La Semana Santa: A Three Tiered Unit Plan

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Background Description:
La Semana Santa is one of the largest cultural celebrations of the calendar year both in Spain and in Latin America. La Semana Santa means Holy Week, or the week leading up to Easter Sunday. The most famous Semana Santa celebration takes place in Seville, a city in southern Spain. In this city alone, more than fifty five church brotherhoods carry over 115 floats from their church, through the crowded city streets to the Cathedral, and back again. All of these floats hold great religious and cultural significance. Each procession depicts a scene from the Bible and includes images of Christ and of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin is always in mourning for the death of her son, and thus she symbolizes sacrifice and a mother’s love.

La Semana Santa represents both the religious beliefs and cultural vivacity of the Spanish-speaking world. Boisterous marching bands accompany the processional, and millions of tourists flock to major cities. For some, Semana Santa is a festival time that fills the streets, bars, and restaurants with people, while for others it is a weeks of ritual, reflection, and time in the church.

Project Goals:
Upon successful completion of this lesson, students will have met the following learning goals:

I. Knowledge of the traditions, customs, and history of La Semana Santa.

The students will be able to:

a. List and explain the specific components of each section
   - Processionals
   - Masses
   - Music
   - Biblical basis for the celebration

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II. Knowledge and recognition of Spanish vocabulary and grammar concepts related to the material.

*The students will be able to:*

a. Correctly identify and define terms related to *La Semana Santa.*

b. Incorporate these terms into writing and speech.

c. Correctly use the grammar concept, prepositions, in writing and speech.

III. An understanding of the religious views and values of the Spanish people.

*The students will be able to:*

a. Analyze and describe the main religious beliefs of the Spanish people including the value of suffering, the importance of the church, and repentance.

b. Relate appropriate scriptures to the religious foundation of la Semana Santa.

c. Discern the difference between the cultural and the religious reasons behind la Semana Santa practices by speaking with a Spanish missionary and reading various statistics.

IV. An appreciation and understanding of the differences between Spanish and American religious beliefs.

*The students will be able to:*

a. Orally discuss specific differences including the role of the church, the emphasis on suffering/repentance, and aesthetic elements within small groups.

b. Record these differences using a Venn diagram.

c. Describe the similar biblical foundation of la Semana Santa that both countries share.

**Progression of the Unit:**

I. **Approximate Length:** Two weeks

II. **Daily Plan**

A. **Day One: Basic Level**

   - Background information
   - First half of vocabulary- PowerPoint
   - Video Clip #1
B. **Day Two: Basic Level**
- Second half of vocabulary - PowerPoint
- Video Clip #2

C. **Day Three: Basic Level**
- Quick review of day one and two
  
  Video Clip #3
- Prepositions
  o Introduction
  o “El sombrero activity”
  o Prepositions Worksheet

D. **Day Four: Basic and Values Level**
- Prepositions - Go back through the Semana Santa vocabulary PowerPoint. Students describe the items in each picture using prepositions.
- Aesthetic Values
  o Discussion and listing of the Aesthetic elements in la Semana Santa.
  o Values Overarching Questions #1
- Values of suffering and sacrifice
  o Discussion/brainstorming/listing specific elements that show the value of suffering

E. **Day Five: Values and Faith Informed Levels**
- Value/Importance of the church
- Discuss the practices of the churches in Spain and the United States

F. **Day Six: Values Level**
- Comparison of traditional American Easter and la Semana Santa
  o Brainstorming
  o Venn Diagram
G. Day Seven: Faith Informed Level
- Review the themes of repentance, the suffering of Christ, and praise
- Present the scriptures that correspond to these themes.
- Define important vocabulary that corresponds with these verses.

H. Day Eight: Faith Informed Level
- Discuss how the common practices do or do not connect with the beliefs of the church.
- Complete the accompanying worksheet.

I. Day Nine: Faith Informed Level
- Students will skype with a Spanish missionary and learn about the religious and spiritual situation in Spain. Specifically, the contradiction between the outward display of religion and internal beliefs will be discussed.

J. Day Ten: Assessment
- In class essay assignment.

All unit plan materials can be found under Student Projects on the Grove City College Modern Language Department website [http://www2.gcc.edu/dept/modl/index.htm](http://www2.gcc.edu/dept/modl/index.htm).