

Tech Talk

Success Criteria: Students will use technology to engage with Latino studies.

Movie Remake Proposal

- Remind students that all genres, even those that were not written to explore marginalized identities or comment on social justice or diversity, help shape perceptions of different identities.
- Have students review a favorite movie based on what they have read about in this lesson. Students should select movies that feature Latin American or Latino characters or actors. Once students have evaluated their film, they should create a presentation that provides suggestions about how a remake could be more inclusive. Depending on the type of film, this might involve replacing stereotypes or tropes with nuanced representation, drawing parallels between historical or current events and a storyline within the film, or adding more characters that have historically marginalized or marginalized intersectional identities.
- Have students create a four- to five-minute presentation in which they do the following:
 - » Provide a short plot summary of their film and contextual information such as the original release date, genre, the director, screenwriter, key designers, and actors.
 - » Offer an evaluation of how the movie succeeded or failed in representing Latin American and Latino characters.
 - » Create a storyboard, brief script rewrite, or casting proposal to suggest changes that would provide better representation or build on the strengths of the film. Students should recommend a few behind-the-scenes professionals, such as producers, writers, directors, or designers, who share a social identity with some of the characters.
 - » Depending on the film, students may choose to address reactions to similar films that have featured a diverse main cast, updated plot, or changes in dialogue or humor.
- Provide time for a short Q&A session after each presentation in which students can ask their classmates questions about their proposals.
- For an exit ticket, have students write down which classmate's reboot film they would be most likely to watch or recommend.

Colorblind and Color-Conscious Casting

Does it matter who is cast in a particular role? Some people argue that a part should be played by someone of a similar background as the character: Black actors should play Black characters, actors with disabilities should play characters who have disabilities, and so on. Others believe that an actor should get a part based only on talent.

Recently, popular media, such as the series *Bridgerton*, produced by Shonda Rhimes, and the musical *Hamilton* (shown right in a 2022 production in Hamburg, Germany), by Lin-Manuel Miranda, have overlooked race in the casting of main characters. Some praise this reimagining of history, while others are wary that it is misleading. Portraying people of color in roles that would not have historically been available to them opens up acting opportunities, but it also may mask the oppressive realities of history. How does this compare to the casting of White actors in Black, Indigenous, Latino, or Asian roles? What do you think?



Disney Pixar's *Coco* (2017), which focuses on a Mexican family and the Día de Muertos celebration, was produced with Latino writers, cultural consultants, and voice actors. The film was received with high acclaim and won numerous awards.



These successes aside, there are apparent inequities that thrive in the entertainment industry. One method of measuring how inclusive this industry has been is to document the record of award-providing institutions. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), which gives out Academy Awards or "Oscars," is one of the largest ceremonial bodies of the film industry. As of 2024 (96 years since it began

evaluating performances and productions), a very limited number of Latinos have been honored through the reception of these Oscars. According to research from USC's Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, a mere 2 percent of winners have been Latino.

Some people might suggest that the reasons Latinos have not won many of these awards include poor quality of work and performances on the part of Latinos or that there are simply fewer Latinos willing to work within such opportunities than others. However, social science and critical studies research has found that the film industry's record of systemic racism is a much more plausible cause. Factors such as disparities in funding for films, limited access to roles and leadership positions in the industry, and the lack of peer support networks have contributed to the underrepresentation of Latinos and other marginalized communities among film awards recipients.

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Unit 6

ML Adaptation: Tech Talk

Consider the following alternative approaches to this activity to meet the needs of your class.

- Accommodated Option:** Have students respond to an animated short or short film. Consider choosing one that centers visual storytelling and instrumental music more than spoken dialogue.
- Integrated Option:** If applicable for your class, allow students to write a journal entry responding to a film from their country or culture of origin.
- Cooperative Option:** If applicable, watch a film as a class and pause frequently to discuss the first two parts of the presentation, the summary and evaluation of the film. Allow students to complete the rest of the project in pairs or small groups.