ACTIVITY 1.5

“Two Kinds” of Cultural Identity

Explain how Tan uses the central conflict between mother and daughter to develop mother’s wishes to be true to herself.

In “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan, the child Jing-mei feels that she must rebel against her mother’s wishes to be true to herself. The struggle between obedience and her feelings of being Chinese and American personalities also represents the conflict between two cultures. Sample responses: In “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan, the conflict between two strong personalities is shown through the mother’s expectations and her daughter’s desires. The contrast with the auntie’s perspective is also highlighted.

ACTIVITY 1.6

Two Perspectives on Cultural Identity

Learning Targets
• Analyze a particular point of view regarding a cultural experience expressed in literature and art.
• Compare and contrast the representation of a subject in different media.

Preview
In this activity, you will analyze multiple media—a film clip, a biography, a painting, and a poem—to compare and contrast perceptions of cultural identity.

Viewing a Film
In preparation for a discussion on the life, art, and culture of Frida Kahlo, watch a short PBS film clip, The Life and Times of Frida. Take notes on the key ideas and details that help you understand Kahlo’s life, art, and cultural identity.

Setting a Purpose for Reading
• As you read a brief introductory excerpt from Hayden Herrera’s biography, Frida, a Biography of Frida Kahlo, use metacognitive markers to mark the text. As you mark the text, focus on the details emphasized that help you understand Kahlo’s life, art, and cultural identity.
• Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.

Biography

From Frida, a Biography of

by Hayden Herrera

1 In April, 1953, less than a year before her death at the age of forty-seven, Frida Kahlo had her first major exhibition of paintings in her native Mexico. By that time her health had so deteriorated that no one expected her to attend. But at 8:00 P.M., just after the doors of Mexico City’s Gallery of Contemporary Art opened to the public, an ambulance drew up. The artist, dressed in her favorite Mexican costume, was carried on a hospital stretcher to her four-poster bed, which had been installed in the gallery that afternoon. The bed was bedecked as she liked it, with photographs of her husband, the great muralist Diego Rivera, and of her political heroes. Papier-mache skeletons dangled from the canopy, and a mirror affixed to the underside of the canopy reflected her joyful though ravaged face. One by one, two hundred friends and admirers greeted Frida Kahlo, then formed a circle around the bed and sang Mexican ballads with her until well past midnight.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Focus Standards:
RL.9–10.7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts” and Breughel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).
RL.9–10.7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person’s life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

W.9–10.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Additional Standards Addressed:
RL.9–10.1; RL.9–10.2; RL.9–10.5; RI.9–10.1; RI.9–10.2; W.9–10.4; W.9–10.10; SL.9–10.1a; SL.9–10.1b; SL.9–10.2; SL.9–10.4; L.9–10.6
Two Perspectives on Cultural Identity

ACTIVITY 1.6 continued

6 As students are reading, monitor their progress. Be sure they are engaged with the text and annotating key ideas and details about Kahlo’s cultural identity. Evaluate whether the selected reading mode is effective.

My Notes

My Notes

My Notes

My Notes

SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

1. Key Ideas and Details: (RI.9–10.1) Based on details in paragraph 1, what inference can you make about Frida Kahlo’s character and personality? What details does the text provide about her bed decor and how she looked and presented herself that can help you make an informed inference?

2. Craft and Structure: (RI.9–10.4) Using context clues from paragraphs 2 and 3, determine the meaning of the word alegria as it applies to Kahlo’s personality? Look at paragraphs 2 and 3. Think of what you have already learned about Kahlo’s personality and character. Then look at the phrases that follow the word alegria.

3. Craft and Structure: (RI.9–10.6) Choose a line of text that best characterizes the author’s opinion of Kahlo’s art. What are some words the author uses to describe Kahlo’s art? Which words relate to the writer’s own connections to the art?
Second Read

- Reread the biography to answer these text-dependent questions.
- Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

1. Key Ideas and Details: Based on details in paragraph 1, what inference can you make about Frida Kahlo’s character and personality?
   She was determined and didn’t let pain or illness keep her from doing things. Even though she was sick, her first major exhibition in Mexico was so important to her that she had herself taken there in an ambulance. She had a colorful personality, dressing in Mexican costume and decorating her bed with papier-mâché skeletons. She had many friends and admirers, two hundred of whom joined her at the opening. RI.9–10.1

2. Craft and Structure: Using context clues from paragraphs 2 and 3, determine the meaning of the word alegria as it applies to Kahlo’s personality.
   Alegria in Spanish means joy, or happiness, and is used here to show that Kahlo’s fierce sense of alegria was an important way of combatting or masking her pain and sadness. RI.9–10.4

3. Craft and Structure: Choose a line of text that best characterizes the biographer’s opinion of Kahlo’s art and explain your understanding of the opinion.
   Answers will vary, but may include: “...each was like a smothered cry, a nugget of emotion...”; “...she transmuted her pain into art...” RI.9–10.6

4. Key Ideas and Details: In paragraph 6, the author describes an exhibition of Kahlo’s work as “a strange sort of homage, for it seemed to celebrate the exotic personality and story of the artist rather more than it honored her art.” How does this statement help develop the central idea of the text?
   The central idea of the text is that Kahlo’s work is more than her “exotic personality,” but this is often overlooked because of that larger-than-life persona, and because most of her paintings were self-portraits. RI.9–10.2

5. Key Ideas and Details: What connection does the author make between the outer Frida and the inner one of her art?
   The author says that the flamboyant outer Frida was camouflage for “a deep sadness and inwardness, even self-obsession.” The public persona was flamboyant and had a “love of spectacle,” but the paintings are small and intimate. RI.9–10.3

6. Craft and Structure: How does the author develop her ideas about Frida Kahlo and her art?
   She starts by describing Kahlo’s first major exhibition in Mexico, less than a year before her death. She segues from a discussion of Kahlo’s public persona to her work, which consisted primarily of self-portraits. RI.9–10.6

SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

4. Key Ideas and Details: (RI.9–10.2) In paragraph 6, the author describes an exhibition of Kahlo’s work as “a strange sort of homage, for it seemed to celebrate the exotic personality and story of the artist rather more than it honored her art.” How does this statement help develop the central idea of the text? Look at paragraph 6. Think of what you have already read in the text about Kahlo’s life and personality. How is her work compared to her personality?

5. Key Ideas and Details: (RI.9–10.3) What connection does the author make between the outer Frida and the inner one of her art? What something looks like on the outside might be very different on the inside. Think about what details the author uses to describe Kahlo and her art using this concept.

6. Craft and Structure: (RI.9–10.6) How does the author develop her ideas about Frida Kahlo and her art? How would you divide the article into parts? What are the main ideas of each part? How does the author move readers from one part to the next?
**ACTIVITY 1.6 continued**

10 Organize discussion groups, and remind them of the class discussion norms.

11 Monitor discussions and check that students are prepared and are asking questions to keep the discussion moving. Set a time limit for discussions. Then, ask volunteers to share a few of their key ideas about Frida Kahlo and her cultural identity.

12 After students participate in the group discussion, have them use their notes to complete the Writing to Sources prompt either in class or for homework. During the next class period, have them rejoin their discussion groups and exchange papers for a peer review of syntax.

**Two Perspectives on Cultural Identity**

**Working from the Text**

7. Organize your notes from both texts (the film clip and the informational text) so that you can come to the discussion prepared with well-reasoned, text-based responses to address Kahlo’s life, art, and cultural identity.

**Group Discussion:** What did you learn about Frida Kahlo’s life, art, and cultural identity? What details are emphasized in each text to support your interpretation of this artist and how she depicts her cultural identity in her work? In your discussion, be sure to:

- Adhere to the class norms for discussions.
- Present thoughtful, well-reasoned ideas.
- Use textual evidence to support responses to questions or statements.

**Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text**

Explain how Kahlo expresses her cultural identity in her art, drawing on examples from both sources. In your writing, be sure to do the following:

- Begin with a clear thesis that states your position. Include a clear definition of Kahlo’s cultural identity, as you understand it.
- Include direct quotations and specific examples from the texts to support your claims. Introduce and punctuate all quotations correctly.
- Include transitions between points and a concluding statement.
- Vary your syntax, using a variety of sentence types.

**Group Discussion:** Exchange your response to the Writing Prompt with a peer. Consider the syntactical choices they have made in their writing. What is the effect they are trying to achieve? Were they successful? What suggestions do you have for improvement?
ACTIVITY 1.6 continued

13 In the next part of this activity, students will analyze a painting by Frida Kahlo for evidence of her cultural identity. Try to find a version of this painting online so students can see it in full color. Many images are available online and can be found by searching for the title of the painting.

14 Introduce students to the OPTIC strategy. Consider modeling the first few rows of the graphic organizer on the next page with the whole class before having students complete it either individually or in groups.

15 Analysis of the Painting: This painting shows Frida Kahlo standing between two different worlds: Mexico and the United States. The images in the painting depict information about Frida’s interests as an artist, her cultural identity, and the feelings she holds toward her alien environment (she was living in the United States at the time). The left side of the painting shows an ancient Mexican landscape and various aspects of nature in Mexico. The right side of the painting is dominated by what Kahlo sees as a representation of industry and the United States. There is just one link between the two worlds: an electricity generator standing on U.S. soil draws its power from the roots of a plant on the Mexican side, which it then supplies to the socket on the pedestal on which Frida is standing. The legend on the pedestal reads: “Carmen Rivera painted her portrait the year 1932” (Carmen was Frida’s baptism name). Her image holds the flag of Mexico that crosses over to the Mexican side, demonstrating where her loyalty lies.

My Notes

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Introducing the Strategy: OPTIC

OPTIC is an acronym for overview, parts, title, interrelationships, and conclusion. OPTIC is a strategy for analyzing visual texts—including paintings, photographs, advertisements, maps, charts, or graphs—and developing an interpretation regarding the meaning or theme(s) of the text.

8. Use the OPTIC graphic organizer on the next page to analyze this painting.

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WORD CONNECTIONS

Content Connections

The word medium has different meanings in art, communication, science, and math. In art, medium refers to the mode or material used to communicate artistic expression, such as watercolor or sculpture. In communication, medium is the system of communication, such as newspapers or television. In science, medium can be a substance placed in a habitat, such as a petri dish, to help organisms grow. In math, medium is used to describe a middle degree or mean.

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

In 1930 Frida Kahlo’s husband, Diego Rivera, received several commissions to paint murals in the United States, causing them to move from Mexico to this country. After three years in the United States, Frida was homesick and longed to return to Mexico. This tension between living in one world and longing to be in another inspired her painting _Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States._

Like literature, art is a medium that intends to communicate to an audience. Just as every literary work is a conversation waiting to happen, so is a work of art waiting for a listening audience. As a viewer and reader of art, you must consider the elements of the art before making an interpretation.

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8. Use the OPTIC graphic organizer on the next page to analyze this painting.
ACTIVITY 1.6 continued

ACTIVITY 1.6 continued

Have students complete the OPTIC graphic organizer to analyze the painting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Piece:</th>
<th>Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist:</td>
<td>Frida Kahlo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Artwork:</td>
<td>painting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overview**

Look at the artwork for at least 10 seconds. Generate questions that you have about the artwork, such as the following: What is the subject? What strikes you as interesting, odd, etc.? What is happening?

- How does her dress—its color and style—represent her place between two cultures?
- What does the skull on the Mexico side represent?
- Why is she holding a Mexican flag?
- What aspect of life in each country is represented by the roots on one side and the electrical wires on the other?

**Parts**

Look closely at the artwork, making note of important elements and details. Ask additional questions, such as the following: Who are the figures? What is the setting and time period? What symbols are present? What historical information would aid understanding of this piece?

- Analysis of the steam/clouds: the clouds on the United States side seem to mingle with the factory steam and include the American flag.
- The clouds on the Mexico side include a glaring sun and a darker cloud with a crescent moon connected by lightning.
- The forces of weather seem a larger, looming presence on the Mexico side while the presence of industry appears to loom the largest on the United States side.

**Title**

Consider what the title and any written elements of the text suggest about meaning. How does the title relate to what is portrayed?

- Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States suggests that the differences between these two cultures contribute to how the painter defines herself.
- The caption on the pedestal means “Carmen Rivera painted her portrait in 1932.” Kahlo used her maiden name as an artist, so this suggests that she is defining her cultural identity on this borderline.

**Interrelationships**

Look for connections between and among the title, caption, and the parts of the art. How are the different elements related?

- The common gray/brown landscape highlights the different elements of each world.
- The girl’s pink dress seems to keep her out of place in both worlds as neither is a natural fit for her attire.
- Various aspects of Mexican culture appear to sit opposite the predominantly industrial depiction of America.

**Conclusion**

Form a conclusion about the meaning/theme of the text. Remember the questions you asked when you first examined it. Be prepared to support your conclusions with evidence.

- The individual is caught between two very different worlds—the ancient, natural world of Mexico and the industrialized, modern world of the United States.
9. How did the information about the artist’s life help you to understand the artwork?

10. What is the conflict presented in the artwork? Provide examples from the text to support your analysis.

Check Your Understanding
How does Frida Kahlo’s painting *Self-Portrait on the Borderline Between Mexico and the United States* represent her cultural identity? Write an interpretive response and provide examples from the text, including Kahlo’s *symbolism*, to support your analysis.

Setting a Purpose for Reading
- Every writer has a unique voice. You have learned that voice is the distinctive use of a writer’s language, achieved in part through diction and syntax, to convey persona or personality. The term voice is also used to express cultural identity. Read the poem several times and use metacognitive markers to examine the voice used in the text.
- Circle unknown words and phrases. Try to determine the meaning of the words by using context clues, word parts, or a dictionary.
ACTIVITY 1.6 continued

**FIRST READ:** Based on the complexity of the passage and your knowledge of your students, you may choose to conduct the first reading in a variety of ways:

- independent reading
- paired reading
- small group reading
- choral reading
- read aloud

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**
Pat Mora is a poet, writer, and social activist whose works explore issues of heritage and social inequality. An avid traveler, Mora wrote *Communion* (1991) about her experiences traveling in Cuba, India, and Pakistan. A year later, she published her first children’s book about a beloved aunt who taught her to appreciate her own Mexican American heritage.

**Poetry**

**Legal Alien**
by Pat Mora

- Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural.
- able to slip from “How’s life?”
- to “Me’stan volviendo loca,”
- able to sit in a paneled office
- drafting memos in smooth English.
- able to order in fluent Spanish
- at a Mexican restaurant,
- American but hyphenated,
- viewed by Anglos as perhaps exotic,
- perhaps inferior, definitely different,
- viewed by Mexicans as alien,
- (their eyes say, “You may speak
- Spanish but you’re not like me”)
- an American to Mexicans
- a Mexican to Americans
- a handy token
- sliding back and forth
- between the fringes of both worlds
- by smiling
- by masking the discomfort
- of being pre-judged
- Bi-laterally.

**WORD CONNECTIONS**

**Roots and Affixes**
The prefix *bi-* comes from Latin and means “both” or “in two parts.” Why does the author begin and end the poem with words that use the prefix *bi-*? What is she saying about her cultural identity?

**My Notes**

11. **Craft and Structure:** (RL.9–10.4) What is the meaning of the word *alien* as it is used in the title of the poem? What is the meaning as it is used in line 11? Think of what you already know about the meaning of the word *alien.* Does it have multiple meanings or connotations? Look at how those meanings might be different as it is used in the title and in line 11.

12. **Key Ideas and Details:** (RL.9–10.1) What is implied in lines 5–7 by the different activities performed in English and Spanish? How are the activities alike and different? What is Mora saying about the people who do those activities?
Second Read

- Reread the poem to answer these text-dependent questions.
- Write any additional questions you have about the text in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

11. **Craft and Structure**: What is the meaning of the word alien as it is used in the title of the poem? What is the meaning as it is used in line 11?
   
   In the title of the poem, alien is a noun that means “a person who was born in another country.” In line 11, alien is an adjective that means “strange, different.” RL.9–10.4

12. **Key Ideas and Details**: What is implied in lines 5–7 by the different activities performed in English and Spanish?
   
   The author is suggesting that people see English as the language of success in business while they see Spanish as useful only for ordering food in a Mexican restaurant. RL.9–10.1

13. **Craft and Structure**: As you saw in Frida Kahlo’s artwork, juxtaposition is the arrangement of two or more things for the purpose of comparison. Identify places where Mora juxtaposes two contrasting views, situations, or actions. How does she use this technique throughout the poem to create a sense of the speaker’s conflict with others—or her conflicted sense of self?
   
   Note the highlighted words on the reduced SE page (in TE only). The use of the prefix “Bi” beginning the poem shows the poet’s sense of being in two worlds. She juxtaposes her perception of being viewed as “exotic” but “inferior” at the same time. Another juxtaposition starts with the title of the poem. She is legal but feels alien. RL.9–10.5

14. **Key Ideas and Details**: How does Pat Mora represent cultural identity in this poem?
   
   Although an American citizen, Mora feels like an alien as she is constantly singled out for her roots. To the Mexican people also, she portrays her feelings of being far removed from their culture. She is thus torn between two worlds defined here by language occupation, and ethnicity (“Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural”) RL.9–10.2.

**SCAFFOLDING THE TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS**

13. **Craft and Structure**: (RL.9–10.5) As you saw in Frida Kahlo’s artwork, juxtaposition is the arrangement of two or more things for the purpose of comparison. Identify places where Mora juxtaposes two contrasting views, situations, or actions. How does she use this technique throughout the poem to create a sense of the speaker’s conflict with others—or her conflicted sense of self? Look at lines 5–7. What is Mora comparing? What else does Mora juxtapose?

14. **Key Ideas and Details**: (RL.9–10.2) How does Pat Mora represent cultural identity in this poem? What cultures does Mora compare in the poem? Identify the aspects of her cultural identity that she describes for both cultures.
Two Perspectives on Cultural Identity

Working from the Text
15. **Group Discussion:** Share your annotated poem within your small group and address the following questions. Remember to follow the class norms for meaningful group discussions.

Create a diagram to synthesize information about the art and the poem as you answer these questions:
- What is emphasized in the art?
- What is emphasized in the poem?
- What ideas and images are present in the poem but absent from the art?
- What ideas and images are present in the art but absent from the poem?

Writing to Sources: Explanatory Text

Write an explanatory essay that explores the similarities and differences in the cultural identity of the artist Frida Kahlo and the poet Pat Mora, as expressed in the painting and the poem. Be sure to:
- Begin with a clear thesis that states your view of the overall similarities and differences between the cultural identities of the two.
- Include direct quotations and specific examples from both the painting and the poem. Introduce and punctuate all quotations correctly.
- Use a coherent organizational structure and employ transitions effectively to highlight similarities and differences.
- Use an appropriate voice and a variety of phrases to add interest to your writing.

Check Your Understanding

**Group Discussion:** Now that you have studied art and poetry, choose a medium of interest to you and respond to one of the prompts below. After you complete the prompt, you will participate in a small group discussion and present your piece to the group.

**Artistic Prompt:** What would a self-portrait say about your perspective on your own cultural identity? Create an artistic work that portrays aspects of this identity. You might revisit your Perception Box work from Activity 1.2 as you consider objects to include in your self-portrait. Also, consider techniques and specific images you can use as evidence to depict and/or symbolize potential conflicts that arise when various aspects of your culture collide. Because artwork, like literature, speaks to an audience, keep in mind the message you want your audience to “read” as they view your work.

**Creative Writing Prompt:** Write a poem emulating the style of Pat Mora and exploring your perspective on a key component of your cultural identity. Be sure to:
- Focus on a specific culturally based conflict, which may be internal, external, or both.
- Structure the poem to use juxtaposition for effect at least once.
- Use diction, syntax, and imagery to present your own voice.

Discuss students’ responses to the Check Your Understanding and assess students’ ability to portray cultural identity in their work. You might have students annotate their poems to identify elements of cultural identity. For students who created art, ask for a short analysis of the components they used to show cultural identity.

Use student responses to the Writing Prompt as an assessment. In contrasting Frida Kahlo and Pat Mora, look for an understanding that Kahlo wanted only to be in Mexico, whereas Mora swings back and forth between each with ease.

If students need additional help understanding cultural identity, ask them to make a list of the characteristics or elements that comprise cultural identity.