

TEATRO VISIÓN



LUZ

A SHADOW PLAY
INSPIRED BY
SENIOR
STORIES



STUDYGUIDE

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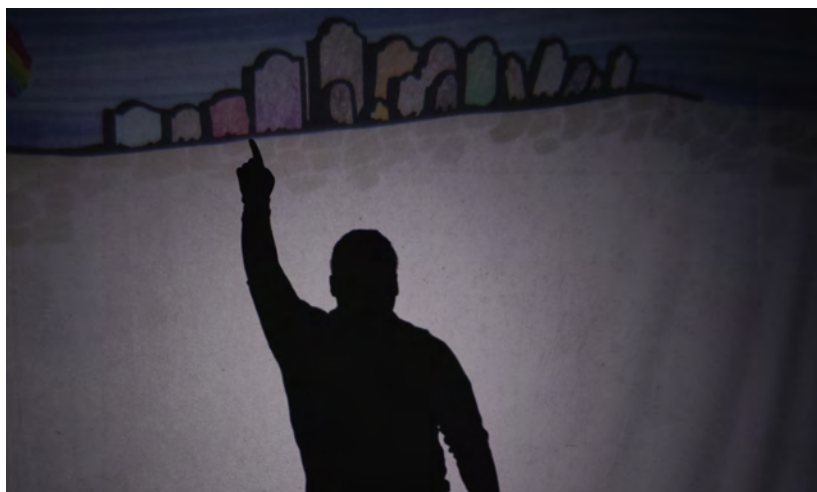
ABOUT TEATRO VISIÓN

Teatro Visión is a Chicana theater company serving the Latinx and other diverse communities of the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

Our mission is to create theater rooted in Chicana and Latinx experiences to inspire the people of Santa Clara Valley and beyond to feel, think, and act to create a better world. Our activities include producing and presenting theater, focusing on Latinx and Chicana communities and artists; developing new works of theater through a participatory, community-based process; and offering theater classes and workshops for youth and adults that teach performance as a tool for social change.

About

This study guide is designed to be a resource for middle and high school teachers of the humanities (language arts, social studies, theater, etc.) to expand the learning and engage their student in conversation about the social, cultural and historical themes of the play. Another goal of this study guide is to offer students a better understanding of the work that playwrights do by offering them information about the playwright of *Luz: A Shadow Play Inspired by Senior Stories*; and exercises that allow them to engage with playwriting as creative writers.



II. Before the Play

- A. Playwright Biography & Interview
- B. Production History
- C. Genre



[Click here to listen to Cristal González Avila talk about her journey to becoming a playwright, her approach to writing a new play and her experience working on Luz.](#)

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT

Cristal González Avila is an award winning actress, and the author of the plays *La Sombra* ("The Shadow"), *PIERNAS: The Story Between Our Legs*, and *Sombra Mia* a collection of poetry. González Avila earned her B.A in Theater Arts from San José State University. She is from Watsonville, CA and is a proud company member of both El Teatro Campesino and Baktun12.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

In 2018, Teatro Vision commissioned local playwright, Cristal González Avila for a project called *Senior Stories*, a series of one-minute plays that were to premiere before each performance of Teatro Vision's production of *Departera*. For *Senior Stories* González Avila gathered stories from seniors and elders in San Jose. After the initial debut of these short plays, González Avila expanded these stories into *Luz: A Shadow Play Inspired by Senior Stories*.

GENRE: Ethnographic Performance

Ethnographic Performance is a form of theater making that requires an artist to gather information from a community. This can be done in a lot of ways, most commonly, it includes participation in day-to-day activities and in-depth interviews. The information is used to create a collaborative performance that can be shared with an audience.

GENRE: Shadow Puppetry

Shadow puppetry is form of storytelling that uses shadows projected onto a screen. This form of performance is present in cultures across the world and has a particularly long history in Southeast Asia.

III. Exploring Form

Project Ideas

A. Beginning with a Poem.

In her interview, González Avila says that she typically starts a new play with a poem. Below are four poems. What stories can you pull from any of these poems? Who are the characters in the poem? Where are they? What do they want and what do you think they do to get it?

If none of these speak to you, find one that does, or write your own.

the sun and her flowers **By Rupi Kaur**

this is the recipe of life
said my mother
as she held me in her arms as i wept
think of those flowers you plant
in the garden each year
they will teach you
that people too
must wilt
fall
root
rise
in order to bloom

We Real Cool **By Gwendolyn Brooks**

The Pool Players
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike Straight. We

Sign Sin. We
Thin Gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

The Rose That Grew From Concrete **By Tupac Shakur**

Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law is wrong it
learned to walk with out having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its
dreams,
it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from
concrete
when no one else ever cared.

Fire and Ice **By Robert Frost**

Some sat the word will end in fire,
Some say ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire. But if I
had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction
ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

III. Exploring Form

Project Ideas

B. Interviewing Family.



Luz was developed by conducting a series of interviews with seniors in the community. Marcel Proust was a French writer who came up with a series of questions that he used when developing characters. Apply this concept to your family or friends. See what characters develop. Three are included below to get you started.

Proust's Questions:

Who is your hero of fiction?

Which historical figure do you most identify with?

Who are your heroes in real life?

[Click here to access all 35 of Proust's Questions](#)

IV. Exploring Themes through History

LGBTQIA Identity and History

- A. LGBTQ Flag
- B. HIV/AIDS and Pandemics
- C. AIDS Activism



LGBT FLAG and Its Many Variations.

In 1978, Gilbert Baker designed the first LGBT flag for San Francisco's Gay Pride Parade. The original flag consisted of eight horizontal stripes: pink, red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise blue, and violet that replicate the colors of the rainbow. Later that year, Harvey Milk, California's first openly gay politician, was assassinated. After his assassination, the demand for the gay pride flag increased and Paramount Flag Company began to sell a version with seven striped rainbow fabric they had in stock which eliminated the hot pink stripe. For the 1979 Gay Pride Parade, organizers wanted to decorate the parade route with half of the flag on each side of the street so the turquoise stripe was eliminated so that there could be an even number of stripes on each side of the street.

In March 2017, Gilbert Baker created a version with nine stripes which reintroduced the pink and turquoise along with a lavender to symbolizes diversity.

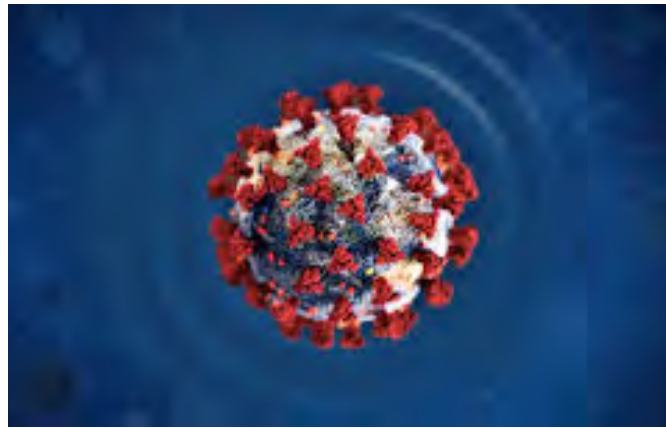
In June 2017, the city of Philadelphia adopted a revised version of the flag. The design adds black and brown stripes to the top of the standard six-color flag, to draw attention to issues of people of color within the LGBTQ communities.

Barker initially designed the flag to bring attention to the struggle of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people in the United states. In 2020, the LGBT acronym is widely used in the expanded form, LGBTQIA, which includes Queer or Questioning, Intersex and Asexuals or Allies. If you were to create a flag for this contemporary acronym, what would it look like?

IV. Exploring Themes through History

LGBTQIA Identity and History

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HIV/AIDS and Global Pandemics

With the recent outbreak of COVID-19 the word pandemic has been circulating, but what is a pandemic? The World Health Organization defines a pandemic as, “A worldwide spread of a new disease.” Before COVID-19 had communities around the world following shelter-in-place orders to stop the spread of the disease, the world had already experienced multiple pandemics. Most famously, the “Black Death” caused by Bubonic Plague killed between 75 and 200 million people between 1353 and 1366. The world has also seen multiple cholera and flu pandemics over the years.

In 1981, during end of the first year of Ronald Reagan’s presidency, the CDC (Center for Disease Control) reported five cases of a rare fungus and 270 cases of an aggressive skin cancer in gay men (Kaposi’s sarcoma). By November 1982 the CDC had named the disease AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). That same year, the first AIDS clinic was founded in San Francisco. Research was being conducted to combat the disease, however people were still dying of AIDS. In 1985, major Hollywood leading man Rock Hudson succumb to the disease. Hudson also left enough money behind to start the American Foundation for AIDS Research. Later that year, the CDC licensed its first commercial blood test for HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the virus that can develop into AIDS. Despite the death toll and push in the scientific and artistic community for more research, President Reagan made no public mention of the disease until 1986. The following year, the Food and Drug Administration approved the first drug treatment. However, it was very expensive and hard to get. In response, the organization ACT-UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) was formed and began to protest the high cost and limited access to the drug.

Thinking about global pandemics. How are the ways that the current global pandemic is being handled by the current president different that the way that Reagan handled the AIDS crisis? How are they the same?

IV. Exploring Themes through History

LGBTQIA Identity and History

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AIDS Activism and Performance

ACT-UP, the HIV/AIDS activism collective started in New York City, was at the forefront of this new movement to spread awareness and gain access to resources. From the beginning, ACT-UP used performance to spread awareness and raise funds to support those affected by the virus. Singing and dancing were part the early days of ACT-UP. Later, AIDS activism found its way to larger stages though Broadway plays and musicals like 1984's *The Normal Heart*, written by ACT- UP's founder Larry Kramer, and 1996's *RENT* by Johnathon Larson.

In addition to ACT-UP's direct action and Broadway's inclusion of stories about the HIV/AIDS Crisis, music also became a place where the LGBT community found inspiration and support, like Gabriel in *Luz* who begins his vignette by singing the popular refrain from *Respect*, a song written by Otis Redding, but made popular by Aretha Franklin. Redding originally wrote the song in response to marital problems, but Franklin made it a popular power anthem for the LGBT, Women's rights and Black people who were all organizing against different forms of oppression.

POSE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCaJoPrP9kM>

RESPECT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OD3WOKLTRYQ>

RENT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvyHuse6buY>

Can you think of other songs that have become popular through activism or social movements?

IV. Exploring Themes through History

Valley of the Heart's Delight and the Bracero Program



Valley of the Heart's Delight and the Bracero Program

In the play, *Luz*, the character Fernando talks about coming into the United States from Mexico in 1942 in his mother's arms first to Los Angeles and then to San Jose. By the 1940s most of the industry in and around San Jose was agricultural. After experiencing hardship during the great depression, the 1940s brought prosperity due in large part to its agricultural industry, which helped it earn the nickname The Valley of the Heart's Delight. San Jose and Santa Clara County. A large part of this industry was dedicated to prune production. According to a 1940 pamphlet published by the San Jose Chamber of Commerce, the over 70, 000 acres of prune trees in Santa Clara County grew up to 80,000 tons of prunes which translated into a market value of \$10,000,000 in 1940. In Today that would that would be the equivalent of \$183,552,857 and that's just the prunes. In the 1940s San José and Santa Clara County was also home to over 50 acres of fruit trees. These included apricots, pears, cherries, peaches, walnuts, almonds, olives, and figs which earned the agriculture industry \$20,000,0000 (or \$367,105,714 today).

However with World War II in full swing, the wartime industry and the region began to manufacture marine engines, small boats, and machines for mining and milling. The new industry brought with it a demand for labor which was filled by workers (including women) who had previously worked in the orchards and canneries. However, this labor still needed to happen.

The bracero program was a formal agreement with Mexico that allowed Mexican workers to come the United States to work. The program began in August of 1942 and brought thousands of workers just like Fernando's family to California to labor in the fields and orchards.

Thinking about the family interview activity, can you think of a question that you might ask an elder in your family that relates to agriculture? What is your family's relationship to agriculture? How far does it go back?

IV. Exploring Themes

Music and The United Farmworkers Movement



Farm Labor Activism and Music

Twenty years after the introduction of the bracero program to the United States and twenty years before ACT-UP activists were protesting AIDS in New York, The United Farm Workers movement was standing up for workers rights in California. The farmworkers movement used skits and music to get their message across. El Teatro Campesino, The Farmworkers Theater was one of the main figures in bringing theater to the people during the farm labor strikes of the 1960s. El Teatro Campesino was able to make theatre that can be done in all kinds of places by creating skits called actos that relied on masks and signs. Because these props and costume pieces were very portable the actos could be performed all over the place. Like the actos, music was also something that could be used to educate and enliven striking workers. The guitar's portability make it the perfect instrument for the picket lines because of the players ability to walk and play at the same time. Two very popular protest songs *De Colores (Of Colors)* and *No Nos Moveran (We Shall Not Be Moved)* were popular in part because of their wide circulation on behalf of religion. *De Colores* was a song that had become popular though the Roman Catholic Church and *No Nos Moveran* was a translation of the Gospel spiritual *I Shall Not Be Moved*.

Listen to both tracks and read the lyrics. What part do the words play in motivating people? How might the melodies have done similar work? What do you feel when you read the lyrics and listen to the songs?

No Nos Moveran

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zqc5GI5cTLg>

Unidos en la huelga, no, no, no
nos moverán

Unidos en la huelga, no, no, no
nos moverán

Como un árbol firme junto al río
No nos moverán, no nos
moverán

We Shall Not Be Moved

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GN-I2_vLKWI

We shall not we shall not be
moved

We shall not we shall not be
moved

Just like a tree that's standing by
the water side

We shall not be moved

We're _____ together
(this lyrics gets repeated and
replaced by lots of different
lyrics)

We shall not be moved

We're brothers together

We shall not be moved

De Colores

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwZ-g5pCvuw>

De colores, de colores se visten los campos en la
primavera

De colores, de colores son los pajarillos que vienen de
afuera

De colores, de colores es el arco iris que vemos lucir

Y por eso los grandes amores de muchos colores me
gustan a mi

Y por eso los grandes amores de muchos colores me
gustan a mi

Canta el gallo, canta el gallo con el quiri quiri quiri quiri
quiri

La gallina, la gallina con el cara cara cara cara cara

Los polluelos, los polluelos con el pio pio pio pio pi

Y por eso los grandes amores de muchos colores me
gustan a mi

Y por eso los grandes amores de muchos colores me
gustan a mi

In Colors

In colors, the fields drape themselves in profusion of
colors in springtime.

In colors, in colors the young birds arriving from afar

In colors, in colors the brilliant rainbow we spy

And that's why the great love of infinite colors is pleasing
to me

And that's why the great love of infinite colors is pleasing
to me

The rooster sings, the rooster sings with a cock-a-doodle-
do (kiri, kiri)

The hen, the hen with a cluck, cluck, cluck (kara, kara)

The baby chicks, the baby chicks with a cheep, cheep,
cheep (pio, pio)

And that's why the great love of infinite colors is pleasing
to me

And that's why the great love of infinite colors is pleasing
to me

IV. Exploring Themes

MUSIC OF MEXICO: SON JAROCHO



MUSIC OF MEXICO: SON JAROCHO

From the previous lesson, we know that both *De Colores* and *No Nos Moveran* emerged from faith based origins. However, these songs have been arranged and rearranged to fit several different genres. The Oxford English Dictionary defines genre as, “a particular type or style of literature, art, film or music that you can recognize because of its special features.” This means that genres can be distinguished from one another because of certain features. In this lesson we will explore the genre of *Son Jarocho* (*Ha-roh-cho*). In *Luz*, Tere was excited to see a group of *Son Jarocho* players, but what is *Son Jarocho*? In Spanish, *Son* is a word that describes a song that accompanies a dance and *Jarocho* is a term that is an informal/slang way of describing people or things from Veracruz, Mexico.

Son Jarocho is a type of music that is played by combining three guitar-like stringed instruments: the *jarana* (*ha-rah-nah*), a small instrument that is strummed; the *requinto* (*reh-keen-toe*), a second small instrument that is plucked; and finally, the *leona*, a low pitched bass like instrument. The final stringed instrument is the *arpa* (*are-pah*), a harp. These instruments are paired with percussion instruments which might include a tambourine called a *pandero* or an instrument made from the jawbone of a horse or a donkey called a *quijada* (*key-ha-da*). *Son Jarocho* groups sing and play for dancers who dance on top of a hollowed out wooden platform called a *tarima*.

Below there is an example of Son Jarocho music. Can you identify the instruments used by their descriptions above?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qfTB-ITh2U&list=PLAC9CEA353AB4EC82

III. Exploring Themes

LATINOS and BASEBALL (A BRIEF HISTORY)



LATINOS and BASEBALL (A BRIEF HISTORY)

If you can believe it, Latino baseball players have a history that goes back as early as the mid-1800s especially in Cuba. However, it wasn't until 1930 that the major leagues would make space for a larger Latino presence. The 1930s saw the first two players of Mexican descent signed to major contracts and the first Latino coach, Miguel Angel Gonzalez, a Cuban player who had been with the major leagues as a player for over fifteen years.

In the same way that World War II pulled workers out of the fields and orchards of San Jose and into other industries (opening the door for the Bracero Program) the Major Leagues needed to fill spots on baseball teams and for this, they looked to Cuba since Cubans were not subject to military draft.

By the 1950s Latinos had experienced some success in the MLB, but before this there had never been a Latino baseball star, until both Minnie Miñoso and Alfonso "Chico" Carrasquel joined the All Star team. This made them the first two Latinos to ever play in an All Star game. In the 1950's other Latino players like Orlando Cepeda, Roberto Clemente, and Louis Aparicio also made a name for themselves through the game and were among the first Latinos to join the Baseball Hall of Fame. Roberto Clemente was the first Latino inductee.

As of 2011 there are nine Latino players who have been inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

III. Exploring Form

CINE DE ORO: MEXICOS GOLDEN AGE OF CINEMA



CINE DE ORO: MEXICOS GOLDEN AGE OF CINEMA

Mexico's "Golden Age" of cinema spans from the early 1930s to the mid 1960s. During this period, the Mexican film industry was experiencing a lot of popularity and international attention for its films. In part, this success was a side effect of World War II. In the early 1930s film studios in the United States and Europe were interrupted by the war. However, Mexico did not join the Allied Forces against Germany until the 1940s. In addition, when Europe and the United States did start making movies again, they mostly focused on the war. Mexico was telling other stories.

Allá En El Rancho Grande (1936) tells the story about a love triangle on a ranch. It is considered the first classic film of the era. The film featured something that would become very popular during this time, songs. In today's terms, *Allá En El Rancho Grande* might be considered a film with musical numbers as opposed to a musical, because in musicals, the songs help tell the story. In the case of *Allá En El Rancho Grande*, the goal of the music was to celebrate the singing talent of the lead actor, Tito Guízar. In fact, after *Allá En El Rancho Grande*, there were many films that celebrated the *Ranchera* genre of Mexican music by including a musical number sung by the leading man. *Ranchera* music was not the only genre of music celebrated during Mexico's Golden Age. Rumba, which was popular all over Latin America during this time was also very present and it allowed for the films to be enjoyed by audiences beyond Mexico.

However, during the Golden Age, *Ranchera* dramas were not the only genre to come out of Mexico. Comedic films were also popular. Many of these starred Adalberto Martinez who went by the name "Resortes." Martinez's comedy would pave the way for many famous comedic character actors in Mexico. During the Golden Age period, many Film Noir and Horror movies were also being produced.

Using singers who are already popular to make a film sell to a wide audience is not a strategy that was limited to Mexico. For instance, in the United States, *A Star is Born* has been remade four times. Each time, the lead is played by a different musical super star (the latest remake starred Lady Gaga). Can you think of others?

