

## Narratives Stories: Jose M. Lopez

**Themes:** Military service, honors, heroism, courage, new experiences

**Activities:** Roles of Latinos & Latinas in Films of 1940s, Film Strip Animation

*One of the 12* Hispanic WWII veterans to have received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military accolade, had a difficult childhood, but maintained a fervent belief in the Virgen de Guadalupe, the patron saint of most Mexicans.

Jose M. Lopez's father died in the Mexican Revolution; his son never really knew him. Mr. Lopez's mother died eight years later, when he was eight. He never went to school, but worked in the cotton fields to help support himself.

As an infantry soldier, he prayed to his beloved Virgin, but he didn't pray to be a hero, he only wanted to return to his wife and their two children in Brownsville, Texas.

Sgt. Jose M. Lopez did return safely — to a hero's welcome and met a succession of U.S. presidents, from Truman to George W. Bush. He was even feted in Mexico with that country's highest military honor.

"I prayed a lot to the Virgen de Guadalupe," (Le rezaba mucho a la Virgen de Guadalupe), Mr. Lopez recalled about his time in Belgium as a sergeant in the U.S. Army, Company K, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. "And she allowed me to succeed and I finished with combat." (Y se me concedio que triunfe y acabe con el combate.)

Mr. Lopez — who believes he survived the horrors of war thanks to the Virgin's blessings — sure enough packed his bags upon arriving in Brownsville and along with his wife and two children went on a pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

The trip was fully funded by donations from the grateful residents of Brownsville, who threw Mr. Lopez a hero's welcome.



**Jose Lopez shakes hands with John F. Kennedy, one of several U.S. presidents who have thanked him over the years for his bravery in battle.**



## Jose M. Lopez-continued

“I was glad that I returned to my family,” Mr. Lopez said. “My wife and I went to church to thank God that I returned and saw my children and wife.”

But the valor that Sgt. Lopez demonstrated on a Belgium battlefield — where he carried out a seemingly suicidal mission — was more than a divine gift. It was a quality that flowed deep in his blood.

Born in Mission, Texas, in 1910, Mr. Lopez’s father, Cayetano Lopez, and his mother, Candida Mendoza de Lopez, emigrated from a small village in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. His father worked on the cotton and beet fields of Mission while his mother took care of the newborn.

Mr. Lopez became an orphan when his mother died.

“I didn’t know my father . . . my mother died very young,” Mr. Lopez said. (Yo no conocí a mi papa . . . mi mamá falleció muy joven.)

Mr. Lopez grew up living with a maternal uncle, Constancio Mendoza, but he provided for himself by working on the cotton fields around Brownsville. Mr. Lopez never had the chance to set foot in a classroom, something he regrets to this day.

As a young man, Mr. Lopez then caught the attention of a boxing promoter, who noticed his physical abilities and mental agility. A seven-year career as a lightweight boxer then ensued, and he fought a total of 55 matches, winning all but three of them. Never in his defeats was Mr. Lopez knocked out nor did he hit the tarp.

While at a boxing match in Melbourne, Australia, in 1934, Mr. Lopez met a group of men who worked for the Merchant Marine, and he was convinced to sign a work contract with it. He was accepted into the union in 1936 and spent the next five years traveling the world and visiting far-off places such as New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and Tahiti.

For a time, Mr. Lopez lived in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, where he would break concrete with a steel gun for a living. He lived there for about five months but eventually decided to return to the mainland United States.

It was en route to California that he learned about the Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which led the United States into World War II. Mr. Lopez said the attack happened three days into his voyage back home.

“When I arrived in Los Angeles, I disembarked, they arrested me because they thought I was Japanese,” (Cuando llegue a Los Angeles, que me desembarque, luego me agarraron porque creían que era yo japonés.) Mr. Lopez said. “I let them see my papers, that I was Mexican and they let me go. They were going to put me in the prison (interment camps) for the Japanese.” (Les deje mis papeles que era Mexicano y me soltaron. Me iban a poner en la prisión de los japoneses.)



## Jose M. Lopez-continued

Mr. Lopez then returned to Brownsville in 1942 to marry Emilia Herrera, with whom he would eventually have four daughters — Candida, Virginia, Maggie and Beatrice, and one stepson, Juanito, from his wife's first marriage.

But later on that year, he received a draft card and went to San Antonio to enlist in the U.S. Army. Mr. Lopez was sent first to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and then to Camp Roberts, Calif., to receive his basic training.

Although Mr. Lopez volunteered to serve in the Airborne Unit, he was not accepted because the Army wanted young, single men to serve in that dangerous unit. Instead, Mr. Lopez was assigned to Company K of the 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division.

Sgt. Lopez was then sent to Northern Ireland to receive military training for a top-secret mission that would pave the way for the Allied Force's invasion of Nazi-controlled Europe, the June 6, 1944, assault on Omaha Beach.

Mr. Lopez's regiment landed at Normandy on June 7, D-plus-1.

"We fought very hard against the enemy," (Peliamos muy fuerte con los enemigos.) Mr. Lopez said. "We lost many of my friends." (Perdimos muchos amigos mios.)

Sgt. Lopez's ultimate test of valor, however, came on Dec. 17, 1944, near Krinkelt, Belgium, when he took it upon himself to carry his machine gun from Company K's right flank to its left to protect it from the advancing German infantry. "Germans started to arrive and attacked an American tank," Mr. Lopez recalled. (Alemanes comensaron a llegar y atacaron a un tanque americano) "I climbed up and asked if anyone was alive..." (Me trepe y pregunte si alguien estaba vivo)

There was no answer.

Sgt. Lopez then occupied a waist-deep fox hole and shot 10 Germans. He stayed there, despite heavy enemy fire, and he shot 25 more Germans, according to an account from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, which maintains a Web site.

"Everyone was afraid of where I put them to fight the Germans," Mr. Lopez said, recalling that one soldier even wanted to surrender. "I told them that they had to stop and fight back."

Sgt. Lopez realized his position would be outflanked so he carried his machine gun to a new position, reset the weapon and continued to fire. He single-handedly held off the Germans until he was satisfied that his company had completely gotten away and was no longer compromised.

Sgt. Lopez's efforts ultimately allowed the Americans to create a line of defense to fight back enemy fire.

Sgt. Lopez's bravery — in which he killed at least 100 Germans and secured the position of Company K —



## Jose M. Lopez-continued

merited him the United States' highest award for military valor, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

After being presented the medal in Nuremberg, Germany, Sgt. Lopez returned to the United States. He received an enthusiastic reception when his ship landed in New York City, and he was even greeted by legendary New York Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.

"Oh boy, they gave me a welcome!" Mr. Lopez said. "I met the mayor, the Italian guy [LaGuardia]."

Sgt. Lopez was also greeted in Mexico City during his pilgrimage to the Basilica. He was welcomed by President Avila Camacho and was also awarded Mexico's highest military commemoration, la Condecoracion del Merito Militar.

When he came back from the war, he was unable to get a good job in Brownsville, so he moved to San Antonio and worked as a contact representative with the Veterans Administration. A few years later, he volunteered — to serve in Korea, this time retrieving fallen soldiers' bodies. But somehow word got to then-President Harry S. Truman, who ordered him returned home.

"Bingo," Mr. Lopez said his captain said. "Sergeant Lopez, we're sending you back to the U.S."

Mr. Lopez now advises his grandchildren to get an education, which he considers the most important thing to do in life.

"It's the most one can leave to one's grandchildren: education," (Es lo mas que le puede dejar uno a los nietos, es la educacion) Mr. Lopez said, boasting about the success of his grandchildren's college educations and careers as doctors, magazine representatives and even imported cigar merchants. "They must learn so that they can live in this life." (Que aprendan para poder vivir en esta vida.)

Mr. Lopez currently lives in San Antonio with his wife Emilia, at his daughter, Maggie Wickwire's home.





**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Think of the films you watch. How are Latinos and Latinas portrayed now? Do stereotypes still persist?

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Are you seeing more positive and complex Latino characters in films?

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If you were a director, what kind of film would you make to portray Latinos and Latinas?

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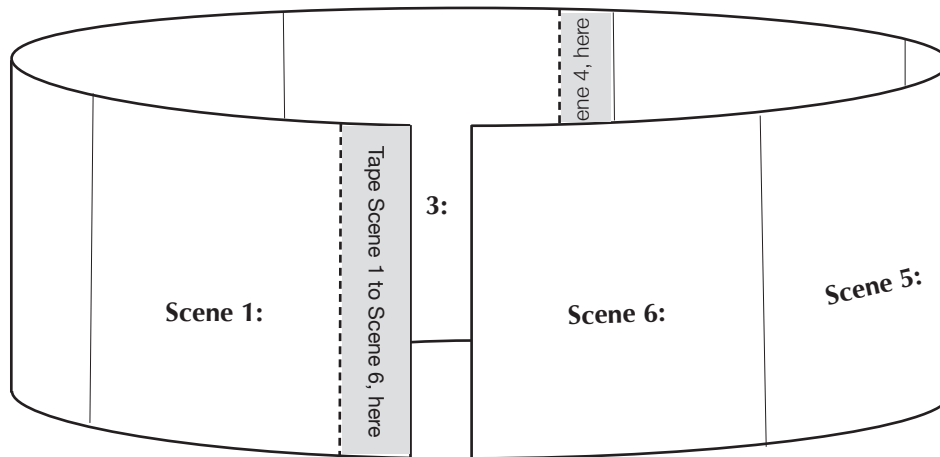
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## Film Strip Animation Activity

Choose a narrative to read about Richard Candelaria, Saragosa A. Garcia, or Jose M. Lopez; they all came back from WWII with honors and medals. Now imagine you are going to make a war film based on one of these accounts. Pick six important scenes that would be crucial to your “movie”, and sketch out your imagined scenes on the paper film strip.

\*Make sure you sequence your story starting at Scene 1, or your “paper film” will not work. Draw your illustrations in the top box, and below you can write a sentence or two explaining your scene. When you are through, cut out the two strips, and tape the end of Scene 3 to Scene 4. You will then draw a television on construction paper and cut two slits for the paper strip to fit through. Once your paper strip is through the television “screen”, tape your strip together so it forms a loop. You are now ready to view your film!



**EXAMPLE:** film strip before placing in TV

### TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.23: *Culture*: student understands the contributions of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to the United States

TEKS 5.26: *Social Studies Skills*: The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms

Tape Scene 3 to Scene 4, here

**Scene 3:**

**Scene 2:**

**Scene 1:**

Tape Scene 1 to Scene 6, here



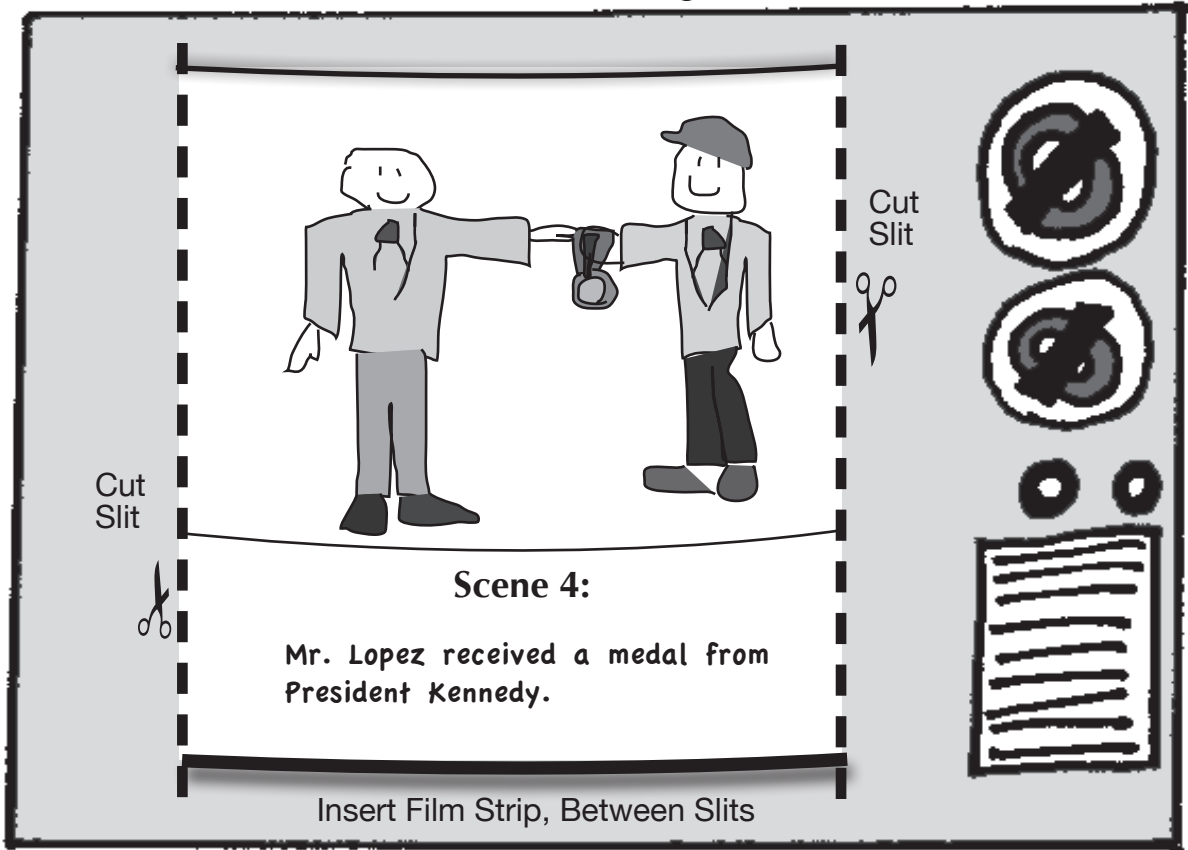




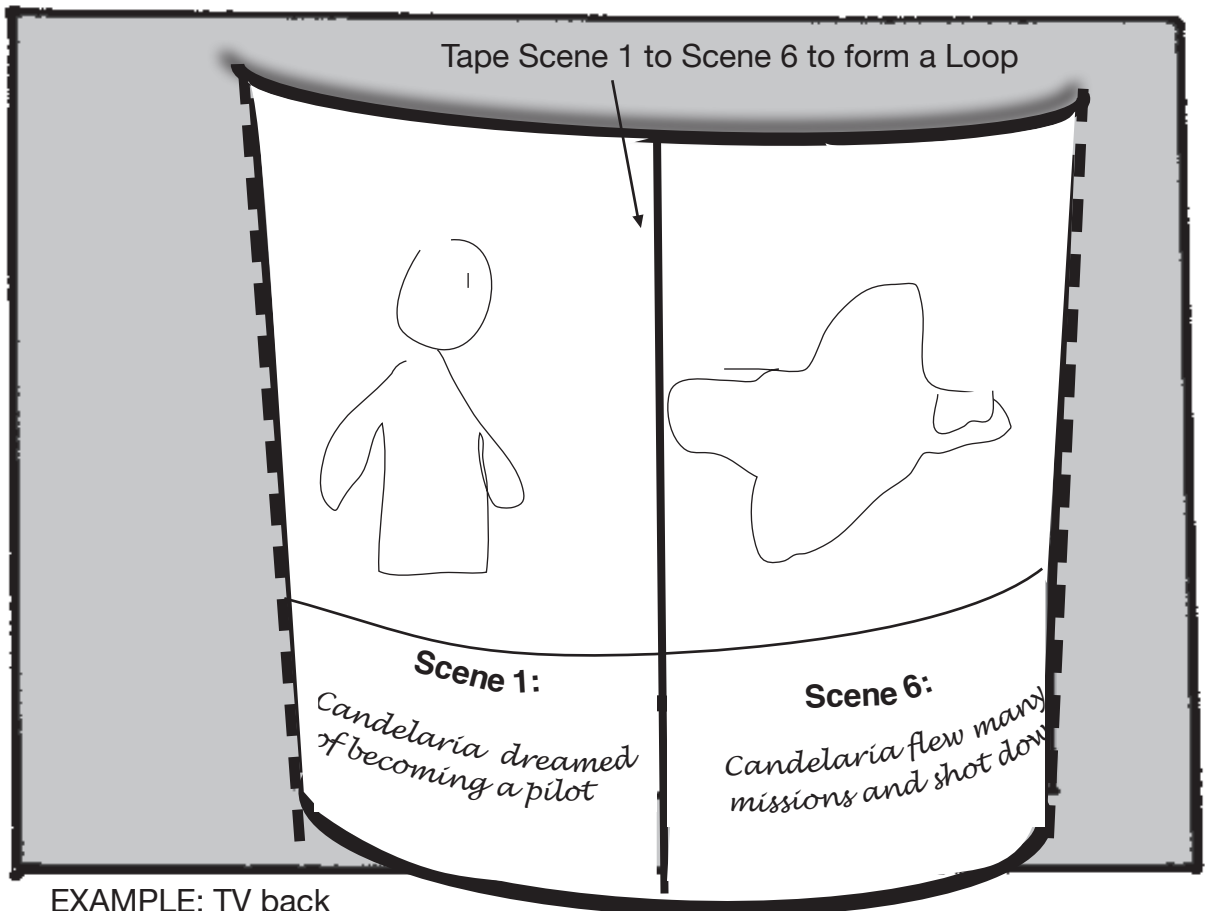
	<b>Scene 6:</b>
	<b>Scene 5:</b>
	<b>Scene 4:</b>



Draw your TV on Cardboard and Cut Out 



EXAMPLE: TV front



EXAMPLE: TV back

## Narratives Story: Elisa Rodriguez

**Themes:** Civil service work, women's contributions, personal goals, role models, perseverance

**Activity:** Women's Roles in World War II

*Seventy-seven-year-old Elisa Rodriguez* is not shy about opening her mouth when something's not right. As a Mexican American woman and as a former employee of the United States Civil Service since World War II, she has developed strong opinions about her country, discrimination and the relationship between the two.

"We're in America, and everybody has to be treated equally," Mrs. Rodriguez says. "But if you don't have the guts to speak out for yourself, nobody's gonna do it for you." Mrs. Rodriguez a Waco native, was 21 when she got her first government job in 1943 at Blackland Army Airfield, a temporary training ground in Waco for World War II twin engine pilots. She had been working days at a local department store and going to night school to learn shorthand, typing and other administrative skill courses so she could find secretarial work. Mrs. Rodriguez says she had always aspired to become a secretary.

"Typing fascinated me," she says "You know, there weren't many secretaries back then." Ironically, she was turned down in her first application to work as a stenographer with a defense company in nearby McGregor, Texas. When she arrived in McGregor with a letter of recommendation, the facility's personnel director immediately told her that the position, which had been advertised in the Waco paper for weeks, was no longer available.

"I'm just the type of person that I want an answer. I don't want them to beat around the bush. So I says, 'Sir, are you just denying me a position because of my nationality?' And he grinned and said, 'Yes, if I hire you, the other secretaries will quit. ... We just have white secretaries,' " recalls Mrs. Rodriguez, hands in front of her, locked together by her fingers and resting on the white lace cloth covering her dining room table."I'm sorry that God didn't make me white, but I'm proud of who I am," she told the man.

Rodriguez asked if she could speak to the president of the company, but was promptly told that he was not in.



**Elisa Rodriguez on the job at Blackland Army Airfield in 1943.**



## Elisa Rodriguez-continued

“Your gonna hear from somebody. I’m not gonna keep quiet about this,” said Mrs. Rodriguez on her way out the door.

She was quick to fulfill her threat. On her way back home, she stopped by the office of Mr. Earl, a lawyer friend of her family and the author of her rejected letter of recommendation. He called the company in McGregor and was immediately put through to the president. Mr. Earl proceeded to tell the man that if what his friend had just told him was true, he would call Washington and have the company’s defense contract broken with the government.

“He told him, ‘send her over,’ “ Mrs. Rodriguez recalls.

But she didn’t go straight back to McGregor. She went back to her house for lunch instead. When she got to the front porch, she checked the mailbox, where there was a letter from Blackland in response to a secretary’s job she had applied for a few weeks before. She immediately made the 12-mile bus ride to the base, where she got the job and started the next day. She made about \$2,000 a year, an average salary in those days, she says.

### ***Work & Discrimination***

The war provided Rodriguez with a decent job, but that was about it, she says. Being the only Latina at the base, she dealt with discrimination and prejudices routinely, she says.

“People would ask, ‘Why is it that you people have so many babies?’ They were always asking that. That was very personal and very rude, I thought,” says Rodriguez, who had eight brothers and sisters.

Rodriguez believes that discrimination is still as prevalent today as it was in 1945, when hundreds of Latinos returned to Texas after fighting for the U.S. in World War II.

“Some people don’t believe what goes on,” Rodriguez says. “Up till this day, it’s still the same. You work. You’re trying to get up in the world, but they [supervisors] bypass you.”

Rodriguez was bypassed for promotions she had been promised when she worked at Bergstrom Airforce base in Austin as a secretary and as an equal employment opportunity coordinator, she says. She was only getting paid to be a secretary, but she took on the coordinator responsibility in exchange for a future promotion and more money. She was desperate for a job because she was going through a divorce and both of her children, Rudy and Julie, were young at the time, she says.

Rodriguez never moved up at Bergstrom because she took her added responsibility as Equal Employment Opportunity coordinator too seriously, she says.

“I think I made a lot of waves while I was at Bergstrom. I was their advocate,” says Rodriguez of the minority veterans she served.



## Elisa Rodriguez-continued

Her supervisor cringed every time he saw her coming down the hallway to his office because of the confrontations they would sometimes have, she says. For example, when a group of minority veterans working at the base called Mrs. Rodriguez and let her know that they were about to get laid off, she took action.

“All I cared about were those Vets,” she says. “They go to war, they fight for you and they get nothing but a reduction in force?”

There were several nonveteran Anglos at the base that were not in danger of losing their jobs, Mrs. Rodriguez says, so she made the march over to her supervisor’s office.

“Look, I think it’s your duty to do something about this,” says Mrs. Rodriguez, recounting her encounter with her supervisor. “You better start checking around the base and seeing all those nonveterans that are holding jobs. They’re the ones that should be laid off. If you don’t do this, I’m gonna do something about it. ... I’m gonna go to the paper, the Green Berets, tell the whole world what you’re doing to these Vets,” she said.

“I tell you. Those slips were taken back,” she adds, her eyes widening. “I didn’t get ahead very much, but at least I got it off my chest. I let them know,” says Mrs. Rodriguez about her decision to speak out instead of keep quiet.

Despite her belief that minorities still suffer from discrimination, Mrs. Rodriguez notes that they don’t tolerate as much as they used to. “A lot of poor people back then weren’t educated. They were afraid of stuttering, getting laughed at. They couldn’t express themselves clearly and they were timid. That’s why I was glad (to do it),” she says, “ Even if it was a hardship.”

### ***Elisa Rodriguez Today & Yesterday***

Mrs. Rodriguez now lives comfortably, in a two-story, pink brick house with green shutters in South Austin. Big band music, the favorite of she and her husband of 28 years, Ben, emanates from a black jam box, filling the photo-laden house with wartime tunes.

“Sometimes we’ll get in the kitchen and dance to it.” Says Rodriguez, who adds that ballroom dancing is a favorite pastime for her and Ben.

Back when Mrs. Rodriguez worked at Blackland Airforce Base, she vowed never to get married until she earned enough money to buy her parents a new house. Within about two years, she had enough money to buy them a wood-framed four-bedroom house. The house, which her son Rudy now owns, cost \$3,500 when she paid for it in 1945, she says.

Both of Mrs. Rodriguez’s parents were Mexican immigrants. Her father, who had a sixth-grade education, and who knew little English, worked odd jobs until he landed one with the Lone Star Gas Company in Waco, where he worked as a pipe fitter for more than 40 years, Mrs. Rodriguez says. She was the second of nine children, all of whom started working at a young age.



## Elisa Rodriguez-continued

“I had to work all my life,” she says. “I was always the bread winner.”

Her three brothers grew up shining shoes and delivering the newspaper, she recalls. Mrs. Rodriguez, an honors student, got her first job at school, helping a teacher grade class work. At the same time, she worked as a maid for a local white woman in exchange for free piano lessons from her boss’s daughter.

Mrs. Rodriguez used to play the piano frequently at St. Francis, her family’s church. Later on, she often played for veterans at the Veterans Administration Subregional Office in Austin, where she worked in the medical clinic for a few years after the war ended. There were so many shell-shocked soldiers returned from the war, that the Veterans’ Administration had to open another building in Austin to handle all of them, she says.

“A lot of the ones that were really, really bad had to be locked up,” she recalls.

Mrs. Rodriguez spent a lot of her time taking flowers to the wounded, often-downtrodden men at the facility’s hospital, as well as organizing entertaining events for them.

“I found it very rewarding to do something for the boys. It’s the least we could do,” she says.

### TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.23 *Social Studies*: The student understands the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to the United States

TEKS 5.25(B), (C), (D) *Social Studies*: (B) analyze information/drawing inferences and conclusions (C) interpret information in visuals (D) identify different points of view about an issue or topic



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Women's Roles in World War II



**Elisa Rodriguez on the job at Blackland Army Airfield in 1943.**

Hispanic women made a significant contribution to World War II in a variety of roles. They worked as airplane mechanics and ship welders, they planted "Victory Gardens," volunteered for the Red Cross and took over households when their husbands went off to war.

Look at the photo of Elisa Rodriguez. Just by looking at her picture, what kind of person might she be?

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**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

In her interview, Mrs. Rodriguez stated, “We’re in America, and everybody has to be treated equally, but if you don’t have the guts to speak out for yourself, nobody’s gonna do it for you.”

Are her words typical for a woman, especially a Hispanic woman, living in the 1940s?  
Please explain:

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Mrs. Rodriguez, a Waco native, worked in a department store by day, but she took night classes to learn shorthand, typing, and other administrative skill courses so she could become a secretary. Would most people consider her a role model? (Explain your answer):

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How might her seemingly ordinary life been helpful for other Hispanics?

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## Narratives Story: Nicanor Aguilar

**Themes:** Social justice, discrimination, LULAC and WWII, equality

**Activity:** The League of United Latin American Citizens and World War II

*Nicanor Aguilar* is something of a renaissance man, both as a musician and, at a time when most people his age would be slowing down, as an athlete.

But his proudest accomplishment involves his efforts to end discrimination in his West Texas hometown after returning from the war.

Born Jan. 10, 1917 in Grand Falls in rural Texas, he spent most of his time helping his father, a tenant cotton farmer. The family of three brothers and two sisters helped pick cotton on the 100-acre farm.

In 1930, a schoolhouse was finally built for Mexican-American children next to a grouping of mesquite trees, but he left after one year to work with his father. No schools existed for Mexican-American children after elementary; entry into the “Anglo” schools was banned. Mr. Aguilar learned most of his English from the Anglo children with whom he played in town.

One of his younger sisters, Maria, was prevented from attending junior high. But then along came Laura Francis Murphy, a teacher who was an advocate for teaching disenfranchised Hispanic students.

“[Ms. Murphy] did a lot for the Mexicans,” Aguilar said.

His sister, Maria, ultimately became the first Hispanic to attend Grand Falls High School in 1942, thanks largely to Ms. Murphy.

Maria, an accomplished trumpet player with the family’s orchestra also won band competitions.

The entire Aguilar family was musically inclined. In 1927, at age 10, he began playing music with his father and, later, his brothers.

“We were bad, but we played good music,” Mr. Aguilar said, referring to his family’s Grand Falls Orchestra ensemble.



**Mr. Aguilar in Juarez,  
Mexico on January 26, 1946**



## Nicanor Aguilar-continued

The family played both Mexican and “American” music, including classics such as “Stardust.” Each family member was paid \$1 an hour to perform at weddings and other dances.

Mr. Aguilar started playing drums, but didn’t like it because he would have to read the music simultaneously and miss watching the people dancing on the dance floor. So his father put him on the violin, instead, so he could focus on his dual interests.

“I didn’t like the violin too well, but there I was. At least I could see the people,” he said, laughing. He would go on to play the clarinet, saxophone and piano for the next 50 years.

Mr. Aguilar proudly displayed a framed article from a 1946 edition of a regional newspaper headlined, “Aguilar’s Brought ‘Big Band Sound’ To West Texas” and a photo of the family playing.

This family bond helped inspire him to join the U.S. Army; younger brother Isabino Aguilar, had already enlisted. Mr. Aguilar received basic training at Camp Hood, Texas, and later Fort Ord, Calif., intent on fighting in Europe for his country and joining his kid brother in Germany. He joined the U.S. Infantry, inducted as a private in July 1945 and ending his service the next year.

Like many veterans, Mr. Aguilar is reticent in recalling war stories. In his interview, he focuses instead on the social battles he fought stateside. After the war, he found discrimination had not disappeared in his hometown.

“There was the same discrimination in Grand Falls, if not worse,” Aguilar recalls. “First, we’d work for a dollar a day. After the war, they raised it to \$2 [for] 10 hours. And the whites would get \$18 (a day) in the petroleum [field].”

Virtually none of the town’s petroleum jobs were available to Latinos. Mr. Aguilar managed to hold down such a job for one year with a small petroleum company, but only through a friend’s assistance.

Mr. Aguilar felt he had to act to end his town’s discriminatory climate.

“It wasn’t right,” he said. “I started calling other veterans and I told them, ‘We have to do something good.’ Toward that end, they secured assistance from a League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) associate.

“We would investigate. For example . . . I would see [signs that read] ‘No Mexicans, whites only.’ There was only one (restaurant) that would serve us. We would write reports so they could give us the reasons. Some would answer us well; others, not so well. I brought those reports to El Paso (Texas) and gave them to a LULAC associate. I don’t know what he did with them after that. Once, a more powerful LULAC associate came to see me from San Antonio and congratulated me.”



## Nicanor Aguilar-continued

Gradually, the oppressive signs began coming down from diner windows.

In 1948, Mr. Aguilar moved to El Paso after a drought in Grand Falls, still continuing his work for LULAC. Today, he is a LULAC Member At Large.

Mr. Aguilar knows that it was the efforts of many people, like him, that led to changes.

“You don’t know the sacrifices we made,” Aguilar said.

In addition to his civil rights efforts, Aguilar started competing in the Senior Olympics when he was 65, participating in running, bicycling and other events.

Today, he displays his mounted awards: 37 medals, 10 ribbons and another 14 more awards he earned at the age of 85 earlier this year. In later correspondence, Mr. Aguilar noted that, all told, he has 67 awards, most of them for gold or first place. And he adds 14 of those were earned earlier this year at the age of 85.

In later correspondence, sent after being interviewed, Mr. Aguilar writes extensively about the discrimination of his youth, seemingly as vivid a memory as the war. Perhaps he internalized much of that personal history to himself earlier, preferring instead to record his thoughts at a more leisurely pace that would accommodate intermittent waves of emotion upon remembrance.

In the makeshift building – the one next to the mesquite trees – he soaked up whatever learning he could, he wrote.

“We had scraps of education in old abandoned houses with teachers perhaps not qualified. I was kept three years in the seventh grade because the state could not afford any more books. I had one choice: Stay ‘til I grew a beard or quit . . . ”

But he did not quit. And today, his story of simply growing resonates powerfully and speaks volumes.

### TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.19: *Citizenship*: The student understands the importance of individual participation in the democratic process

TEKS 5.21: *Citizenship*: The student understands the fundamental rights of American citizens guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and other amendments to the U.S. Constitution

TEKS 5.26: *Social Studies skills*: The student communicates in written forms





## Narratives Story: Dennis Baca

**Themes:** World travel, Pacific front, new experiences

**Activity:** Mapping Dennis Baca's Journey

*Dennis Baca* still cries when he thinks of the friends he lost during World War II. Even now, 57 years after his discharge from the U.S. Army, his voice becomes choked with emotion as he recalls the battles, the hardships and the deaths that marked his days in the South Pacific.

The soft-spoken 76-year-old with the gentle face is uncomfortable talking about himself or his war experiences. He doesn't see his service during World War II as anything heroic. He was just doing his job, he said.

"I wish I could have finished high school, but they got me and drafted me, and I had to go and fight for my country. I'm glad I could fight for my country," said Mr. Baca.

Mr. Baca was drafted in 1942, at the age of 18, shortly after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. After completing basic training in Fort Bliss, Texas, Baca went through infantry training at Camp Roberts, Calif.

"It was pretty tough. It was hot, sometimes 100, 110, 115 degrees," Mr. Baca recalled. "At the end of our training we had to make a 30-mile hike with a full field pack to see who would make it. Some guys didn't make it. They just collapsed."

Mr. Baca said he knew he would see combat soon but he says his unit, the Anti-Tank Platoon, 132nd Infantry Regiment, American Division, was unsure of its mission. "We got transferred at 2 o'clock in the morning. We didn't know if we were going to Japan or Germany. We didn't know what kind of clothes we needed. It was tough," said Mr. Baca.

After a three-week journey at sea, his platoon landed at New Caledonia, an island in the South Pacific. "We landed in barges, you know, in waves. We lost a lot of my friends here in the landing," recalls Mr. Baca.

After a few months on New Caledonia, his unit was moved to the Solomon Islands, a thinly populated and undeveloped area about 800 miles east of New Guinea.



**Dennis Baca in Joyahama, Japan  
after the war in December 1945.**



## Dennis Baca-continued

According to World War II historians, the region was pivotal to the Japanese control of the Pacific. Historians believe that if the Japanese had controlled the Solomon Islands, along with New Guinea, they would have been presented with a stepping-stone to Australia.

Some of the fiercest battles, including Guadalcanal, were fought there. Mr. Baca's 132nd Infantry joined the campaign on Guadalcanal on Dec. 8, 1942, at Mount Austen and fought through there and at the Gifu strongpoint. They were relieved Jan. 9, 1943. They then assaulted Verahue on Feb. 1 and captured Tenaro Village on Feb. 9, 1943. They moved to Fiji to regroup and attacked Bougainville in the Solomon Islands, on Jan. 12, 1944.

"They gave us machetes to cut through the jungle. It was all jungle, seems like it rained every day," Mr. Baca said. "Jungle, swamps and mosquitoes. That's where I saw a lot of my friends get killed."

He said, "A lot of nights we had to make foxholes and that's where we'd sleep. The mosquitoes — they were bad. They gave us mosquito nets to put over our heads and over our beds. There's where I got malaria. That's where I got jungle rot, all over my body."

They left Bougainville for the Philippines, arriving in Leyte on Jan. 26, 1945; they assaulted Cebu Island on March 26, 1945.

But Mr. Baca's worst memories came from battles. He remembers one battle in which an American patrol followed Japanese soldiers into a ravine, resulting in a disastrous ambush for the Americans.

"The Japanese had a lot of caves in there. And most of my friends got killed," he said. "By the time we got there, it was getting dark and we couldn't go in. We had to wait all night until we could go in to get them out. We could hear them moaning, my friends."

He paused to wipe away his tears, tormented by the memories of that event.

"They had all died by morning. And then we carried them out, down the hill."

He said he became very good friends with many of his fellow soldiers. He said he was seldom singled out or discriminated against even though he was one of very few Spanish-speaking soldiers in his platoon.

And while he says he didn't see a lot of blatant discrimination, he remembers one particularly bad experience.

"I got along great with most of the guys," he said. "But there was one lieutenant, Paul Silvers, who just didn't like me. He got into me and he just wouldn't let me up. He always gave me the worst details. Maybe it was because I was Hispanic. I could have been a sergeant or a corporal. But no promotions for Hispanics, I guess. He didn't even put it down that I got wounded. He kept me from getting a lot of things I'm entitled to."

"I went in a private, and I came out a private," he says, choking back tears.



## Dennis Baca-continued



**Dennis Baca, Left, with friend Bernard Ventura in 1945 in Japan after the war.**

Mr. Baca believes the lieutenant's treatment kept him from receiving the Purple Heart. He said he was wounded in the left shoulder blade by shrapnel but claims the lieutenant did not note that in his file.

In spite of his brushes with death in battle, Mr. Baca said he was most concerned for his life when his unit began preparing to invade the Japanese mainland in 1945.

"We were in the Philippines. We got ready to hit the mainland in Japan, in August 1945. Then they dropped a bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Japanese surrendered," he said. He believes the invasion would have cost the lives of a great many American soldiers.

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japan surrendered, and World War II was finally over.

For Dennis Baca, life would never be the same. When he arrived, there were no ticker-tape parades, no grand celebrations. Without fanfare, he was discharged from the Army on Dec. 3, 1945, and returned to Albuquerque.



## Dennis Baca-continued

“A lot of things had changed in three years. It was hard to get a job until I started working at the VA. My folks didn’t recognize me because I was yellow from malaria. It took me years and years to get over it,” said Mr. Baca.

The war had left physical and emotional scars on Dennis Baca. He said he worked for many years as a nursing assistant at a VA hospital but often was plagued by bouts of depression and anxiety while on duty.

“That’s one thing you never forget. You know, sometimes, when I think about it, I just start crying. I saw a lot of my friends get killed, and it still comes back to me,” he said.

Sometimes he cries for his enemies, too.

“I know I killed a lot of them. I hate to say that, but it was our job. I don’t know how we made it. I guess God was with us. That’s one thing I believe in,” said Mr. Baca.

After years of medication and ongoing counseling, Mr. Baca is now able to talk about his experiences during the war.

“We were Spanish, but we were proud to serve our country. I’d do it again,” he said. “I’m too old now, but I’d do it again. We love this country. We’re Americans. We should fight for our country because this is the best country in the world. There’s no other country like this.”

### TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.6: *Geography*: The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Mapping Dennis Baca's Journey



**Dennis Baca in Joyahama, Japan after the war in December 1945.**

Dennis Baca was 18 years old when he got drafted. He survived some fierce battles fighting on the Pacific front. Read of the places his troops were sent and see if you can create a map showing the route he and his fellow soldiers traveled. You will need to use an atlas or globe.

- Label the ocean.
- His platoon landed at New Caledonia.
- From there they went to the Solomon Islands.
- On the Solomon Islands they fought at Guadalcanal, Mount Austen, Gifu, Verahue, Tenaro village, Fiji, and back to Bougainville in the Solomon Islands.
- From there they went to the Philippines, arriving in Leyte, then going to Cebu Island.



**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Draw your map in this space. Be sure to include a compass rose.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying most of the lower half of the page. It is intended for the student to draw a map within this space.



## Narratives Lesson I: Timeline and Reflection

**Narratives Story:** *Louis Ramirez recalls brutality of war; but what still shines through is the camaraderie*—By Jennifer Nalewicki

**Lesson Developed By:** Edna Amador

**OVERVIEW:** Create a timeline and write a reflection on how WWII affects life in a personal manner.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 4 - 40 minute class periods (1st day to read the narrative, 2-3 days to list the sequence of events in a timeline and analyze his character, and, 4th day to type a reflection on what students think of his life.)

**GRADE LEVEL/**

**SUBJECT:** Appropriate for upper elementary to middle school.

- OBJECTIVES:**
1. Students will read a narrative in order to learn about Mr. Ramirez' experiences during WWII and its effects on his life.
  2. Students will list in chronological order the events of his life in a time line.
  3. Students will write a reflection on how a war affects people's lives.

**MATERIALS:** Copy of the narrative, timeline handout, pen paper and/or word processor

**PROCEDURES:** Student will work independently. Student will read Mr. Ramirez' narrative and list dates and events in the time line. After taking notes, student will use tone, word choice and quotes to draw generalizations on the affects of war. Student will present a reflection on their reading.

**ASSESSMENT:** Informal—one-to-one student conference to determine student's understanding of Mr. Ramirez's life events and their effects on his life.  
Formal—timeline and student's reflection



## Louis Ramirez recalls brutality of war; but what still shines through is the camaraderie –By Jennifer Nalewicki

*Louis Ramirez* has many memories of World War II — as the Battle of Saint Malo raged around him, smelling death and suffering in a German concentration camp and seeing death all around him. But his strongest memory is the camaraderie soldiers shared in his platoon helped him stay grounded while battling German soldiers on the front lines.

He considered the men in his platoon, the 102nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, his family, especially since they were together from the time they began military training in Fort Dix, N.J., and Fort Jackson, S.C., in 1941 until the war's end in 1945.

“Those guys are like my brothers, they worry about me and I worry about them,” he said. “We care for (each other). It’s like a big family.”

The men would often pass the time spent traveling inside tanks to reach the next battlefield by telling each other jokes and stories to alleviate the stressful surroundings of the war. They always kept a keen eye for fear of being ambushed.

“We were always on guard, (there were) mines all over the place, so we were very careful. We didn’t want to die,” he said. “It was hard, but at the same time, we were not alone, we were a bunch of guys looking after each other.”

Born a U.S. citizen in Lajas, Puerto Rico, on Sept. 17, 1914 to a farmer father and schoolteacher mother, Ramirez was one of 11 children. Due to a case of malaria, Mr. Ramirez, in his early 30s, traveled to New York City where he could receive better health care. Once he recovered Mr. Ramirez decided to stay in New York.

After spending a year working on the factory floor of an eyeglass manufacturer and brushing up on his English skills by going to the movies and reading the newspaper, Mr. Ramirez was drafted by the U.S. Army in April 1941 and was stationed in Fort Jackson with the 102nd Cavalry Regiment.

The regiment left the United States, spent 12 days on ship and arrived in England on Oct. 6, 1942.



**Sgt. First Class Louis Ramirez in Germany, 1961.**



## Louis Ramirez-continued

“I was seasick most of the time,” he said. “We were, of course, nervous but we stayed together. The regiment was reorganized in England in January 1944, his unit being renamed the 102nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Mechanized. They landed at Normandy on D Day and advanced into France during the Battle of Saint Malo, where they were met by enemy tanks, bombs and soldiers. That was their first whiff of combat.

“(The enemy) was bombarding us when we first got there,” he said.

Once the fighting ceased, all that was left was a field strewn with the bodies of horses, cattle and Germans. Mr. Ramirez said the smell of death permeated the air, but fortunately, for Ramirez and his platoon, no one was injured.

“My best memory was that we all looked out for each other. Nothing touched (us), thank God. (We) were in the middle of it, but nothing happened,” he said. “Maybe it was because we were good fighters, I don’t know.”

Mr. Ramirez feels the Battle of Saint Malo was the largest battle he participated in during World War II. But this does not mean he avoided the anguish of battle. He recalls walking through one of Hitler’s concentration camps and seeing the lifeless bodies of those once held captive.

“We saw people walking like skeletons, it made you sick,” he said. “We didn’t see much, we were just passing through, but the smell was awful. Just like a factory of cheese, you could smell it everywhere.”

By the time Mr. Ramirez arrived in Czechoslovakia in 1945, Germany surrendered. The war was over, but even today, the memories of war are embedded in his mind.

He chooses to remember the good times he had overseas, however, and the lifelong friends he made as opposed to dwelling on the difficulties he was faced with on a daily basis.

“I saw people dead on a beach in Normandy, I couldn’t believe it. That affects you a lot,” he said. “But then you keep going. You forget and you get used to everything that happens to you in life. Sometimes I remember things so vividly; sometimes I get tears in my eyes . . . I (try to) go easy in life, that is the way I live.”

After spending 11 months in combat against the Germans, Ramirez said he has no feelings of animosity toward them.

“My mom taught us to not hate anybody. I don’t hate the Japanese and the Germans, I know what they did was terrible, but I don’t have to hate them,” he said. “If they come to me with a gun, I am going to shoot them first, but that doesn’t mean I hate them. I am just defending myself.”



## Louis Ramirez-continued

If anything, Mr. Ramirez uses his experiences as a World War II veteran as a means to get others interested in enlisting in the military so they, too, can serve their country. However, despite mentioning this opportunity to his granddaughter on several occasions to no avail, Ramirez said if he were given the chance, he would re-enlist.

“If (the military) would call me, I think I would go,” he said. “I am 90 and the way I feel is if they need me for anything, I would go. I still have patriotism in me. I am very proud of serving my country.”

### TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.10(E): use of text's structure or progression of ideas such as cause and effect or chronology to locate and recall information

TEKS 5.10(H): draw inferences such as conclusions or generalizations and support them with text evidence and experiences

TEKS 5.15(C): write to inform such as to explain, describe, report, and narrate

TEKS 5.12(K): recognize how style, tone, and mood contribute to the effect of the text

# Narratives Lesson 1: Timeline (see p.52)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date ↓

\_\_\_\_\_

Date ↓

\_\_\_\_\_

Date ↓

\_\_\_\_\_

Date ↓

\_\_\_\_\_

Date ↓

\_\_\_\_\_

Date ↓







## Narratives Lesson II: Female Soldier Life Map

**Narratives Story:** *Underage, Sally Salazar enlisted under assumed name; tropical ailments and the carnage of war left her physically and emotionally drained—By Therese Glenn*

**Lesson Developed By:** Edna Amador

**OVERVIEW:** Create a life map of a female soldier during WWII.

**TIME REQUIRED:** 4 - 40 minute class periods (Day One: read the narrative, Days Two and Three: decide which events most explain Ms. Salazar's life, and decide which graphics help tell her story, and Day Four: publish their life map to present to peers.)

**GRADE LEVEL/**

**SUBJECT:** Appropriate for upper elementary to middle school.

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. Student will read a narrative to develop images depicted by details.
2. Students will create a life map with images to show progression of events.
3. Student will present main idea using a life map.

**MATERIALS:** Copy of narrative, life map template, graphics from magazines, online graphics, or drawn

**PROCEDURES:** Student will read the narrative and select the events that best help tell Ms. Salazar's life story. Student will search for online graphics or draw pictures that will help tell the story. Place the graphics in order on a life map and come up with the main idea presented in the narrative. Student will write the main idea as a title for the life map.

**ASSESSMENT:** Informal—one-to-one student conference to determine student's understanding of Ms. Salazar's life events which best depict her life story.

Formal—life map and student presentation



**Underage, Sally Salazar enlisted under assumed name;  
tropical ailments and the carnage of war left her physically  
and emotionally drained – By Therese Glenn**

*When Maria Sally Salazar* illegally enlisted into the Army, she dreamed of traveling the world. She did not imagine her service would lead to six months in the hospital recovering from multiple illnesses and watching the end of the war from a hospital bed.

“The war in '41 woke us up,” Ms. Salazar said. “Everyone was talking about it. Everyone wanted to go.”

Ms. Salazar’s family was against her going, and at 19 she was too young to enlist without parental consent. Women who wanted to enlist at the time had to be 21, so Ms. Salazar told her parents she was going to visit her sister, took her older sister’s birth certificate, and went to San Antonio with a group of girls and enlisted.

The entire time she was in the service Ms. Salazar had to go by her sister’s name, ‘Amelia.’ When she left the service she had to hire a lawyer to correct the discharges so she could have her own name and age.

Ms. Salazar grew up in Laredo, Texas, with her parents and four brothers and five sisters. Laredo is about 150 miles southwest of San Antonio. In school she was very athletic and played on the basketball, volleyball, baseball and tennis teams.

At 16, Ms. Salazar became pregnant. Her father forbade Ms. Salazar to marry her child’s father so she could finish school. The child died six months after birth from pneumonia, and Ms. Salazar lost contact with the father during the war. She later found out that the father had become a colonel in the Army and had married.

“I was 16 and stupid,” Ms. Salazar said.

So Ms. Salazar saw the beginning of the war as an opportunity to travel and see the world.

After returning from San Antonio she managed to keep her enlistment a secret until her parents intercepted her acceptance letter. Her father wanted to report her, but Ms. Salazar’s mother was afraid of the legal repercussions for assuming another’s identity. So Ms. Salazar, under sister’s name Amelia, remained in the Army.

After basic training 17-year-old Pfc. Salazar was sent to New Guinea from 1943-1945, and then to the Philippines, not quite living up to her dreams of traveling to Europe.



**Maria Sally Salazar in 1943.**



## Maria Sally Salazar-continued

“They painted a very pretty picture. You will go here, you will travel there,” Ms. Salazar said. “It didn’t happen that way. We were stuck in a jungle for a year and a half.”

Salazar was assigned to the Women’s Army Corp and worked specifically for the Surgeon General’s office.

“Anywhere they needed us we worked, but mostly in the medical field,” Ms. Salazar said.

She worked at a building they called the Pentagon Building, named after the one in Washington D.C. “The Pentagon” was the head of communication for the area. It was also the place where the numbers came in for wounded, missing, and dead soldiers

“It was pretty hard because we knew in the wee hours of the morn the men were leaving to take an island and with no supplies,” Ms. Salazar said. “We did what we could.”

The casualties were high in the area, and sometimes Pfc. Salazar was asked to help with the wounded men.

“Every time they told me ‘Private come over here and help’ I just stood there, just looking. I don’t think I heard anything,” Ms. Salazar said. “Finally I would go help. I was in shock.”

The high stress combined with the lack of adequate supplies took its toll on many of the women, including Pfc. Salazar.

Along with several of the other women, she said she could not stomach the food. She was reported for not going to the mess hall, punished for it, and eventually forced to sign-in to the hall.

“But still I couldn’t eat powdered eggs, canned meat, and I think the milk was powdered too. It was horrible,” Ms. Salazar said. “As soon as we got there everybody had lost weight.”

Several of the women became ill, but nothing could be done. Penicillin was the only antibiotic available at the time, and all of that had to be sent to the front. Pfc. Salazar said that sometimes the women would be sent to bed for a few days to rest, but usually they had to keep going because everyone was needed.

By end of the war Pfc. Salazar was hospitalized in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, with several illnesses including malaria, hepatitis, and diarrhea. After the atomic bomb was dropped, extra planes and ships were used to transfer people back to the states, starting with those who were most likely to survive. She was one of the first to go.

Once stateside Pfc. Salazar spent six months in General Hospital in Tacoma, Wash., and remembers watching the soldiers coming home. “We were sitting there . . . thinking ‘How can you celebrate? Look at us,” Ms. Salazar said.



## Maria Sally Salazar-continued

Pfc. Salazar received a medical discharge, but re-entered the service because her family couldn't afford to pay her medical bills. To this day she suffers from five service-connected illnesses including chronic hepatitis and anemic dysentery. She also suffered from depression during the war, and still feels the emotional impact of those times.

"My nerves, they just won't leave me," Ms. Salazar said.

Pfc. Salazar left the service with two Bronze Stars,, two Combat Bars, the Disabled American Theater Campaign Medal, the WW2 Victory Medal and two Overseas Medals.

After the war, she finished high school and attended Laredo junior college. She married in 1978 and put her three stepchildren through college on her benefits. She recently divorced.

Although the war was hard on her, Ms. Salazar said she does not regret the time she gave and is very proud of her awards and recognitions she has received for her service.

"To me it was an experience I would not change for anything in the world because not just anybody can have that," said Ms. Salazar. "And my nightmares are with me, and my dreams are with me."

### TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.10(D): describe mental images that the text's descriptions evoke

TEKS 5.10(E): use the text's structure or progression of ideas such as cause and effect or chronology to locate and recall information

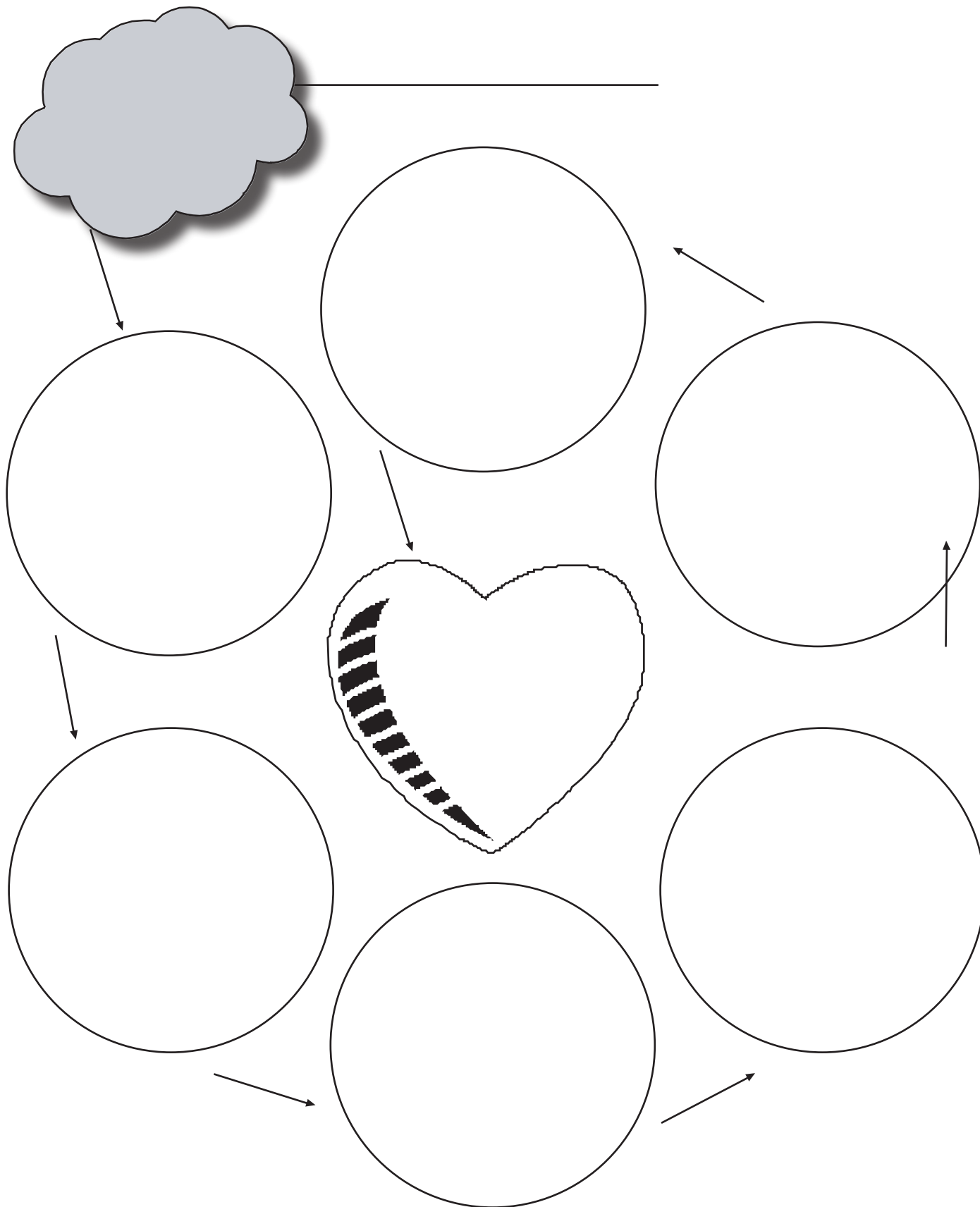
TEKS 5.10(F): determine the text's main ideas and how those ideas are supported with details

# **Narratives Lesson II: SCRATCH PAPER**

**Narratives Lesson II:**  
**LIFE MAP** (see p. 58)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_





# Oral History

## Background and Activities

### What Is Oral History?

Oral history methods are the oldest kind of historical inquiry. Oral history was being done before people could write – and much before we had modern technologies, including audio and video recording equipment.

Oral history is a way of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews of people about past events and ways of life. It involves tapping into people’s memories and can serve as the living history of people’s experiences. Oral history can be particularly useful when attempting to recover the history of people who have been historically absent or underrepresented in historical records.

The Voces Oral History Project uses oral history to unearth the varied and remarkable experiences of Latinos during the WWII era. The Voces Oral History Project uses oral histories to bring the stories about WWII generation Latinos and Latinas to light. From these archives we learn aspects of history and Latino contributions that have been missing from historical texts.

**Sources:**

Oral History Society webpage: <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/>

Oral History Association webpage: [http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/pub\\_eg.html](http://omega.dickinson.edu/organizations/oha/pub_eg.html)



## Overview:

The following section will include activities that will engage students in the use of oral history. It includes an oral history project that involves students interviewing family members or friends, as well as pre- and post-interview activities that will prepare students for the interview and help them to synthesize the information collected.

## Procedure:

Begin the project by having students choose someone to interview. It can be either a family member or friend. Encourage them to choose an older person, as they will have varied life experiences to share. Choosing a family member is often especially meaningful because students will be able to share their project with their family after completion and have it around for years to come. The following activities will involve students asking whether this person was alive during World War II, where they lived, what it was like for them in their community, what types of things they did for work and what life was like during the war.

### TEKS Correlations

TEKS 5.5: *History*: The student understands important issues, events, and individuals of the 20th century

TEKS 5.19(A): *Citizenship*: The student understands the importance of individual participation in the democratic process) can explain how individuals can participate in civic affairs

TEKS 5.23(B): *Culture*: describe customs, celebrations, and traditions of selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States

TEKS 5.25(A): *Social Studies Skills*: The student applies critical thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as interviews to acquire information about the United States. TEKS 5.25(D): identify different points of view about an issue or topic and TEKS 5.25(E): identify the elements of frame of reference that influenced the participants in an event

TEKS 5.26(D): *Social Studies Skills*: The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies, and TEKS 5.26(E): use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation





## Preparing for the Oral History Interviews

### In-Class Activity: Fish Bowl Interviews

**OVERVIEW:** Fish bowl interviews will involve teacher and students doing mock interviews with each other in front of the class. This will allow students to get practice with the interview process and to see it modeled.

#### LEARNING

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will:

- Understand the process of conducting an oral history interview.
- Explore ideas for their interview.
- Ask questions that will inform their oral history interview.

**PROCEDURES:** Begin by explaining the interview process to your students using the “steps to conducting an oral history” listed below. The teacher and guest should sit either in front of the class or in the middle of a circle of students, facing each other. Prior to the interview, the teacher should explain what he/she wants the students to observe; the teacher could also brainstorm with them and uncover what they would like to learn from the interview. This will give the teacher an opportunity to model how interviews should be approached. Then, have students break up into teams of two and interview each other. Use the questions below or configure your own.

### Sample Interview Questions:

#### CHILDHOOD/EARLY LIFE

What is your full name?

Were you named after somebody else?

Did you have a nickname as you were growing up?

Where were you born and when?

Who are your parents and where are they from?

Where were your grandparents from?

Do you remember hearing your grandparents describe their lives? What did they say?

What was your hometown like? Was it in the city or country?

What historical events were occurring when you were a child?

What is your favorite memory of your childhood?

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

What would you consider to be the most important inventions that have been made during your lifetime?



### **CHILDHOOD/EARLY LIFE-continued**

How is the world now different from what it was like when you were a child?  
What types of things did you do as a child? What kinds of chores did you do?  
What were some hard times your family went through?

### **SCHOOLING**

What were your schools like?  
How did you get to school?  
What was your favorite subject in school and why?  
What languages did you speak at home and at school? What was that like?  
What was your least favorite subject in school and why?  
Who was your favorite teacher and why were they special?

### **ADOLESCENCE**

Did you and your friends have a special hang-out where you liked to spend time?  
Were you ever given any special awards for your studies or school activities?  
How many years of education have you completed?  
Do you have a college degree? If so, what was your field of study?  
Were there any fads during your youth that you remember vividly?  
Do you remember your first date? Describe the circumstances.  
Name a good friend that you have known for the longest period of time? How many years have you been friends?

### **CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND FAMILY LIFE**

What types of family traditions did you have? Which were your favorite?  
Are you married? If so, how did you meet the person that you would later marry?  
Do you remember where you went on the first date with your spouse?  
How would you describe your spouse? What do (did) you admire most about them?  
Do you have children? If so, how many? What were their names, birth dates and birthplaces?  
What was the funniest thing you can remember that one of your children said or did?  
What kinds of jobs have you had? How did you decide on your career?  
What were the hardest choices that you ever had to make? Do you feel like you made the right choices?  
Who was the person that had the most positive influence on your life? Who were they and what did they do?  
What wars have been fought during your lifetime? How did you feel about them?  
If you served in the military, when and where did you serve and what were your duties?  
What U.S. President have you admired the most and why?

# Pre-Interview Brainstorm

Use this graph to brainstorm ideas for your interview.

Idea(s) for interview subject(s)

## FACTS:

**What types of information about this person's life do I want to know?**

*Examples:*

Where they were born  
Early childhood –schools, games played, etc.  
Adolescence  
Adult life  
Family  
Work

## LIFE EXPERIENCES:

**What are some interesting life experiences that I could ask this person about?**

*Examples:*

World War II  
The Great Depression  
Cultural/religious life  
Their work  
A certain life achievement  
Immigration

## WHO:

**Who were the important people in this person's life?  
Who influenced them?  
Who taught them?**

*Examples:*

Teachers  
Friends  
Mentors

# Oral History Interview

My Interview with: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:**

Think of your questions ahead of time and write them down here.

Below the space after each question, fill in the answers your interview subject gives you.

1. Question:

Answer:

2. Question:

Answer:

3. Question:

Answer:

4. Question:

Answer:

5. Question:

Answer:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Oral History Interview: Follow Up Activity

Write a story about your interview. Who is this person and what was their life like?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Oral History Interview: Follow Up Activity

What was the most interesting thing you learned about this person?

Illustrate this below:



## Teacher Resources

**From the Voces Oral History Project Educator Guide activity developer, Diana Garcia, 5th grade AISD history teacher:**

*“As I began looking on the internet, at the library, and at a book store for lists of World War II books written for children, I learned that there are many, MANY books out there, but I did not come across one single book that reflected the roles of Latinos and Latinas in WW II. Nonetheless, I found some useful books that could serve as multicultural resources, that could be used to support and model why our students must develop tolerance, empathy, courage, and activism.*

*I always preview my books before reading them to a class, and I practice not crying while reading if the book is especially sad. I suggest you also preview books to see if they are suitable for your particular students. All of the books listed are suitable for 5th graders, in my opinion, but each class has its special needs and “climate.”*

### SOME BOOKS ON WWII

#### **Picture Books:**

Amis, Nancy. *The Orphans of Normandy: A True Story of World War Two Told Through Drawings By Children*. Atheneum Books, 2003.

*(A good book to use so your students can see the war's effects on the lives of children.)*

Deedy, Carmen A. *The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark*. Peachtree, 2000.

*(This true story honors the courage of King Christian X who chose to help the Jews in his country.)*

Hausfater-Douieb, Rachel. *El Nino Estrella*. Edelvives, 2003.

*(This is a Spanish translation of a French book. I could not find an English translation. I love this simple, poetic book about a little boy who must hide from the Nazis, the “hunters of stars.”)*

Kodama, Tatsuhara. *Shin's Tricycle*. Walker and Company, 1995.

*(A little boy in Hiroshima, Japan finally gets a tricycle, but he is soon a victim of the atomic bomb.)*

Noguchi, Rick and Deneen Jenley. *Flowers from Mariko*. Lee & Low Books, 2001.

*(A little girl tries to cheer up her parents after they are released from a Japanese American relocation camp, and they find out the father's truck has been stolen.)*



Say, Allen. *The Bicycle Man*. Walter Lorraine Books, 1982.

*(Two American soldiers interact with Japanese school children in this simple, yet poignant tale. I have to add that Allen Say has several other beautiful books that deal with Japanese Americans and WWII. His books are simply stunning and human. Go to his official website to learn more.)*

### **Chapter Books:**

Opdyke, Irene Gut and Jennifer Armstrong. *In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer*. Dell Laurel-Leaf Books, 2004.

*(This memoir tells of the bravery of a Polish, Catholic teenager who helped smuggle Jews out of a prison camp.)*

Perl, Lila and Marion Blumenthal Lazan. *Four Perfect Pebbles: A Holocaust Story*. Scholastic, 1997.

*(This memoir tells of a Jewish family, living in Germany, who escaped to Holland only to find Holland occupied by Nazis soon after.)*

Zullo, Allan & Maria Bovsum. *Survivors: True Stories of Children in the Holocaust*. Scholastic, 2004.

*(This book contains the true stories of nine children who survived the Holocaust, and this book will definitely give your students a "picture" of how horrific the war was for the children living through it.)*

### **Informational Books:**

Nathan, Amy. *Count on Us-Women in the Military*. National Geographic Books, 2004.

*(This book, full of photos, tells of the many roles women played in WWII, the Vietnam War, and the Korean War.)*

Schroeder, Peter W. & Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand. *Six-Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children's Holocaust Memorial*. Kar-Ben Publishing, 2004.

*(Wow! This book explains the true story of how some middle school students in Whitwell, Tennessee got involved with collecting 6,000,000 paper clips to symbolize the Jews killed in WW II. This moving and inspiring book is a must-have for all teachers, and there is even a documentary film, "Paper Clips," that recounts how the teachers, students, and citizens of Whitwell mobilized to create their Children's Holocaust Memorial.)*

### **Of course all school libraries have informational books on WWII, and let's not forget the classics:**

*Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank

*The Cay* by Theodore Taylor

*The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen

*Journey to Topaz* by Yoshiko Uchida

*Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry

*Sadako and the 1000 Paper Cranes* by Alexander Coerr

### **A good website to check out for more books and information on WWII:**

"World War II As Seen Through Children's Literature" By Laura Pringleton

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1997/2/97.02.03.x.html>



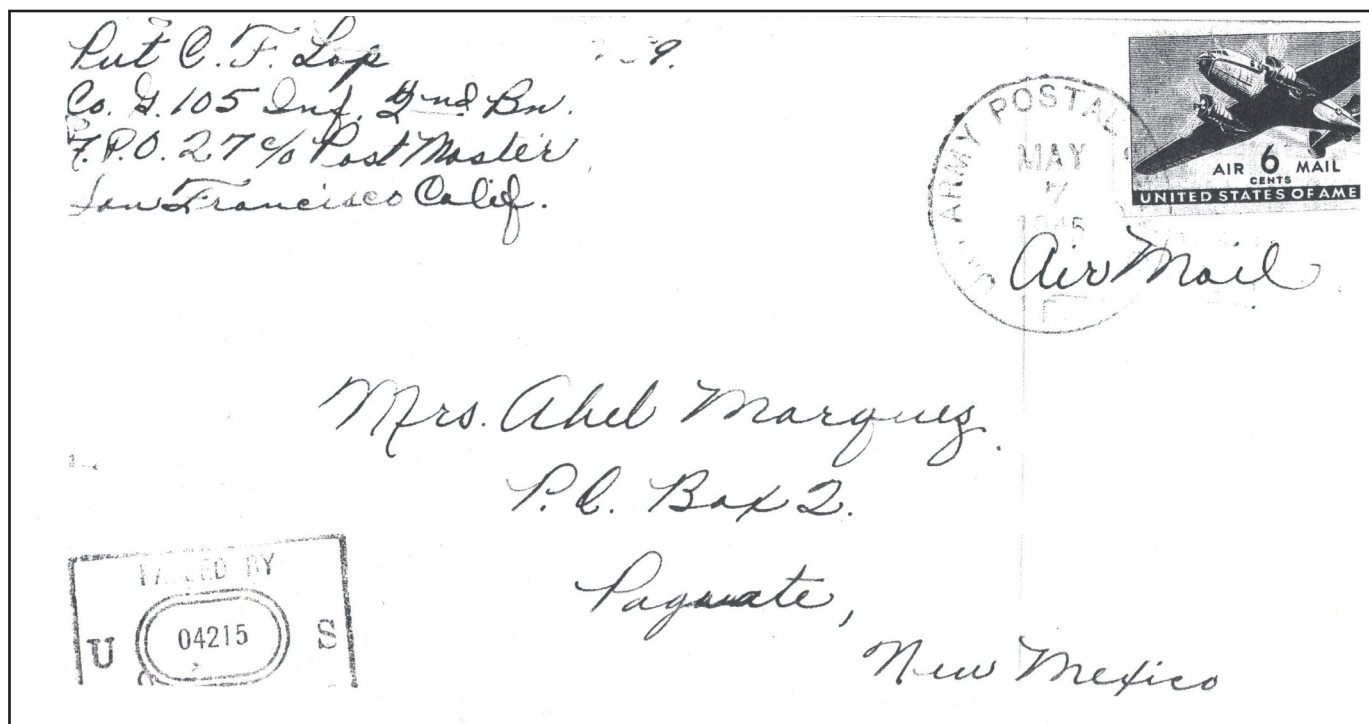


## Primary Sources

**Primary Sources:** A soldier's letter home, A letter from the Navy thanking a lieutenant for service, discharge papers, and a letter recognizing a Silver Star recipient

The following are copies of primary sources which you can use with your class to generate discussion and/or activities about Latinos and World War II:

### Primary Source: Crecencio Lopez's Letter Home - Outer Envelope



Primary Source:  
Crecencio Lopez's Letter Home

A. Kinawa  
May 4, 1945

Dearest Mama,

This are just a few lines to let you know, that I'm alright. Thanks to God. And hoping that you will be the same when you receive this letter. How is Vilia and her kids? I haven't heard from them for a long long time. I hope ~~I~~ they are alright. Mama I haven't had any mail from home since I left the Marianas. In fact we haven't had a mail call here on this Island.

This place seems to look fine, There is lot of farming done all over the Island.

How is every thing going on at home, How is Luis and Lolo getting along with the cattle?

I've written to Trinnie two letters since I been here and besides that I wrote to you a few letters while I was on board ship. So Good-Bye.. Mama + God Bless you  
Your lovingly Son,  
Crecencio.

# Primary Source:

## Letter from the Navy thanking Beatrice Kissinger for her service

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON

October 4, 1946

My dear Lieutenant (jg) Amado:

I have addressed this letter to reach you after all the formalities of your separation from active service are completed. I have done so because, without formality but as clearly as I know how to say it, I want the Navy's pride in you, which it is my privilege to express, to reach into your civil life and to remain with you always.

You have served in the greatest Navy in the world.

It crushed two enemy fleets at once, receiving their surrenders only four months apart.

It brought our land-based airpower within bombing range of the enemy, and set our ground armies on the beachheads of final victory.

It performed the multitude of tasks necessary to support these military operations.

No other Navy at any time has done so much. For your part in these achievements you deserve to be proud as long as you live. The Nation which you served at a time of crisis will remember you with gratitude.

The best wishes of the Navy go with you into your future life. Good luck!

Sincerely yours,



James Forrestal

Lieut. (jg) Beatrice Mary Amado  
125 West St.  
Nogales, Arizona

Primary Source:  
Discharge papers for Dennis Baca



**Honorable Discharge**

*This is to certify that*

DENNIS J BACA 38 351 099 Private First Class

Anti-Tank 132nd Infantry

**Army of the United States**

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military  
service of the United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest  
and Faithful Service to this country.*

*Given at* SEPARATION CENTER  
Fort Bliss Texas

*Date* 3 December 1945

*Robert Marnfeld*  
ROBERT MARNFELD  
Major Coast Artillery Corps

# Primary Source: Silver Star notification for Richard Candelaria

HEADQUARTERS, EIGHTH AIR FORCE  
Office of the Commanding General  
APO 634

GENERAL ORDERS

15 July 1945

E X T R A C T

NUMBER 115

SECTION

AWARDS OF THE SILVER STAR . . . . . 1

1. Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, 22 September 1943, as amended, and pursuant to authority contained in Letter, Hg., USSTAF, AG 200.6, 3 April 1944, Subject: "Awards and Decoration", the SILVER STAR is awarded to the following-named officers:

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RICHARD G. CANDELARIA, O-766418, Captain, then First Lieutenant, Army Air Forces, United States Army. For gallantry in action while escorting heavy bombers over Germany, 7 April 1945. When adverse weather caused Captain Candelaria to become separated from his Squadron, he continued on alone to rendezvous with the bombers. Observing two (2) ME-262 jets attacking the formation, he intercepted and dispersed them, probably destroying one (1) of the fighters. Still alone and completely ignoring the odds and personal danger, Captain Candelaria attacked approximately fifteen (15) hostile fighters. Selecting the lead plane for his initial target, he shot it down in flames and then gallantly engaged the remaining aircraft until assistance arrived. Captain Candelaria's courage, tenacity of purpose, and determination to destroy the enemy at any cost are borne out by the fact that during this action he shot down four (4) ME-109's and one probable (1) ME-262 Jet, thus preventing serious damage being inflicted on the bombers. Entered military services from California

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BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL LARSON:


OFFICIAL:

S/Lindsey I. Braxton  
T/LINDSEY I. BRAXTON  
Colonel, A.C.D.  
Adjutant General

EMIL C. KIEL  
Brigadier General, U.S.A.  
Chief of Staff

DISTRIBUTION: F.

CERTIFIED, A TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

  
LAWRENCE J. POWELL, JR.  
LT/COL, AF, CAL AND  
Adjutant General