

Novel Rationale for *La Tumba* by Mira Canion

Target Course: Spanish Level 2

Author: Mira Canion

Proficiency Level: Novice High to Intermediate Low

Tense Focus: Present tense

Word Count: ~5,000

Setting: Mexico, modern era

Themes: Family, tradition, cultural celebration (Día de los Muertos), honesty, courage

Purpose and Justification:

Mira Canion's *La Tumba* is an ideal novel for Spanish 2 students, providing comprehensible input with high-frequency vocabulary and present-tense structures. Its compelling plot follows a middle school student named **Alex**, who is preparing for **Día de los Muertos** but struggles with family secrets, peer conflict, and emotional growth. The story is accessible and engaging, designed specifically for language learners, and introduces cultural topics in a respectful and age-appropriate way.

Because the language is controlled and the cultural content is authentic, *La Tumba* supports both language acquisition and intercultural understanding. This makes it a strong fit for a standards-based, proficiency-driven Spanish classroom.

Alignment with the Montana World Language Standards:

Standard 1: Communication

- **Interpretive Mode:**
 - Students will read and comprehend authentic-like texts that reflect the everyday lives of native speakers.
 - *Application:* Reading and discussing chapters, identifying main ideas and supporting details.
- **Interpersonal Mode:**
 - Students will discuss character motivations, fears, and changes using familiar vocabulary.

- *Application:* Pair conversations about Alex's feelings and choices.
- **Presentational Mode:**
 - Students will summarize chapters, describe traditions, or create alternate endings.

Standard 2 and Standard 4: Cultures and Comparisons

- Students will understand cultural practices and perspectives related to **Día de los Muertos**, family roles, and Mexican traditions.
 - *Application:* Comparing and contrasting Mexican and U.S. perspectives on death and remembrance.

Standard 3: Connections

- Students will connect what they learn in Spanish to social studies (family structures, cultural practices) and art (ofrendas, calaveras).
 - *Application:* Exploring the meaning and design of altars and symbolic items in Mexican tradition.

Standard 5: Communities

- Students will explore how death is celebrated/treated in U.S. communities.
 - *Application:* Investigating local observances or contributing to a class ofrenda.

Instructional Benefits:

- **Scaffolded vocabulary** and grammar support for second-year learners
- **Relatable protagonist and themes** for middle and high school students
- **Rich cultural content** integrated in a non-stereotypical and meaningful way
- **Cross-curricular opportunities** for collaboration with social studies or art

Conclusion:

La Tumba by Mira Canion is a developmentally and linguistically appropriate novel for Spanish 2 students. It supports acquisition through compelling input, promotes intercultural understanding, and aligns strongly with the Montana World Language Standards. Through the story of Alex, students gain a deeper appreciation of Mexican culture while building interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational communication skills.