



**Activity 5:**

“Matters of the Sea”

On August 14, 2015 Richard Blanco read his poem “Matters of the Sea” at the opening of the United States Embassy in Habana Cuba. Blanco says “... the inspiration that first came to me was this idea of those 90 miles that everyone always sort of talks about that's almost at this point cliché - you know, the 90 miles between these two countries that might as well be 9,000 miles. So I started thinking about that and how to make that something not about separation, but about unification. And so it's the sea that separates us, but it's also the sea that unites us.”

Watch the video clip of Richard Blanco reading “Matters of the Sea” then analyze the poem to appreciate its meaning. <https://youtu.be/M1GqJURaTl0>.

The sea doesn't matter,  
 What matters is this.  
 We all belong to the sea between us,  
 All of us.  
 Once and still the same child who marvels  
 at a starfish,  
 Listens to hollow shells,  
 Sculpts dreams into impossible castles.  
 We've all been lovers,  
 Holding hands,  
 Strolling down either of our shores.  
 Our footprints,  
 Like a mirage ourselves,  
 Vanish in waves that don't know their birth  
 Or care on which country they break,  
 They break.  
 They bless us and return to the sea,

Our mothers teaching us how to read in Spanish or English,  
 How to tie our shoes  
 How to gather falls colors or  
 Bite into a guava.  
 Our fathers worn by the weight of clouds,  
 Clocking in at factories  
 Or cutting sugar cane  
 To earn a new life for us.  
 My cousins and I now scouting the same skies  
 Above skyscrapers or farms,  
 Waiting for time to stop  
 And begin again.  
 When rain falls,  
 Washes its way to river or street  
 Back to the sea.  
 No matter what anthem we sing,  
 We've all walked barefoot and bare soul



7. List words that refer to the sea.

8. Why do you think that Blanco says that the sea doesn't matter?

9. How does Blanco play with the word "matter"?

10. Listen to Richard Blanco read the poem again. What his is tone? List 4 adjectives that describe his voice, his interpretation of the poem. Was his tone fitting to the occasion? Explain your ideas.

11. What is Richard Blanco's message for Cuba and the United States?

12. Lagniappe- Why are there so many bare flag poles in front the US Embassy in Cuba?