

# Learning English

## **American Stories** ***Benito Cereno*** **by Herman Melville**

Lesson Plan  
*by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.*

# Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *Benito Cereno* by Herman Melville, Part One .

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

# Lesson Elements

**Prepare**

**Present**

**Practice**

**Self-Evaluate**

**Expand**

# Prepare

Introduce the story. “Today we will read the first part of *Benito Cereno*, by Herman Melville. The story takes place on a sailing ship. Have you ever been on a ship? Or on the sea in a small boat?

Listen to students’ responses. Show the picture of the Spanish Frigate on the next slide.

Ask students if they know where Chile is. Explain that the Spanish colonies allowed slavery until the mid 1800s. Merchants bought and sold people like property. The story takes place on the Pacific Coast of Chile. One of the places mentioned in the story is shown on the map. Show the map on the following slide. Tell students this story is based on an incident in 1805 - Captain Amasa Delano was a real person. Then, teach the vocabulary.

# Spanish Frigate (Sailing ship)



# Chile



# Vocabulary

**suspicion** - *n.* a feeling that something bad is likely or true

**handspike** - *n.* a wooden rod with an iron tip, used as a lever on board ship and by artillery soldiers.

**hatchet** - *n.* a small ax that has a short handle

**authority** - *n.* the power to give orders or make decisions

**intense** - *adj.* very great in degree; very strong

**disorder** - *n.* a confused or messy state; a lack of order or organization

# Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy, *summarize*. When we *summarize*, we create a short mental, oral, or written version of the information we get from reading or listening. This helps us remember and understand the story better. I’ll show you how to do this.”

Play or read aloud to “Day after day, the soft breeze kept the ship on course toward Peru.”

Tell students, “This sounds like a peaceful voyage on a ship. When you summarize, you don’t need to tell everything. So I am going to make a summary with only the parts I think are important.”

Show your summary on a screen or the board as on the next slide.



“Here is my summary:

Captain Benito Cereno commanded a ship from Chile to Peru. They carried products and slaves. The slaves were not in chains.”

# Practice

Tell students, “Now it’s your turn. Take out a sheet of paper. After we read the next section, you will write a summary. Then I will ask you to share your summary with your partner.”

Play or read aloud to ‘But water and supplies could be found there.’

“Now, sit with your partner and write on your paper. What happened in the part we just heard?”

Give students time to write. Then ask them to tell their partner their summary.

Ask several students to share their summaries with the class. Point out how they include only the important information – the rebel takeover of the ship, the demand to go to Senegal, then the decision to stop at Santa Maria to get water.

Instruct students to listen again. “With your partner, listen to the next part of the story. Get ready to summarize again.”

Play or read aloud to ‘And, the sight of the ship caught the rebels by surprise.’

Show the map to help explain the locations mentioned in the story. Ask students to summarize this part. “Now, instead of writing your summary, just speak it aloud to your partner.”

# Map of the San Dominick's Voyage



Ask students if they got the main points of this section: the rebels kill Don Alexandro; the ship got stuck in an area with no wind; they saw another ship. Explain that you will now ask them to listen again until the end of the story.

Play or read aloud to “Then they set out toward the mystery ship.”

Ask students to stand and move to the next group. “Change partners. This time, summarize by telling your new partner what happened in the *whole story* so far.”

Instruct students, “Now make a group of four. Talk with your old partner and your new partner. What do you think will happen next? Will Captain Delano save Captain Cereno?”

Give students time to talk about their predictions.

# Self-Evaluate

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, *summarize*, when you read? Did it help you follow the story? Raise your right hand if you think it helped you a lot today. Raise your left hand if you think it only helped you a little. Put your hand on the top of your head if you want to try it again with another story.”

# Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *summarize*?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. Summarizing helps us to review the important points of what we hear or read. If you can’t summarize, it means you probably didn’t understand the story, so you should go back and read it again.”

“Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”



*Our story today is called "Benito Cereno." It was written by Herman Melville. We tell the story in three parts.*

Captain Benito Cereno hurried aboard his ship. It was ready to sail. A bright sun and a soft breeze promised good weather ahead. The ship's anchor was raised. And the San Dominick -- old but still seaworthy - moved slowly out of the harbor of Valparaiso, on the west coast of Chile. It was carrying valuable products and slaves up the Pacific coast to Callao, another Spanish colonial port near Lima, Peru.

The slaves, both male and female, slept on deck. They were not chained, because their owner, Don Alexandro, said they were peaceful.

The San Dominick moved steadily forward under a clear sky. The weather showed no sign of change. Day after day, the soft breeze kept the ship on course toward Peru.

Slave traffic between Spain's colonial ports in this year of seventeen ninety-nine had been steady. But there were few outbreaks of violence. What happened, therefore, on board the San Dominick could not have been expected.

On the seventh day out, before daybreak, the slaves rose up in rebellion. They swept through the ship with **handspikes** and **hatchets** moving with the fury of desperate men. The attack was a complete surprise. Few of the crew were awake. All hands, except the two officers on the watch, lay in a deep untroubled sleep. The rebels sprang upon the two officers and left them half dead. Then, one by one, they killed eighteen of the sleeping crew. They threw some overboard, alive. A few hid and escaped death. The rebels tied up seven others, but left them alive to navigate the ship.

As the day began to break, Captain Cereno came slowly, carefully up the steps toward the chief rebel leader, Babo, and begged for mercy. He promised to follow Babo's commands if he would only put an end to the killings. But this had no effect. Babo had three men brought up on deck and tied. Then, the three Spaniards were thrown overboard. Babo did this to show his power and **authority** -- that he was in command. Babo, however, promised not to murder Captain Cereno. But everything he said carried a threat. He asked the captain if in these seas there were any Negro countries.

"None," Cereno answered.

"Then, take us to Senegal or the neighboring islands of Saint Nicholas."

Captain Cereno was shaken. "That is impossible!" he said. "It would mean going around Cape Horn. And this ship is in no condition for such a voyage. And we do not have enough supplies, or sails or water."

"Take us there, anyway," Babo answered sharply, showing little interest in such details. "If you refuse, we will kill every white man on board."

Captain Cereno knew he had no choice. He told the rebel leader that the most serious problem in making such a long voyage was water. Babo said they should sail to the island of Santa Maria near the southern end of Chile. He knew that no one lived on the island. But water and supplies could be found there.

He forced Captain Cereno to keep away from any port. He threatened to kill him the moment he saw him start to move toward any city, town or settlement on shore.

Cereno had to agree to sail to the island of Santa Maria. He still hoped that he might meet along the way, or at the island itself, a ship that could help him. Perhaps -- who knows -- he might find a boat on the island and be able to escape to the nearby coast of Arruco. Hope was all he had left. And that was getting smaller each day.

Captain Cereno steered south for Santa Maria. The voyage would take weeks.

Eight days after the ship turned south, Babo told Captain Cereno that he was going to kill Don Alexandro, owner of the slaves on board. He said it had to be done. Otherwise, he and the other slaves could never be sure of their freedom. He refused to listen to the captain's appeals, and ordered two men to pull Don Alexandro up from below and kill him on deck. It was done as ordered. Three other Spaniards were also brought up and thrown overboard. Babo warned Cereno and the other Spaniards that each one of them would go the same way if any of them gave the smallest cause for **suspicion**.

Cereno decided to do everything possible to save the lives of those remaining. He agreed to carry the rebels safely to Senegal if they promised peace and no further bloodshed. And he signed a document that gave the rebels ownership of the ship and its cargo.

Later, as they sailed down the long coast of Chile, the wind suddenly dropped. The ship drifted into a deep calm. For days, it lay still in the water. The heat was fierce; the suffering **intense**. There was little water. That made matters worse. Some of those on board were driven mad. A few died. The pressure and tension made many violent. And they killed a Spanish officer.

After a time, a breeze came up and set the ship free again. And it continued south. The voyage seemed endless. The ship sailed for weeks with little water on board. It moved through days of good weather and periods of bad weather. There were times when it sailed under heavy skies, and times when the wind dropped and the ship lay be-calmed in lifeless air. The crew seemed half dead.

At last, one evening in the month of August, the San Dominick reached the lonely island of Santa Maria. It moved slowly toward one of the island's bays to drop anchor. Not far off lay an American ship. And, the sight of the ship caught the rebels by surprise.

The slaves became tense and fearful. They wanted to sail away, quickly. But their leader, Babo, opposed such a move. Where could they go? Their water and food were low. He succeeded in bringing them under control and in quieting their fears. He told them they had nothing to fear. And they believed him.

Then, he ordered everyone to go to work, to clean the decks and put the ship in proper and good condition, so that no visitor would suspect anything was wrong.

Later, he spoke to Captain Cereno, warning him that he would kill him if he did not do as he was told. He explained in detail what Cereno was to do and say if any stranger came on board. He held a dagger in his hand, saying it would always be ready for any emergency.

The American vessel was a large tradeship and seal hunter, commanded by Captain Amasa Delano. He had stopped at Santa Maria for water.

On the American ship, shortly after sunrise, an officer woke Captain Delano, and told him a strange sail was coming into the bay. The captain quickly got up, dressed and went up on deck. Captain Delano raised his spy glass and looked closely at the strange ship coming slowly in. He was surprised that there was no flag. A ship usually showed its flag when entering a harbor where another ship lay at anchor.

As the ship got closer, Captain Delano saw it was damaged. Many of its sails were ripped and torn. A mast was broken. And the deck was in **disorder**. Clearly the ship was in trouble.

The American captain decided to go to the strange vessel and offer help. He ordered his whale boat put into the water, and had his men bring up some supplies and put them in the boat. Then they set out toward the mystery ship.

As they approached, Captain Delano was shocked at the poor condition of the ship. He wondered what could have happened . . . And what he would find. That will be our story next week.

*You have heard part one of the American story "Benito Cereno." It was written by Herman Melville. Your storyteller was Shep O'Neal. Listen again next week at this time when we continue the American story "Benito Cereno"*

## Words in this Story

**suspicion** - *n.* a feeling that something bad is likely or true

**handspike** - *n.* a wooden rod with an iron tip, used as a lever on board ship and by artillery soldiers.

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*\* “Negro countries” refers to nations that would be ruled by people of African heritage. Senegal is one of the countries in Africa from which enslaved people were taken to the Americas. Babo asks about these countries because he wants to go to a place where he will be a free man.*

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# About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.





CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.

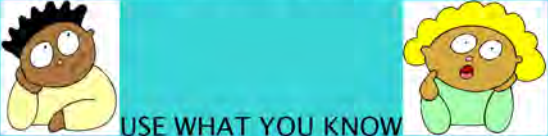




CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.

# Metacognitive Strategies



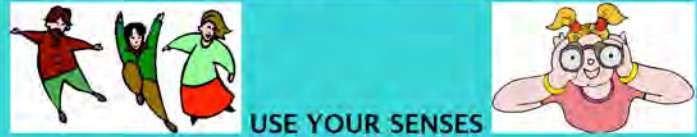

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES</b>		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Set goals.</li> <li>-Plan the task or content sequence.</li> <li>-Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies).</li> <li>-Preview a text.</li> </ul>
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Check your progress on the task.</li> <li>-Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem?</li> <li>-Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?</li> </ul>
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task.</li> <li>-Assess how well you have used learning strategies.</li> <li>-Decide how effective the strategies were.</li> <li>-Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.</li> </ul>
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Determine how you learn best.</li> <li>-Arrange conditions that help you learn.</li> <li>-Seek opportunities for practice.</li> <li>-Focus your attention on the task.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies


CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>USE WHAT YOU KNOW</b></p>		
Use Background Knowledge	 <p style="text-align: center;">I know.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task.</li> <li>- Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge.</li> <li>-Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.</li> </ul>
Make Inferences	 <p style="text-align: center;">Use Clues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use context and what you know to figure out meaning.</li> <li>-Read and listen between the lines.</li> <li>-Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.</li> </ul>
Make Predictions	 <p style="text-align: center;">Crystal Ball</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Anticipate information to come.</li> <li>-Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text.</li> <li>-Make an estimate (math).</li> <li>-Make a hypothesis (science).</li> </ul>
Personalize	 <p style="text-align: center;">Me</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.</li> </ul>




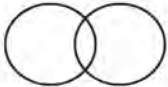


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<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language.</li> <li>-Recognize cognates.</li> </ul>
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.</li> </ul>
 <b>USE YOUR SENSES</b>		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information.</li> <li>-Use or draw a picture or diagram.</li> </ul>
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding.</li> <li>-Sound out/vocalize.</li> <li>- Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.</li> </ul>






# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>--Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language.</li> <li>-Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.</li> </ul>
  <b>USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS</b>		
Find/Apply Patterns	 abacus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply a rule.</li> <li>-Make a rule.</li> <li>-Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules.</li> <li>-Identify patterns in literature (genre).</li> <li>-Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.</li> </ul>
Classify/Sequence	 Life cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Categorize words or ideas according to attributes.</li> <li>-Classify living things; identify natural cycles.</li> <li>-Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies.</li> <li>-Sequence events in history.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
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TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading.</li> <li>-List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..</li> </ul>
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.</li> </ul>
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.</li> </ul>
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.</li> </ul>

# Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
 		
<b>USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES</b>		
Access Information Sources	 <p>Look it up!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials.</li> <li>-Seek out and use sources of information.</li> <li>-Follow a model</li> <li>-Ask questions</li> </ul>
Cooperate	 <p>Together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.</li> </ul>
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 <p>I can do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.</li> </ul>