

# **From the Sugar Mills to the Majors: The Rise of Dominican Beisbolistas in Major League Baseball**

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## **Introduction**

“El beisbol para muchos es un deporte, para mí una forma de vida.”<sup>1</sup>

In this unit designed for a World Language class, I will focus on the great American pastime, the sport of baseball, in the target language, specifically the recruitment of Major League players from the Dominican Republic, and why these beisbolistas are the most sought after recruits in Latin America by U. S. Major League Baseball teams. Students will learn how to read and interpret authentic texts, in the target language using the *Visual Thinking Strategies* method.<sup>2</sup> The same strategies that students employ for close reading of text are easily applied to the interpretation of maps and infographics. Students will practice both strategies as they read about and research baseball in the Dominican Republic and the United States.

## **Background**

I currently teach at The John Dickinson School in Wilmington, Delaware in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme, which has been in existence for five years. The middle school is located within the high school building in a wing of its own and was created as an extension to the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme for grades 11 and 12. The Diploma Programme was initiated at Dickinson five years prior to the inception of the Middle Years Programme (MYP). MYP was

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<sup>1</sup> "Desmotivaciones El Beisbol Para Muchos Un Deporte, Para Mí Una Forma De Vida," DESMOTIVAR.COM, accessed July 7, 2020, [http://www.desmotivar.com/desm Motivaciones/21200\\_el\\_beisbol\\_para\\_muchos\\_un\\_deporte](http://www.desmotivar.com/desm Motivaciones/21200_el_beisbol_para_muchos_un_deporte)

<sup>2</sup> Kristina Robertson, "Visual Thinking Strategies for Improved Comprehension," *Colorín Colorado*, December 01, 2015, Kristina Robertson, "Visual Thinking Strategies for Improved Comprehension," *Colorín Colorado*, December 01, 2015, , accessed May 17, 2020, <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/visual-thinking-strategies-improved-comprehension.>, accessed May 17, 2020, <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/visual-thinking-strategies-improved-comprehension.>

implemented to encourage more students to participate in the Diploma Programme. In its first year, MYP included grades six, seven, eight and this year will be expanding to include grade nine. A continuous sixth through twelfth grade International Baccalaureate Programme will be established at Dickinson in the near future. Our Middle Years Programme will be at full capacity this coming school year with the maximum enrollment of 300 students.

Students must apply to participate in MYP. To be eligible, students must be motivated to learn. I am currently the only Spanish teacher in MYP teaching Spanish 1A (Grade 6), Spanish 1B (Grade 7), and Spanish 2 (Grade 8), meeting with my classes for forty-five minutes every day.

Open-mindedness is one of the ten attributes included in the IB Learner Profile. To be considered open-minded students, “critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.”<sup>3</sup> Our school population is fairly diverse but the students typically have a shallow understanding of various cultures not only around the world, but also close to home. They need opportunities to immerse themselves culturally in order to appreciate the similarities in our human experiences that on the surface appear to be different. My plan is to use authentic Spanish language texts in order to present students with opportunities to immerse themselves in the Hispanic culture using authentic target language nonfiction writing; news articles, web pages, and books, accompanied by culture rich realia such as infographics, maps, charts and tables. It is my intention to incorporate authentic texts and realia into this unit so that students can have exposure to Hispanic culture through the materials from the everyday life of native speakers. Authentic text exposes students to culture because it is written for native speakers, by native speakers and has clear context. Some authentic texts and realia have built in supports for language learners like pictures, graphs, and maps. Both can offer language in small chunks making it more manageable for students. The language included in such realia as infographics is highly contextualized making it easy for students to acquire new vocabulary quickly. “Language expresses cultural reality.”<sup>4</sup>

Incorporating authentic text and realia not only enriches students’ vocabulary in the target language but it increases their understanding of the target language culture(s). Realia involves the senses in the learning process therefore fostering creativity and stimulating the mind. Through realia, students are exposed to real discourses, which in

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<sup>3</sup> “IB Learner Profile.” International Baccalaureate Organization 2013. Accessed August 10, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Kramsch, Claire. *Language and Culture*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003.

turn engages and motivates them in the process of language learning while at the same time they learn to use the target language in various contexts. Authentic materials keep students informed about what is happening in the world while increasing their global awareness. Bringing realia and authentic text into the World Language classroom creates opportunities for students to be active learners and teachers to be facilitators allowing lessons to be more interactive and students more independent. Students feel more comfortable with authentic materials and realia which increases student motivation. Increased motivation leads to increased language use which leads to improved proficiency.<sup>5</sup>

### **Content Objectives**

I am focused on three goals in the creation of this unit. First, I would like my students to gain a cultural appreciation and understanding of sports, specifically baseball, and the recruitment of Major League Baseball (MLB) players in Latin American countries, particularly in the Dominican Republic. I plan to incorporate MLB recruitment information and statistics across various Latin American countries to allow students to compare and contrast information and data not only amongst these Latin American countries but also with MLB recruitment information and statistics within the United States. Students will delve further to determine why beisbolistas from each of these countries are sought after by MLB teams.

Second, I would like my students to learn the history of baseball in Latin American countries, specifically the Dominican Republic. I will prompt my students to explore how this sport came to this particular area of the world through the use of Movie Talk, a technique for language learning. In Movie Talk a short film or short film segment of a longer film related with little to no dialog is used. The film is to be watched not listened to. I plan to narrate the film in the target language as the students view it. In doing this, I can pause and play the film as needed describing everything in the target language while providing the students with the vocabulary they need. This also allows me the freedom to check for comprehension as needed. Again, I am using realia, a film created by a native speaker of the language for native speakers. I believe it is important for my students to understand the history of baseball in this country in order to understand how it has evolved into the industry that it has become.

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<sup>5</sup> Tasnubha Bably and Dil Nusrat, "Using Realia as an Effective Pedagogical Tool," *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 22,, no. 11 (November 2017): Tasnubha Bably and Dil Nusrat, "Using Realia as an Effective Pedagogical Tool," *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 22,, no. 11 (November 2017): , accessed May 19, 2020 <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol. 22 Issue11/Version-4/A2211040107.pdf>.

Lastly, I would like the students to increase their awareness on the issue of inequality in sports, specifically in the MLB recruitment practices in Latin American countries. Delving into the topic of racial inequality in the target language for first and second year students of the language will seem quite daunting and almost impossible initially. Hence a visual, an infographic, can be a useful tool for teaching beginning language students, especially those who are visual learners. A map, graph, chart, or infographic can clarify meaning and may be a tension diffuser. It is my hope that with the use of some of these visuals, the students will explore the recruitment in baseball and inequality connection in depth, spurring them on to question the value of such practices.

As previously mentioned, authentic material and realia in the target language will enrich the vocabulary and improve the proficiency of my students. Both realia and authentic text provide comprehensible input because students are seeing images of what is being described, not written translations. Both can be used to provide differentiated instruction because students will pick up on whatever they are able to based on their current level of language ability.

#### Unit Overview

It is my goal to design a unit in which students will use authentic text and realia as a springboard to navigating the process that a prospective beisbolista from the Dominican Republic has to endure to successfully become a member of a Major League Baseball organization. The class will research MLB recruitment of players in Latin American countries using the following learning strategies; vocabulary, close reading and visual thinking, and CAFE - check for understanding. Students will investigate the racial inequalities in the MLB recruitment practices through the use of infographics and mapping. To conclude the unit, students will complete a breakout box, more commonly known as an escape room, using knowledge learned from the unit and coded information within the activity. The breakout box will simulate a prospective player's journey through the MLB recruitment process.

#### Objectives

This unit will be based on two IB MYP Objectives, two Delaware World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages and one Common Core State Standard. I will focus on IB Language Acquisition Objective Criterion C: Comprehending Written Text requiring the student to understand information and engage with the text by supporting opinion and personal response with evidence from the text. I will also evaluate Criterion D: Communicating in Written Form which expects the student to organize and express thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information in writing, write for specific purposes,

and develop accuracy when writing in the target language. The Delaware World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages are Standard 1.3 Presentational Communication: Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers or viewers; and Standard 2.1 Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives: Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied. I will focus on the Common Core Standard CCSSELA – Literacy RI.9 – 10.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 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.

## **Background Content**

### Student Background Knowledge

Students will approach this unit with very limited prior knowledge about life in the Dominican Republic, baseball in the Dominican Republic and the process that a beisbolista has to endure to earn the right to be a player in an MLB organization. All of my students, in their Physical Education classes, learn about the sport of baseball; the mechanics and rules of the sport, and how it is played. Some will have a deeper understanding of the sport, such as its background and history and/or the organizational system of Major League Baseball – divisions, teams, and Minor League Baseball affiliates simply from being fans of the sport.

## **Key Content**

### History of the Dominican Republic

“History is for human self-knowledge . . . the only clue to what man can do is what man has done. The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is.”<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this unit, I believe it helpful to become familiar with the history of this Caribbean country. The study of history is valuable because it allows us to understand our past, which in turn helps us to understand our present. History can also provide us with insight into cultures with which we might be less familiar and thus

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<sup>6</sup> R. G. Collingwood, "Famous Quotations and Quotes About Learning from History," Learning from History - Famous Quotations and Quotes about Learning from History, [PAGE], accessed July 17, 2020, [https://www.age-of-the-sage.org/philosophy/history/learning\\_from\\_history.html](https://www.age-of-the-sage.org/philosophy/history/learning_from_history.html))

increasing our cross-cultural awareness and understanding. This information will allow you to develop a framework of skills necessary for teaching this topic.

The Dominican Republic is one of two countries on the island of Hispaniola and it shares a border with Haiti. La República Dominicana was the first European settlement in the Americas founded by Cristobal Colón (Christopher Columbus). The colonial zone in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, was the first city in the Americas and served as the capital of all Spanish colonies in America. Before Columbus arrived in 1492, the island of Hispaniola, La Isla Española as named by Columbus, was inhabited by los Taínos, an indigenous people of the island. Los Taínos suffered a terrible history at the hands of the Spanish. They were forced into slavery by the Spaniards and due to brutal treatment and disease, the majority of the Taínos died within 50 years. For that reason, no indigenous communities are in existence on the entire island today.

During the colonial period the island was commonly referred to as Santo Domingo, named for its capital city. The colony of Santo Domingo generated a huge amount of wealth for the Spanish crown. The main producers of this wealth were sugarcane and tobacco. Slaves were brought to the island from Africa to work on these plantations. But as Spain explored more of the Americas, they eventually abandoned the colony in favor of more resource rich regions. Hispaniola suffered neglect and decline as a result.

By the mid-1600s the French began exploring the western part of the island and eventually took formal control of it in 1697, and this became Haiti. In the following year, there were many raids and attacks. Spain handed over Santo Domingo, the capital city, to France in 1795. Then in 1801, the slaves of Haiti overthrew their French masters and took control of the capital. France regained control of Santo Domingo the following year and in 1809 Spain took back control of the capital city.

Though Spain ruled the colony again, it was in worse shape than ever. In 1821, the inhabitants of Hispaniola, led by José Núñez de Cáceres, declared independence as the Republic of Spain Haiti. This lasted only two months as the less-wealthy and less-densely populated areas of the island came under the control of Haiti and the new republic entered into formal union with its neighbor.

The Dominican people suffered under Haitian rule. Though the two halves of the island were technically united, it was evident that political influence lay in the western half of the island, and that Haiti's amassed debts imposed upon them by the French and other political powers had an extremely negative effect on the entire island's economy. In 1838, La Trinitaria, a secret resistance organization was founded by three Dominicans; Juan Pablo Duarte, Ramón Matías Mella, and Francisco del Rosario Sánchez. They chose the name La Trinitaria because of their decision to divide the organization into three

small cells with each cell operating independently and without knowledge of what the others were doing. Operating in the highly secretive manner, La Trinitaria was able to gather support from the general population and even managed to secretly convert some regiments of the Haitian army.

In February of 1844, La Trinitaria seized the opportunity and stormed Puerta del Conde (The Count's Gate), which was the main entrance to the fortified city of Santo Domingo, forcing the Haitian army out of Santo Domingo. In victory, a cannon shot was fired, and the blue, red and white flag of the Dominican Republic was raised and to this day flies over the country.

During the next few years, even into the next decade, the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic were sporadically at war, one invading the other in reaction to prior invasions. The steep expense of war bankrupted the nation. As a result, Pedro Santana, President of the Dominican Republic, appealed to Spain to annex his country. So, in March of 1861 the Dominican Republic once again became a Spanish Colony with disastrous economic results for the former republic.

Spain did not honor their side of the agreement, reverting to slavery, racial discrimination, and religious intolerance. As a consequence of the economic and social crisis that took place after the annexation of the Dominican Republic, there were occurrences of massive popular riots with the intent to restore the republic and throw out the Spaniards. By 1864 this movement known as the Restoration Movement had expanded to almost the entirety of the Dominican territory, maintaining that the Republic was still in existence, and that the people did not request to once again become a Spanish colony. In March of 1865 Spain issued a Royal Decree declaring the annexation of the Dominican territory null and void and the second Dominican Republic is proclaimed.

The country appeared to thrive under the leadership of President Ulises Heureaux with the initiation of a railroad system aimed at connecting the entire country. New irrigation canals were dug leading to increased food production and new roads were built. Cuban investors sweetened the economy with modern sugarcane production. In the end, Heureaux was corrupt taking secret loans from many European lending institutions and banks. With the Dominican Republic's economy in ruins, Heureaux was assassinated presumably by one of his creditors. Due to the country's massive debt, European countries threatened to invade but the United States intervened and took control over Dominican customs. The Dominican Republic not long after declared bankruptcy and the economy and leadership grew even more unstable.

In May of 1916, the Dominican Republic was invaded by the United States. While a protectorate of the U. S., the Dominican debt decreased, the country developed a

balanced budget, and the economy became more stable. United States occupation was resented by the Dominicans and the U. S. ended it in 1924 leaving the Dominicans to settle back into governing themselves.

In the three decades after 1930, the Dominican Republic was dominated by one man, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Trujillo, who was an American-trained National Guard commander, overthrew the elected President Horacio Vasquez. He did what many dictators tend to do; rename the capital after himself, violently suppress opponents, censor the media, and adorn the city with statues of himself. Trujillo was an autocrat. Everything had to conform to his will. He was anti-Haitian, regarding Haitians as culturally and racially inferior people. Trujillo viewed Haitian migration as a detriment to the economic and social development of the Dominican Republic. He ordered thousands of Haitians slaughtered in El Corte (the cutting). United States diplomatic cables at the time described the killings as “a systematic campaign of extermination”.<sup>7</sup>

The country was stable under Trujillo’s rule. The economy grew, and the infrastructure and healthcare improved. But anyone who criticized or opposed Trujillo’s regime would find themselves at the mercy of El Servicio de Inteligencia Militar (The Service of Military Intelligence), or the Secret Police, who would likely ensure that you would not do anything ever again.

The year 1960 marked the beginning of the end of Rafael Trujillo’s dictatorship. In June 1960 his regime failed an attempted assassination of Venezuelan President Romulo Betancourt. The final straw for Trujillo occurred in November of the same year when he ordered the assassination of the Mirabal sisters, four Dominican sister who opposed his dictatorship and were involved in underground activities against his regime. The Organization of American States (OAS), expressing outrage, unanimously voted to impose economic sanctions on the Dominican Republic and sever diplomatic relations with its government. The United States embassy in Santo Domingo was downgraded to consular level in August 1960. According to Bernard Diederich, President Eisenhower asked the National Security Council’s Special Group to initiate operations aimed at Trujillo’s removal. Rafael Trujillo was assassinated on May 30, 1961.<sup>8</sup>

In 1962 Juan Bosch was elected President but was ousted by a coup d’etat of right-wing military officers. The country entered into civil war in 1965. The United States

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<sup>7</sup> Nick Davis, "The Massacre That Marked Haiti-Dominican Republic Ties," BBC News, October 13, 2012, [PAGE], accessed October 19, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19880967>)

<sup>8</sup> "The Era of Trujillo," Dominican Republic - THE ERA OF TRUJILLO, 1989, accessed October 10, 2020, <http://countrystudies.us/dominican-republic/11.htm>)

feared that the Communists would seize power, so they sent the Marines and the Army to invade the country and establish an interim government and remained until a non-communist leader was securely in power.

One of the deadliest hurricanes in the country's history, Hurricane David, hit the island on August 31, 1979, killing over 2000 people. The storm caused torrential rainfall causing extreme river flooding. Upwards of 70% of the country's crops were destroyed from the floods. Thousands of homes were destroyed. Over 200,000 people were left homeless.

During the presidency of Joaquín Balaguer (1966-1978, 1986-1996), the country's standard of living steadily declined and in 1988 the Dominican Republic sank into an economic crisis with a soaring rate of inflation.

Better times arrived with the presidency of Leonel Hernandez and under his successor Danilo Medina the economy continued to boom. The Dominican Republic today has achieved a high level of human development and possesses the largest economy in the Caribbean which is driven mainly by tourism. It is the most visited country in the Caribbean.

### Culture of the Dominican Republic

For the purpose of this unit, it is important to understand the definition of culture. According to Kim Ann Zimmermann, a contributor to Life Science Magazine "Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habit, music and arts."<sup>9</sup> The Center for Advance Research on Language Acquisition delves a little deeper, defining culture shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs and understanding that are learned through socialization. It can be viewed as the growth of a group identity fostered by social patterns unique to the group.<sup>10</sup> To fully understand culture, one must go beyond what is acceptable and not acceptable, although we must not discount these. One needs to understand what makes people tick and how, as a group, they have been influenced over time by historical, political, and social issues. Understanding the "why" behind culture is key.<sup>11</sup> Understanding what we mean by culture and what the components of culture are will allow you to develop a framework of skills necessary for teaching this topic.

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<sup>9</sup> Brandon Specktor, "Culture," LiveScience, [PAGE], accessed October 19, 2020, <https://www.livescience.com/culture>)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Andy Schmitz, "Https://saylordotorg.github.io/text\_international-business/s07-01-what-is-culture-anyhow-values-.html," What Is Culture, Anyhow? Values, Customs, and

Dominican culture is a blend of the cultures of the Spanish colonists, African slaves, and Taino natives. European, African, and Taino cultural elements are most prominent in Dominican family structure, religion, food, and music. In the Dominican culture, family is of the utmost importance. Dominican families tend to be caring, conservative and protective. It is not usual to find grandparents included as members of the immediate family, living under one roof, and fully integrated into the life of the family. Young people often remain living at home, even while in college or even after they become financially independent. In fact, they usually will not leave home until they get married. Once married they remain geographically close to their family home.

The majority of Dominicans are Roman Catholic and there are a variety of other Christian denominations including Evangelists and Jehovah's Witnesses. Various forms of African influenced religion are practiced in the rural areas of the country. Dominicans are a people of faith with a strong belief in God. One can find evidence of this in the national motto which is included in the country's coat of arms, "Díos, Patria, Libertad" (God, Homeland, Liberty).

Dominican cuisine is predominantly a combination of Spanish, Taino, and African influences. Dominicans prefer a diet of meats and starches over one that includes dairy products and vegetables. In the Dominican Republic, fresh fish such as tuna, marlin, and ballyhoo are abundant. Titeri, a minnow-sized fish, is prepared in a spicy stew. Callallo is another popular stew made with taro leaves and fresh vegetables. Dominicans enjoy seasoning their dishes with garlic and spicy peppers. Mangú is a traditional Dominican dish that can be served as breakfast or dinner. It is a savory puree of mashed plantains and yucca and is served with fried red onions, fried white cheese, eggs or salami. A typical Dominican lunch dish is la Bandera Dominicana (the Dominican Flag) consisting of white rice, black, red, white bean stew, and meat. In the Dominican Republic, bananas and plantains are available and eaten throughout the entire year.

Merengue is the most recognized genre of Dominican music. It is a kind of joyful, lively music based on African rhythm. It is made of syncopated beats using Latin percussion, brass instruments, bass, and piano or keyboard. President Trujillo declared merengue the national music of the Dominican Republic. Another form of Dominican music that has gained popularity in recent years is Bachata. Bachata originated in the rural areas of the country and grew out of the slower romantic style of music called

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Language, 2012, [PAGE], accessed October 19, 2020, [https://saylordotorg.github.io/text\\_international-business/s07-01-what-is-culture-anyhow-values-.html](https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_international-business/s07-01-what-is-culture-anyhow-values-.html))

bolero. Bachata has been heavily influenced by merengue and several Latin American guitar styles.

### History of Baseball in the Dominican Republic

In the world of baseball, it has become increasingly difficult to ignore the presence of Latin American players. Since 1956, with the debut of Ozzie Virgil in Major League Baseball, there have been hundreds of Dominican players in the major leagues.<sup>12</sup> In 2019, 251 (28.5 %) major league players were born outside of the United States. The Dominican Republic accounted for 40.6% (152) of all internationally born players on Opening Day, the most ever in the history of Major League Baseball.<sup>13</sup> These rates held remarkably steady in the 2018 full season minor leagues, where 909 (28% ) players on Opening Day rosters were born outside of the United States. In 2018, the Dominican Republic accounted for 43.6% (396) of all internationally born players on Opening Day.<sup>14</sup> To be successful in this unit, I believe it is essential to familiarize yourself with the history of baseball in the Dominican Republic in order to develop a framework of skills needed to teach this topic.

The sport of baseball in the Dominican Republic dates back to the mid – 1800s with the British colonists playing cricket. Fleeing the Ten Years' War (1868 – 1878), Cubans arrived in the Dominican Republic and brought with them the game of baseball, which was already popular in Cuba.<sup>15</sup> According to Professor Alan Klein, noted author and expert on the sport of baseball in the Dominican Republic, when the Cubans introduced baseball the Dominican people did not have an established sports tradition. The game did

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<sup>12</sup> Sarah Nass, "Dependency Theory Reloaded: Exploring Baseball in the Dominican Republic," *Western Kentucky University*, 2016, accessed June 7, 2020, [https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1650&context=stu\\_hon\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1650&context=stu_hon_theses))

<sup>13</sup> "MLB Rosters Feature 251 International Players," MLB.com, March 29, 2019, [PAGE], accessed July 19, 2020, <https://www.mlb.com/news/mlb-rosters-feature-251-international-players>)

<sup>14</sup> J.J. Cooper, "Numbers Game: Makeup Of The Minors," *College Baseball, MLB Draft, Prospects - Baseball America*, May 04, 2018, [PAGE], accessed August 8, 2020, <https://www.baseballamerica.com/stories/numbers-game-makeup-of-the-minors/>)

<sup>15</sup> "History of Baseball in the Dominican Republic," *History of Baseball in the Dominican Republic - BR Bullpen*, March 7, 2019, [PAGE], accessed December 19, 2020, [https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/History\\_of\\_baseball\\_in\\_the\\_Dominican\\_Republic](https://www.baseball-reference.com/bullpen/History_of_baseball_in_the_Dominican_Republic))

not have any other sports to compete against.<sup>16</sup> Life in the Dominican towns revolved around the booming sugar refineries which began to establish their own baseball teams. The mill workers were the heart of the teams. Their reward for winning was a time off from work. Baseball became a way for workers to avoid the physically strenuous labor of cutting sugar cane. The refineries developed strong competition leading to an outstanding class of baseball.<sup>17</sup> Baseball rose to such a level of popularity that it came to be considered the Dominican national pastime. Winston Llenas, Dominican Winter League general manager, said of baseball, "It's more than a game, it's a national fever. It's almost our way of life."<sup>18</sup>

During the early 1900s, the Dominican Professional Baseball league was established, paving the way for Ozzie Virgil to become the first Dominican born player to play for a major league team in the United States. Virgil debuted with the New York Giants in 1956. During the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of international baseball talent came from Cuba. Due to political tension between Cuba and the United States in the early 1970s, Castro prohibited the emigration of Cuban baseball players to play in the major leagues. Major League Baseball began to turn more and more to the Dominican Republic for baseball talent. Exploring the Dominican Republic, Major League Baseball discovered a well-established infrastructure and some challenging economic conditions fostering an environment for talent.<sup>19</sup> Because of the poverty in the Dominican Republic, Major League Baseball could "cast a wide net by signing as many players as possible . . ."<sup>20</sup> Major League Baseball organizations could acquire and train players for a mere fraction of the cost in the United States. As an example, teams could sign twenty

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Mc Kenna, "The Path to the Sugar Mill or the Path to Millions: MLB Baseball Academies' Effect on the Dominican Republic," *Baseball Research Journal*, no. Spring (2017), accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.bibme.org/chicago/journal-citation/search?utf8=✓&q=https://sabr.org/journal/article/the-path-to-the-sugar-mill-or-the-path-to-millions-mlb-baseball-academies-effect-on-the-dominican-republic/>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> John Thorn, "Pride and Passion: Baseball in the Dominican Republic," Medium, February 01, 2017, [PAGE], accessed July 7, 2020, <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/pride-and-passion-baseball-in-the-dominican-republic-c4f8d1bd41b8>)

<sup>19</sup> Alicia Jessop, "The Secrets Behind The Dominican Republic's Success In The World Baseball Classic And MLB," *Forbes*, March 19, 2013, [PAGE], accessed July 9, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/aliciajessop/2013/03/19/the-secrets-behind-the-dominican-republics-success-in-the-world-baseball-classic-and-mlb/?sh=74bbfff285f>)

<sup>20</sup> Diane L. Spagnuolo, "Swinging for the Fence: A Call for Institutional Reform as Dominican Boys Risk Their Futures for a Chance in Major League Baseball," *Penn Law Legal Scholarship Repository*, April 2003, [PAGE], accessed July 17, 2020, <https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/jil/vol24/iss1/5/>)

Dominican players at \$5,000 a piece, instead of only two American players at \$50,000 each. By Opening Day 2019, the Dominican Republic would be well represented with 152 players on Major League Baseball rosters. Major league organizations found it difficult to obtain enough visas for the large numbers of players they signed to work and train in the United States.<sup>21</sup> In order to reduce the number of visas needed while maintaining the ability to sign many players, teams started building training and development facilities in the Dominican Republic.

The first talent development facility was built in the Dominican Republic in 1973 by Epifano “Epy” Guerrero, a Dominican born player in the United States minor leagues. Epy became the leading scout in the Dominican Republic, working for four different major league organizations and signing more Dominicans than any other scout.<sup>22</sup> According to Epy’s son and Latin American Scout supervisor for the Minnesota Twins, Fred Guerrero, “it was very hard for Epy to get players to commute every day to his field, so he needed to build some sort of a house where he could house them so they wouldn’t have to commute . . . that’s where it all started.”<sup>23</sup> The facility which grew in size later became affiliated with the Toronto Blue Jays. Epy Guerrero will forever be remembered as the native Dominican who expanded the exploration of Dominican talent and created the groundwork for the Major League Baseball academies.

The Los Angeles Dodgers organization decided to experiment with the academy concept some fourteen years after Epy Guerrero began his private academy. In 1987 the LA Dodgers opened the doors to the first ever Major League Baseball affiliated academy. Soon after, Major League Baseball academies were springing up all over the Dominican Republic. By 2003, all thirty major league organizations established active academies in the country. At these academies, players from ages 16 to 21 can learn English and American culture, practice and play on smooth fields, and build up their bodies by eating well and lifting weights. According to Rob Ruck, a History professor at the University of Pittsburgh, “Most Dominicans saw the academy as a very positive step toward cultivating

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Jay Jaffe, "Epy Guerrero, Scout Who Helped Open Dominican Pipeline to Majors, Dies at 71," *Sports Illustrated*, May 24, 2013, [PAGE], accessed December 19, 2020, <https://www.si.com/mlb/2013/05/24/epy-guerrero-scout-who-helped-open-dominican-pipeline-to-majors-dies-at-71>)

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Mc Kenna, "The Path to the Sugar Mill or the Path to Millions: MLB Baseball Academies’ Effect on the Dominican Republic," *Baseball Research Journal*, no. Spring (2017), accessed July 7, 2020, <https://www.bibme.org/chicago/journal-citation/search?utf8=✓&q=https://sabr.org/journal/article/the-path-to-the-sugar-mill-or-the-path-to-millions-mlb-baseball-academies-effect-on-the-dominican-republic/>)

more young Dominican players.”<sup>24</sup> Ruck further explains, “The subsequent development of academies by every MLB franchise represents a significant economic jolt for the nation’s economy and has provided jobs for thousands on and off the field.”<sup>25</sup> The academy was a significant innovation, the start of a new era in baseball, and an expansion of Major League Baseball’s international presence.

## Teaching Strategies

### Vocabulary

In this unit the students will be exposed to a large amount of new vocabulary. In order to prepare them, before delving into each activity, I will use a Knowledge Rating Scale to conduct a knowledge rating of the significant vocabulary in the activity. I will use a rating scale that is Spanish to English since the language of the activities is Spanish. Students will be given a list of words from the activity and will be asked to rate how well they know each one. Rating scales help students activate prior knowledge and make them aware of the new vocabulary, exposing them to it before engaging it in context. Having students identify the vocabulary terms with which they are unfamiliar helps the teacher to be able to better prepare them to engage with the information presented in each activity. The students will be better prepared to read, listen to, discuss and write about the text. In using formative assessments like rating scales, the teacher is better able to assess the students’ prior knowledge. The Knowledge Rating Scale is a graphic organizer that contains each new vocabulary term in Spanish for that activity. The rating categories included are “Have No Clue,” “Have Seen It or Heard It,” “I Think It Means,” “Know It Well,” and “Definition.”

Before beginning each activity, the activity vocabulary will be pre-taught. This will be done to help the students understand what they are reading or hearing and to ensure that they understand the discussions that we are having in the classroom about what they are reading or hearing, especially when unfamiliar and new vocabulary is being used. For the actual vocabulary instruction, the students will use a different graphic organizer to write the term in Spanish, the definition/meaning in English, write a sentence in Spanish using the term and draw an example. The vocabulary chart will be revisited throughout the unit as students refine their understanding of the vocabulary.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Rob Ruck, *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2011), Electronic Nook Book

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “Vocabulary Rating Comprehension Strategy Teaching Tools.” Vocabulary Rating Comprehension Strategy Teaching Tools. 2016 Accessed December 22, 2016

## Close Reading

The Delaware Department of Education - World Languages current focus is connecting proficiency and the Common Core State Standards for ELA with a focus on Reading and Writing. Close reading is a technique used to teach students to carefully study a piece of writing by reading it several times, each time looking for a different bit of information. The process can begin with a pre-reading question, or a “hook” with the teacher asking the class a question or providing some background information. Then the teacher will have the students identify the text feature of the reading. The first reading is done aloud by the teacher as students follow along circling any words they do not know and annotating any sentence(s) or paragraph(s) they do not understand with a question mark. After the first reading, using a graphic organizer for learning and reflection, students will write a Learning/About statement, a statement telling about what they just read, a brief summary. The students complete the second reading independently. As the students read, they underline details in the text that support their Learning/About statements. Next, the students, using the same graphic organizer from the first read, write a reflection. The reflection can be questions they still have about the text, predictions, or a personal connection that they have to that particular part of the story. With a shoulder partner, each student discusses the details they selected from the text and how they support their Learning/About statement. Reflections are also shared. The teacher then conducts a whole class discussion regarding the details of the text in order to check for understanding. In addition, the teacher addresses student questions about the reading. This discussion is followed up with a series of text dependent questions. Students work through these questions in pairs. The teacher continues the close process with a whole class discussion of the questions and the text in order to check for accuracy.<sup>27</sup>

## CAFE – Check for Understanding

CAFE consists of learning strategies to check for students’ Comprehension (I understand what I read), Accuracy (I can read the words), Fluency (I can read accurately, with expression, and understand what I read), and Expanded lists the various strategies. The teaching strategies are used to assess the students’ understanding of a concept, determine if the students can transfer the lesson objectives to a new situation, emphasize the key points of the lesson, or extend the lesson’s content. The strategy used is usually

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[http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/engla/Documents/vocabulary\\_rating\\_comprehension\\_strategy\\_teaching%20tools.pdf](http://education.ky.gov/curriculum/conpro/engla/Documents/vocabulary_rating_comprehension_strategy_teaching%20tools.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Allens, Ms. “Close Reading in Foreign Language (French).” You Tube. November 14, 2013. Accessed December 22, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZkjBP4eink&t=1s>

brief and is typically used as a formative assessment, helping the instructor to determine a course of action for the learning activities that will be implemented in the near future.<sup>28</sup>

### **Activity 1: The Road to the Major League Baseball**

The first activity was designed as a hook to get the students to engage with the main themes that will be covered throughout the unit. This activity consists of five parts: Access Prior Knowledge, Baseball Basics, Infographic Study, Mapping MLB Teams, and Novel Study. The Essential Questions for this activity are, “Where is the Dominican Republic?” “What are the principal elements that represent Dominican culture?” “How does one become a player in Major League Baseball?” “What obstacles did Felipe Alou encounter in his journey to the Major Leagues?”

#### **Introduction**

##### *Step 1: Access Prior Knowledge – Discussion of Baseball*

To assess what the students already know I will present the students with questions in the target language like “Do you or have you participated on a school or neighborhood team?” “Have you attended a major league or minor league baseball game?” “Do you have a favorite baseball team?” Students will record their responses on paper. I anticipate that many students will say that they have played on a t-ball or neighborhood baseball or softball team. Some will say that they have attended a Philadelphia Phillies or a Baltimore Orioles major league game while many will have attended a Wilmington Blue Rocks minor league game.

Students then share their responses with a shoulder partner. Then I will direct a whole class discussion related to the questions. I suggest conducting a class poll related to the question responses and having the students create a bar graph or a pie chart of the results. This will give students visual data indicating the similar opinions and preference of classmates.

##### *Step 2: Baseball Basics*

After sharing and comparing class preferences, I will direct the class focus to the basics of the sport of baseball. I will provide each student with a reading in the target language

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<sup>28</sup> Boushey, Gail, and Joan Moser. "Check for Understanding–Ready Reference Guide." Check for Understanding–Ready Reference Guide - The Daily Cafe. 2016. Accessed December 23, 2016. <https://www.thedailycafe.com/articles/check-for-understandingready-reference-guide>.

explaining the basics of baseball. This includes the basic concept of the sport, a description of the role of each position, and the history of the sport. As the students prepare to read the text I will explain to them that they will be using a strategy called Close Reading, working both independently and collaboratively to closely analyze the text. I will further explain that they will be reading the text a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. I suggest that the text is divided into three separate readings. The first read of the first section, is read aloud by the teacher. Students follow along circling any words they do not know and annotating any text they do not understand with a question mark. After this first read students use a graphic organizer, a one page paper divided in half with the first half labeled *Learning* and the other half labeled *Reflection*, to write a Learning/About statement, a brief summary.

The second reading is reading with purpose. Students read independently underlining details in the text that support their learning statements. Using the above graphic organizer, students reflect upon what they just read. I will explain to the students that the reflection can be questions they still have about the text, or a personal connection that they have to that particular part of the reading. With a shoulder partner, each student discusses the details they selected from the text and how they support their Learning/About statement. Reflections are also shared. I will then conduct a whole class discussion regarding the details of the text in order to check for understanding. In addition, I will address student questions about the reading.

The next step in the close process is a series of text dependent questions. I will model for the students the process of answering these questions by working through the first question with them. First, re-read the section of text. Next, take notes. Then discuss the question with a partner. Finally, write your best possible answer using all of the information that you have gathered to the question.

To end the close reading process, I will lead a whole class discussion of the questions and the text in order to check for accuracy.

### *Step 3: Infographic Study– Target Language MLB Team Names*

For this learning episode I will provide each student with an infographic containing the names of all of the Major League Baseball (MLB) teams in the target language. An infographic is a combination of written information and pictures/graphics that combines data into design. According to The Best Practices Foundation, using infographics in the classroom may improve students' learning up to 400%. Vision trumps all other human senses when it comes to learning as the average learner can recall 65% of visual information 10 days later but only 10% of what they heard. The majority of students

(close to 65%) are visual learners.<sup>29</sup> Incorporating visual media into my lessons has proven to increase student engagement with the material being taught and student motivation to learn. In addition, in the World Language classroom, infographics provide clarification of content being taught as well as enhance vocabulary comprehension due to the visual clues included in the infographic. As previously stated, the use of visuals is especially helpful for students with special needs as they assist these students in acquiring background knowledge and putting the elements of the lesson into context.

As the students prepare to view the infographic, I will explain to them that the same strategy caused in the previous learning episode, close reading, to analyze the infographic. I will further explain that they will read the infographic a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. I suggest that the infographic to be studied be divided into three separate viewings. In the first reading, I will ask the students to view the infographic in silence for a minute or two and think about what they see. After a minute or two I will ask the entire class, in the target language, "What do you observe in the infographic?" I anticipate the students to respond with the obvious — "There are a lot of team logos." "The infographic is divided into 6 sections." When a student provides an answer, I will ask her/him to supply more information. "You said it has team logos? What makes you say that?" The students will justify their answers by providing evidence from the work. They may say, "One of the logos I recognize is for the New York Yankees." Next, I will encourage the students to share differing opinions and provide justification for their opinions. This will deepen the conversation and allow for a wider variety in the student interpretations of the various elements of the infographic. One student may say, "This infographic is about major sports teams across the country." I would then ask if everyone agrees with the statement. Another student might say that s/he doesn't agree because the logos in the infographic are all logos of MLB teams. I will summarize what the students said. After the discussion, the students will use a graphic organizer; a one-page paper divided in half with the first half labeled *Learning* and the other half labeled *Reflection*, to write a Learning/About statement and a brief summary.

The second reading is reading with purpose. Students will study the infographic independently noting in writing details of the infographic that support their learning statements. Using the above graphic organizer, students reflect upon what they just read. I will explain to the students that the reflection can include questions they still have about the work, observations, or a personal connection that they have to a particular part of the infographic. With a shoulder partner, each student will discuss the details they selected from the infographic and how they support their Learning/About statement. Reflections are also shared. I will then conduct a whole class discussion regarding the details of the

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<sup>29</sup> John Medina and Pear Press, "Vision: Vision Trumps All Other Senses," Vimeo, June 15, 2020, accessed July 7, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/52295314>)

text in order to check for understanding. In addition, I will address student questions about the infographic.

The next step in the close reading process is a series of text-dependent questions. I will model for the students the process of answering these questions by working through the first question with them. The process requires the students to begin by reviewing the infographic. Next, they will review the completed graphic organizer. Then they will seek the answer to the question and discuss the question with a partner checking for accuracy and clarification. The final step is where the students write their best possible answer using all of the information that they have gathered to adequately answer the question.

To end the close reading process, I will lead a whole class discussion of the questions and the work in order to check for accuracy and address any inaccurate responses.

### *Step 3: Mapping MLB Teams*

The next part of this lesson will introduce digital mapping to my students. Digital mapping with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) produce maps with the ability to integrate, manipulate, and analyze spatial data and related descriptive and statistical data. Using the information learned about MLB teams from the close read of the infographic of Major League Baseball teams, each student will use Google Maps to create their own digital map in the target language of these teams. Before reading the novel *Felipe Alou: From the Valleys to the Mountains*, I think it is necessary to provide my students with some background knowledge of MLB teams and a physical frame of reference. According to Christopher J. Young and Joseph Ferrandino in their article *The Old Is New Again: Digital Mapping as an Avenue for Student Learning*, digital mapping encourages students to think creatively about spatial relationships and realities and how these factors affect human action and interaction both past and present.<sup>30</sup> Using visuals, such as maps, is especially helpful for students with special needs as they help these students to acquire background knowledge and put the elements of the lesson into context.

In order to prepare the students to create their own digital map, I will employ the teaching strategy of modeling. Modeling is an instructional strategy in which the teacher demonstrates a new concept or approach to learning. Students learn by observing rather than by trial and error or direct experience. This strategy allows students to observe the

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<sup>30</sup> Christopher J. Young and Joseph Ferrandino, "The Old Is New Again: Digital Mapping as an Avenue for Student Learning," *EDUCAUSE Review*, October 8, 2018, [PAGE], accessed November 19, 2020, <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/10/the-old-is-new-again-digital-mapping-as-an-avenue-for-student-learning>)

teacher's thought process.<sup>31</sup> Using the information that we gathered together as a class from our discussions about the MLB teams, I will model for my students how to create a digital map of MLB teams in the target language. I will begin by using a Think Aloud by verbalizing my thoughts about how I will begin to map. I may pose the question, "Which team should I map first, the team I am most familiar with?" "What layers do I want to include in my map?" "What information do I want to include?" "Are there tags that I want to use?" The use of Think Aloud is an effective way for me to model thinking skills for my students. This strategy will give my students a framework for conducting the activity on their own.

#### *Step 4: Novel Study*

For the purpose of this unit, I suggest dividing the of the novel *Felipe Alou: Desde Los Valles a Las Montañas* by Carol Gaab into three parts by theme: Theme 1 – The Dominican Republic, chapters 1-4; Theme 2 – Obstacles, chapters 5- 9; and Theme 3 – Breaking Barriers, chapter 10-11. These themes are based on the protagonist's journey through the story. This novel is the biography of Felipe Alou, a man from the Dominican Republic who came to the United States in 1956 to play professional baseball. He encountered many obstacles along the way, but he ended up having a very successful baseball career. Although the book focuses on Felipe Alou's baseball career, it also addresses his struggles in coming to the U.S. as a non-native speaker and the racial discrimination he encountered. It is my hope that my students develop an understanding and appreciation of the "journey" that many Dominican males make in order to realize their dreams of becoming a player in MLB, similar to the main character, Felipe Alou.

#### Theme 1 – The Dominican Republic

##### *Vocabulary – Access Prior Knowledge*

To get the lesson started I will provide each student with a knowledge rating scale chart, prior to any instruction of the terms. The chart will have a listed twenty or so vocabulary words from the text to read. My students will rate themselves on their level of familiarity with each term by placing a check in a column under one of the following headings: Have No Clue, Have Seen or Heard It, Know It Well. I will instruct the students to provide the English meaning of the word in the column labeled Definition if they know a word on the list well. If a student has seen or heard a vocabulary term from the list I will direct them to write an educated guess as the meaning of the word in the column labeled I Think It

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<sup>31</sup> Abdullahi Salisu and Emmanuel N. Ransom, *The Role of Modeling towards Impacting Quality Education*, PDF, Switzerland: SciPress Limited, June 24, 2014)

Means. It is important to encourage them to be honest, as their responses will determine how much time will be devoted to the instruction of each vocabulary term.

#### *Vocabulary – Direct Instruction*

After the students reflect on their knowledge of the chapter vocabulary, I will use a vocabulary chart made up of two columns, one with the vocabulary terms and the other with their English meanings, to clearly teach the vocabulary. Using this chart makes certain that all students have the needed vocabulary to participate in class discussions and chapter activities. Students use the definitions to complete a graphic organizer with the vocabulary terms in the target language by writing a definition or meaning of the word in English, writing a sentence in the target language using the term in context, and sketching the vocabulary word. Initially I will instruct the students to complete each section of the graphic organizer for every term with the end goal in mind of each student determining which option; definition, sentence, or sketch is the most effective tool for him/her to learn and remember the vocabulary.

#### *Close Reading*

As the students prepare to read the text I will explain to them that they will be using a strategy called Close Reading, working both independently and collaboratively to closely analyze the text. I will further explain that they will be reading the text a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. I suggest that within this theme, the text to be read be divided into three separate readings. In my opinion, the most logical division is by chapter. The first read of the first section, is read aloud by the teacher. Students follow along circling any words they do not know and annotating any text they do not understand with a question mark. After this first read students use a graphic organizer, a one page paper divided in half with the first half labeled *Learning* and the other half labeled *Reflection*, to write a Learning/About statement, a brief summary.

The second reading is reading with purpose. Students read independently underlining details in the text that support their learning statements. Using the above graphic organizer, students reflect upon what they just read. I will explain to the students that the reflection can be questions they still have about the text, predictions, or a personal connection that they have to that particular part of the story. With a shoulder partner, each student discusses the details they selected from the text and how they support their Learning/About statement. Reflections are also shared. I will then conduct a whole class discussion regarding the details of the text in order to check for understanding. In addition, I will address student questions about the reading.

The next step in the close process is a series of text dependent questions. I will model for the students the process of answering these questions by working through the first

question with them. First, re-read the section of text. Next, take notes. Then discuss the question with a partner. Finally, write your best possible answer using all of the information that you have gathered to the question.

To end the close reading process, I will lead a whole class discussion of the questions and the text in order to check for accuracy. As with chapter 1, the close reading process will be practiced when reading chapters 2 and 3 with the text dependent questions being chapter specific.

### *Check for Understanding*

This check for understanding can be used to assess students' comprehension of the text. Divide the class into groups that have as many students as there actors in the chapter. A director role could be included if needed. Each group assigns character roles to each of its members. Then, read the story aloud as each group acts it out simultaneously. There are many small groups acting out the chapter at the same time rather than having a small group of actors at the front of the class. If one group has an awesome performance, stop the action and have that group re-do the scene. This is a great way to get everyone involved.<sup>32</sup> It can be used as a quick and easy formative assessment.

## Theme 2 – Obstacles

### *Vocabulary*

In order to provide consistency throughout the unit, I will use the same procedures for accessing prior knowledge and direct instruction of vocabulary as in the previous lesson with the exception of the completion of a graphic organizer for vocabulary definitions. Instead of using the graphic organizer I will have students create digital flashcards using a website like Quizlet. On sites such as Quizlet students can create their personalized study stack of vocabulary terms allowing the students to be active participants in the learning process. Digital media works well in my curriculum because it has multisensory appeal and will engage my visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners.

### *Close Reading*

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<sup>32</sup> Bex, Martina. "Simultaneous Acting." *The Comprehensible Classroom*. October 13, 2013. Accessed December 30, 2016. <https://martinabex.com/2013/10/13/simultaneous-acting/>.

I will employ the same close reading processes used in the previous lesson to maintain consistency. Within this theme I suggest dividing the text into four different readings. In my opinion, the most logical division is by chapter.

### *Check for Understanding*

To assess the students' understanding of Felipe Alou's journey thus far from The Dominican Republic to Minor League Baseball in the U. S., I will have students create a storyboard of events to date in the story. I suggest using one frame for each chapter that was read with an extra frame to be used to predict what will happen next in the story. I will encourage students review and reflect upon their learning statements and reflections from the close readings to help them in the creation of their storyboards. In accessing the storyboard, in each frame, I will look for an illustration of the main idea for that chapter along with some supporting details.

### Theme 3 – Breaking Barriers

For the sake of continuity, the same procedures for the instruction of vocabulary and close reading will be followed as in the previous two lessons. This will provide structure and routine within the lessons. Within the instruction of vocabulary for this lesson I will give my students the two options for recording the definitions; they may choose between using a graphic organizer like the one used in the first lesson, Theme 1, or they may create digital flashcards as used in the second lesson, Theme 2. In providing my students this choice, they are able to choose the strategy that works best with their learning style(s) and will therefore be more engaged in the lesson.

### *Check for Understanding*

I will have the students complete a Timed Free Write summary in the target language of the novel, comparing themselves to the main character of the story, Alex. By asking each student to write continuously for a limited time span of 10 minutes, I am able to evaluate what a student is able to produce from memory when there's no time for editing or second-guessing. I will provide each student with a timed writing form which will facilitate the counting of words written. Then I will set a timer for 10 minutes projecting it for students to see. Once I instruct the students to begin, they write continuously in the target language as much as they are able summarizing the novel. As the students write, I will monitor their progress and encourage those who may be struggling. When the timer goes off, I will instruct the students to finish the last sentence if they are in the middle of it. Next, I will direct them to count all of the words in the target language and write the number largely at the top of the page and circle it. I will collect the timed writing forms

to review as a formative assessment to identify what students are comprehending and where they may be struggling.

To scaffold this activity, students may use the storyboard they created upon completion of Theme 2 – Obstacles as a reference. As an extension to the Timed Free Write, I could perform a Read Aloud, reading a few of the summaries to the class, fixing any errors as I read. Reading the summary of a reluctant or a weaker student may provide them with confidence as they witness peers enjoy their writing.

## **Activity 2: Dominican Domination in the Sport of Baseball**

This second activity was designed as a hook to get the students to engage with the main themes that will be covered throughout the unit. This activity consists of an Infographic Study of Latinos in Major League Baseball. The Essential Questions for this activity are the following: “How does culture influence our choice of profession?” and “What attracts these players to Major League Baseball?”

### Infographic Study– Latinos in Major League Baseball

Upon completion of our novel study we turn our focus to the role of Latinos in Major League Baseball today.

#### *Vocabulary*

Students will have had exposure to some vocabulary associated with Latinos in baseball reading *Felipe Alou: Desde los valles a las montañas*. When delving into statistical information, specific vocabulary will be needed. To introduce this vocabulary, I will use the same learning strategy and procedures from Activity 1: Step 4 - Novel Study; Vocabulary – Access Prior Knowledge. The vocabulary that I will introduce is from the infographic *Latinos en MLB en Opening Day Temporado 2019*<sup>33</sup> of which we will be doing a close read.

#### *Close Reading*

As the students prepare to read the infographic, I will remind them that we will once again be using the Close Reading strategy, working both independently and collaboratively to closely analyze the text. I will further remind them that they will be

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<sup>33</sup> Juan Carlos González César, "El Poder Latino De La Major League Baseball," Deportes Inc, May 13, 2019, [PAGE], accessed December 19, 2020, <https://deportesinc.com/investigacion-deportes-inc/latinos-en-mlb-2019/>

reading the text a couple of times, each time focusing on a different aspect of it. The same strategy and procedures will be followed as in Activity 1: Step 4 – Novel Study; Close Reading. My goal in using this strategy with the infographic is that the students use the information in the infographic to compare and contrast the statistics of Latino countries included and then consider the reasons for the variance in the numbers of players coming from each country. Even though at first glance it appears that a country's proximity to the U. S. is the reason that large numbers of players from there join Minor League Baseball (MiLB) and MLB organizations, it is my hope that through learning and reflection, especially reflection on previously learned cultural information in Activity 1, my students will realize that many variables such as a county's economic status, it's national pride and tradition, and it's baseball infrastructure factor into large number of its beisbolistas playing in MiLB and MLB.

#### *Check for Understanding – Text Dependent Questions*

I will show students a baseball commercial in the target language, *Beisbol Profesional - Galarraga*<sup>34</sup>. I chose this particular commercial because it discusses the sport as preparation of the hardships faced in life and that it, baseball, provides constancy and a future for those who are struggling. For the purposes of this learning episode, I recommend that students view the commercial three times. For the first view, I will instruct the students to view the commercial in its entirety. For the second viewing I will provide the students with a written script of the commercial. I will instruct the students to view the commercial using the written script as a reference. I will inform them that they may pause the video as needed to refer to the script for clarification. I will monitor student progress and encourage students to employ the use of an online dictionary such as [wordreference.com](http://wordreference.com) to discover the meaning of any target language word necessary to their understanding of the text. During the third viewing, students will once again view the commercial in its entirety referring to the script only as needed. Next, using Google Docs, each student is to write, in the target language, three text dependent questions about the commercial. I will review with them what a text dependent question is and provide examples of previously used text dependent questions before they begin writing. After questions are written, I will instruct the students to share their questions with one other student, whom I have identified, and me. The student receiving questions will then answer the questions in the target language and share the completed document with the student who wrote the questions and me. Ideally, the student writing the questions should be able to identify specific details in the commercial and form simple written questions in the target language to elicit a specific answer from another student. The student

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<sup>34</sup> Campaña Promocional De Televen Para El Campeonato 1999-2000 De La Liga De Beisbol Profesional De Venezuela. (Venezuela, 1999), accessed November 17, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbQ82nUincs>

answering the question should be able to recognize/understand the language used in the question well enough to write a simple answer.

### **Activity 3: Breakout Box**

The Essential Question for this final activity is, “How does a beisbolista make his way to becoming a player in MLB?”

To conclude the unit, students will demonstrate their understanding of the MLB recruitment process of international players, specifically those from the Dominican Republic, by completing a virtual breakout box. This culminating activity will require each student to work collaboratively with 2 to 3 classmates. This will require students to work together towards a common goal and bounce ideas off of one another. To successfully complete this activity, students will have to analyze, organize, evaluate, and implement strategies they have previously learned to solve problems and clues. Students will be required to think outside of the box to come up with possible methods to find a solution to the puzzles. This will necessitate the implementation of creative problem solving. Effective communication in the target language is essential for the successful completion of this activity. Students will need to communicate their thoughts and ideas with one another in the target language in order to solve the puzzle. To begin the activity, I will instruct each group that they will have 45 minutes to breakout of the box by solving a series of 4 puzzles. The puzzles to be solved will include information from previous activities in this unit; for example, one puzzle will be a cloze passage in the target language of the commercial script from Activity 1 – Infographic Study *Check for Understanding*. In order to facilitate this process, I will provide each student with a hard copy stapled packet containing each puzzle in the correct order. This allows students to write on each puzzle as they work through each one as they arrive at the codes to advance to the next level of the MLB recruitment process. Each will have successfully completed the challenge when they have been signed as a player with an MLB organization.

In the creation of this activity, I found the following blog post by Bespoke ELA (Meredith) *How to Build a Digital Escape Room Using Google Forms*<sup>35</sup> to be extremely informative and helpful. I strongly encourage allowance of student feedback regarding

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<sup>35</sup> Meredith Dobbs, "How to Build a Digital Escape Room Using Google Forms - Bespoke ELA: Essay Writing Tips Lesson Plans," Bespoke ELA, October 04, 2019, [PAGE], accessed November 19, 2020, <https://www.bespokeclassroom.com/blog/2019/10/4/how-to-build-a-digital-escape-room-using-google-forms>)

the process and the technology. Giving my students the opportunity to be a part of this process will allow for a final product that is effective, engaging, enjoyable, and useful.

### **Appendix A: Implementing District Standards**

This unit will implement two IB MYP Objectives, two Delaware World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages and one Common Core State Standard. I will focus on IB Language Acquisition Objective Criterion C: Comprehending Written Text requiring the student to understand information and engage with the text by supporting opinion and personal response with evidence from the text. I will also evaluate Criterion D: Communicating in Written Form which expects the student to organize and express thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions and information in writing, write for specific purposes, and develop accuracy when writing in the target language. The Delaware World Readiness Standards for Learning Languages are Standard 1.3 Presentational Communication: Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers or viewers; and Standard 2.1 Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives: Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied. I will focus on the Common Core Standard CCSSELA – Literacy RI.9 – 10.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 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.)

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## Notes