

Novel Rationale for *Felipe Alou* by Carol Gabb

Target Course: Spanish Level 2

Author: Carol Gabb

Proficiency Level: Novice High to Intermediate Low

Tense Focus: Present and past tenses (preterite and imperfect)

Word Count: ~6,000

Setting: Dominican Republic, 1950s-1960s

Themes: Perseverance, overcoming adversity, cultural pride, identity, racism, sports

Purpose and Justification:

Felipe Alou by Carol Gabb is an inspiring and accessible novel for Spanish 2 students, offering a compelling story of **Felipe Alou**, a Dominican baseball player who broke racial barriers in Major League Baseball. His journey is one of determination, resilience, and pride in his cultural identity. This novel is particularly well-suited for Level 2 students due to its focus on language that is straightforward, contextually rich, and easy to engage with. The narrative is structured around both present and past tense, reinforcing the grammar focus of the course.

Additionally, the novel presents significant historical and cultural context about the Dominican Republic and baseball, providing students with insights into both the sport and the broader themes of racial inequality. *Felipe Alou* not only enhances language proficiency but also promotes intercultural understanding and historical awareness, making it an ideal choice for the classroom.

Alignment with the Montana World Language Standards:

Standard 1: Communication

- **Interpretive Mode:**
 - Students will read and comprehend texts that depict the story of Felipe Alou, identifying key details, themes, and characters.
 - *Application:* demonstrating comprehension of the book.
- **Interpersonal Mode:**
 - Students will discuss the themes of perseverance, identity, and racism in groups or pairs.
 - *Application:* Small group or partner discussions regarding challenges for immigrant athletes.
- **Presentational Mode:**
 - Students will write summaries, connections, questions and opinions on Felipe Alou's journey and what it means to persevere.
 - *Application:* Writing a short email to Felipe Alou identifying obstacles and perseverance

Standard 2: Cultures

- Students will explore the culture of the Dominican Republic, including customs, language, and the role of baseball in society.
 - *Application:* Discussion related to baseball as an opportunity to immigrate and provide financially for their families.

Standard 4: Comparisons

- Students will compare cultural aspects of the Dominican Republic with their own culture, particularly regarding sports, family dynamics, and social issues.
 - *Application:* Engaging in a comparison by writing connections to Felipe Alou regarding the challenges faced by Felipe Alou and those in the students' own communities.
- Students will analyze language use and the differences between formal and informal registers.
- Students compare and contrast political oppression (Trujillo dictatorship) and political/societal oppression (segregation in the south in 1950's)

Standard 5: Communities

- Students will expand their understanding of the Spanish-speaking world by learning about a significant Dominican figure during a specific historical moment.

Instructional Benefits:

- **Historical and Cultural Relevance:** Provides students with insights into the history of baseball in the Dominican Republic and the broader social context of the 1950s and 1960s. Also, provides insight about the dictatorship in the DR from the 30's-70's.
- **Rich Vocabulary:** Introduces vocabulary related to sports, perseverance, and societal issues, which is engaging for students.
- **Grammar Reinforcement:** The novel uses both present and past tenses, allowing students to practice and apply these grammar structures in context.
- **Interdisciplinary Opportunities:** Links language learning with history, social studies, and sports, making the novel an excellent tool for cross-curricular connections.
- **Inspiring Story:** The themes of overcoming adversity and cultural pride resonate with students, offering both motivational and educational value.

Conclusion:

Felipe Alou by Carol Gabb is an excellent choice for Spanish 2 students, offering not only a rich narrative that helps reinforce language skills but also a cultural and historical perspective that promotes empathy and understanding. It aligns seamlessly with the Montana World Language Standards, supporting communication, cultural exploration, and global awareness. Through Felipe's story, students gain a deeper appreciation for perseverance and the importance of cultural identity, all while strengthening their Spanish language proficiency.