

## WHS Book Rationale

**Title:** Bless Me, Ultima

**Author:** Rudolfo Anaya

- **Intended Audience**

English 10 and English 10 Honors

- **Brief summary and educational significance**

This novel is the coming of age story of Antonio and his experiences with the curandera Ultima who comes to live with his family in her old age. The novel is an example of magical realism and therefore explores Native and Latin American mythologies and the somewhat mysterious identity of the young narrator. Ultima must protect the family from the forces (both human and possibly supernatural), that threaten to destroy the small New Mexico community.

- **Purpose of teaching the work and how it will be used**

- Example of magical realism an important literary genre in world literature
- Clear symbolism allows students to explore dualities and the struggle between good and evil, and balance
- Narrator's struggle with his identity provide students with discussion of personal choices
- Cross-curricular opportunity to explore visual art and connections to literature
- Example of Latino literature

- **Potential problems**

- Occult and witchcraft
- Offensive language
- Religious viewpoint
- Sexually explicit
- Violence

- **Addressing potential problems**

- Though not autobiographical the novel is based on characters and experiences from the author's childhood in 1940s New Mexico (Mexican American culture)
- Ambiguity of the text is a strength—allows students to draw conclusions about the role of imagination, “magic,” and the protagonist's outcome
- The book offers choices for characters that have real outcomes, and through discussion students explore the results and choice that must be made
- Witchcraft scenes show the struggle between good and evil, and the ultimate power of good to overcome evil