

My Operación Triúnfo Unit

Operación Triúnfo is the Spanish version of “American Idol.” The first Spanish incarnation took place in Spain sometime between the summers of 2001 and 2002. I learned about it during the summer of 2002 when the family I was staying with—for the third summer in a row—told me about it. Although neither of them was particularly interested in music, they had enjoyed the show, and told me all about it nearly every evening during dinner as we watched many of the contestants turn up in variety shows on television.

Having discovered the previous summer that popular music is a great way to keep 8th graders engaged, I purchased many of the CD’s recorded by many of the contestants. I also purchased a DVD of the program itself since I had missed it. (I also had to purchase a “zone-free” DVD player on eBay to play it on since European DVD’s won’t work in our DVD players.) It was very easy to record parts of the DVD onto a VHS tape to use in school.

Since I teach exploratory Spanish, I knew that my students were not going to understand much of the language. But there were still some interesting things we could do with it.

1. I created a sheet with the photos, names, ages, and hometowns of all 16 contestants and used it to ask the students questions about the contestants in Spanish.
2. I created a map of Spain labeled with with letters and gave the students a labeled map and asked them to identify the hometowns of all the contestants.
3. I made a list of phrases that were frequently mentioned in some of auditions and asked the students to note every time they heard one of them on the video. “Pasas a la siguiente fase.” “Enhorabuena.”
4. I gave the students a copy of the words (in Spanish and English) of the song created by the contestants, “Mi Música es Tu Voz.”
5. I gave the students ballots and played songs featuring the top contestants and asked them to vote. Afterwards, we compared the results with the actual winners in Spain and discussed possible reasons for the discrepancies. For example, adolescents typically picked the “hottest” contestants without paying much attention to the voices. Many of them admitted afterwards that the actual winner, Rosa, had the best voice, but that they didn’t vote for her because she was fat. When they saw the photo of her on her new CD, they were pleased to discover that she had lost a lot of weight during her stay at the “Academia.”
6. Using puzzlemaker.com, I created a word search puzzle consisting of words from the show, contestants’ names, and hometowns.

With upper levels, these discussions could take place in Spanish. A number of interesting and engaging activities could be created to help students develop their language skills in upper level classes with DVD’s such as this one.

The actual winners of the first “Operación Triunfo” were:

1. Rosa
2. David Bisbal
3. David Bustamante
4. Chenoa

For more information about Operación Triúnfo, check the following web site:
<<http://www.portalmix.com/triunfo/masterclass/> >.