"Another Poem of the Gifts"

Using Borges to foster inclusive, culturally responsive language learning

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About Montgomery College.....

- MC is one of the most diverse community colleges in the US, and reflects the rich cultural and international makeup of Montgomery County, Maryland.
- 70% of the student body belongs to a racial or ethnic minority groups.
- About 33% are Hispanic or Latino (MC is designated as a Hispanic serving institution).

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986)



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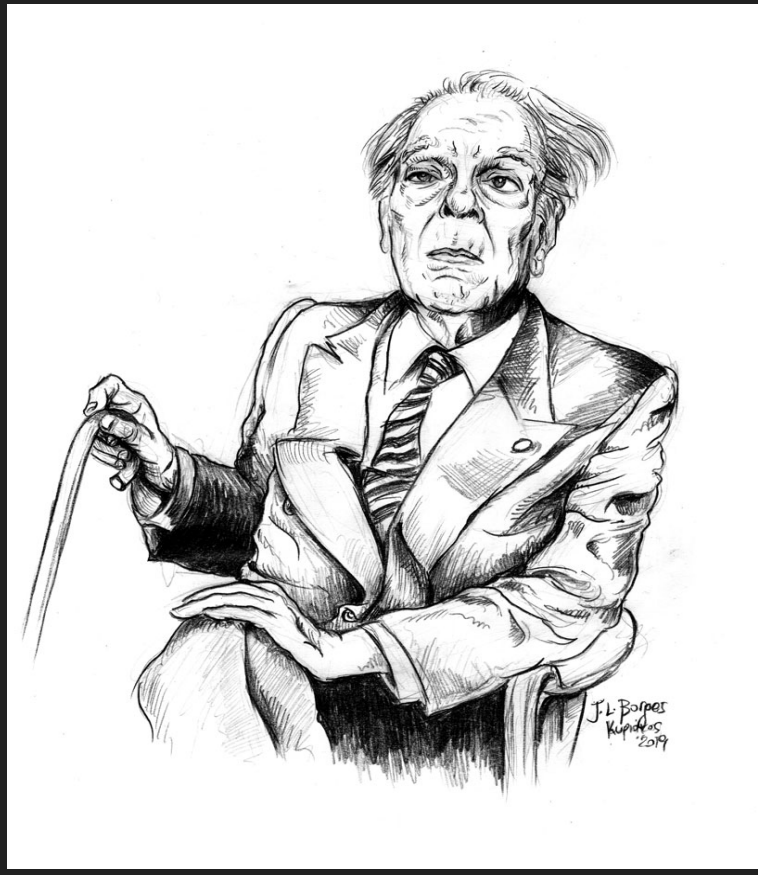
Thanksgiving: Poem of gratitude



1.- Students read the poem in English and Spanish.
2.- They analyze the vocabulary.
3.- They explore the cultural contexts.
4.- They write their own poem of gratitute in the target language: Spanish.

Why "Another Poem of the Gifts" is the one?

- 1.- For its undeniable beauty.
- 2.- Inclusive.
- 3.- Simple structure.
- 4.- Rich vocabulary and cultural references.
- 5.- Lowers the affective filter creating a sense of community and belonging.



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Bridging the gap between Borges' poem and students own immediate experiences

- 1.-**Deconstruct and "Translate" the Mentor Text**.- Real "translation or interpretation" comes with exploration of its cultural references.

- 2.- **Brainstorming Scaffold**.- Students work in groups making a list of the sensory and natural elements from the Borges poem, and from their lives. They also make a list of the micro-moments and habits that make them happy and grateful, as well as the difficult moments from which they learned.

Motivating students who are not thankful...



1.- Using humor.

2.- Asking precise questions: "do you like coffee, playing video games, watching movies," etc.

3.- Giving examples of poems of students of past semesters.

The poem as an entry to foster inclusivity



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"I want to give thanks to the divine Labyrinth of causes and effects"
"For Helen's face and the perseverance of Ulysses."

Echoes of the Catholic faith



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- "For love which lets us see others
- As God sees them" (Genesis 1:27)
- Doctrine of Imago Dei.
- Loving someone with true love "caritas" is recognizing their infinite, inherent worth.

Many motives to be thankful...

"For mahogamy, cedar, and sandalwood",
"For bread and salt"
:"For epic winter"
"For gallant, noble, geometric chess"
"For the tiger's stripes"
"For the medicinal smell of eucalyptus"



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Compassion and Forgiveness....



"For the words spoken one twilight,
From one cross to another"

Borges reminds us with this verse something essential in the Catholic faith: that no life is beyond the reach of love.

Embracing Inclusivity

"For Algebra, a palace of exact crystals."

"For Shopenhauer, who perhaps deciphered the universe."



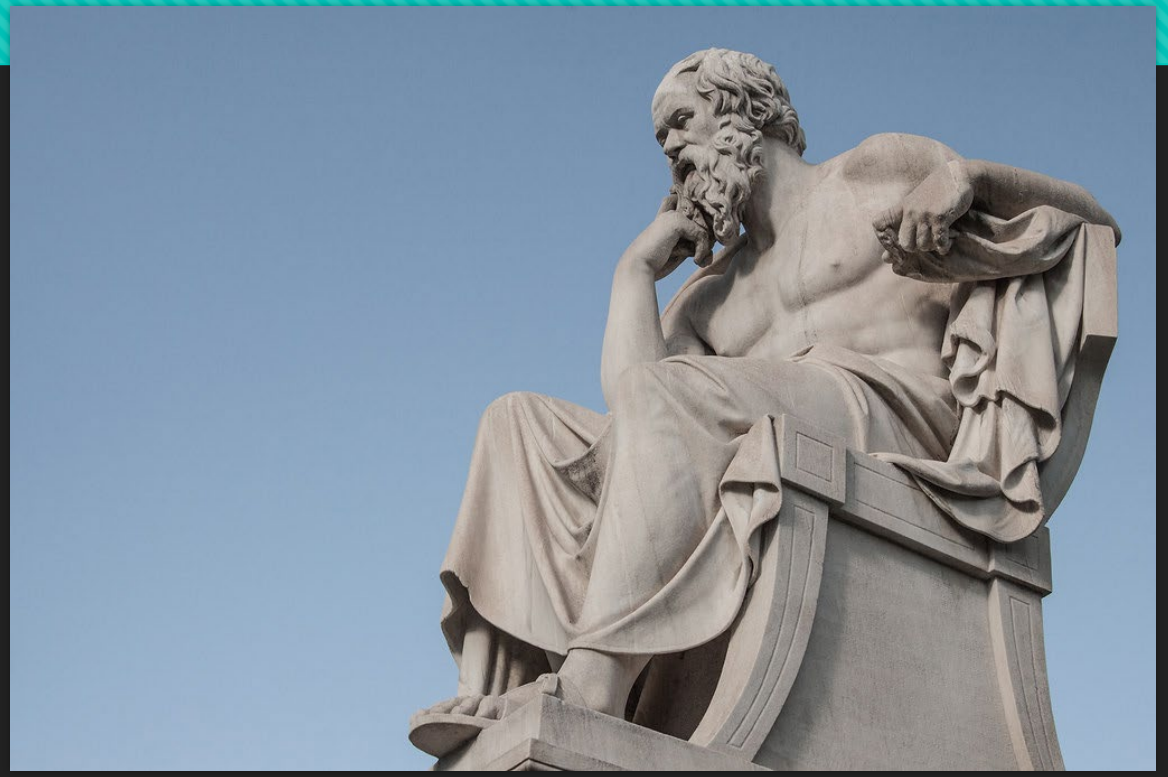
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Borges talks about ethics ……

"For Socrates' last day"

Socrates told in Crito: "The important thing is not living, but living well" (= justly).

Moral integrity and respect to law triumphed over self-preservation.



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Embracing his ethnic and cultural backgrounds.....

"For the secret and immemorial rivers that converge in me."

Reference to his ancestors and to Heraclitus (river metaphor).



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Different languages and literatures……



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"For that dream of Islam that embraced A thousand nights and a night"
"For the word music of England"
"For the word music of Germany"
"For Seneca and Luca, both of Cordoba who, before there was Spanish, had written all Spanish literature."
"For Whitman and Francis of Assisi, who already wrote this poem."

Borges did not forget anything...



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"For the intimate gifts I do not mention,
"For music, that mysterious form of time."

Time in this poem is a positive phenomenon. Thanks to music we experience time unfolding.

Students feel empowered

"I am thankful for my parents' courage for risking everything for us while coming to the States without anything: nor money neither papers." (SPAN 202)

"I am grateful for the rain, the sun, the moon, and the stars." (SPAN 102)

"I am thankful for my boyfriend and his three funny cats." (SPAN 101)
"I am grateful for all the small and big mistakes I made because I learned a lot from them" (SPAN 201)

"I am grateful for Bob Dyland because his songs are sweet melodies for my soul whenever I feel sad or lonely." (SPAN 216)
"I am thankful for the Borges poem of gratitude because now I became a poet." (SPAN 102)



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"Another Poem of the Gifts" has multiple purposes.....



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- 1.- Serves as a model for fostering inclusive language learning,
- 2.- Encourages creative writing,
- 3.- Promotes intercultural reflection,
- 4.- Supports culturally responsive pedagogy,
- 5.- Guide students to recognize the value of their own worldview, fostering a sense of community.

When there is a sense of community……

A learner's background is treated as an essential asset.

Language acquisition is not a mechanical exercise but a meaningful, identity-affirming journey of human connection.



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Students' input on this assignment:

- "I feel empowered; I discovered I like poetry."
- "I never imagine that in Spanish 101, I could understand a long poem in Spanish."
- "I could not believe I could write my own poem in Spanish."
- "I am curious to read other poems and short-stories by Borges."

References

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Thanks a lot for your attention!!!

