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ABSTRACT

This unit provides relevant material for teaching Rudolfo Anaya's "Bless Me, Ultima." This material gives the classroom teacher the opportunity to focus more deeply on the teaching of Anaya's work, especially in the areas of Mexican history and folklore on which the book is based. Objectives for "Bless Me, Ultima" include: (1) students will gain familiarity with aspects of Mexican history and folklore related to the novel; (2) students will gain familiarity with rural Chicano life in the southwestern United States at the middle of the 20th century; and (3) students will gain familiarity with the concept of archetypes, both literary and cultural. Introductory notes briefly describe Anaya's life, early influences on his writing, and related history. Chapter notes are included to accompany the reading of the novel. (Contains 20 references.) (Author/EH)

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A Curriculum Guide for

Rudolfo A. Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima

by Jerry W. Webster

1994 Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Program: Mexico

SO 024 328

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This unit grew out of my experience as a 1994 Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar participant to Mexico. The purpose of this unit is to provide relevant teaching material for the classroom instruction of Rudolfo Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima. This material should allow the classroom teacher to go more deeply into the teaching of Anaya's work, especially in the areas of Mexican history and folklore on which this book is based.

Student Objectives for Bless Me, Ultima

1. Students will gain familiarity with aspects of Mexican history and folklore related to the novel.
2. Students will gain familiarity with rural Chicano life in the southwestern United States at the middle of the twentieth century.
3. Students will gain familiarity with the concept of archetypes, both literary and cultural.

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Anaya's Life

Anaya's family had first settled in Albuquerque with a Mexican land grant. The family then moved with the first families that went westward into the plains of New Mexico when it was initially safe to do so, around the middle of the nineteenth century. His parents met in the small town of Puerto de Luna. Rudolfo Anaya was born in 1937, in Pastura, a small village on the plains of New Mexico where ranching was the common livelihood of this rural area.

Soon after Rudolfo was born, Anaya's famliy moved to Santa Rosa on Highway 66. Being on a major highway opened Anaya to more cosmopolitan influences than his previous environment. Santa Rosa provides the background setting for Bless Me, Ultima (Bruce-Novoa 185).

Anaya's father and mother spoke Spanish, and Anaya was brought up in an almost completely Hispanic environment. However, this changed in elementary school. Anaya's lessons were in English. Although Anaya is a leading Chicano writer, his books are written in English as this is the language with which Anaya feels most comfortable and most fluent (189).

Bless Me, Ultima was Anaya's first work and won Anaya immediate acclaim. He has since published a succession of works. Recurrent themes include his study of Mexican folklore, his upbringing in New Mexico, and

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the fight of Chicano survival in Anglo-American society.

Anaya completed both his graduate and undergraduate work at the University of New Mexico. He is currently a professor at the same university, teaching creative writing and Chicano literature classes.

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Early Influences on Anaya's Writing

Anaya's writing draws heavily on his New Mexican heritage. This is especially true of Bless Me, Ultima which is based upon Mexican folklore. On the connection between his writing and his background, Anaya has said, "...my interest in writing is to explore the magic in realism and in that sense of my immediate environment and my relationship to my region is only a point of reference, but a very important place because it is the 'taking off point.' It is the place where imagination and the image-laden memory begin their work, and the three forces--place, imagination, and memory -- are inextricably bound together in my work" (Anaya 1977, 39). Among the early people of Anaya's youth, there were "...ancianos who taught me to respond to my landscape and to acquire the harmony that is inherent between man and his place" (40).

An affinity not only for the land but also for the people of Anaya's heritage permeates Anaya's work. Of his early days, Anaya says, "Any time that people gathered, family or friends, they told stories, cuentos (tales), anecdotes, dichos (sayings), advinzanos (riddles)" (Bruce-Novoa 188). It is this rich oral tradition that forms the base for Bless Me, Ultima with its tales of curanderas and brujas, magic and witchcraft.

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Related History

The early civilizations of Mexico, civilizations that rivaled Rome in its grandeur, have left mainly pyramids and ruins behind with few clues to their disappearance. Later cultures, such as the Mayan and the Aztec, also founded great empires. The Aztecs came to Mexico in the 1160's, and slowly expanded their power and territory. The Aztecs ruled most of Mexico until 1519 brought the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors led by Hernando Cortez. The Spaniards called the land Nueva Espana and forced many of the Indians to convert to the Roman Catholic faith.

The descendents of these Spanish explorers and the native Americans are the ancestors of today's Chicanos. In 1598, Juan de Onate led 130 families and a large herd of livestock from Nueva Espana to an area they named "New Mexico." He was of Spanish descent and claimed the land for Spain. His wife was the great-granddaughter of Montezuma, the king killed by Cortez during the time of the Spanish conquest.

In 1810, the people of New Mexico revolted against Spain, and in 1821, the revolutionists set up the independent nation of Mexico. In 1846-1848, there was a war between the United States and Mexico. As the eventual victors, the United States took all of northern Mexico, including the area known as New Mexico.

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At first this area consisted largely of farms and ranches. Then came lumbering and mining. Eventually, factories appeared, and many people moved to large cities to find work, having found it more and more difficult to make a livelihood off the land (Literacy Volunteers 12-14).

It is this background that forms the setting to Bless Me, Ultima. The Anaya family struggles to survive in its present environment. The family must keep pace with the changing times. At the same time the family is well aware of its cultural heritage. This awareness continually informs and enriches their lives.

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Notes on Chapters

Chapters will have explanatory notes that may assist the teacher presenting the chapters. There are also class work activities included.

Uno

1. In the first paragraph, the narrator presents Ultima as the one who allowed "...the beauty of the llano to be presented before my eyes...the pulse of the living earth pressed its mystery into my living blood...Time stood still, and it shared with me all that had been, and all that was to come..." (1). The reader is immediately aware of Ultima's overwhelming presence for the boy narrator. This same power has been attributed to Ultima by Anaya from his own experience. The author had been struggling for several years with this book. Then one night, he says, "...I heard a noise and turned to see an old woman dressed in black enter the room. This is how Ultima came to me, deep in the process of creativity; while I was struggling with the story. Old and bent, the fragrance of sweet herbs clinging to her dress, wrinkled but with the fire of truth and wisdom burning in her eyes, she moved towards me. Que' hace hijo? the old woman asked...Her presence in the room was strong, palpable. She laid her hand on my shoulder and I felt the power of the worldwind" (Jacobsen 4). The author's description seems little different from that of the boy's. The author has the boy again mention this magical experience later in the first chapter, "The four directions of the llano met in me, and the white sun shone on my soul" (10).

2. In the third paragraph it becomes clear that the narrator is retelling these events from his early childhood at a later point in his life although the exact time is not specified.

3. The boy's father had been a vaquero, or cowboy. The narrator identifies this with "a calling as deep as the coming of the Spaniard to Nuevo Méjico." The Márezes, the father's family, are linked back to the conquistadors. The father's spirit is a wild spirit, where "the spirit of the horse was very close to the spirit of the man..." (2).

4. Mexicans typically place high value on the family and family solidarity. When the mother is worried that Ultima will live her last days in loneliness, the father says "...it is not the way of our people (3). Later, the

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narrator comments, "There was always room in the safety and warmth of la familia for one more person..." (4). The emphasis on strong family solidarity is maintained throughout the book.

5. Ultima is a curandera, "a woman who knew the herbs and remedies of the ancients..." (4). Opposed to her are the brujas, or witches, who make people ill. Antonio, the boy narrator, remarks, "The cuentos of the people were full of tales of evil done by brujas" (4). The narrator is immersed in a deep oral tradition in which tales about white and black magic are commonplace and remain a common mythology of today.

6. Italics demonstrate dream sequences in the book. In the first dream, the father's and mother's families fight over Antonio's destiny. The Luna family, the mother's farming family, surround the boy with fruits and vegetables and rub dirt on his head to make him of this earth. The Márez family, the father's vaquero family, replace the produce with riding gear and remove the earth so that Antonio's spirit will not be bound but wild. They say, "His forefathers were conquistadores..." (6). Through this dream Anaya presents the basic feud between the two families. The mother wants her son to become a farmer or priest. The father wants the boy to become a free spirit like a vaquero. In the dream sequence, Ultima stops the feud between the two families and declares, "Only I will know his destiny" (6). Ultima is established as a protector figure for the boy. One interesting point is that the boy, when questioning his mother at a later point in the chapter, learns that the contents of the dream generally occurred in real life--that there really was such an argument between the two families at his birth.

7. Anaya gives a notion of Antonio's belief in Ultima's power at the end of chapter one. In this dream Antonio sees the owl, Ultima's guardian spirit, lift the Virgin of Guadaloupe, the town's patron saint, and also all babes of Limbo, children not baptized before death, and place them in heaven. In Antonio's dream there is a foreshadowing of both Ultima's strength and her goodness.

8. Figures such as the Virgin of Guadaloupe and the babes of limbo are prevalent throughout this book as Roman Catholic religion and mythology provide the sources for the main religious beliefs in the community. However, underlying these beliefs for many of the villagers are other beliefs which find their roots in Mexico's pre-Catholic Indian cultural

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heritage.

9. The teacher could introduce students to the concept of archetypes at this point. Anaya's dream sequences form their bases from Jung's theory of universal archetypes that spring from a collective unconsciousness. Jung hypothesized that these archetypes often appear in dreams. Anaya has said of these archetypes, "One way I have of looking at my work...is through a sense that I have about primal images, primal imageries. A sense that I have about the archetypal, about what we have known collectively. What we all share is a kind of collective memory...That's what I'm after. Our relationship to it" (Márquez 46). To help students understand archetypes, first introduce the idea of universal archetypes, either through Jung's work or a modern movie such as Stars Wars. Then introduce them to the concept of literary archetypes through literary characters with whom they are already familiar, such as Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Odysseus, and Holden Caulfield. Finally, introduce cultural archetypes from the United States, such as Washington, Lincoln, King, James Dean, Rosa Parks, and John Wayne. Students could write a notebook entry about the archetype of their choice and share it with the class.

10. Have students keep separate lists of what characteristics this novel attributes to the following Mexican cultural archetypes: curanderas, brujas, vaqueros, farmers, la llorona (weeping woman), and priests.

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1. Antonio's father's dream is to take the family to the vineyards of California. This is consistent with the dreams of many of the Chicano families in the region. As small farms and ranches went the way of modernization, traditional work opportunities for the vaqueros became much more limited. Márez dislikes his work on the highway. His dream of a journey to California, and then the new work in the vineyards, conjures up in his mind his free days on the llano as a vaquero.

2. Slowly the reader is introduced to Ultima's work as a curandera. As a curer, Ultima gathers herbs and roots for her medicines. Antonio sees her as both teacher and nurturer. "She taught me the names of the plants and flowers and bushes, of birds and animals...My soul grew under her careful guidance" (14). The boy already understands that her work is more than that of an herbologist.

3. Anaya portrays the boy's early life as a time of innocence on the llano. However, for Antonio, "the affairs of the town began to reach across the bridge and enter my life" (14). Chávez's brother's death and the death of Lupito invade any tranquility that the family has. The whole incident takes place as a consequence of Lupito's experiences with the Japanese in World War II. Anaya makes it clear that even a somewhat protected place like the llano is not free from influence from the larger happenings in the world.

4. The clash between the two familial cultures is obvious in the choosing of a house. Márez chooses a place that is on the edge of the llano to placate his vaquero spirit. It is next to the town to satisfy the mother with her farming instincts. However, the compromise satisfies neither. The father can no longer be a vaquero, and the actual location is only the beginning of the llano; on the other hand, the soil is too poor for the mother's gardening.

5. in Antonio's dream, his brothers hear the wailing of la llorona, a common cultural archetype of Mexico. There are many stories as to the cause of this woman's weeping with one of the most common ones being the loss of child. As an archetype, la llorona, the weeping woman, appears in many works of Mexican literature in many different forms. In

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Antonio's dream, she seeks the blood of boys and men to drink. Anaya juxtaposes "the tormented cry of this lovely goddess" (3) to the "moan and cry" (4) of Antonio's own mother as she realizes her son is growing older. La llorona's suffering seems to be the fate of all mothers.

Tres

1. The conflict between Antonio's two parental heritages becomes more obvious in this chapter in the discussion about religion. True to the independent spirit of the vaqueros, the Márez family is characterized as "freethinkers," and Antonio's father is one who is not "a strong believer in religion" (27). In contrast, the mother's family, the Luna family, had settled in El Puerto through a Mexican land grant, much in the same way Anaya's own family had settled in Albuquerque for some time before moving to rural Nueva Mexico. The person leading the Luna expedition was a priest. The "shared, whispered riddle" (27) refers to the fact that this first priest was married. Antonio's mother is a devout Catholic as are the other members of her family.

2. This conflict between cultures is further reflected in different concepts of manhood. To the mother, life destroys the innate purity that God gives children. To the father, life allows one to become strong and be a man.

3. Although Ultima does not openly oppose the Catholic religion, she is less confined by its dictates than the mother. As Antonio notes, "My father and Ultima were the only people I ever knew that did not mind breaking their fast before communion" (28).

4. As a curandera, Ultima continues her own way of teaching Antonio. Antonio says he wants to know many things, and Ultima replies, "...if a person really wants to know, then he will listen and see and be patient. Knowledge comes slowly..." (31).

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1. Ultima twice mentions her training as a curandera in this chapter, tracing her knowledge in herbology to pre-Spanish roots. Her knowledge is from "...before the great Coronado built his bridge..." (37). Later in the chapter she speaks to Antonio "...of the common herbs and medicines we shared with the Indians of the Rio del Norte. She spoke of the ancient medicines of other tribes, the Aztecas, Mayas, and even those in the old, old country, the Moors" (39). The history of Mexican herbology is a shared cultural heritage with its knowledge used in many everyday situations in the daily lives of Mexicans.

2. Select sections from the interviews with the botanist and the anthropologist at the end of this unit to point out everyday use of herbology in Mexico. Students could ask relatives if they are aware of any such practices from within their own cultures, and then students could share findings with the class.

3. In this chapter Antonio says that "we all knew the story of how the Virgen had presented herself to the little boy in Mexico and about miracles she had wrought" (42). References to Our Lady of Guadaloupe occur on numerous occasions throughout the novel, including the name of the town itself. According to the legend, the mother of Christ appeared to an Indian peasant near the Temple of Tonantzin, an ancient Indian goddess. The bishop disbelieved this sighting. Then the apparition appeared a second time and gave the peasant roses in winter. The peasant carried the roses in his cloak, and when he appeared a second time to the bishop, there was an imprint of the Virgin on his cloak. Following the Spanish tradition of building churches on or next to sacred Indian temples to help the Indians transfer the idea of sacredness from their tribal Indian religions to the Catholic religion, a new church was built which replaced the Indian temple. The Indians made the Virgin more like them, picturing her as a "brown" Madonna. The Virgin is the patronness of the Mexican nation. It is this Madonna, the patron saint of the town of Guadaloupe, which Ultima's owl lifts above the town in the first chapter, suggesting some allegiance between the two but also suggesting the ultimately greater strength of the owl.

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Cinco

1. Antonio's family visits the Lunas. The Mexican emphasis on family values and family solidarity permeates the chapter. The mother is careful that the family follow the appropriate customs. The family must first visit the grandfather, the patriarch of the clan. Also, each brother must take a turn in hosting their sister's family's visits. The concern of the Luna family is that Antonio embody the values of this staunchly Catholic farming community which would require, in some ways, a rejection of his father's vaquero-conquistador spirit.

Seis

1. The two parental upbringings clash once again. The Lunas were the first colonizers of the Llano Estacado in the name of the Mexican government. When Márez starts to bring up the questionability of the priest's married life, the mother is visibly upset. As long as Antonio remains with his mother, he continues to be shielded from the outside world.

2. Márez talks of the destruction of the llano and of the vaquero. The tejano came with his fences, railroads, and roads. The range was destroyed and with that the life of the cowboy and of the fiercely independent cowboy spirit.

3. With the school experience, Antonio enters a time when his mother can no longer help him. He is in the process of being enculturated into white Anglo-American culture. All situations are new to him--machines, words, sounds, foods, and customs. In his inexperience, he comes to suffer the laughter of his classmates. Confronted by this common situation, the Chicano boys find solidarity in their friendships.

4. On encountering these prejudices, Antonio reflects, "The pain and sadness seemed to spread to my soul, and I felt for the first time what the grown-ups call, la tristesa de la vida" (55). Have students write about this sadness of life, describing similar instances of prejudice they

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have experienced or heard about and have them share these experiences.

5. Anaya has been criticized by some Chicanos for his lack of animosity toward the white world. Anaya has replied to these critics, "...if the literature is only one of defiance to the white world, or a literature that only has an impetus or force as long as that white model exists, then there is a danger, because we cannot define ourselves, or create a literature in defiance of that white model. We have to come out of our own experience, our own tradition, culture, roots, our own sense of language, of story, and deal with that and to hell with the white world...We are who we create" (Bruce-Novoa 194).

Siete

1. The three brothers return from the war. Their return revives the father's dream of the family moving together and working in the vineyards in California.

Ocho

1. The three older brothers finally break from their father's dream. Just as Antonio has been haunted by his parents' dreams, so have his brothers.

2. Antonio now begins to see his brothers more clearly. Earlier he had glorified them "like giants" (64). Now he sees them like "wild bulls running down the goat path towards town." (63).

Nueve

1. León and Eugene are not able to follow their father's dream because they have their own generation's dream. They want to go to Santa Fe and find work. The mother remarks, "The Márez blood draws them away from

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home and parents..." (67). The father also recognizes that it is the independent spirit of the vaqueros which draws his sons away from his dream. Even though the boys do not show the family solidarity that the father and mother want, nevertheless, they are careful not to anger the father and bring about his curse.

2. One can see the effects of the white educational system on the Chicanos. Antonio's three older brothers have left school although Andrew now plans to return. Even though Antonio does well in school and will skip second grade, he does not stay for the farewell party, for he feels separate from the other children.

3. Samuel introduces Antonio to the legend of the golden carp. The roots of the legend are pre-Catholic and were told to Samuel's father by Jason's Indian. It is the story of the people who disappeared long ago. Although Anaya is not specific, these people are probably a reference to several great civilizations that initially started to disappear in Mexico around the turn of the eighth century A.D. There is no question that these pre-Aztec civilizations existed because they left behind great pyramids and ruins, such as the ones at Teotihaucán, El Tajín, Uxmal, and Monte Albán. However, archeologists do not know why these great societies disappeared. One prominent theory is that there was a great drought which forced the inhabitants to leave. This particular theory fits with the legend of the golden carp. Whatever the actual reality, Antonio becomes aware that a different mythology exists in his immediate environment, one that greatly captures his interest.

4. Antonio begins to experience a spiritual crisis. He sees the golden carp as a new god. He no longer knows where to place the Virgin and his Catholic God. He even questions whether his mother is praying to the right god..

Diez

1. When Antonio's uncle, Lucas, becomes sick, traditional, conventional methods are tried first. Both doctors fail to cure the uncle. Feeling that the cause may be spiritual, the priest is brought in but to no avail. The villagers then begin to think it is the work of a bruja, or Mexican witch.

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For a traditional, rural Chicano society at this time, there would be widespread belief in witches. The teacher can refer to the interview with the anthropologist at the end of this paper to find such beliefs are still common today. According to legend, these witches perform black masses, have familiars like coyotes and owls, and are able to make people sick and die. In this atmosphere Ultima, the curandera, is called upon as the only one who can combat the witch's magic and affect a cure.

2. Ultima requires that Antonio be present. It seems that the presence of this pure blood is necessary to the ceremony. The botanist in his interview says that it is still a common practice for a young boy to accompany a curandera. The presence of a young boy is one of the characteristics that distinguishes curanderas and brujas.

3. The question arises in this chapter as to whether Ultima is a witch herself. The village priest washes his hands of the whole matter. Ultima keeps an owl as a familiar which later in the chapter seems to be Ultima herself. Even Tenorio, acting as if Ultima is a witch, makes the sign of the cross to protect himself from her. She seems to be practicing some type of voodoo on the clay dolls. However, it seems that Anaya wants the reader to treat Ultima as a curandera. She is able to affect the uncle's cure. She also says to Antonio, "The smallest bit of good can stand against all the powers of evil in the world and it will emerge triumphant" (91).

Once

1. Cico introduces Antonio farther into the legend of the golden carp. Antonio becomes aware that there are a group of people that are aware of, and are forcefully moved by, these legends--Samuel, Samuel's father, Cico, Jason, Jason's Indian, Narisco, and Ultima. Cico tells Antonio that the faith surrounding these legends is not based on rules but on feelings.

2. On seeing the golden carp, Antonio is completely enthralled. "I knew I had witnessed a miraculous thing, the appearance of a pagan god, a thing as miraculous as the curing of my Uncle Lucas" (105).

3. Another Indian legend which emerges is that of the mermaid who murmurs sadly and tries to capture men. This is another version of the

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llorona myth that emerges many times in this story.

4. First Ultima has cured Antonio's uncle after the priest had failed. Then there is the addition of a new mythology which captures Antonio's attention. Antonio's spiritual questioning deepens. He seeks solace in Ultima who responds, "I cannot tell you what to believe....As you grow into manhood, you must find your own truths--" (111-2).

Doce

1. Ultima teaches Antonio the stories of his ancestors. From Ultima, Antonio learns the importance of history, of his roots.

2. The history of the vaqueros is given in short form. Their free cowboy life is hemmed in by the railroad and barbed wire. No longer is the life of the vaquero possible.

3. Tenorio succeeds in gathering the men of the town against Ultima. Their purpose is to kill Ultima for being a witch. Ultima must pass through a doorway with crossed needles to prove she is not a witch. When Ultima's owl gouges out Tenorio's eye, the men's attention is distracted, and Ultima passes through the door. Seeing that Ultima has passed through the door and satisfied that she is not a witch, the men leave. Afterwards, Antonio picks up the two broken needles. Ultima's identity remains somewhat unclear.

Trece

1. Antonio's spiritual crisis continues to deepen. He cannot understand why the new god, the golden carp, would also choose to punish humanity as the Catholic God did. Ultima had been his spiritual protector, but now he questions even her. In his dream he opens the witch's coffin to find the face of Ultima.

2. The doctrines of the Roman Catholic religion dominate the moral code of the village. Therefore, it is particularly important to Tenerio and his

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daughters that the dead daughter receive a church burial. When the village priest does not grant this, it is equal not only to a religious excommunication, an ostracism from the church and its sacraments and the state of grace, but also a social excommunication by the town.

Catorce

1. Because of the Roman Catholic dominance, one is considered good in terms of one's relationship to one's faith. Even Samuel, the boy who first introduces Antonio to the story of the golden carp, tells Antonio that to be a priest is the highest of men's callings. One is considered unable to enter heaven if one is not Catholic. The faith of Ultima is questioned; some think that she is a witch.

2. The school play turns into a farce when the boys become the main actors. It is possible that Anaya is demonstrating that children will resort to buffoonery when any real intellectual development is denied to them through the normal school processes. In terms of his spiritual development, it is obvious that Antonio is much deeper than his school friends.

3. When Antonio experiences the whorehouse while following Narisco, he senses that he has somehow sinned. No longer can he believe he is innocent. He waits for the sacraments of confession and communion in order to once again be reunited with God.

4. Antonio's dream of the carp allows him to accept his newly found lack of innocence. The carp accepts everything, good and evil alike. Antonio is no longer left with feeling of separateness from the world.

Quince

1. Antonio's understanding of humankind is steadily increasing. He understands that Narisco's suffering comes as a result of his wife's death. He sees that his father and his three older brothers understand each other but that this does not stop them from causing each other immense

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suffering in terms of their opposing dreams.

Dieciséis

1. At different points in the story, the boy has seen Ultima, his father, and then Narisco stand up to Tenerio. By the strength of their examples, he is now able to stand up to Tenorio himself.

Diecisiete

1. Antonio is confronted with man's destruction of the earth. First there is the testing of the new atomic bombs on the desert in New Mexico after which he hears the older people tell their fears of the total destruction of all mankind. Secondly, his father later explains how men's farming, ranching,and industrializing techniques have destroyed the llano.

2. Antonio's spiritual questions deepen in his conversation with Florence. Antonio has many of the same questions that Florence has, but Antonio has had a better fate in life. He is free from Florence's feelings of utter loneliness and defiance. Florence's misfortunes have turned him into a committed atheist, and Antonio does not want the same fate to happen to him.

3. Against the background of this sincere questioning by the boys, Anaya places Father Byrnes's speech. The priest tries to rule the children by placing fears of guilt and damnation in their hearts.

Dieciocho

1. The children's spirituality is the focus of this chapter. Anaya first treats it with humor. The saying of the Stations of the Cross, a series of stations in which Christ's crucifixion is relived, becomes a comic scene with Horse thinking he is suffocating due to the billowing clouds of incense. Later the boys try to better each other in their telling of sins.

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The immediate contrast to this is the group of old women in the church who are the pillars of the faith.

2. By the end of the chapter, the children's faith is no longer humorous. Florence seriously asserts that he has committed no sins. The children force Antonio to act the priest in order to have him condemn Florence. When Antonio absolves Florence, the children turn their cruelty from Florence to Antonio. Anaya places more emphasis on the cruelty of the children in this mock confession than on the feelings of Antonio during his real confession at the end of the chapter, making the latter seem somewhat meaningless.

Diecinueve

1. Antonio finally reaches the time of his awaited first communion in which he hoped to communicate with God. Instead of providing Antonio with a deep religious experience, Anaya has the other children's foolishness dominate the passage. After Antonio receives the host in his mouth, he waits for God to talk to him. A voice does say, "Tony! Tony!" (210), but it is only the boy next in line poking Antonio to move along. Anaya intentionally instills this humor. Antonio finds the experience of his first communion empty, and he is left with all his questions about God.

Veinte

1. Ultima is called upon again to work her magic against the witches. Great power is attributed to the witches as they are even able to wake the Indian ghosts. Once again a village priest is unable to combat the magic of the brujas, and it is only the curandera who can combat the brujas.

2. Antonio acknowledges what he has learned individually from his mother, his father, and Ultima. Read this passage to the students (217-220). Have students write a journal entry about what they have learned from one person or what they have learned from several people. Have volunteers share their entries with the class.

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Veintiuno

1. Antonio begins to question his God even more deeply. Cico presents a pluralistic divinity. Antonio's agnosticism grows as Cico paints a picture of Antonio's jealous God who admits no other gods. At this point Antonio acknowledges the divinity of the golden carp.

Veintidós

1. Three is an important number in this book. There are three witches, Antonio has three older brothers, and with Florence's drowning, Antonio witnesses his third violent death. However, Anaya gives this number no definite meaning other than the unity it provides for the book.

2. The last chapter emphasizes acceptance and change. Antonio considers himself a man when he goes out from his immediate family at the age of eight. Ultima tells him not to expect to come back to the same circumstances. The father is able to accept the Luna part of the family, even though he is as proud as ever of being a Márez. Antonio, now realizing that the priest who led the Lunas into the valley had changed the rules of his religion to fit the times, wonders if the religion itself would not change to fit the times. Uncle Pedro, cowardly in failing to help Ultima in Tenorio's earlier attack, even though Ultima had saved his brother, now emerges as the one who comes to help and ends up saving Antonio's life.

3. The father talks to Antonio of Ultima's understanding of life. According to the father, "...in the end understanding means having a sympathy for people." For Márez "Ultima has sympathy for people, and it is so complete that with it she can touch their souls and cure them--" Antonio now comes to understand "...what Ultima tried to teach me, that the tragic consequences of life can be overcome by the magical strength that resides in the human heart" (237).

4. Tenorio realizes that the owl and Ultima are the same. Therefore, when he kills the owl, he kills Ultima. As Ultima dies, she says of the owl, "not dead...but winging its way to a new life, a new time--just as

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I am ready to fly--" Whatever Ultima's belief, it contains some idea of a continuance of the spirit, of some type of reincarnation.

5. Antonio buries the owl, and as an adult he looks back on this scene and reflects, "Sometime in the future I would have to build my own dream out of those things that were so much a part of my childhood" (248). Even though Antonio respects his past and will use it to help create his future, he also recognizes that he will be operating as his own free agent.

6. At the end of the story, Antonio feels that Ultima's Catholic burial is merely ritual and that the real burial takes place when he buries the owl. It is significant to the reader that the priest must have accepted Ultima, unlike Tenorio's daughter, as a member of the faith to be granted a church burial. However, more significant is the fact that Antonio has learned to trust the truth of his heart and to find his own spiritual meanings.

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Evaluation

A. Identify the following terms and their importance to the book:

1. curandera
2. bruja
3. vaquero
4. The Virgin of Guadaloupe
5. la familia
6. la tristesa de la vida
7. excommunication
8. la llorona
9. the people
10. the priest of the Lunas

B. Identify the following quotes and signify what the quote indicates about the speaker:

11. "It is the owl that is the spirit of the old witch, and tonight I will send that miserable bird to hell..."
12. "I am the priest, and I have absolved him of his sins."
13. "They are a steady, settled people. We have been at odds all of our lives, the wind and the earth. Perhaps it is time to give up the old differences..."
14. "The Márez blood draws them away from home and family, Gabriel."
15. "The smallest bit of good can stand against all the evils in the world and it will emerge triumphant."

C. Answer the following questions:

16. What is a cultural archetype? Identify one cultural archetype in this novel and describe its characteristics.
17. Throughout the book the author leaves some question as to whether Ultima is a witch? Argue both sides, for and against.
18. Antonio is continually in conflict due to the opposing cultural backgrounds of his two parents. Describe the difference in these parental backgrounds and the resulting conflict.
19. Antonio undergoes a spiritual conflict during the course of this novel. Trace the development of this conflict and explain its resolution.
20. Anaya has asserted that one's social and physical environment play an important part in the writer's work. Explain how both the social and physical setting are important elements of this work.

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The following is an interview with the biologist Fabian Vargas in the garden of the Casa de Cultura in Los Tuxtlas, Mexico, on June 16, 1994:

Webster: We are doing special projects, and the project I am doing has to do with plants. It's a book that's written about plants, and I'd like to ask you some questions about that.

Vargas: What's the name of the book?

Webster: It's by a Chicano writer, Rudolfo Anaya, and it's named Bless Me, Ultima. (He shakes his head 'no' as he has not read the book). So they talk about different people in the book, like brujos and brujas and also curanderas, and how do the Mexican people tell the difference between those two?

Vargas: I think the difference between the two is in the medicine man in the use of the plants. One medicine man uses praise, many praises, all the time when they exit the house...going to collect the plants. The medicine man traditionally exits with one boy because of the boy's innocence. They are always walking around with a little young boy. The witches use very little medicinal plants or plants of any kind, and they work with evil spirits and like casting spells more so than actually curing people.

Webster: What do they...What does the Church think of the curanderos?

Vargas: The Catholic religion actually prohibits all of those practices and condemns everything that they do.

Webster: Is this tradition still very much alive within Mexico, the curandera and the brujos and the brujas?

Vargas: Yes, it is still very much alive, especially in specific regions, and specifically in this region, it is very much alive and kicking.

Webster: Do you know about the Ouichel Indians and their walk?

Vargas: No, the Indians in this region are the Nahuas and the Socho Poculucas (?). The Indians you mention are not of this region , and I am not familiar with them.

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Bystander: I think it is necessary to use the historical perspective in what happens here. Here, of course, syncretism. There are many beliefs from different ethical groups that converge here. They create a special way to confront the reality on how to use the medicinal plants. There are several kinds of practices in this way. The most ancient culture in all Mesoamerica was here, the Olmecs...

Webster: Yes.

Bystander: ...and before the Spanish conquered, the Nahuas and the Socho Poculucas (?). Some of their beliefs remain still.

Webster: What do you think of the work of the curanderas personally?

Vargas: Okay, I believe the curandero's work with plants mostly works best as preventive medicine. That's mostly the bulk of knowledge that they have. They have the second function of holding to something that is part of their past in that they have continued to cling to it because it represents part of their culture and their background and...and their beliefs...Also, because the curanderos have a very important role in the community as a whole making decisions for the community. They go...They go to them not only about things of health but also about other matters concerning the community, and they play a very important role in that.

Bystander: In this region we have a very important natural and cultural heritage, and we must preserve both, and one of these alternatives is to rescue the empirical knowledge in the use of the medicinal plants. We don't know exactly from the medical point of view how they work, but they work in certain cases, and we must do research more about that.

Webster: Of the pharmaceutical companies that have come to study these plants that you mentioned,. in their research did they find actual substances that were causing effects?

Vargas: Definitely, they found these substances and that it is not only a placebo effect, but they actually found these active substances...not only that the plant has it but a method of preparation where they dry the plants...they use alcohol to purify it or they have to heat the plant...I mean, this operates chemical changes that actually creates these reactives, so yes, definitely not only in the plants themselves but in the way they are

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prepared and the way they are mixed that creates, you know, active substances.

Webster: My step-father lives in Hawaii, and he has maybe two hundred to two hundred and fifty plants in the yard, and he belongs to the bonsai club, and sometimes we use the plants to treat, also. For instance, we use aloe when we get a bad sunburn or a different plant when our stomachs are upset, but usually the plants are just for beauty, so it's very interesting to hear all these different uses of plants.

Vargas: Many families here have a medicinal pharmacy...drugstore in the backyard. (Everyone laughs.)

Webster: Thank you very much for all the information. I appreciate it. It is good to write on these things because we know little of this in the United States, and when we do these projects, we can introduce this culture to our students. They know nothing about this, nothing at all, so it is good that we are able to come here and do things like this. I think your work is very important.

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The following is an interview with Carmen Hernandez, the field leader for the Fulbright Mexico program. Ms. Hernandez, in conjunction with her thesis work in the field of social anthropology, spent one year doing ethnographic work comparing traditional Mexican medical practices ("the use of herbs and common sense") to Occidental medical practices ("institutionalized medicine") as practiced in Mexico. The setting for her work was the northern province of Veracruz. The majority of her informants were Wasteca Indians although there were a significant number of mestizos.

A large segment of the conversation has been omitted. These sections were omitted as the information contained in these passages would have little bearing in the classroom use of Bless Me, Ultima. Omitted sections have been marked by asterisks.

Hernandez: *** But the way that we have doctors there, those are the students that are done with their studies, and the ones that leave the University. They have to go for one year social service, and they get paid, but very low. They don't expect to get paid very well, and usually the ones, the students at the universities, they go to work for one year to different hospitals and communities. And, of course, the ones who get the best grades are the ones who are able to choose where they want to go. So the ones...the worst students don't get to choose. They just need to go to the farthest places where no one wants to go, so usually you will find the doctors who are in this area don't want to be there, and they are there because they are probably the worst students in their classes, like they went there because they have to go there.

****

Hernandez: ***In the three cases [she is referring to the three types of governmental health care systems], we have mainly students who are doing their social service, and they have to work there. **** In the three cases, none of these institutions have a good system to deal with health care. I mean, that means they give you like first aid; if you need surgery, they can't give it to you because they don't have the technology and the knowledge enough to do it. So they can help you in...just with the basics **** So these are the three basic government or social security health systems there. Then again, there are some doctors, private doctors....people from the same town that have gone to the city...

Webster: You're talking about doctors within the system, and that was

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what your work was on, but this book barely mention doctors, and...

Hernandez: I'll be back! I'll be back! Don't worry! I know that you are getting worried I'm not dealing with that. It's just that it has to deal with everything, and then we have the private doctors and the private dentists and everything, okay. People...the private doctors charge you like twenty...well, right now it varies from thirty to...uh...fifty pesos a visit. Well, I mean if you think that a local worker earns like twenty pesos a day, you would realize it's too expensive for them to go to the doctors. That's my main point, okay. So that's the Occidental, the Western medicine. Then I started making a census, visiting all kinds of curandaros and brujos and...and midwives, and here it's very important to make the difference...in this area, for people in this area, They...they were really aware of ...they were always talking about four different kinds of medicine men, we can say. Well, they were very distinctive. The first kind is the curandero, and this is like the most general person who knows how to use some of the herbs but mainly to prevent...well, sometimes it's just to prevent some illnesses, and other times it's also to cure you of some illnesses, but the way they cure you is like...yes, they use herbs, they use...(inaudible)...but they are only going to cure you, and they are not going to do anything else but just to cure you.

Webster: What else could they do?

Hernandez: Okay, those are...those are just the curanderos. And then we have the brujos which are the witchcraft...the witches. And the witches, the brujos, are the ones that not only...don't only cure you but they also help you to do bad to someone else. I mean they will tell you, "Okay, you're ill because someone is doing some brujerias (witchcraft) to you, and the only way to stop him or her is if you reverse the witch's...the witchcraft to them," and so they will help you...to make ...to make them to be sick, okay, and those are the brujos in the Wasteca area. And then we have the yerberos. The yerberos are the ones that know...that know the use of the herbs, and then finally we have the midwives...

Webster: Wait! What's a yerbero?

Hernandez: A yerbero, okay, well, usually the yerberos know how to use the herbs...mmmnh...They know how to use the herbs, like in the work they were doing in Los Tuxtlas (the garden site of the first interview). They

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know exactly what different herbs are for that you can use for...so that means you can use...I mean if you are having some problems with your stomach, they will let you know what exact kind of herbs you have to boil to make teas and drink it for three days and whatever...

Webster: Okay, they're like general helpers.

Hernandez: And then we have the midwives that help women to bring...well, they will help them to have their children. And so these are like the four main kinds of curanderos. Okay, so the curanderos, who are the ones that cure...who don't do anything but cure people, they mainly cure four or five different kinds of illnesses. *** [descriptions of different children's illnesses] *** There is another illness that is really well known, not only by people from...by the curanderos from this area but from almost all of Mesoamerica and that's susto...like you get when you get scared...susto...and there are many ways to...to get scared. Anything can scare you, like, I mean, some people...there are many ways to get scared. They're on a trail, and you find a...a snake, and you get scared...you get scared, and you get susto, but the susto is related to another thing that is very important to...to these people. Uh, how do you call that? You know, we have like the soul, a very important part of the body. We have like the body, and we have the soul. But for these people, besides the soul, we have the....the sombra, like the shadow. It could be translated literally like shadow. The shadow is something in spite of...in spite of you...is not your soul, is not your body, but it's something else. What is...it's like how strong you are. At the same time, it's like the weakest part of your body...human being. So if you are walking, find a snake and you get scared, you are going to lose your shadow. It's real important that...I mean that if you lose your shadow, it's very hard because you're not going to be okay until you get your shadow back to your being, so that's even more complicated because...well, there have been some anthropologists who have been doing some research on the shadow and all these different parts of the body, and they have realized that the shadow is a concept that has been brought to Mexico through the slaves, through the black people, so for those people who have had influence from different Negro areas, like the ones in Veracruz, Guerrero, and Wasteca, we have a lot of influence of what they (the Blacks) feel of the shadow. Then when you get susto, you lose your shadow, and so you have to get it back. And the way you get your shadow back varies from curandera to curandera. Usually, they give you what they call baridas (?) which means they get some herbs, and they are

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going to pass those herbs through your body, and they will do that for seven times...

Webster: What specifically?

Hernandez: They get some herbs, and they clean your body...

Webster: Like brush you with them?

Hernandez: Yes, like brush you with them. They will be praying, also, and they will do it for seven times. For three and a half days, twice a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon *** So there are many ways to get your shadow back *** [description of illness caused by a bad wind] *** The other important illness that they cure is the mal de ojo which is...

Webster: The evil eye.

Hernandez: Evil eye, and that's really hard to say when people are going to give you mal de ojo because sometimes people don't really give you mal de ojo. *** For example, if sometimes I say, "Oh, this is a beautiful flower," and if people from that home care about mal de ojo, they will be really concerned because they will think it will die if people like it too much. *** It's not that you want it to. It's just that it might die. Sometimes people even tie red ribbons around their children or plants or animals to prevent mal de ojo which can cause them to die or get sick. *** So the mal de ojo is really bad, and the only ones who can cure them are the curandaras. *** Curanderas cure all these kinds of illnesses. *** Well, for me, there are social reasons for these illnesses. They don't have money to go to the doctor--your wife or your children or your husband has stomach problems, it is cheaper to take them to a curandera, and usually the curanderas are very common. Everyone can be a curandera. Most of the women would know how to cure some of these ilnesses (children's diseases mentioned earlier), so you would go to your sister-in-law or your mother-in-law or your mother or your neighbor. Anyone would be able to help you. You wouldn't even have to pay her. And if you have to go to the curandera, that's more expensive. So that is, for me, the social reasons for the curandera.

And then we have the yerbero. In this particular area, there is a curandera who is very famous. In the sixties, he was working with another very famous curandera, a yerbero, but most of all, he knows ho..

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to use the herbs, and he developed a system...nowadays, it's very nice to visit his place...I mean, he has a herbal place where he has a huge laboratory where he prepares different teas, and he has all labels on them like a huge emporium where he has everything very complete right now. Because of him, many people work in that area. Because of him, many yerberos know the use of the herbs. They will know what to use for everything. Every different herb has different things that they will use in different ways. If you know the different herbs, you can help a lot of people. Here, in Mexico, most of us have a lot of knowledge about which kind of herbs we can use for what, like knowing that the chamomile tea is very good for your stomach, and the cinnamon tea for your throat when you are coughing, and the lemon tea is also very good for your throat. Here it seems like...me and my mother talk about it...we use a lot of the herbs here in Mexico. There would be certain people who know herbs better, and we call them yerberos. So those are the yerberos.

And then we have the brujos. They not only know how to cure you but also how to do damage to other people Uh, this is more complicated. Usually, those brujos are very strange. You have to be in like another stage talking to them. They will say that they have like mirrors, but these mirrors will be just like pieces of wood, and they will say that they can see through them. They will say, you know, one day they were working on their land, and I had this vision, and then I started curing. And they can say one night I dreamed, and my mother came into my body, and since that day I have this mirror, so I can cure people, and I can see into this mirror and guess what is going on. They are really weird. I hear that like the common people of your village, if they hear that you are a brujo, they will never come to you. They will respect you, I mean, because they do not really know if you are a brujo are not, but they don't want to have problems with you. But at the same time, I don't think that they are the ones that will come to visit you. The brujos have...they need to be in a special place where they are away from people who know them. In the Wastec area, it was important to know that the people who visited the brujo were people who were away from those communities. *** Brujos from their own community, they will just laugh at them. They will say that he is not really a brujo, but they will visit brujos in other communities. It is very important to people that they are far away from the brujo they know. They need a certain kind of darkness, because if you know him or her, you don't trust them. That's the main way with brujos.

So, in this area, people did not have enough money to visit doctors. So first of all, people tried to do auto-medication. They tried to cure

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themselves. They're going to try to cure themselves, not only with the teas but also with the medication. If you know you need some Pepto Bismol, you're going to go to the pharmacy and get the Pepto Bismol. And usually you are going to try to use both. You're going to use the traditional medicine and the Western medicine. If the auto-medication doesn't work, you're going to go to the curandero. You're going to do both. *** But with the brujos, it's mainly like a psychological part and a social part like, let me tell you what...Once I went with one of my friends, and she just let the brujo take over her life. She was educated, but she just kept letting him tell her what to do, and he came to make all her decisions...

End of first side of tape.

Webster: In terms of the book that I am studying, first of all you mentioned that the curandera does not hurt people. In the book the curandara does fight against the brujas. There are three brujas in this case. It is more of a fight between good and evil, so the curandera is given even more power than the brujas. Are the curanderas not considered good people with magic?

Hernandez: Brujos, you mean?

Webster: Not the brujas but the curanderas.

Hernandez: I feel like it varies from area to area. It is hard to give one answer for the whole part. What I could say about the Wastecs where I was doing my fieldwork is that the curanderas could be like good people because they are trying to help you, so they are not evil people at all. They are good people. Brujos could be more like bad people. People are afraid of them, but the curanderas, no, probably because they represent the good. They will be better than the brujos, but that doesn't mean the brujos will be more evil.

Webster: How does the church feel about these people, the Catholic church?

Hernandez: Well, we Catholics...I mean as a Catholic, the church doesn't agree with this, and the Church is really clear with this. There is only one God, and these other things, they are blasphemous. I mean, they are like...It doesn't match the church. I guess that the Church, most of the

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time, doesn't want to know about it. If someone from the Church knows...if a priest knows...in the small communities, you know everyone. And if I am a priest, and I know there is a curandera...I must explain to you, most of the people are curanderas. It is not like one person in the community is going to be a curandera. Sometimes, it is like half of the women of the community are curanderas, and it is really hard for the church to deal with this. Sometimes the curanderas...the women will want to speak up about it, and the priest will have to complain to them because of the kind of things that don't match with the religion. So they probably won't talk about this with the priest. On the other hand, the priest knows this is part of the cultural life of Mexico, and I mean, you are not going to change five hundred years of tradition in this country, you know.

Webster: This one curandera that you mentioned in the Wastec area...Was he given supernatural powers? Did some people put him on the same level as brujos and brujas in the terms of the way he could work things?

Hernandez: In certain ways, yes, and I guess that's why he was so...so famous, but this was a very particular case. He doesn't call himself a curandero or a brujo, but he calls himself yerbero or a doctor botanical. And he speaks...he is always trying to make things clear that he is a doctor botanical, and the funny thing is...he is a very famous person, and when he started working, he became so famous...sometimes, people were giving him, for free, just to try to thank him, their daughters or some sisters or whatever, so he got some different wives. For a time, people told me he was every Sunday to the market in that town, and he was always followed by his seven wives, and he was buying things for everyone. But then he met a priest, a Catholic priest, and he talked to him, and he converted him to one of the most Catholic people in town. He paints the church every year for the celebration of the local saint, Santa Katarina, and he has a certain kind of degree in the church, and so he is a very good Catholic, and he would never think of himself as like a superpower person. In fact, when I went to talk to him, he said, "Well, there is nothing special that I can tell you. I just got all the books on different herbs, special medicine herbs, and that's the way I think. That's the way I know the herbs, and if you want some more information, just read the books." You know, so he doesn't think he has any special powers.

Webster: Well, do any of the people think of the curandera as like the brujos and brujas, because in this book it obviously makes it that way?

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But that's not from your experience?

Hernandez: Not from my experience. I mean, are you saying the brujos and brujas have like special powers?

Webster: Well, people think they have special magical powers...

Hernandez: The brujos, yes.

Webster: Not the curanderos?

Hernandez: Not the curanderos.

Webster: In the book the curandera has these powers, and she can harm the brujas.

Hernandez: It again depends on your region. It depends on where you are talking about. I mean, it's really hard for me to generalize. I've been in this field in the Wastec area, but I also know how this works in Orizaba, in my town, in Veracruz in general, and how this works in Mexico City. It's always very different. It varies again from place to place a lot.

Webster: Why do you think the people think they have so much power? Why do they feel that? Do they actually seem to have it?

Hernandez: Again with the curanderas...I mean with the brujos, what they sell is that they have special powers. That's their main thing. If not, why should you go to see a brujo? A brujo is someone who has special powers, and then you can ask yourself why they have special powers. Well, maybe because they are connected either with evil or with God, and I mean, it's definitely because they have special powers. And...and it's definitely hard for people to know why they have these special powers. That's what I was trying to explain to you...people from the local community won't believe those people. I mean, it's really hard for you to believe people that you grew up with, that you've known since you were a child. Suddenly, they say, "Well, I'm a brujo." "You're not! You're not!" But people from abroad will say, "Yes, he is a brujo!" I mean, for me, that's the main reason that they are not famous in their own town, even though people will respect them because you don't want to have any problems with them. But usually, you won't have people from town trust this brujo. Usually, it's people

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from abroad who come to visit.

Webster: So would you say that most people in Mexico believe that brujos and brujas actually exist or not?

Hernandez: Oh yeah, I think that it's very common to all...I mean, it's not a particular thing for a particular level of society...I mean, the economic or societal level. I think that it's everyone...everyone in certain degrees...we all have some kinds of connections or beliefs that attach us with the brujos. I mean, like I grew up in a Catholic way, going to a nun's school, a Catholic school, and even though my classmates used to go to the brujos or brujas to ask them to read them the cards...I mean there are all kinds of brujos. There are some who are just brujos because they know how to read your future, but they are still brujos. There are brujos that people go to visit to buy some amulets, like the ones we saw at the brujo market in Mexico City. And sometimes it's not only that you want to get an amulet but that you want to make something bad for someone else. And that, for me, is the main difference for the brujos. *** A brujo will try to do something to a third person. Then they will always give you some kind of general description of the person who is causing the problem, and it is so general that it is easy to match some person to this general description. *** Then you will try to give them some kind of brujeria. That's the way the brujos work.

Webster: Now I know you don't have the experience of curandaras the same way from the Wastec area, but do you know of other regions where they might treat the curandera the same way as the brujas? If they thought evil was bewitching them, where they would get a curandera to fight back?

Hernandez: No, I have never seen that.

Webster: Okay, so you're not used to that although in the book that is exactly what happens.

Hernandez: No, I have never seen that or heard about that.

Webster: You know, the other day when I talked to the biologist, he said you can often tell a curandera because she will have a young boy with her. Have you heard that? That that's the way you can tell the difference

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between a curandera and a bruja?

Hernandez: No, and then again people from Los Tuxtlas are really famous because they are all brujos. People from all the country know that this is the area where you can get some brujos.

Webster: Where we were the other day?

Hernandez: Yeah, where we were the other day, Los Tuxtlas, but I have never done any research, and I haven't lived in that area, so I am not familiar at all with that region, and I don't have any information about it. There are a lot of books about Los Tuxtlas and the brujos from Los Tuxtlas, but I have no idea about it.

Webster: He seemed to attribute much more power to the curandera than you are doing.

Hernandez: Yeah, because, then again, it would be very different in this region.

Webster: Well, I don't have any more questions at this point. What I find interesting...What is very interesting to me is this idea about brujerias in everyone's mind in Mexico to some degree.

Hernandez: Oh yes! Oh yes! My friends who are anthropologists...especially among anthropologists, the brujos are like so well known. I mean, usually it is so amazing. Sometimes we will be talking as friends. For me, these are like intellectual people. They read a lot. Sometimes we are talking about anything, and then suddenly, they are talking about brujerias, and they are serious like, "Do you know any good brujeria that you can recommend to me because I am having problems with my money?" or "..my love?" or whatever. I mean they are serious, and I can't believe it, but they do. And it's not only anthropologists, you know. All kind of people...they believe in brujos, so I guess at a certain point, everyone here in Mexico.