HOLLYWOOD OR HISTORY?

AN INQUIRY-BASED STRATEGY FOR TEACHING LATINX HISTORY

Tim Monreal | Jesús A. Tirado

A VOLUME IN HOLLYWOOD OR HISTORY?

Hollywood or History?: An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Teaching Latinx History

EMERALD: HOLLYWOOD OR HISTORY?

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Series Description

Teaching and learning through Hollywood, or commercial, film productions is anything but a new approach and has been something of a mainstay in the classroom for nearly a century. Purposeful and effective instruction through film, however, is not problem-free and there are many challenges that accompany classroom applications of Hollywood motion pictures. In response to the problems and possibilities associated with teaching through film, we have developed the Hollywood or History? book series. The series consists of a collection of collaboratively developed practical, and classroom-ready lesson plans that might assists K–12 history/social studies teachers endeavoring to make effective use of film in their classrooms. Using the Hollywood or History? strategy, each lesson plan offers teachers an inquiry-based approach which allows students to analyze motion pictures, television shows, documentaries, and cartoons using multiple sources.

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Hollywood or History?: An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Teaching Latinx History

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Emerald Publishing Limited
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2025

Editorial matter and selection © 2025 Tim Monreal and Jesús A. Tirado

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 979-8-88730-902-6 HC
ISBN: 979-8-88730-901-9 PB
ISBN: 979-8-88730-903-3 ePDF
ISBN: 978-1-83708-563-7 EPUB

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INTRODUCTION

MORE THAN CRUMBS

> But I'm not content with crumbs. Nobody should be. Latinos deserve complexity and nuance, truth and beauty. Latinos deserve art, not insultingly simplistic, barely disguised agendas that undermine our inherent and inalienable dignity. (Rivera, 2023, para. 5)

Tim's Opening Vignette

Thanksgiving weekend, 2017: I was home in California for the holiday, visiting my parents and family, and taking a short break from doctoral studies in South Carolina. Caught in the buzz of Disney Pixar's new film, *Coco*, the family made sure to schedule a group viewing on that Saturday. To say I was excited was an understatement. My eldest daughter (nearly two) would get to see a film centering Mexico and a Mexican family, alongside her tias, her grandparents, and most special, her nana, my own grandmother. Arriving at the theater, we grabbed popcorn and candy and sat down for the show. I thought about that last movie I went to with my grandmother. Maybe it was *The Muppets Christmas Carol* or possibly *Beauty and the Beast*; regardless both were more than 20 years prior. For a moment, I sat dumbfounded. Could she ever have imagined sitting here with her great-granddaughter watching a Disney movie about Dia de Los Muertos? As the theater darkened, previews started, and I gulped on some soda. Then, another

Hollywood or History?: An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Teaching Latinx History, pp. ix–xxvi.
Copyright © 2025 *Tim Monreal*
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited
ISBN: 979-8-88730-902-6 (HB); 979-8-88730-901-9 (PB),
979-8-88730-903-3 (ePDF), 978-1-83708-563-7 (ePUB)

movie, *Olaf's Frozen Adventure*, started playing. Although it was a "short," it kept going, and going, and going. I turned to my sister and said, "So wait, even in a movie about Mexico, we need to center Whiteness?" I was dumbfounded, not because I dislike *Frozen*, who am I kidding, I have watched it more times than I can count. Instead, here *we* were proudly watching a movie that was made for *us*, only to first sit through a 21-minute story about a (adorable) singing snowman. Really?

When *Coco* (finally) started, the theater erupted. There were gritos, aplausos, and smiles. We all laughed. We all danced. We all compared one of the characters to somebody in our family (for me, I couldn't get over how much Papá Julio looked like our Uncle Gilbert). And near the end of the film, we all cried (well at least I did). Watching the movie, you felt like you were part of a collective, a group who had just shared something beautiful together. Still, no matter how many times I have seen the film (now with my three daughters), no matter how enduring its characters, no matter how popular a second Disney Latinx film, *Encanto*, continues to be, I always think about pinche Olaf. Really?

JESÚS'S OPENING VIGNETTE

When I (Jesús) was in college, a US History professor I had was really into showing films to highlight themes that cut across politics and culture. While I can't remember all the films she showed us, there was one that stood out to me above the others. It was Elia Kazan's (1952) *Viva Zapata!* that stuck with me long after I had finished with this class. The film featured a fictionalized story of Emiliano Zapata and his life during the Mexican Revolution. It was the first time that I had seen a film about the Mexican Revolution and one that also featured a few Mexican actors. The film featured important scenes from Zapata's inspiration for resistance, to his meeting with Pancho Villa in Aguascalientes, and his family conflicts as well. The film sparked me to read more about the Mexican Revolution and even ask about my family's own involvement in the conflict which produced a photograph that featured some family members with notable Mexican figures. While the film did not alter my family history, it definitely helped me connect to a history that was not easily accessible from where I was living and learning in the Northeastern US. For me, my experiences with this film highlights the capacity that media holds to share stories about the world and the stories that connect to our own histories. For our rapidly growing Latinx population, this is not just about seeing ourselves on the screen, it's about seeing our stories being valued and honored.

PURPOSE(S) OF THE BOOK

At the most basic level, the purpose of this book is to help classroom teachers include more (accurate) Latinx[1] stories in their classroom. However, we decided

[1] We use the umbrella term "Latinx" to reference people that live in and/or have familial connections to Latin American countries. We prefer Latinx as an inclusive term that represents a spectrum of gender identity rather than the masculine/feminine binary of Latina/o. We also recognize that language,

to start the book with personal vignettes to show why we believe the purpose goes deeper than that. Seeing ourselves, in film, in media, and in classroom materials *moves* us. It moves us to reflect, it moves us to learn, it moves us to critique, it moves us to demand more. It moved us to write this book. Moreover, we suggest it moves students.

We believe that when used intentionally, and critically, media representations of Latinx communities and histories are powerful tools of and for high-quality curriculum and instruction (see also Berner et al., 2023). Therefore, we approached the writing of this book as teachers and learners, not film critics or media experts. In line with previous iterations of the *Hollywood or History?* series[2], we believe inquiry-based lessons are well-suited to capitalizing on this potential. Still, we emphasize that inquiry be rooted in critical approaches and theoretical underpinnings that invite rich discussion on social justice over ephemeral nods to diversity, inclusion, and recognition (see also Marks et al, 2023). As Crowley and King (2018) remind us critical inquiry, "is not quite as simple as examining a topic [e.g. Latinx histories] that could connect to social justice issues…There must be a focus on identifying unequal power relationships in society coupled with the goal of transforming those unjust social relations" (p. 17). In other words, representation is neither an end in itself, or inherently positive. As the opening epigraph explicitly calls out, "I'm [we're] not content with crumbs. Nobody should be. Latinos deserve complexity and nuance, truth and beauty." Hence, we explain throughout the introduction and book, students and teachers must examine the historical accuracy of events *and* the ways (our) stories are told–how, why, where, and on what/whose terms Latinx are represented in film and television. Representation, like education itself, is a political project that is entrenched with systems of power and inequality.

This general approach provides a path that, we hope, meets teachers where they are, providing avenues to better learn and refine knowledge of Latinx history for some, and to incorporate additional criticality and perspectives for others. We know most teachers are working hard (often in perilous situations) to include Latinx stories. As such, we hope that the lessons and ideas provide comfort and assurance (i.e. standards-based, content-driven, see also Harris & Bain, 2010) as well as the opportunity to sit with and better teach the lasting impacts of many uncomfortable, yet often consequential histories. While it is well-established that Latinx histories are marginalized and over-simplified in social studies curricula

along with identity, is a fluid and dynamic social construction that changes over time, context, and understanding. For example, as we write this book there appears to be momentum towards "Latine" as a way to represent the diversity of communities and individuals without the "X." A point we make repeatedly in this text is that Latinxs are not a monolith, hence we welcome a variety of self and group identification. We do, however, limit the use of "Hispanic" as this governmental identification category (in the U.S.) includes people from Spain and the Iberian Peninsula, which are not a focus of this text.

[2] See *Information Age Publishing* for more at https://www.infoagepub.com/series/Hollywood-or-History

(Conner, 2023; Díaz & Deroo, 2020; Monreal, 2017; Santiago, 2017), we aim to support teachers in breaking a vicious cycle of exclusion (or suspect inclusion) as Latinx histories are largely absent in textbooks and teachers are unsure to include new stories because the curriculum they learned didn't have them. For those teachers who do feel confident centering Latinx media, this book is for you as well. While the adage *don't preach to the choir* makes sense, it also bears mentioning that there are times when the choir needs rehearsal to gather, re-group, expand, and challenge the repertoire. Perhaps too, this book might create a space for dialogue where teachers from all backgrounds can engage in learning and sharing additional lessons, ideas, and critique forward.[3]

That brings us to the last major purpose of this book. We sought to create a book that would house a collection of stories that featured a variety of Latinx worlds, histories, and experiences. Even as the Latinx category, identity, and/or subject position continues to be (re)made and contested across different time and space scales (e.g., Aparicio et al. 2022; Rosa 2019; Ramos-Zaya & Rúa 2021), its complexity has been erased from both outside and within. While it is relatively easy to locate "outsized examples of outlandish Latin American stereotyping [in film]" (e.g. *Once Upon a Time in Mexico*, *¡Three Amigos!*; Brewer, 2016, p. 5), it is an alternative challenge to think about how Latinxs have told each other's stories. For example, Saragoza (2004) discusses how Chicano filmmakers "generally failed to address the experience of Mexican immigrants beyond the border and before they become Mexican Americans" (p. 124). Similarly, the relative dominance of Chicano film and filmmakers in the United States has probably worked to collapse widespread understanding of Latinx difference to relatively well-known geographies (like Los Angeles) and events. Thus, while we acknowledge that the book still leans heavily on films from the United States, we aimed to encompass a breadth of Latinx narratives from across the Americas and Caribbean. From Indigenous stories to baseball, from focus on AfroLatinidad in Panama to Cuban reflections on diaspora, from trans youth to cross country runners, the Latinx experience is not one that can be essentialized into a simple story, theme, or trope. We hope that we not only provide pathways to increase the diversity of Latinx stories, but give tools for teachers and students to grapple with various projects of Latinx representation.

(TEACHING) LATINX HISTORY AND (ISSUES OF) REPRESENTATION

> *Perhaps the most important is the acknowledgement by the educational system, writ large, that current Latino-focused content in history and social studies textbooks—and by implication curricula—fall far short of what should be required in a country*

[3] Please visit https://sites.google.com/view/LatinxHollywoodorHistory for additional lessons, updates, and other resources.

> *where the proportion of the Hispanic population is expected to grow to 29% by 2050.* (Berber et al., 2023, p. vi)

A recent report conducted by UnidosUS and Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Education Policy (Berner et al., 2023) investigated Latinx representation in a variety of textbooks. Among key findings, the report describes how key Latino (history and knowledge) topics are either rarely covered in textbooks, or if covered at all, they are given scant detail (less than five sentences; see also Conner, 2023). A prime example of this is that the textbook that included the most images of Latinxs (in the study) also scored the second-lowest quality on (their) authenticity metric. Unsurprisingly, then, the textbooks rarely provided opportunities for critical thinking, examinations of Latino agency, and discussion of justice and equality. The report confirms previous research that details how, despite the growth of Latinx communities across the United States (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020) broadly, and in U.S. public schools specifically (de Brey et al., 2019), Latinxs continue to struggle with issues of (positive) representation in the formal school curriculum. As Santiago and Castro (2019) note, much of the representation of Latinxs in the curriculum is limited to mentions of Cesar Chavez, celebrations of Hispanic Heritage Month, and ephemeral heroes and heroines approaches. Similarly, Dozono (2020) comments that in social studies textbooks and standards most minoritized populations appear as passive entities, objects in which history happens to, rather than dynamic, agentic, and complex figures. Díaz and Deroo (2020) also maintain that such historical representation of Latinx in curriculum material extends the persistent idea that Latinxs are somehow outside the narrative of U.S. history. Such representation of Latinx history in school settings complements an enduring media and cinematic propensity to reify and (re) produce deficit notions of Latinx individuals and culture (Beltrán, 2020). In this case, representation also produces certain knowledges about Latinx that teachers may (unintentionally) further in the classroom (Monreal & McCorkle, 2020). Thus, it is important for educators to not only disrupt the erroneous depictions of Latinx in film, but also highlight the efforts of Latinx both in and outside the United States to create and distribute their own cinematic narratives (Beltrán, 2020).

In order to improve narratives of Latinxs in the (US History) curriculum, the aforementioned UnidosUS and Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Education Policy report (Berner et al., 2023) recommends prioritizing high-quality and well-curated social studies materials that are both content-rich and inclusive of diverse peoples' experiences and contributions. Still, as the report emphasizes, inclusion is not enough; we must provide students the critical cultural and historical thinking skills to always question the terms of Latinx inclusion. This book, then, reflects the need for improved materials for teaching and learning Latinx history and social studies, while also including rich analysis-centered activities that go *beyond* representation. As Banks (2016) reminds us, teaching about (Latinx) culture, community and history is more than content integration, it is about working to reduce prejudice and transform systemic inequities. We hope to

communicate through this book and lessons that critical investigation of Latinx representation(s) pushes students and teachers to consider the effects of the traditional ways in which Latinx have been included in the media. Put another way, it is not just Latinx erasure that produces (mis)understanding, but also the ways that certain types of representations (both in and outside media) work to *produce* idea(l)s of (knowing) Latinx communities. Such representations are often normed to neoliberal discourses that reify "American" ideals such as diversity, effort, resilience, and meritocracy (see also Monreal, 2024). As such, Latinx representations often oscillate between deviant and deficient stereotypes (e.g. *Mi Familia*, *Queen of the South*, *West Side Story*) and then the occupant role models (e.g. *Flaming Hot*, *Stand and Deliver, McFarland*) that show success is possible if such actions are curbed for "hard work" and "good conduct" (see also Monreal, 2024, Singh, 2018).

We also stress the importance of critically thinking about representation because more recent scholarship in social studies and social studies-adjacent fields (like Latinx Studies and Ethnic Studies) highlight how monolithic renderings of Latinidad are entangled with Whiteness, anti-Blackness, and anti-Indigeneity (e.g.; Calderón & Urrieta, 2019; Chávez-Moreno, 2021; Flores, 2021; Gamez & Monreal, 2021, 2025; Hernández, 2022; Pulido, 2021; Stone, 2022). To this point, Adams & Busey (2017) discuss how textbooks and social studies standards offer little if any mention of Afro-Latinidad. They write, "Afro-Latin@s have been actively and intentionally erased from mainstream media as well as various political moments. Subsequently, Afro-Latin@s are omitted from K–12 social studies curriculum, as 'Latinos' are often represented as a single, brown-skinned, monolithic ethnoracial group" (Adams & Busey, 2017, p. 13). Similarly, Santiago (2017) finds that because "firsts" and "stories of progress" fit within familiar historical scripts of linear racial advancement, Latinx students (were taught to) compare their group's achievements vis-a-vis other racialized groups. In a classroom of focus, Santiago (2017) observed that race/ethnicity was communicated to be static and natural, implicitly reproducing distinct racial binaries like white/Brown and white/Black. Thus, when learning about *Mendez vs Westminster*, Latinx students reified meritocratic discourse in claiming things like Mexican Americans achieved desegregation *first* (compared to Black students). Thinking about the prevalence of settler colonialism in Latinx representation, Stone (2022) shows how many community history celebrations and monuments (e.g. California's and Texas' mission days/festivals) omit, imagine, commodify, and blur layers of prior and ongoing Indigenous dispossession to make "claims" on contemporary Latinx belonging. As such, and in line with Urrieta & Calderón (2019) it is imperative that examinations of representation raise critical questions in relation to Indigenous land and space (see also Cahuas, 2019). All to say, any teaching of Latinx representation (in and through media) must be rooted in a critical intersectionality that explicitly counters surface-level discourses on multiculturalism, diversity, and recognition (Marks et al., 2023, Melamed, 2011). While we might celebrate

the idea of seeing "people who look" like me/us, we must also be wary of how this "reinforces biological views of race that are easily co-opted by (neo)liberal multicultural efforts to change the *complexion* of white supremacy while leaving its foundations intact" (@nelsonflores, September 24, 2019, emphasis ours).

(Social studies) Teachers have a unique opportunity to center a more nuanced politics of representation as we outline above. We are making an effort with this text to help all classrooms center a complex perspective of the many worlds of the Latinx experience(s). For us, this means that the media in this book should not be reduced to representative texts used for "knowing" the other and/or skill-based learning (i.e. historical thinking, 'fact' vs 'fiction'). Such teaching forwards cultural differences as tempered economic projects instead of tools for collective organizing and action. Including more, diverse Latinx stories in the curriculum is about much more than creating global citizens and multicultural consumers; it is about foregrounding story, and critical analysis of story, as a path toward transformative and material change. To give but one example, the film *El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez* (Chapter 3) can be used as a way for students to understand decades upon decades of state-sanctioned, anti-Mexican violence in Texas that included hundreds of lynchings and murders (Moreno, 2021). The film is more than identifying a Latinx character or story; it is part of *doing* history (see also Kautz & Blanco, 2022) to identify and remedy wrongs like the public history project *Refusing to Forge*t (more information is included in the Chapter 3 extension) does today. Many of the chapters have extension activities that foreground such critical thinking and praxis. We outline additional tweaks to the *Hollywood or History?* method next.

TEACHING WITH FILM/MEDIA AND OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE *HOLLYWOOD OR HISTORY?* METHOD

Given that Roberts and Elfer (2018, 2021), along with additional books in the *Hollywood or History?* series (see for example, Kaka, 2022), highlight myriad academic literature about using film in the social studies classroom, we keep our discussion of such brief. We invite readers to read those texts, along with other important scholarship, studies, and resources (e.g. Marcus et al., 2010, 2018; Roberts et al, 2014; Russell, 2007, 2009; Russell III & Waters, 2017; Van Haren & Roberts, 2021; Waters & Russell III, 2017) for deeper articulation of myriad film and social studies topics like instructional effectiveness, film selection, (historical and critical) thinking skills, and pedagogical considerations. Still, there are some points that bear repeating. First, while classroom access to film and media has gotten considerably easier, contestation about what is presented in classrooms continues to be politically charged. Teachers have the legal right (limited of course, see Waters & Russell III, pp. 8–9) to show film and media for educational purposes, but schools and districts have various policies and procedures for what can be shown. Even as the *Hollywood or History?* method relies largely on clips and segments as a path for inquiry, analysis, and application, it is wise to preview

the clips in each lesson and understand their appropriateness vis-a-vis the climate of your school community. Second, and related, the use of film and media is beneficial for more than fostering connections to student lives and engagement with historical content. Just because something is entertaining and appealing does not mean it is inherently accurate and/or sound; films as texts have biases, misrepresentations, and falsehoods. Thus, the instructional value of film and media lies in *how* it is being used. The lessons that follow provide structured models to critically interpret film and media and their relationship to primary and secondary sources. We are confident that the lessons support a rigorous and instructionally useful way for realizing the potential of film and media in the classroom, but also encourage teachers to adapt, remix, and substitute in any way that may improve student learning. We now move to how this book takes up the *Hollywood or History?* method more specifically.

The *Hollywood or History?* approach developed as the result of classroom practice, state and regional conference presentations, and now, international teacher-researcher collaboration. Originally created as a set of strategies for his middle schoolers, Scott Roberts joined with Charles Elfer to both codify and expand the tool. Fundamentally a platform for historical inquiry and analytical skill-building, *Hollywood or History?* "challenges teachers to evaluate competing claims, detect bias and measure evidence from multiple sources with the goals of developing reasoned perspectives regarding the relative accuracy of commercially produced [media]" (Roberts & Elfer, 2021, p. xiv). The model has become adapted to meet the needs of different grade levels and content areas with our articulation as follows:

Step 1: Media Selection

The general goal is to select a piece of media that introduces, provides context, and/or aligns with academic content knowledge (i.e. standards). A specific aim of using media to learn social studies material is to provide students a way to think and experience content, concepts, and ideas in a different manner than is usually experienced in the classroom. All of the content here aims to open up an invitation for the class to talk and learn about some aspects of the Latinx experiences that exist in the world. Hence, in many ways, the selection of the media is based on its utility to teacher instruction and classroom learning, rather than the overall merit or prestige it garners. For this reason, Jesús and Tim have previously created a number of lessons and materials on *Salt of the Earth*, a rather obscure, but significant film as it tells the story of a Latinx led strike in the early 1950s (see Monreal & Tirado, 2022; Tirado & Monreal, 2022). Additionally, teachers should take into account ratings, grade levels, availability, and any controversial issues related to a media selection.

A teacher's selection of media, like this book, are not meant as an exhaustive collection of certain experiences, topics, events, or people, but a way to facilitate deeper analysis and understanding of Latinx history. We also believe it is impor-

tant to look across mediums to find engaging and relevant examples. Throughout this book, you will find selections from films and TV shows, but also short animated films, music videos, musicals, and documentaries. Sharing different kinds of mediums in your classroom allows students to experience different forms of expression and also engage in discussions and learning about how those mediums provide various affordances for storytelling. Finally, some media may have personal connections to you as a teacher and community member. It may relate to your family's history, remind you of a specific event and time of your life, or it may point to an important course or class you took about the Latinx experience. We hold it is essential to share these experiences with your students. To model this, we have included a personal connection section at the beginning of each lesson, where authors discuss the selection of their media.

Step 2: Developing the Inquiry and Staging the Questions

Films and media should not be wheeled into the classroom (some of us remember the Fridays when the "cart" came in) to provide a time away from thinking and learning, but instead should push students in the classroom toward thinking about content in new ways. The goal of each of these lessons in the book is to provide an inquiry centered means of critical instruction and learning about Latinx history. At the heart of meaningful inquiry rests interesting and compelling questions; those that hit the "sweet spot" are both "intellectually rigorous and relevant to students" (Grant et al., 2017, p. 200). Similar to previous iterations of *Hollywood vs History?* the driving questions center upon whether the degree to which depictions of events and people are accurate, fictional, or a mixture of both. Even as these *Hollywood vs History?* questions are a great place to start when developing film and media based inquiry lessons, the authors in this book show that teachers can develop additional questions to guide inquiry in other directions. Thus, in addition to questions about historical fidelity, many chapters provide ways to use film and media to advance critical inquiry about race, class, and representation. For just two examples, authors ask, is *Ixcanul* racism made beautiful? (Chapter 21) and how and/or why do you think movies (over)emphasize certain parts of (sports) stories (Chapter 8)? Movie selection and inquiry development work hand-in-hand in developing the high impact use of film and media.

Step 3: Curating and Selecting Sources

While media selection and inquiry development lead the construction of *Hollywood or History?* lessons, Kaka (2022) writes, "equally important is the careful selection of accompanying documents that serve to complicate, verify, and or challenge the film [or media] under review" (p. xvii). Generally, the approach is to include *at least* one primary and one secondary source that helps students critically analyze the media. The integration of primary and secondary materials provides the evidence and foundations for answering inquiry questions and

reinforces the disciplinary practice of using sources *to do* history (see also Kautz & Blanco, 2022). The assessment, understanding, and use of multiple sources is also at the heart of the Common Core State Standards and the C3 Framework, and as such the *Hollywood or History?* strategy complements both. From this 'base' of one primary and secondary course, teachers can incorporate any number of additional sources to refocus inquiry to build on students' different linguistic strengths, to increase developmental fit, and to differentiate instruction.

When looking for sources to develop a lesson teachers have many places to turn. Roberts and Elfer (2021) suggest the textbook as a pragmatic starting point for secondary sources. Beside being an accessible part of the classroom for students, teachers are generally familiar with the contents and organization of their textbooks. Still, as many social studies textbooks and classroom materials struggle to cover Latinx topics and history accurately if at all (Berner et al., 2023; Díaz & Deroo, 2020; Monreal & McCorkle, 2020), it is important for students to challenge those school/district provided resources through the inquiry process. To this point, by "incorporating the textbook in an inquiry exercise like this one… students are in a better position to evaluate the textbooks as a useful, if sometimes flawed and imperfect, academic resource (Roberts & Elfer, 2021, p. xvii). Students and teachers may also use the textbook with myriad secondary sources to discuss why there may be differences and how biases may appear in a text.

Even as the textbook can be an important part of creating and implementing *Hollywood or History?* lessons, primary sources are essential for building student's historical literacy and thinking skills. As the authors of this volume evidence, there is no shortage of online repositories for primary sources. More exciting, thanks to the hard work of activists, academics, amateur historians, and community members there is increasing access to Latinx primary resources available on the Internet. Additionally, well-known collections like the Library of Congress and the National Archives continue to expand their Latinx-focused document sets. While text-based offerings like letters, diaries, speeches, pamphlets, and reports are popular choices, many collections feature photos, sound recordings, and video that teachers can incorporate into lessons. Finally, it is helpful for teachers to think about the type of primary source and the viewpoints represented by each selection. As a major driver of rigorous inquiry is the possibility of many well-supported conclusions, primary sources should represent multiple viewpoints and backgrounds.

Step: 4 Showing the Film, Reviewing the Sources, and Instructional Methods

Another part of building rigorous media based lessons is developing a wide array of instructional methods. Thus, after the media and sources are selected, teachers select the pedagogical supports and activities that guide the understanding, analysis, and assessment of said media and sources. Oftentimes, the media is shown near the beginning of a lesson and then followed by instructional strategies

to help students engage in historical inquiry. On the other hand, some educators choose to have clips shown throughout a lesson or even near the end after sources have been reviewed by students. In this book, the different chapters include many different approaches. Instructional activities from gallery walks, individual research, simulations, and other group activities meant to create learning environments that match the needs of diverse teachers and learners. Given that breadth of classroom teaching experience represented by authors, the methods and supports are guided by classroom readiness and relative ease of application. Authors in this volume present a variety of activities that can be modified for myriad grade levels and student abilities. Another core feature of the *Hollywood or History?* strategy is a structured graphic organizer that guides students in summarizing the clips and sources towards making evidence and document-based claims about the film's accuracy. This core graphic organizer is meant to provide a recognizable process of leveraging sources with critical reading and viewing; thus, the template aims to blend familiarity with flexibility. Throughout the book, readers will see how authors add slight changes and adaptations to the graphic organizer as well as sharing their own unique support materials. In sum, we agree with Roberts and Elfer (2021) who share, "whether the graphic organizers contained within this present volume are incorporated or not, what students do likely need is some sort of support to organize their thoughts as they move through the exercise" (p. xviii). As we have said throughout this introduction, we hope teachers share their own adaptations and ideas as they use the media and lessons.

Step 5: Hollywood or History? (Assessments)

No lesson is complete without asking students to share, and perhaps build on what they've learned. A central component in the *Hollywood or History?* strategy revolves around assessing the accuracy of the media clips. While it is relatively straightforward to have students use the *Hollywood or History?* structured graphic organizer to build conclusions about the film clips, there are many ways students can demonstrate their understanding. Given that a film selection's accuracy probably falls somewhere on a spectrum (it is hard to imagine a film being 100% Hollywood or 100% History), it is important that students are able to evidence and support their own evaluations. Thus, when thinking about an assessment, educators should expect students to draw upon specific parts of the film selections and documents to support their conclusions. Throughout the book, authors share written assessment examples that vary from crafting a few sentences to paragraphs to blog posts, editorials, and reviews. Visual and multimedia assessment examples include infographics, presentations, and social media posts/content. In these lessons, authors show how educators can combine opportunities for students to share what they've learned with a chance to reflect. Reflecting on what and how they've learned helps create meaningful experiences for your classroom.

Step 6: Debrief and Extension

The last feature that we'd like to discuss is our commitment to debriefs and extensions of learning, particularly those that center social justice. The extensions are aimed to help students push beyond the initial learning activity, apply additional resources and viewpoints, transfer their learning to different subjects, and generally dive deeper into the content of the lesson. This might include opportunity for more intellectual exploration of a topic that can help improve the depth of understanding for students and classrooms who pursue this. The other cause for extension is to help students follow their learning with informed action. Levinson and Levine (2013) write that (informed) action is essential to any inquiry arc, but particularly those in social studies as it centers civic learning and participation. We are guided by Facing History and Ourselves' (2022) articulation of informed action as having students a) understand the issues evident in an inquiry from a larger, often sociopolitical context, b) assess the relevance and impact of the issues, and c) act in ways the demonstrate (collective) agency in real-world ways. Examples include starting and sustaining student organizations, producing student journalism and media, creating issue campaigns, making presentations to public audiences, building curriculum, and engaging in direct protest and resistance (see also Levinson & Levine, 2013). We firmly believe that social studies is a medium in which our students can take the lead toward visioning and building a better, more just world (Rodriguez & Swalwell, 2021, see also Sinclair et al., 2022). We hope that these extensions will push your classroom beyond its initial inquiries and the four walls that so often hold it back.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Section I

The book's first section looks to the Mesoamerican world before the arrival of Europeans. The Mesoamerican world before its various conquests was filled with dispute, wealth, food, mythology, cities, family, life, death, endings, and beginnings–all the things that make human civilization the feature that it is. Tim Monreal and Jesús Tirado lead with *Apocalypto* (2006), a film that presents stories of conflict, culture, and village life in the Yucatán, so students might question how issues of representation affect portrayals of Indigenous peoples. Similarly, the second chapter in this section encourages students to explore the cultural and mythical worlds of several different civilizations that thrived before 1492 through the show *Maya and the Three* (2021).

Section Two

Section II centers narratives of Latinx (im)migration and borders. Tim Monreal locates the historical importance of the borderland region between the United States and Mexico with a set of lessons on *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* (1982).

The lessons offer students and teachers a way to inquire about the long history of the U.S.-Mexico border, a history defined by imperialism, White supremacy, racialization, state-sanctioned violence, and (human) rights violations. Second, Jessica Ferreras-Stone and Scott Roberts challenge us to consider a type of hidden curriculum in *Vivo* (2021), that is, the absence of an explicit discussion of immigration between Cuba and the United States.

Section III

Section III includes four films that trace international efforts of Americans (from both the North and South continent) fighting for rights and justice. Tim Monreal shares a set of lessons investigating *Zoot Suit* (1981), a close adaptation of a ground-breaking play by the same name that follows the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon trial. Next, Mireya Perez and Erin Adams describe a lesson in which students view sections of the film *Chicano!* (1996) to consider issues of school equity from the inside-out rather than the outside-in. Third, Tim Monreal uses *Romero* (1989) with primary source documents to examine both historical narrative and questions like *What was the role of the United States in El Salvador and Central/ Latin America during the Cold War?* Finally Tim Monreal and Jazmine Medrano Rodriguez analyze the relative accuracy of *McFarland, U.S.A*. (2015) while having students inquiry into if the film adequately addresses the larger structures and systems that cause marginalization for many Latinx communities in the Central/ San Joaquin Valley.

Section IV

The focus of Section IV is Central America, a region with rich histories, cultures, arts, and contributions to the world, that have largely been written out of US social studies curriculum (Blanco, 2022). Yianella Blanco takes up Jayro Bustamante's reimagining of classic legend *La Llorona* (2019) to discuss the production of history and remembrance vis-a-vis Guatamala's genocide of native Mayans in the early 1980s. Next, Tim Monreal and Celeste Esqueda share a two-part lesson about the film *Panama Canal Stories* (2014) that provides social studies classes a way to critically interrogate who built, and who benefited from, the construction of the Panama Canal.

Section V

In Section V, two chapters highlight facets of South American history. The first uses the film *Heroic Losers* (2019) to explore the events and aftermath of the Argentine Corralito, the name of the nation's 2001 currency crisis and aftermath. The next features *Bear Story* (2014), an award winning animated short from Chile. The film features a story of loss and pain about a father who is abducted and forced into labor.

Section VI

Section VI provides a glimpse at the lives and worlds of the Caribbean (and its often colonial relationship with the United States). Chantelle Grace and Jesús Tirado center the complex nature of immigration stories between the United States and Cuba by examining the Netflix reboot of *One Day at a Time* (2017). Tim Monreal, Tommy Ender, and Dawnavyn James provide a chapter on *Sugar* (2008), a film that portrays the Caribbean's connection to the great sport of baseball. The film follows an Afro-Dominican player as he struggles to break through to the Major Leagues while also facing the challenges of playing in a foreign land.

Section VII

The focus of Section VII is Latinx futures, a move toward discussing imaginative and speculative media for teachers to use in their classrooms. Jesús Tirado uses two episodes from the series *West Wing* (1999) to examine the issue of (Latinx) representation on the Supreme Court. Then, Tim Monreal shares two lessons based on the horror-comedy film, *Vampires vs the Bronx* (2020) where the 'vampires' are (white) gentrifiers that seek to change a Latinx community.

Section VIII

Section VIII highlights intersectional and nuanced depictions of Latinidad in, and through film. Jessica Ferreras-Stone, Stephanie L. Strachan, and Scott L. Roberts lead with a set of lessons that use the hit Disney movie *Encanto* (2021) to discuss myriad ethnic, racial, and cultural cleavages within the Latinx experience. Continuing the theme of more recent films, Edgar Diaz discusses the (lack of) representation in the remake of *In the Heights* (2021). Third, teacher Lance Azusada joins Tim Monreal in teaching with the film *Gun Hill Road* (2011) which portrays the daily, lived experiences of trans youth. Finally, Sam Robison with Jesús Tirado shares lessons that cover the radical film *Salt of the Earth* (1954).

Section IX

The focus of Section IX is the intersection of Indigenuity, Indigenous Language, and Latinx histories. Toward such ends, this final part of the book provides three sets of lessons from the following media, *Ixcanul* (2016), *Sesenta y Ocho Voces, Sesenta y Ocho Corazones* (2016), and *Even the Rain/Hasta La Lluvia* (2010). First, Tim Monreal shares two lessons from the film *Ixcanul* (Bustamante, 2015) that tells the story of a Kaqchikel family and community in Guatemala. Then, Tim Monreal and Marlene Herrera discuss ways to examine *Sesenta y Ocho Voces, Sesenta y Ocho Corazones*, an initiative from the Mexican government that seeks to elevate Mexico's 68 Indigenous languages. Finally, Jesus Moraga centers the concept of *wétiko* as a way to critically analyze the film *Even the Rain/Hasta La Lluvia*.

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SECTION I

BEFORE AND AFTER CONQUEST

Being defined by conquest seems like an odd place to start, but for Latinx history it is a reminder of how our stories became, and continue to become intertwined with the world through violence, destruction, resilience, and (re)creation. Conquest shapes many of our stories and is an almost inescapable reality for many of our family stories as well (Tirado & Levine, 2019). As Galeano (1971/1997), in his masterpiece on Latin American History, writes, "*Our defeat was always implicit in the victory of others*" (p. 2, emphasis original). The world before conquest was filled with dispute, wealth, food, mythology, cities, family, life, death, endings, and beginnings–all the things that make human civilization the feature that it is. Yet, because of the violent colonialism that comes out of The Conquest(s), that epoch of our culture is often divided by being either before or after a singular event. Even textbooks often call the time before the Conquest the "Pre-Columbian Era" to imply that these civilizations were just waiting for those fateful days in 1492. But that was not the case as different works by Bowles, (2018), Gilmore (1968), León-Portilla (1990), Maffie (2000, 2014), and Mann (2005), (albeit all with some issues) portray a vibrant continent not to be defined by the aftermath of Columbus's visit and conquest(s) that followed. What we hope these chapters do is to provide a glimpse into a world that continues to be made into something new.

In the first chapter, Tim Monreal and Jesús Tirado lead with a film that dives into the very moments of conquest. *Apocalypto* presents stories of conflict, culture, and village life in the Yucatán, and the corresponding lessons ask students to question how issues of representation affect portrayals of Indigenous peoples. In the lessons, the authors ask students to become critics of how Indigenous culture is framed and represented on the "big screen" in order to think about current Ma-

yas who are alive in the Yucatán, Guatemala, Honduras, and across the continent. Similarly, the second chapter in this section encourages students to explore the cultural and mythical world of several different civilizations that thrived before 1492. The show *Maya and the Three* provides a context for helping students to see different symbols and how/why they matter. The larger goal being that students will be able to see how symbols hold meaning, and how people (including themselves) use symbols to communicate complex ideas and values. In order to continue learning about the Indigenous cultures of MesoAmerican before the conquest, we encourage teachers (and students) to read academic articles by Monreal (2017) and Monreal & Tirado (2023), children's books by Rodriguez and Stein (2016), Serrano (2006), and Tonatiuh (2016, 2022), and young adult texts by Bowles (2018).

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CHAPTER 1

APOCALYPTO (2006)

Tim Monreal and Jesús Tirado

AUTHOR(S) CONNECTION

This lesson uses primary and secondary sources to investigate *Apocalypto's* (Gibson, 2006) representation of historic Mayan society. Toward such ends, the lesson highlights two clips, a first scene showing oral storytelling, and a second depicting a portion of a human sacrifice ceremony. We challenge students to use evidence to inquiry whether parts of Mayan culture are sensationalized in the film, and if so, what (if any) ethical responsibilities do filmmakers have when representing cultures other than their own. We feel such critical inquiry is necessary not only to better understand the Mayan civilizations located in the Yucatán Peninsula (Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras) from the 600s C.E. to 1200 C.E., but also contemporary Mayan that inhabit the region and continue to practice their core beliefs. In sum, we hope this lesson is one way to help students understand the historic Mayans, but also the current Mayan communities that continue to thrive.

**This lesson is adapted from Monreal and Tirado (2021).*

Hollywood or History?: An Inquiry-Based Strategy for Teaching Latinx History, pp. 3–11.
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ISBN: 979-8-88730-902-6 (HB); 979-8-88730-901-9 (PB),
979-8-88730-903-3 (ePDF), 978-1-83708-563-7 (ePUB)