

# The latin deli essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

1. Select 5 stories and then create a character analysis on each main and favorite character.

Dear Joaquin: In this letter, the depressive angst is almost surely palpable. Olga is hopelessly in love. It seems a man took her virginity, her purity, and left her in an anxious state of expectancy. A one night stand in which she gave her whole being to a fraud made her believe she knows what love is. She exhausts the word love saying " me, the woman who truly loves you" and " this is unbearable, mi amor". Joaquin has completely forgotten the narrator for " ten months have passed and not a word" from him and that's not to mention the fact that he's living with another woman, two actually.

Olga is blinded by love and although she writes that he " hides like a frightened child" behind his " mama's big bottom, under Rosaura's mambo skirts" she cannot accept the fact that he's moved on. Olga could spend her entire life waiting on Joaquin and signing letters " Amor y besos, Olga" to which she will never receive a reply. Paterson Public Library: The character is so enthralled by her " pillared palace of the Paterson Public Library" and the greed for experiences of the adventures inside. She describes herself as rummaging through the stacks " like the beggar invited to the wedding feast," starving for books.

The narrator is so inviting and easy to connect with because she is a child and loves to read (which is ironic considering we are reading this book). She's intrigued by a world of knowledge that it so incomprehensibly vast it's hard to bear. The foil, Lorraine in this story further emphasized how much the narrator treasures knowledge. Eva, the main character in *By love*

Betrayed, is as innocent little girl who does not yet know she should be ashamed of her father and who still has an undying love for him despite her mother's warnings that her father is a sinner.

She says " When my mother got angry at my father, she made me think of a hurricane. Blowing him away from us with her screams and her tears. " Eva loves her father so much that she even dreams of him and longs for more time with him, wishing he didn't " work" so much. Her love and quite curiosity is what causes her to skip school to attempt to see her papi. Perhaps a third grader is too young to realize that her father is cheating on her mother but at the end of the story when she's " trying for a ' devil smile'" to match her father's we get feeling that she can sense something is wrong but chooses to ignore it for love.

The main character in *The Witch's Husband*, despite the title, is the grandmother. She is a kind, compassionate woman who " with five children of her own, had found a way to help many others. " She is a stubborn one though when need be especially for her family as in the case of her husband " she insists on taking care of the old man" even " though she has been warned that her heart might fail in her sleep. " The grandmother is also wise, worthy of her title at the top of the chain in ancestry. Her story of the witch's husband answered her granddaughter's unasked question.

She sensed the troubled situation would try to be persuaded by logic but her devotion to her loved one and his for her, cannot be settled till death. No separation till death. El Arabe in the story *Not for Sale* is one who should be analyzed because of his different culture and want, just like the Latinos, to

make a living for his family in America. The girl's lack of understanding when she says " I nodded, not really understanding why he was telling me all this" shows she is still as adolescent.

She is polite but still naive to the adult world. El Arabe is too persistent to recognize this because the only goal on his mind is to bring his son to America. El Arabe is blinded by this goal and persists in even offering " to bargain with [her] father over what [she] was worth in this transaction. " El Arabe's negligence to ask the girl but rather ask her father for her hand in marriage shows his difference in culture. In his culture women are objects, bought and sold like a slave which is even harder for the young girl to understand. 2.

Select 5 poems and then create a character analysis on each main and favorite character The narrator of the poem The Changeling uses empowering diction such as " vying" to connect to the reader a young daughter's longing for her father's regard and affection. She becomes the male character she wishes to truly become for her father to succumb to her needs of comfort from her " sternly forbidding" mother. For in the time the child can imagine a fondness from her father which she believes can only be claimed if she were a male fulfilling it only for a time for desire for acceptance.

In Sugarcane there's an awe stricken astonishment at a secret, almost sinful action that compels her. She's young in this way, yet mature in experience enough to recognize her father's masculinity in handling family situations " the the road-warping sun". She's wise to learn from her mistake, yet slightly

hints she deems her father's scrutiny unjust. Olga is a strong willed woman. We can assume from her trip to the bar after " a double-shift day at the denim factory" she exhausts herself and requests some peace; let it be only a few hours in a bar.

Though she's carried along a path she that overrules her, trips to the bar where she can unwind with songs that travel " into her limbs" bracing the bottle against her at the end of the poem relates to how alcohol has become her salvation from the harsh world in which she dwells. Life of an Echo: The narrator is a guarded, knowledgeable woman afraid of being misguided saying she " preferred the company of shadows". She enjoys feeling needed. The man " Manuel" makes her feel exposed for she'd be giving into him, into his calling for attention, be giving into her desires.

Absolution in a Year: It's past due to let go of grudges since " the decade is over". The character feels sullen and remorseful. She understands the term acceptance for she alone accepts her father's drastic actions going " I am almost your age. And I can almost understand your anger then". As an adult she's still attempting to dissect her father's reasons for destroying her inner self, wishes, and ambitions by finding her diary and " taking it to the kitchen" where he " examined it under harsh light" because she'd like to keep the memory of him, of her father, existent. 3.

Google Judith Ortiz Cofer and read her biography and write a summary on her personal life and career Judith Ortiz Cofer was born in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico in the year 1952. She moved along with her mother and father to the United States, Paterson, New York to be exact, when she was four years

old. Her father joined the armed forces and her mother who carried a constant longing to return to Puerto Rico, kept in close contact with her relatives. Judith was mostly schooled in the U. S. but frequently visited her grandmother in Puerto Rico and attended school there as well.

At age 15, Judith Cofer moved with her family to Augusta, Georgia. After high school she went on to Augusta Collage where she receive her undergraduate degree in English following up with an M. A. from Florida Atlantic University. Subsequent to this she took employment at the University of Georgia in Athens where she is currently Regents' and Franklin Professor of English and Creative Writing. Her career as a writer first began with poetry. An early writing called Peregina which she wrote in 1986, won the Riverside International Chapbook Competition.

Although this was a great honor, her first major work of prose fiction titled The Line of the Sun in 1989 was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize is what established her attention from critics. As her fame grew she also began writing short stories and personal essays without leaving poetry far behind. The storytelling expertise, she assures, came from her greatest teacher, her grandmother, who always taught lessons through her stories. She's never lost sight of her true Latin roots and has, throughout the years, continued to incorporate her experience and knowledge into all she writes to be a teacher to us all against prejudice.

II. An Examination of Symbolism (Full paragraph with supporting evidence for each story/poem) 4. Select 5 stories and explain the use of symbols in the selection In Dear Joaquin, a letter from a woman clutching to her idea of the

past with a vengeance, there is much symbolism. The overuse of the word “love” throughout the story for example “me, the woman who truly loves you” and “this is unbearable mi amor” symbolize Olga’s desperation. Her continual use of the word love represents her over exaggeration of the idea of love for this man, Joaquin, who she can no longer be with.

Olga saying that Joaquin is hiding from “the priest’s tongue” is to recognize that he has not accepted that his actions were sinful and need penance. Lastly, the final sentence of the letter goes “Tell me how it is to feel the sun on your skin in November”. This portrays that Joaquin is living free in hiding away on an island of carefree bliss and protection while all Olga has, has been stripped away like the leaves from the trees in winter. The public library in Paterson Public Library is quite an uplifting setting for the narrator. From the first sentence she refers to the building as a “Greek temple” which represents a godly reference.

She sees this as an extraordinary palace which holds that which should be worshiped. The “two roaring lions, taller than a grammar school girl” depict people’s insecurities in entering the world of knowledge. Most importantly in this short story though is what the narrator herself represents; knowledge. An educated Puerto Rican has found salvation in books and literature and wished to expose Lorraine, also a minority, to this marvel. Lorraine’s aggression against learning is only because her teacher has belittled her, placing her as a “subject to...ritual humiliation” that is tutoring in the hallway.

Knowledge really is “ freedom, a feeling of power and the ability to fly. ” The Myth of the Latin Woman: This story portrays empowerment throughout especially with the use of symbolism. Her Island of Puerto Rico stands to represent her culture in a general way. She says you can “ travel as far as you can” but “ the island travels with you” because although she tries her best to conform to a true English American, she cannot completely rid herself of her cultural roots or the public stereotyping of Latin woman. The word “ uniform” has a big impact on this story.

She says in the “ Catholic school I attended we all wore uniforms,” which can be interpreted to exemplify her feeling of anxiety and call for approval. She does not wish to separate from her culture but rather that society would cease to stereotype people by their cultures. In *By Love Betrayed* the narrator’s father’s “ green bottle of cologne that he splashed on his face before leaving the house” is symbolic of two things. For one, the color green was previously stated to represent hope. In Spanish it is “ Verde-Esperanza”. Secondly, the cologne of her father mainly represents his role as a fatherly figure for the way it soothed Eva.

She says “ his perfume would get on my blanket and I would hold it to my face until I fell asleep,” because she is too young to understand the adult life and hopes her father will stay the same affectionate father she has imaged him to be. The “ holy water, which doesn’t smell like anything” also represents the child’s lack of faith. Her mother would say “ the rosary aloud, the dozens of Hail Mary’s and Our Fathers” in desperation for help from God to right her husband’s wrong but he still goes out with other women at night and nothing much changes. Eva is not too young to notice that.



The heart in *The Witch's Husband* can stand for many things. Undying love is arguably the most significant. Though the old woman's "heart might fail" she remembers a time she let that stop her from continuing her duties, and how cruel she was to her husband to have let that happen. The heart also represents commitment in this way because "a good woman is defined by how much suffering and mothering she can do in one lifetime".

For the grandmother to be suffering from a heart problem, that expresses how much love she has committed to others. It isn't just a coincidence that her heart gives out first; she has given so much in her lifetime. Select 5 poems and explain the use of symbols in the selection *The Lesson of the Teeth*: The narrator is tormented by teeth which represent the reality of what is to come. The first stanza states "that to dream of teeth means death is coming" but death may not be the most hazardous ending. Growing old is a reality one cannot escape. Aunt Clotilde's "smile sent a little current of icy fear up [her] spine" when a smile is supposed to bring comfort, the old woman's is fraud. The wicked smile represents how the narrator feels she must face the truth of death which fate so happily entrails.

The teeth could also represent fraud in giving yourself up to the devil is the price to pay for others to find you beautiful for the little girls says "as a child, seeking the mystery of my Aunt Clotilde's beauty, I slipped into her bedroom without knocking". Juana: An old story- For Carlos to say snow was falling "like coconut shavings from the sky, its joke that it was Mary making holiday treats for the saints" symbolizes her husband's lack of accountability. She has not heard of him in "three months" and she is still mourning the loss of her child.

Carlos takes winter, Juana's time of sorrow, too lightly to understand the responsibility of a man. She describes her nights as " a slow-moving river she floats on" to say that her only time of sanctuary is her sleep in which she can be carried away from her sorrows if only for a short time. Nothing Wasted: In this poem the mother serves as the caregiver who nurtures growth; " mother always kept something growing in our homes".

The " rented yard" in which she was planting seeds counts as the earth, or life rather, that she brings into a temporary world, the final home being salvation. On her bedroom window hung a cage with three doves; a female and two wary males". This scenario symbolizes the woman caught in the same situation of becoming impregnated when two men are in the picture. The jealous reaction of the doves signifies their lack of empathy for her in her needful time. The egg could also represent the hope she nourishes which is shattered by men and thrown out in hopes of becoming a lesson to others in the world. Fever: The narrator's father in Fever is " like the wind- blowing through [her] house on weekend leaves".

He is tangible to them unlike wind but is illusive to the touch because the narrator and her mother cannot grab a hold of the love and attention a father should bestow upon his family. She later goes on to say " that silence is a thick and dark curtain". The curtain of silence can symbolize hidden secrets of their father as well as the isolation this silence brings with it. Lastly, the child says " absorbing through my pores a sorrow so sweet and sustaining that I lived on it, as simply as a the houseplant that adapts to what light filters into a windowless room".

The child learns to adapt to this cruel predicament only because she feels she would not be able to live otherwise. She will still grow and push through this difficulty in life but she understands it is a harsh struggle. From the Book of Dreams In Spanish: In this poem it is pointed out “ the book of dreams in Spanish says the tree is my father. The fruit that disappears stands for words not spoken, hopes and wishes unfulfilled”. But what it does not say is why the narrator is still starved at the end.

This is because there is lack of communication between the narrator and her father. She desperately craves attention and the little time spent with him is not enough to satisfy a life’s worth of separation and neglect. III. An Examination of Themes (Full paragraph with supporting evidence for each theme) 6. Find 3 example(s) and explain the clash between American and Spanish cultures that becomes the impetus for immigrants. The Latin family in the story can represent all immigrants coming into America.

The adults are trying to cope as best they can in the new world so that they can give their families a better life full of opportunities. In the story the narrator says “ I would emerge from my room, where I kept company only with my English-Language books no one else in the house could read”. No one else in her house has the knowledge to relieve themselves of their hard labor because in America, lack of schooling equals a lack of options. This is why the family speaks so highly of dreams “ which were spoken in Spanish, as fairy tales, like the stories about life in the island paradise of Puerto Rico”.

A downfall that comes with this move to America is the adult’s fear that their daughter may lose sight of her true culture like for instance in the story

when the narrator just wants to have the experiences of a normal American teen by doing things like earning a driver's license, going on dates, and attending high school trips. Upon requesting these things from her father he answers " No, no, no, with a short Spanish ' o'," as if to say that their culture was the final law and there was no giving way to American insolence. Finally 7.

Find 3 example(s) and explain the Stereotyping of people from different parts of the world that makes them feel isolated and vulnerable.

Stereotyping because of race has never throughout history ceased to exist. Differences in say, language can give others the impression they are " mentally deficient". In The Paterson Public Library there are serious concerns about stereotypes. The black's dialect for example is one that expresses their culture and uniqueness but can be referred to as " ungrammatical" because it is not up to the standards of what the majority, the whites, have set for the country.

When the narrator of American History is out on the playground filling in the position of rope turner her hands begin to turn " red and raw from the jump rope". This evokes the black girls, the majority in this setting, to taunt her with " Ain't you got no energy today" and " Didn't you eat your rice and beans and pork chop for breakfast today? " to which the jumpers harmonized into a song to taunt the Puerto Rican child. The young children on the playground use the girl's culture as mockery which makes her feel vulnerable.

She plays the role of the rope turner which portrays the black girls' superiority which makes her believe she will not find acceptance in a game which she is unfit to participate in. Finally, in the *The Story of my Body* the narrator "was born a white girl in Puerto Rico but became a brown girl when [she] came to live in the United States". Labels are used to create borders between races and people in general. Color is one factor with which one can be stereotyped and of course isolation comes along with it because being taunted by others grants superiority to the bullies and nobody would willingly chose inferiority.

Find 3 examples and explain Ortiz's portrayal of women as disadvantaged (\*see "Latin Myth") In *The Myth of the Latin Woman* the woman telling the story is outraged at the lack of options woman seem to have. She has found salvation in knowledge but others of her ethnicity and sexuality are not so fortunate. Relatives of hers would talk about being harassed by their factory "boss men" who "talked to them as if sexual innuendo was all they understood and, worse, often gave them the choice of submitting to advances or being fired.

The men feel superior to the women and see them as objects of lust incapable of achieving higher placement in life without indebted payment. A disadvantage now a day would be lack of respect for women. She has not forgotten that custom dictates piropos should "never cross into obscenity" but it seems the men have justified their actions by pointing out how the women who dress in tight clothing provoke them, which only demonstrates lack of self control. Lastly, and perhaps the most influential portrayal of

women as disadvantaged is the “ media-engendered image of the Latina in the United States.

Movies and television shows dominate people’s individuality in making decisions and allow themselves to have that stereotypical mindset of the Latin culture. The inspirational part of the story is that the narrator never loses her self control but keeps her composure staying “ reserve[d] and cool” to say she is making a statement by taking the initiative at revolutionization.

9. Find 3 examples and explain the relationship between art and experience.

10. Find 3 examples and explain the relationship between nostalgia and poetry in Ortiz Cofer’s poems.

Many of the poems in Cofer’s *The Latin Deli* end with the feeling of longing. In *Sugarcane*, right as the narrator’s father grabs her arm and “ broke [her] sprint towards the stalk. ” Her yearning for the taste of which nothing is sweeter, “ *Nada mas dulce*” brings her into trouble for she craved more than she could handle. The end of the poem leaves us feeling remorseful for something which the narrator could only see but not fully experience. In *To Grandfather, Now Forgetting*, the narrator longs to go back to a different time.

She says she wishes to take her Papa to a fiesta where he “ can recall the words to [his] song, and everything can start again. ” The song stands for his life which she wishes he could still recollect so they could live their life in peace, the way things used to be. Lastly in the poem *IV. Critical*

Thinking/Speculation (Full paragraph with supporting evidence for each

question) 11. In “ *The Story of My Body*”, what is the significance of body

perception? The perception of one's body is what controls their personality and outlook on life itself.

When you are not comfortable in your own skin how are you ever supposed to tackle other problems and have confidence in yourself? In The story of my body the narrator not just perceiving her own body but comparing herself to others in search of who she should be " My mother is barely four feet eleven inches in height, which is average for a women in her family. "

When the narrator is 5 feet by the age of twelve she's considered tall in reference to her family. We can therefore assume that body perception changes with reference to time and place because of the inhabitants in that area. Still, I wanted to be wanted. I wanted to be chosen for the team. Physical education was compulsory, a class where you were actually given a grade". Here narrator sees herself as too small (contradictory when compared to her family) because now she is comparing herself to her classmates. This quote can really mean that she felt her intellect was marvelous but her body was substandard because she was again labeled but now with the title " shrimp" making her feel even more isolated because she cannot find a place to fit it. 12.

In " The Myth of the Latin Woman", explain the speaker's attitude when she is " serenaded" and mistaken for a waitress? The narrator's strong diction when referring to the man's outburst illustrates her irritation. It wasn't so much that he'd serenaded her, it was the song " Maria" from West Side Story and the dark mannish way he sang it that annoyed the narrator because of his judgmental discrimination toward her Latin race. She responded to the

situation by masking her aggravation with an “ English smile: no show of teeth, no extreme contortions of the facial muscle.

Later in the story when she is mistaken for a waitress, she again keeps her strong womanly composure though she was taken aback. She took the woman’s scrutiny and harnessed it into reading her poetry with fire so no one in the room would doubt her abilities. When the woman could have fumed in rage she transferred her energy into making a change of image of not just for her, but for all Latin women. 13. In “ A Legion of Dark Angels”, how does the author use the Bible to describe Fidel Castro? In a strange way Fidel Castro was perceived to be the savior for Cuba just as Jesus was a savior for human kind.

In “ The Lesson of the Sugarcane”, how does the girl’s mother feel about sugarcane and why? In The lesson of the sugarcane, the girl’s mother is astounded at the wide expanse of field that is the residence of the sugarcane. She had “ opened her eyes wide” to suck up every inch of the beautifully delectable plant. The first words she speaks to her daughter are “ Take a deep breath” as if to say prepare yourself for the taste of what you can only see now is far more delectable than you could possibly imagine.

The last we hear the mother speak out loud is that “ there is nothing as sweet”. Perhaps because the mother understood that the sugarcane was not hers, foreign. That is why she remains at the edge of the field only to stare at it. The mother is fascinated by the idea of what she could attain if only she would reach out for it. 15. In “ Lydia”, how does the woman describe Lydia’s



tokens? The woman in the short story Lydia has nostalgia for the past, more specifically, her past with Lydia.

Though the woman remembers Lydia as a bold young woman going out for sinful nights in “ a breath-steamed red Mustang” for example, she wishes to rekindle the connection she thought they’d genuinely shared. Lydia provided the woman with a taste of transgression without too dire consequences. The tokens such as “ a hotel ashtray” and “ matches advertising easy money schemes” made the woman feel as if she too had experienced a wild night but, like a child who can imagine themselves as the main character of their favorite story book, the woman felt a connection to an occurrence of which she never really was related to.