the song reflected in the way you’ve written it?

Add clapping or shakers to the song. Does it sound like a dance?

Is this song loud or quiet? Is it slow or fast?

Dance around to the song. What does your dance look like?  
Do this again, with multilingual songs or songs not in your native language.

### **Multimodal Families and Communities Connections:**

Ask families to think of a song they know, sing, or is special to them in some way. This could be a bedtime/lullaby, traditional birthday or religious song, or other family tradition.

Write the words/lyrics of a family song together, or even as a poem.

Share this with the class by: submitting the lyrics written on paper, via email or text, or as spoken word format recorded on phone, device, tablet, computer or otherwise.

Teachers can create audiobooks from a few simple audiofiles. These can be used to share student work with home-bound families, or family members across the world.

### **Additional Multimodal Opportunities:**

Take a poem you know and put it to music with your class, or write a poem and put it to music.

### **Creating Multimodal Interdisciplinary Opportunities:**

Illustrate a song or poem from the previous work using the method of this illustrator: paint on wood. This site has great recipes for non-toxic paints that can be used on wood:

<http://craftingagreenworld.com/2012/06/25/reader-question-non-toxic-paint-for-wooden-toys/>

Read this interview to see examples of the illustrator's artwork. Parra discusses his preferred methods, and shares high definition images of his work.

<http://blaine.org/sevenimpossiblethings/?p=3156>

### **Learning Experience Design #3:**

In this book, Gabriela is "a name she chose herself". Naming is a very important idea in most cultures around the world. Read more about naming traditions from the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) blog here:

<http://blog.tesol.org/7-naming-customs-from-around-the-world/>

Have you ever wanted to pick your own name?

Read:

- ✱ <https://afrolegends.com/2012/01/18/my-name-by-magoleng-wa-selepe/> Poem about being 'renamed' without permission by South African Magoleng wa Selepe.
- ✱ Choi, Y. (2001). *The name jar*. New York: Knopf.
- ✱ Ada, A. F., & Thompson, K. D. (2013). *My name is Mari a Isabel*. Columbus, O.H: Zaner-Bloser.
- ✱ Mobin-Uddin, A., & Kiwak, B. (2005). *My name is Bilal*. Honesdale, Pa: Boyds Mills Press.
- ✱ Park, L. S. (2003). *When My Name Was Keoko*. New York: Recorded Books.

Discuss and compare texts. How do the characters in the poems and stories respond to their name changes? How would you respond if you were them?

Think about Gabriela in this book—what is her opinion of her name change?

- \* Why did the people in the stories change their name?
- \* Who gets to change their name?
- \* When do people get to change their name?
- \* Why do people change it?
- \* What are the benefits of changing your own name?
- \* What are the pitfalls of changing your name?

### **Multimodal Families and Communities Connections:**

Students should interview someone at home about their names.

- How was the child’s name determined?
- How about the adult?
- How about pets?
- What do your names mean?
- Were they ever changed in your family history memory?

### **Additional Multimodal Opportunities:**

Similar to the interviews with the author resources above, students can write up their interviews and publish in a blog format.

Interviews can be voice-recorded and edited for podcast or audiobook production.

<https://storycorps.org/participate/> has ideas on how to record and the types of questions to ask. This is great for people who are new to voice recording and podcasts.

### **Creating Multimodal Interdisciplinary Opportunities:**

A blog with written interviews, pictures, podcasts, or audiobooks can be produced and shared with families, staff, and community.

### **Summative Multimodal Learning Experience:**

- \* Interactive Poetry Readings
- \* Previously created poem/songs can be demonstrated by classes in both poetry and song.
- \* Audio/video recordings of interviews can be showcased, along with the art from the Chile exploration and painted wood art.
- \* Opportunities for family participation include multilingual poetry readings as well as production and facilitation support.

## **Standards:**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5** Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together

to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.10** By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

### **Next Steps for Your Learning:**

For student's next steps for learning, pose the following questions and keep on a chart paper in the room:

- ✱ After reading and doing these activities, what are we still curious about?
- ✱ How does the language of the place shape things like names?
- ✱ How does the language of our classroom shape the environment of our room and our work together?

Additional information on placemaking and creating a sense of self with places is:

[www.Hilltownfamilies.org](http://www.Hilltownfamilies.org)

Hilltown Families is an organization dedicated to helping people make educative experiences within their own communities. Additionally, ideas of placemaking and belonging are developed with numerous activities, texts, and explorations in art and music.

For additional educator background knowledge:

Botelho, M. J., & Rudman, M. K. (2009). *Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature: Mirrors, windows, and doors*. New York, NY: Routledge.

The chapter "Reading Literacy Narratives" speaks directly to the idea of names, nicknames, and cultural context.