

Echenberg-Neisser, Eva. *Abrir Paso: Spanish Levels 1-4 Cultural Series Copy Masters.*

Montreal: Miraflores, 1997-2006. ISBN: 2-921554-61-5. Each copy master set is \$18.00; the entire set of forty-nine copy masters is \$735.00 (a savings of \$147.00). The average length of each copy master is 20-24 pp. For orders, contact Miraflores at miraflores@sympatico.ca, phone: (514) 483-0722; fax: (514) 483-1212; or www.miraflores.org.

Eva Echenberg-Neisser's *Abrir Paso: Spanish Levels 1-4 Cultural Series Copy Masters* is a delightful collection of interdisciplinary thematic units, roughly corresponding to four years of high school study. However, the units can be easily adapted for use at both the middle school and college/university levels.

Echenberg-Neisser's aim is to provide teachers with effective cultural materials on as wide a range of topics as possible in order to engage all types of language learners as well as their teachers. Teachers can pick the units best suited to their individual curriculum or use the entire series as supplemental material. For *Abrir Paso*, Levels 1-3 comprise thirteen units (A-M), and Level 4 comprises ten units (AJ). A detailed listing of each level's units is found at the end of this review.

The units are regularly updated. For example, units 3H, *Ciencias naturales y turismo*, and 3I, *Dos creadores españoles del siglo XX: Lorca y Almodóvar*, were revised in October 2006. They now include a Teacher's Guide (*Guía del profesor*), quizzes (*Pruebas*), and updated information on Almodóvar. All of the *Abrir Paso*'s copy master units have answer keys. Moreover, some of the *Abrir Paso*'s cultural units contain a "nota cultural" section. For example, 2G: *España: Quinto Centenario* has a *nota cultural* on *¿Es la siesta el deporte nacional de España?* and 4C: Chile has one on "*la cortesía*."

What I particularly like about *Abrir Paso* is that the grammatical lessons are seamlessly linked with the interdisciplinary topic at hand, as well as the fact that it is all done in Spanish. Level 1 units reinforce the present verb tenses, Level 2 begins with some past tenses, Level 3 includes all past tenses, and Level 4 attacks the subjunctive and conditional moods. Moreover, even at the first level, the units provide suggestions and resources for engaging oral presentations, class projects, and writing assignments. For example, as described in the 2007 Miraflores catalog: "1F: Andalucía — Muslim Spain! Admire the architecture and counter stereotypes and racism. Walk through the Alhambra and practice *gustar*. Choose a place to visit in Andalucía and spend the day in Torremolinos. Deductive thinking skills and important information about Muslim Spain are the cornerstones of three thematic units" (6). And with the emphasis on Standard 3 (Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information) of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, who could resist "4I: *Una plantación azucarera* — Sugar and slavery in Cuba can be analyzed from many different points of view. Students research specific questions from one of the following categories: science, art, literature, math, history, geography. For example, the historical assignment deals with Cuban slavery, the scientific with the steps followed to produce sugar from cane" (6). This reviewer had tremendous success in using those units emphasizing ecology, a timely subject given current concerns regarding global warming and the success of Al Gore's 2006 documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Echenberg-Neissberg's *Abrir Paso: Spanish Level 1-4 Cultural Series Copy Masters/Workbooks* is a comprehensive set of enrichment units that are well researched with a breadth of range and culturally appropriate illustrations appealing to students and teachers alike. My only suggestion would be to expand the Level 4 unit offerings to include the ever-growing Spanish-speaking communities of the United States.

The Abrir Paso Level 1 units (with their latest date of revision) are as follows:

1A: Los países y sus capitales (Mapas de Latinoamérica y España) (1997);

1B: Personajes históricos (Miguel de Cervantes y Sor Juana, Pablo Picasso, Juan Carlos I) (1997);

- 1C: Deportes y música (Diego Maradona y Emilio Butragueño, Julio Iglesias, Luis Miguel y Pablo Ruiz) (1997);
- 1D: Preguntas sobre el mundo hispano (La importancia del español, Los nombres de los hispanos, ¿Quiénes hablan bien el español?, Monedas latinoamericanas) (1997);
- 1E: Compara los países (España y el Perú) (Barcelona y Mexico D.F., la regiones de Latinoamérica) (2005);
- 1F: España — Andalucía (“Visita Andalucía,” Granada: La Alhambra, Una ciudad española:Torremolinos) (1999);
- 1G: México (Los ambulantes, El metro de la Ciudad de México) (2005);
- 1H: El español en el mundo (Más mapas de Latinoamérica, Más mapas de España) (2002);
- 1I: México D.F (La Ciudad de México, La calle Madero, Coyoacán) (2006);
- 1J: Más personajes históricos (Carlos V, Moctezuma y Cortés, Simón Bolívar) (2002);
- 1K: Las culturas indígenas (Copán: una ciudad maya, El calendario azteca, Las misteriosas Líneas de Nasca) (2002);
- 1L: Tres artistas españoles (Goya, Rodrigo, Gaudí) (2003); and
- 1M: El nuevo milenio (Adiós peseta, La computadora/el ordenador, El fútbol) (2003).

The Abrir Paso Level 2 units, with their latest date of revision, are:

- 2A: México: pasado y presente (Las culturas indígenas, Rivera, Orozco y Sequeiros, tres muralistas mexicanos, Nota cultural: regatear) (2001);
- 2B: México: ecología (La Contaminación en la Ciudad de México, La mariposa monarca, mariposa migratoria) (2001);
- 2C: Guatemala y Honduras (¿Es la marimba un instrumento latinoamericano,? El transporte: autobuses, Nota cultural: La Navidad y el Año Nuevo) (2001);
- 2D: El Salvador y Costa Rica (La ruta maya: ecoturismo, De San José a Puerto Limón) (2001);
- 2E: Panamá, Costa Rica y Nicaragua (Carretas y autobuses; arte popular en Panamá y Costa Rica, El canal de Panamá: entre Atlántico y Pacífico, Nota cultural: los insultos y los piropos) (2001);
- 2F: Puerto Rico y la República Dominicana (El béisbol, Un papá modelo: la rana coquí, Nota cultural: comidas y bebidas del Caribe) (2001);
- 2G: España (Sevilla: Expo '92 y la importancia del Encuentro, Barcelona: ¿para quién son los Juegos Olímpicos, Madrid: 1992, Nota cultural: ¿Es la siesta el deporte nacional de España?) (1997);

- 2H: España: ecología (El parque Nacional de Ordesa y Monte Perdido, La cigüeña blanca) (2001);
- 2I: El mundo natural (El río Amazonas, Los Andes, El desierto de Atacama) (2003);
- 2J: Colombia (Fernando Botero, Cartagena de Indias) (2004);
- 2K: Ecuador (La educación, El mercado de Otavalo) (2004);
- 2L: Bolivia (La llama, La mina de Potosí) (2004); and
- 2M: Perú (El Cusco, El Señor de Sipán) (2004).

The Abrir Paso Level 3 units, with their latest date of revision, are:

- 3A: Venezuela: turismo y vida urbana (Isla Margarita: turismo venezolano y extranjero, Caracas: una ciudad latinoamericana) (1998);
- 3B: Venezuela: presente y pasado (El petróleo: mucho más que un producto de exportación, Simón Bolívar: El Libertador) (1998);
- 3C: Colombia: literatura y vida diaria (Gabriel García Márquez, escritor colombiano, La cocaína: problema de nuestros días, Nota cultural: ¿Qué piensa el latinoamericano del norteamericano?) (1998);
- 3D: Ecuador: ciencias naturales y deportes (Las Islas Galápagos: islas extraordinarias, La participación del Ecuador en los Juegos Olímpicos, Nota cultural: de negocios) (1998);
- 3E: Bolivia: ecología (La Amazonía y la ecología del mundo, La papa: comida del pasado y del futuro) (1998);
- 3F: Perú: pasado y presente (Machu Picchu: ciudad mágica, Jacinta Quispe: ambulante, Nota cultural: la ropa) (2006);
- 3G: España: deportes (El fútbol y la tele, Perico Delgado: ciclista, Nota cultural: La España del futuro y las consecuencias sociales) (1998);
- 3H: México: ciencias naturales y turismo (Nace un volcán: el Parícutín, El turismo como industria: Cancún y Huatulco) (2006);
- 3I: Dos creadores españoles del siglo XX (Pedro Almodóvar, cineasta, Federico García Lorca, poeta) (2006);
- 3J: Argentina (La telenovela, Jorge Luis Borges) (2005);
- 3K: España: Galicia (Un desastre ecológico: el *Prestige*, El Camino de Santiago) (2005);
- 3L: Chile (El cielo del sur, El Festival Internacional de la Canción de Viña del Mar) (2006); and
- 3M: Uruguay y Argentina (El mate y la carne; Las cataratas del Iguazú, Nota cultural: La pampa) (2006).

The Abrir Paso Level 4 units, with their latest date of revision, are:

- 4A: Argentina (El Tango, Decir Argentina es decir carne) (1998);
- 4B: Chile: ecología (La Región de los Lagos, Chile: ¿maravilla económica o desastre ecológico?) (1998);
- 4C: Chile (Violeta Parra y la Nueva Canción, Carmen Quintana, Nota cultural: la cortesía) (1998);
- 4D: Uruguay (El español de América: el caso uruguayo, El Galpón y el teatro uruguayo) (1998);
- 4E: Paraguay (Treinta comunidades utópicas: los jesuitas en el Paraguay, Paraguay, país bilingüe, Nota cultural: saludos y despedidas) (1998);
- 4F: España (El olivo: el árbol más característico del Mediterráneo, Hace mil años, ¿quién iba a Córdoba?) (1998);
- 4G: España (Felipe II, Las meninas de Velásquez) (1998);
- 4H: Argentina (Mafalda, Buenos Aires: París de Sudamérica) (1999);
- 4I: Cuba (Un galeón: Nuestro Señora de Atocha, Una plantación azucarera: Manaca Iznaga); and
- 4J: México colonial (Sor Juana y la cocina de Nueva España, El Camino de la Plata) (2002).

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Publisher's Response

We thank Dr. Angelini for her insightful review of our black line masters: the *Abrir paso cultural series 1-4*. We are especially grateful to her for underlining the fact that our thematic units “engage all types of language learners” while furthering cultural knowledge and understanding of the Spanish speaking world. As she says, the interdisciplinary nature of the series allows students to pursue their own interests (arts, history, sports, science, etc.) and teachers to match the units to their own curriculum.

The copy master format is ideal for many classroom situations. First, for the teachers who concentrate on specific countries in a given year. Because our units are organized by country, the teacher chooses the specific units that will enrich the curriculum. For example, many teachers who work on México love the science unit on the dramatic eruption of the *Paricutín* volcano and the ensuing evacuation and destruction of two entire villages. Second, it is a great solution for those struggling with two or more language levels in one classroom during the same period. By choosing copy masters from different levels, students work on the same country and progress at their own pace. Group A works on *La cigüeña blanca*

and practices the comparative and superlative while Group B works on the *Camino de Santiago* and practices preterits and imperfects. Thus, as the reviewer observes, language and grammar are seamlessly interwoven to further both linguistic and cultural skills. Grammatical and lexical information can be found in our catalog and on our Website. Finally, another group of teachers who delight in our copy masters are those who do not use textbooks or who for budgetary reasons, have out-of-date textbooks. The *Abrir paso* copy masters provide inexpensive supplements that enrich the materials on hand. Since, as the reviewer points out, they are regularly updated, the students get “well-researched” (units) with a “breadth and range” that can “easily be adapted” to the individual curriculum. Please note that the following copy masters have been updated in 2007: El español en el mundo (1H), Más personajes históricos (1J) and España: ecología (2H).

Dr. Angelini’s only criticism is that we do not include units on the Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. Our response is that we are a Canadian publisher that specializes in the countries of the Spanish-speaking world. We leave the task of writing about our neighbor to the south to those with more expertise. We hope other publishers will address this very important issue.

We are very proud to be a leader in supplemental cultural materials, enrichment units clearly anchored on the National Standards for Foreign Language. Please visit our Website www.miraflores.org for further information on useful cultural materials.

Eva Echenberg-Neisser
Miraflores