Culturally Embedded Lesson (NEH, 2013)

Descriptor: Jamaica Kincaid in A Small Place creates distance between herself and the reader by consistently presenting her homeland, Antigua, as a place of tourism and recreation. She vacillates between being an angry guide and a credible historian who remembers the details and consequences of colonization. She complicates the story through her own experiences as a woman; a woman born to those who were colonized but not conquered. In a similar way, the iconic Doña Marina, who served as a cultural translator to Hernán Cortés. Scholars and students move back and forth in their interpretation of Doña Marina, labeling her traitor and then victim. Those who see her as a traitor become angry with her. Those who see her as a victim appreciate the details of her experience that she shares. Through both of these women, one contemporary and one historical, we begin to understand the complex roles that women take on in their communities. They are not simply one thing or the other. They are complex. They are shaped by their experiences and opportunities.

The Assignment: Read the following articles. Think about how these women (Jamaica Kincaid and Doña Marina) have been shaped by their place and time. Compare and contrast the roles of these women.

The Details: Please write your three page reflective essay in APA format. Use at least one citation from each article to support your thinking. You do NOT have to include an abstract, but you need to have a cover page and a reference page.

This essay represents one of the first reassessments of Malinche published by a Chicana writer. Reviewing 16th-century sources, Candelaria finds Malinche’s “usefulness” to the Spanish extended beyond her work as translator. She was also a valued guide, advisor, strategist and interpreter of indigenous customs.


This essay discusses the negative narrative voice in the “Small Place” text and connects it to the anger present when a culture experiences colonization. The narrator in this Jamaica Kincaid book is representing the island voice of Antigua as a homeland. In western constructs, “land” is often referenced as “feminine.”


Objectives: After completing the assignment, the student will be able to

a) list three impacts of colonization. b) explain how anger informs resistance. c) analyze the complex roles of women in communities.