

## **NEWS BREAK**

Article: **Message received, loud and clear Whistling language echoes around this Spanish island**

Section: **MAIN, A6**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, February 21, 2021** of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some teachers might use this as a take-home assignment and others might read and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

***\*Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for your students.***

### **Standards:**

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1**

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2**

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

### **Objectives:**

Students will discuss learn about a culture in the Canary Islands that whistles to communicate; it's their language. They will talk about whether it's easy for them to whistle and if anyone in their family uses whistling as a signal to communicate, and in what situations they do this. Students will also talk about how perpetuating and learning languages helps protect them and honors their ancestors.

## Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using only these pictures?
- Are there clues?
- What can you infer?

## Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

“However much she is attached to her cellphone, Erin Gerhards, 15, sounded **keen** to improve her whistling and help safeguard the traditions of her island.”

**Keen Guess:**

**Keen Definition:**

### **Comprehension Questions:**

1. Arantxa Cifuentes Gutiérrez, 15, demonstrates the whistling language known as \_\_\_\_\_, which is still in use on Spain's La Gomera Island thanks to mandatory classes for students.
2. With favorable wind conditions, the sound can carry as far as \_\_\_ miles across some canyons.
3. La Gomera, one of the \_\_\_\_\_, a volcanic archipelago in the Atlantic that is part of Spain.
4. Márquez is a proud guardian of La Gomera's whistling language, which he called "\_\_\_\_\_."
5. The whistling of the Indigenous people of La Gomera is mentioned in the 15th-century accounts of what?
6. The Silbo Gomero language substitutes whistled sounds that vary by pitch and length for what?
7. Unfortunately, there are fewer whistles than there are letters in the Spanish alphabet, so a sound can have multiple meanings, causing what?
8. In 2009, the island's language was added by UNES- CO to its list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; the United Nations agency described it as what?
9. But with whistling no longer essential for communication, Silbo's survival mostly relies on what?
10. With its distinct geography, it's easy to see why whistling came into use on the Canaries. Why was that?
11. Older residents on La Gomera recall how Silbo was used as a \_\_\_\_\_ language, particularly when a police patrol was spotted searching for contraband.

### **Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:**

- ***What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?***
- ***At first I thought \_\_\_\_\_, but now I think \_\_\_\_\_?***
- ***What things did you already know from prior experience?***
- ***Do you find it easy to whistle?***
- ***Does anyone in your family use it as a signal to communicate? In what ways?***

However much she is attached to her cellphone, Erin Gerhards, 15, sounded keen to improve her whistling and help safeguard the traditions of her island. "It is a way to honor the people that lived here in the past," she said. "And to remember where everything came from, that we didn't start with technology, but from simple beginnings.

- ***Is it important for younger generations to learn the language of their ancestors? Why or why not?***

News Break is posted to the Web on Monday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.  
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