

# INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



# SETTING UP THE STORY

After the publication of her first novel, Lucia moves away from her home and boyfriend in Chicago to “annoyingly sunny” Los Angeles and a (hopefully temporary) job writing for a television series. The job turns out to be high stress, as she has trouble relating to her male coworkers. The only Latina on staff, she wants to make the show’s Latino characters more realistic. Help comes when she develops a friendship with Abel, a Mexican American janitor in her office building.



## INSIDE OUT

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By **Tanya Saracho**

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# WRITING FOR TELEVISION

While some television shows or episodes are written by off-site, freelance writers, many television shows are written by a team of on-site writers working together. The writers will range from entry-level staff writers to more experienced television writers called story editors, executive story consultants or other such job titles.

According to the rules of the Writers Guild of America, staff writers are given a week-to-week contract for a length of time ranging from six to 40 weeks. Depending on the contract, a staff writer may earn more than the weekly salary if hired to write multiple episodes.

Most of the work of writing for a television series is a collaboration taking place in the writers' room, where ideas are discussed and sometimes change dramatically in the process of development from original pitch to more detailed outline to full script with dialogue. Usually the executive producer, or showrunner, has the final say on the script.

Dan O'Shannon, writer and producer for such shows as *Cheers*, *Frasier* and *Modern Family*, offers this advice to new television writers: "Your job is not to make the best TV you can, but to make your executive producer happy. Sometimes these two goals are worlds apart."

## ICONIC LATINO TV ACTORS

The twenty most iconic Latino television characters of all time, as announced by *Latina* magazine in November 2012, include:

**Desi Arnaz** as Ricky Ricardo on *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957)

**Freddie Prinze** as Chico Rodriguez on *Chico and the Man* (1974-1978)

**Erik Estrada** as Ponch on *CHiPs* (1977-1983)

**Jimmy Smits** as Victor Sifuentes on *L.A. Law* (1986-1994)

**Mario Lopez** as A.C. Slater on *Saved by the Bell* (1989-1993)

**Wilson Cruz** as Rickie Vasquez in *My So-Called Life* (1994-1995)

**Benjamin Bratt** as Rey Curtis in *Law and Order* (1995-1999)

**Kirk Acevedo** as Miguel Alvarez on *Oz* (1997-2003)

**Rita Moreno** as Sister Peter Marie Reimondo on *Oz* (1997-2003)

**Wilmer Valderrama** as Fez on *That 70s Show* (1998-2006)

**Shelley Morrison** as Rosario on *Will and Grace* (1998-2006)

**Jamie-Lynn Sigler** as Meadow Soprano on *The Sopranos* (1999-2007)

**Dora the Explorer** on *Dora the Explorer* (this animated series began in 2000)

**Judy Reyes** as Carla Espinoza on *Scrubs* (2001-2010)

**Edward James Olmos** as William Adama on *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-2009)

**Jorge Garcia** as Hurley on *Lost* (2004-2010)

**Eva Longoria** as Gabrielle Solis on *Desperate Housewives* (2004-2012)

**America Ferrera** as Betty Suarez on *Ugly Betty* (2006-2010)

**Christian Camargo** as the Ice Truck Killer/Brian Moser on *Dexter* (2006-2013)

**Lauren Velez** as Lt. Laguerta on *Dexter* (2006-2013)

# UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

The United States Marine Corps is one branch of the United States Armed Forces (other branches include the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard). Adopted in 1883, their motto *Semper fidelis* (commonly abbreviated “semper fi”) is Latin for “always faithful/loyal.”

# IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was an agency of the U.S. Department of Justice from 1993 until 2003, when its functions were transferred to the newly created Department of

Homeland Security and three of its agencies: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

# MARA SALVATRUCHA

Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, is an international criminal gang in an ongoing war with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the FBI and other law enforcement agencies. MS-13 originally formed in Los Angeles in the 1980s by Central American immigrants escaping civil wars in their home countries; the gang’s original purpose was defense against other L.A. gangs, which were largely Mexican or African American. Today, MS-13 has thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) of members,

mostly Salvadoran nationals or first-generation Salvadoran Americans, but also Hondurans, Guatemalans, Mexicans and other Central and South American immigrants. MS-13 operates in over 40 states and Washington, D.C. Because gang members are deported from the United States after being arrested (many individuals have been deported multiple times), the gang’s presence and corresponding violence have grown in various Central American countries.

# “HELL HATH NO FURY”

The full quote is from William Congreve’s 1697 play *The Mourning Bride*: “Heav’n has no Rage, like Love to Hatred turn’d, Nor Hell a Fury, like a Woman scorn’d.” Congreve (1670-1729) was mostly known for his poems and comedies; *The Mourning Bride* was his only tragic play.



# GEOGRAPHY

**El Sereno** (Spanish for “the tranquil/serene one”) is the oldest community in Los Angeles. A Franciscan mission there was founded in 1771, predating the city of Los Angeles by ten years. Until the late 1940s, Mexican American families were prevented from moving into El Sereno; the 1948 Supreme Court case *Shelley v. Kraemer* ended such restrictions. Today, over 80% of El Sereno’s residents identify as Latino.

**Boyle Heights** is a neighborhood east of downtown Los Angeles; it borders El Sereno. The crime rate in Boyle Heights is generally higher than in El Sereno but lower than Downtown. The average age of residents is only 25, lower than in many surrounding communities. Nearly 95% of residents identify as Latino; over 80% are Mexican American. Over half the residents of Boyle Heights were born outside the United States, which is a higher percentage than in most other parts of Los Angeles; Mexico is the most common country of origin, with El Salvador a distant second.

**Guanajuato** is one of 31 Mexican states. It is in the center of the country, bordered by Jalisco, Michoacán, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí and Zacatecas. The state’s largest city, León, lies over 200 miles (or a one-hour flight) northwest of the federal capital, Mexico City. Guanajuato’s average altitude is over 6,600 feet above sea level.

**Mexico City** (or México, Distrito Federal, a federal capital territory similar to Washington, D.C.) is home to nearly nine million people. It is located on the high plateaus of central Mexico at an altitude of 7,350 feet above sea level.

**El Salvador** (full name “Republic of the Savior”) is a small but densely populated Central American nation on the Pacific coast. During the Salvadoran Civil War (1979-1992), half a million Salvadorans immigrated to the United States; many more have since followed, either to reunite with family or to escape natural disasters and gang violence in their home country.

# PEOPLE

**María Félix** (María de los Ángeles Félix Güereña, 1914-2002) was a Mexican movie actress who starred in 47 films in Mexico, Spain, France, Italy and Argentina. She refused to learn English, so she never acted in any English-language films. The famous femme fatale was often called La Doña (“The Dame”) after her character in the 1943 film *Doña Bárbara*; the BBC reported her funeral with the epitaph “Mexico Mourns its ‘Marilyn.’” Félix once said in an interview, “I cannot complain about men. I have had tons of them and they have treated me fabulously well. But sometimes I had to hurt them to keep them from subjugating me.”

**Jennifer Lopez** or “J Lo” (born 1969) is an American actress and singer born in the Bronx to Puerto Rican parents. She got her breakout role as the Mexican American singer Selena Quintanilla-Pérez in the 1997 biopic *Selena*; the following year she became the first Latina actress to earn a million dollars for a film (*Out of Sight* opposite George Clooney).

**Eva Mendes** (born 1974) is a Cuban American actress born in Miami, Florida, and raised in Los Angeles, California. She appeared in many small-budget films (such as the direct-to-video *Children of the Corn 5*) before her breakthrough role opposite Denzel Washington in *Training Day* in 2001. She is also a model and international spokeswoman for Revlon Cosmetics.

**Maury Povich** (born 1939) is an American talk show host; *The Maury Povich Show* (the title was later abbreviated to *Maury*) first aired in 1991 and has presented well over 2,500 episodes. Common show themes include paternity tests, polygraphs, sex secrets, abusive men or “out of control” teens. Povich married news anchor Connie Chung in 1984.

**Oprah Winfrey** (born 1954) is an American talk show host, philanthropist and one of the most influential women in the world. She hosted *The Oprah Winfrey Show* for its 25 seasons (more than 4,500 episodes) from 1986 to 2011.

# OTHER CULTURAL REFERENCES

**Elvis Presley** (1935-1977) was an American singer and actor. Regarded as one of the most significant cultural icons of the 20th century, he is often referred to as “the King of Rock and Roll”, or simply, “the King”. Presley appeared in the 1957 film *Jailhouse Rock*. The song “Jailhouse Rock” was released as a single in September of that year.

**Sabrina, the Teenage Witch** was a television sitcom based on a comic book of the same name. It aired from 1996 to

2003 and starred actress Melissa Joan Hart as Sabrina Spellman, a half-witch who discovers her magical powers on her sixteenth birthday. It premiered on ABC as part of that channel’s TGIF programming block (“Thank God It’s Friday,” or “Thank Goodness It’s Funny”). The show aired in some Latin American countries titled *Sabrina, la bruja adolescente*.

# GLOSSARY

**Gringo** is a Mexican (or generally Latin American) term for Americans who are not Latino, or for anything very typical of the United States.

**Halitosis**, colloquially called bad breath, is a symptom usually caused by bacteria on the gums and tongue.

**Jingoism** is an extreme form of patriotism characterized by the expression of hatred towards foreigners and foreign countries.

**Mezcal** is a distilled alcoholic beverage made from *Agave americana*, a plant

native to Mexico (tequila is a regional variant of mezcal).

A **Michelada** is a *cerveza preparada* (prepared beer), or Mexican beverage made from beer mixed with tomato juice, hot sauce or salsa. The most common Michelada in Mexico City is prepared with beer, lime, salt and hot sauce or chile slices.

**Paisa** is short for *paisano* or countryman, but is also a term for a Mexican American dressed as a *vaquero* (cowboy).

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# STUDY QUESTIONS

## Pre-Performance Questions

- 1) Do the areas from which we originate reflect who we become? How does where we come from create assumptions for other people about who we may be?
- 2) What are the differences between acting on an assumption about someone and assuming to have a similarity with someone? Can assumptions ever serve as positives in communicating with people?
- 3) What is the difference between “sharing a story” and “storytelling?”

## Post-Performance Questions

- 1) What is the meaning of the play’s title?
- 2) How would you describe the initial meeting of Lucia and Abel?
- 3) How would you describe the relationship between Lucia and Abel and how does it evolve?
- 4) How would you describe Lucia’s relationship with her immediate supervisor at work? How is this reflected in her relationship with Abel?
- 5) What does Lucia’s supervisor have her do? What is her reaction to the request? Would your reaction be similar or different?
- 6) What does the term “fresa” mean and in what ways does the label apply to Lucia?
- 7) What does it mean to be the “diversity hire?” How does Lucia react to this label?
- 8) Why does Abel make the decision to reveal his story to Lucia?
- 9) How are Lucia’s and Abel’s backstories revealed? How do they shape their characters?
- 10) What do you think the future holds, individually and together, for Lucia and Abel?

# UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

Make your experience unforgettable when you join us for one of these insightful, educational events:

## Insider Perspectives

Get an exclusive insider's perspective of each play when you join us for a professionally-moderated discussion with our creative team. Held at The Jones at Speer & Arapahoe. Free.  
Feb 5 | 6pm

## Talkbacks with the Cast

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors directly after select performances. Free.  
Feb 28 | Post-Show

## Talkback with the Higher Education Advisory Council

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community held directly after select performances. Free.  
Mar 6 | Post-Show

## Theatre & Theology Talkbacks

Join Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod to examine each show through a theological lens directly after select performances. Free.  
Mar 8 | Post-Show



# WANT TO KNOW MORE?

## The Denver Public Library recommends:

### Read!

*Handbook for an Unpredictable Life: How I Survived Sister Renata and My Crazy Mother and Still Came Out Smithing (with Great Hair)* by Rosie Perez

Rosie Perez first pushed boundaries for Latinas in the film industry during the opening sequence of *Do the Right Thing* in 1989. This book takes a look at some of the incredible obstacles she overcame, from being placed into a Catholic home after the loss of her mother to film and TV sets in LA and New York City to becoming the bright media personality we know today. A heartbreaking, funny and inspiring story of finding strength and overcoming the odds.

### Watch!

*La Fea Más Bella* (Xenon Pictures 2007)

Lety never saw her looks as being an obstacle to her success after earning her graduate degree with honors in finance, but is soon faced with the harsh reality after getting rejected from an executive position. Hard up on work, she accepts a position as secretary with “Conceptos” one of the most important advertising companies in the country. Originally inspiration for the hit US show, “Ugly Betty,” this series also gives a behind the scenes look at the entertainment industry.

### Listen!

*La Gran Señora* by Jenni Rivera

Mexican-American TV producer, actress, songwriter and singer Jenni Rivera has been labeled by several major media outlets as the most important female figure in Mexican music and continues to be a top-selling artist in this genre. This album blends both traditional and modern sounds, and includes music written exclusively by Jenni in a fitting tribute to this Latina great.

### Download!

*A Writer's Guide to Characterization* by Victoria Lynn Schmidt

Interested in writing your own stories? Not sure what the next big plot twist should be or how to make a character memorable? Find inspiration with this title available for download from [downloadmedia.denverlibrary.org](http://downloadmedia.denverlibrary.org). Includes forty different lessons on character development that can be applied to your own work, as well as questionnaires and exercises to get your creativity flowing.



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