WHO AM I?:
BILINGUAL IDENTITY AND THE LATINA AUTHOR

Laura Steele
Objectives

■ To establish the role that language has in the formation of our lives and thought processes
■ To explore how bilingual people create a unique and empowering new identity through the use of two languages
■ To demonstrate how identity is portrayed in the works of select Latina authors
Language and Identity

- Language is one of many factors that aid in the formation of society
  - Language policy
  - Colloquialisms
- Language can also be a factor in the formation of the identity of the individual
  - Self-expression
  - One of many- identity is fluid and multifaceted
Bilingual Identity: Bilingualism as power.

- Bilingualism can place an individual in a role as an intermediary between two cultures. They can objectively analyze and compare traits of both languages
  - "Bridge between cultures" and "Citizen of the World"

- Creates new form of expression
  - Code Switching
  - Grammatical structure
However....

Things to bear in mind

- The extent of this can vary based on several factors
  - Prominence of languages spoken and how it is viewed?
    - Will people be receptive?
    - How much culture is available to an individual?
    - Is there a stigma?

- Individual
  - "outside looking in"
  - Using language fluidly or "one or the other" approach
Bilingual Identity in Literature

Sandra Cisneros

Julia Alvarez

Photo of Julia Alvarez from Interview with LaBloga August 2007
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/Julia-Alvarez.gif

Sandra Cisneros
http://thegreatsandracisneros.wikispaces.com/Sandra+Cisneros
Continued

Sandra Cisneros

- Chicana author born in Chicago in 1954

Julia Alvarez

- Born in U.S, but raised in Dominican Republic till the age of 10
Examples

- "Now, as your final regreso draws close, cuéntanos, Papi, todo en español, all that we lost of you in English"
  - Julia Alvarez "Regreso"

- My father whispered to my Tia Chucha, Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente. But my eyes did see and my heart suffered
  - Sandra Cisneros Woman Hollering Creek: 98
Food for thought: ESL and English as a dominant language

English in the World

- Academic opportunities
- As a result many programs have emerged to teach English as a secondary language
- These programs have their downsides....
Conclusion

- Bilingualism, although subject to circumstance, can create a unique form of expression and a cross-cultural perspective and should, therefore, be encouraged
A joke for the road...

Olvidé las llaves de mi casa en el trabajo.
—¿Sabes inglés?
¿Y eso qué tiene que ver?
—Ay no sé, dicen que el inglés abre muchas puertas
Citations

- http://www.juliaalvarez.com/about/
- Monaghan, Frank. Reading B: English lessons.n A. Hewings & C. Tagg (Eds.), The politics of English: Conflict, competition, co-existence . New York: Routledge. [Chapter 3]