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TORTILLA SOUP
A TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE
FOR THE ELEMENTARY
SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Elementary Option

by
Janet Baker Stellingwerf

June 1996

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FOR THE ELEMENTARY
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June 1996

Approved by:


Ellen Kronowitz, First Reader

6/14/96
Date


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ABSTRACT

This project will result in a teacher resource for the elementary social studies classroom. As teachers consider the role of social studies in their curriculum, they must consider their classroom population. Currently, numerous ethnic groups are represented in the United States. Projections for the year 2000 indicate that 13.2 percent of the United States population will be Hispanic (Crouch, 1995). The purpose of this project is the integration of Mexican history and culture into the social studies curriculum. While specific curriculum goals are addressed, it is imperative to note the desired purpose of social studies in the elementary school classroom. As defined by Dorothy Skeel in Elementary Social Studies: "The function of social studies should be to assist children in the development of a good self-concept; help them recognize and appreciate the global society and its multicultural composition; further the socialization process--social, economic, and political; provide knowledge of the past and present as a basis for decision making; develop problem-solving and valuing skills; and foster an active participant role in society" (Skeel, 11).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In appreciation to all those who have contributed
in some way to the creation of this manuscript--

For your time, ideas, inspiration,

Muchas Gracias.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Area of Concern

This project has particular significance since the United States Hispanic population is increasing at a rate of more than five times that of Non-Hispanic populations (U.S. Dept of Commerce News, 1989). Mexican Americans constitute 63% of the entire United States Hispanic population, which equals about 13 million people (Estrada, 1988). If we wish to communicate effectively with our fellow citizens, we must know more about their world, how they make sense of experience, and why they behave as they do. The significance of these cognitive and affective learning activities is that we can build self-esteem among the Mexican American students, while helping all students to recognize and appreciate the global society, and its multicultural composition.

The curriculum standards for social studies, as prepared by the National Council for the Social Studies incorporate multicultural studies in several of the ten thematic strands (e.g., culture, global connections), but there is not specific emphasis on multicultural education. For example, Strand One states: "Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity" (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994). Generic learning outcomes are established, but local districts decide what exactly to study, and which specific cultures should be explored. Even with a recent projection that by the year 2050 less than half the United States population will be non-Hispanic white, the California framework is not specific regarding multicultural curriculum (Crouch, 1995). Observation of current curriculum offerings in the state of

California indicate that multicultural education is left open for local interpretation.

Significance of Project

The existing lack of cultural sensitivity is reflected negatively in our society through racism, gangs, and ethnic competition. These problems may be due to the "...providing of insufficient information that builds the context of a culture, presenting only one perspective of the culture, and using loaded words, not dealing with controversial or complex issues that confront the culture, as well as selecting visuals that do not effectively represent the culture" (Fleming, as cited in Skeel, 1995). If all cultures have value, then they must be respected. "Relations worsen when we start to compare cultures in a good/bad manner" (Benavides, 1984). Materials and activities with accurate illustrations, greater depth and variety, and multiple perspectives may contribute to greater overall cultural sensitivity, sense of identity, and a sense of personal value.

Project Goals

The two goals of this study in general are to review literature related to multicultural education, and develop curriculum for use in the elementary school classroom.

Specific curriculum resource goals are created in an effort to generate mutual respect for other cultures by exploring the cultural origins of Mexican Americans. These goals are:

- *To develop cultural literacy in all students
- *To encourage the development of social and communication skills
- *To facilitate understanding of past events, and their influences on the present and future

Description of Project

This project focuses specifically on the Mexican culture and history. More specifically, this project provides activities to examine the culture of Mexico, as it relates to changes in society. Content is selected in an effort to examine the past and present culture of Mexico. The specifics of the project design and the resource book format are explained later in this proposal.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review which follows examines literature relating to multicultural education. Areas of exploration include the definition of multicultural education, approaches to the teaching of multicultural education, resources available, and effects of multicultural education.

Multicultural Education Defined

Varying definitions and expectations have been created for multicultural education. There are many ways to describe multicultural education, and many interpretations, as well. Grant and Sleeter have also noted that the terminology involved can be confusing. They view multicultural education as: "the popular term educators increasingly use to describe education policies and practices that recognize, accept, and affirm human differences and similarities related to gender, race, handicap, and class. Because of the popularity of the term and what it advocates, many educators who use other approaches (e.g., Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different) say that they are doing multicultural education" (Grant and Sleeter, 1988).

While the details may vary, the general expectation remains constant. According to James Banks, "multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform or movement, and a process" (Banks, 1993). The "idea" he is referring to incorporates the notion that all students should have equal opportunity to learn in school, regardless of their gender, social class, ethnic or racial characteristics. The "reform" he suggests would change the schools so that these students all have this equal opportunity. The "process," he notes, is an ongoing ideal, not a one-time activity. He defines the major goal of multicultural education

as "to change the total educational environment so that it promotes respect for the wide range of cultural groups and enables all cultural groups to experience educational opportunity" (Banks, as cited in Kindsvatter, 1992). Similarly, Benavides defines multicultural education as "a philosophical teaching approach with diversity as its central theme" (Benavides, 1984).

A multicultural perspective, as defined by Wurzel, (1984), "is a critical and reflective understanding of oneself and others in historical and cultural contexts, and awareness of both differences and human similarities." Benavides also stresses the importance of gaining knowledge and acceptance of self and others (Benavides, 1984). Self-concept and identity are crucial to this perspective. Cultural values and beliefs have great influence on the formation and development of self-esteem. Approaches to this type of education, materials, and the total classroom experience, should all be focused on the development of these areas. Our world is multicultural, and children need to experience the diversity outside their immediate environment. There are various approaches to multicultural education, and several are reviewed here.

Multicultural Education Approaches

Just as the definitions and terminology of multicultural education vary according to the individual, so do the approaches to the implementation of multicultural education. Popular samples by Carl Grant, Christine Sleeter, and James Banks are outlined.

Grant and Sleeter explain five different approaches addressing human diversity, race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and disability (Grant and Sleeter, 1989). The first approach they identify concerns

itself with the needs of students who do not succeed in the "mainstream" classroom. Attempts are made to help these students build bridges between their capabilities and societal demands. Their second approach concentrates on building positive feelings. Students are encouraged to appreciate each other, and themselves. Approach three teaches students about varying groups like women, blacks, Asian-Americans, and the disabled. Approach four combines these first three approaches, but also suggests that schools change so that they are truly concerning themselves with diversity. Approach five addresses social inequalities in an effort to prepare students for constructive group and individual work. The two primary ideals for this approach are equal opportunity and cultural pluralism (Grant and Sleeter, 1989).

Additionally, James Banks has identified four approaches to the teaching of multiculturalism. According to Banks, these approaches have developed since the 1960's.

The Contributions Approach is the most frequently used, because it is quick, and requires minimal prerequisites. The focus is on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural events. The limitation of this approach is that "ethnic content is limited primarily to special days, weeks, months...the class studies little or nothing about the ethnic group before or after the special event or occasion (Banks, 1993).

Level two, the Additive Approach, utilizes a book, a unit, or a course, but does not change the curriculum. The instruction is added in, as an appendage. The limitation of this approach is that since the curriculum has not been restructured, the perspectives are mainstream. "The perspectives of all groups are needed to help us fully understand the history, culture, and society (Banks, 1993). This approach also fails to show children how cultures are interrelated.

In level three, the Transformation Approach, the actual goals, perspectives, and structure of the curriculum are changed. "The inclusion of various perspectives, frames of reference, and content from various groups will extend students' understanding..." (Banks, 1993). In this Transformation Approach, students can view situations from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The main limitation of this approach concerns the substantial revisions in curriculum, training, materials, and perspectives.

Level four is the Social Action Approach. This is very similar to the Transformational Approach, but it requires students to make decisions and take action on social issues. Students identify social problems, gather data, and clarify their own values. Understandably, this approach also requires extensive curriculum restructuring, and it takes a long time to implement this. Controversial issues may arise, and students may only be able to take minimal action on the problem.

These four approaches, in addition to other methodology, are often blended in the actual teaching situation. One approach may provide the foundation for the next. The progress is likely to be gradual and cumulative in nature. The approaches also depend on the quality of the materials used. The following section examines some of the trends and content of multicultural materials.

Multicultural Resources

There are numerous resources available to teach about Mexican American culture and history (e.g., Perl, Shalant, Blackaby, Everix). There are many fine points in these resources, and their overall goals seem to be in keeping with the widely recognized goals of social studies, however, there are several pitfalls in the existing materials.

Resource books pertaining to this type of study tend to examine the Mexican culture as a whole. Projects and activities tend to generalize, and to lump all of Mexico into one. There is not a single Mexican culture, however, just as there is not one single American culture. In contrast, this particular resource examines diversity by exploring the varied history and culture by region. In this way, the resource is more specific, and acknowledges that the cultures vary by region, and the contributions to society are diverse. Also, these cultures change over time, given the dynamics of society.

Another weakness of some curriculum materials is that they tend to explore historical figures in extremes. These resources explore heroes and victims. The heroes are presented as those who have overcome incredible odds, while other Mexicans are viewed as helpless victims of poverty and discrimination. This dichotomy produces a distorted view of the Mexican population. Perpetuating these concepts is harmful to all students in the classroom. If students are led to believe that only the exceptional super heroes can succeed, they may feel like there is no particular potential motivating them. Additionally, the Mexican American student may begin to feel that his cultural experiences have contributed very little to the development of the Western World. Most Mexican Americans will not achieve the status of Cesar Chavez, nor will they experience extreme poverty. As a result, students may have difficulty identifying with the Mexican American culture presented in many texts and teaching resources. In an effort to develop ethnic pride, a realistic view must be presented.

Unfortunately, many materials limit the Mexican American experience to the discussion of isolated holidays and festivals (e.g. Pearl, Everix). Teacher resources include ideas for studying the 16 de

septiembre (Independence Day), the 5 de mayo (day of celebrating Mexico's victory over the French in 1862). While these are important events, students should view these in the light of previous events, and current situations. These activities should also be accompanied by brief explanations of the cultural context, or the Big Ideas surrounding these events. Emphasis should also be given to the potentially positive effects that a multicultural attitude will allow.

Effects of Multicultural Education

Successful multicultural education will have many positive results. "Studies suggest that positive ethnic affiliation among Mexican-Americans (and other groups) greatly influences individual development in many ways, including: lifestyle choices, values, opinions, attitudes, and approaches to learning" (Gollnick and Chinn, as cited in Escamilla, 1992). Self-esteem among all students will be strengthened. A knowledge of, and appreciation for varying cultures will be developed. Effective intercultural communication will be enhanced. Children can learn more about themselves, and will begin to feel better about their heritage. Through guided discovery, students will learn to take an active, constructive role in our society.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This teacher resource is based on the combination of three main theoretical foundations of learning: Developmental Theory, Sociological Theory, and Constructivist Theory. These foundations are briefly outline here.

Developmental Theory

Jean Piaget's contributions to the area of children's thought are applicable here. He believed that children build their reality by assimilating stimuli, and by adjusting their reality to these requirements. Through their exploration of varying cultures, in this case, they will generalize and coordinate their reality. Through exposure to new concepts, students reformulate their views. Piaget's four developmental stages that a child passes through sequentially are: 1. sensorimotor; 2. preoperational; 3. concrete operations; 4. formal operations. Each stage, according to Piaget, is "a qualitative exploratory experience of understanding the world in a new, and more complex way" (Ornstein, Levine, 1993).

Similarly, Comenius, another educational theorist, stressed the order and organization of learning about the world around us. He noted the importance of using realia and the senses to enhance the learning experiences. These factors are especially useful in the ESL classroom, where many of the Hispanic children are currently placed. Comenius also believed in the natural stages of learning. This resource book encourages the orderly use of our senses to learn and discover. Concrete objects and pertinent realia are used instead of passive memorization.

Comenius would agree with Piaget, then, that "the ultimate goal of education is not to fill the child's mind with an assortment of items of knowledge but to advance the child from one stage of reasoning within a given hierarchy to another..." (Wolterstorff, 1980).

Sociological Theory

According to Herbert Spencer, "human life exhibits a series of basic activities that foster the survival of the species. Education should be based on these activities" (Ornstein, Levine, 1993). The "fittest" children survive by a well-developed knowledge of ideas, attitudes and values which can be developed through social interaction.

For Vygotsky, "social interaction and assistance were more than methods of teaching, they were the origin of higher mental processes such as problem solving" (Woolfolk, 1995). He believed that all higher mental functions have their origins in social interactions.

The role of teacher, in this sociological theory, is to provide sensory, basic instruction, utilizing the scientific method of inquiry. The curriculum should provide activities which lead to understanding. By asking leading, challenging questions, teachers are addressing the whole child. Henry Steele Commanger pointed out "that it is much more important to judge history than to remember it" (Commanger, 1991). For example, it may be more important for children to cope with questions like "How were they right or wrong in what they did on this occasion?" Asking merely the facts regarding what took place does not lead to active participation or creative thinking. By drawing upon the capabilities of the whole child, we are encouraging the inquiry process.

Historical and cultural information may be used in the inquiry process, also. This teacher resource encourages the use of literature to enhance the concepts of culture, customs, beliefs and traditions. To

help children address the multicultural issues, we must expose them to quality literature studies. Through experiences with various characters, settings, and situations, students are introduced to concepts of global education. Through multicultural literature, children discover that all cultural groups have contributed in some way to civilization. This well-balanced literature experience will exhibit people with a variety of dreams, from different socioeconomic levels, with different occupations, and with a wide range of human characteristics.

Constructivist Theory

As children interact socially, they are constantly changing. Constructivists view this change as learning. Grounded in the work of Gestalt psychologists (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky), this teacher resource encourages students' active construction of learning.

Piaget believed that "children are the primary agents of their own cognitive development in that they shape their conceptions of reality by complex and continuous interactions with the environment" (Piaget, as cited in Ornstein, Levine, 1993). In social studies, it is the teacher's job to facilitate this individual understanding, helping the student create, or construct, his own view of life, based on information available to him.

Providing children with information about world geography, cultures, and religions will not automatically promote appreciation for diversity. While students must develop knowledge in these areas, they must also have the freedom to construct. A personal meaning must be constructed to help him relate to people of various backgrounds. One can not assume that knowledge is something that can be handed over to students. Students need to interact with the information to personalize

it, and interpret it individually. Through team collaboration and discussions, students can synthesize their ideas, and form their world views.

The knowledge one constructs is directly related to his life and life experiences. This independent effort, then, encourages students to play constructive roles in their society. Not only do we wish to create good Americans, but we want them to contribute to making America a good place. By examining numerous contributors to our society, students will see their own potential for a constructive contribution.

Similarly, Steven Krashen's theories on second language acquisition can be applied to this theoretical foundation. Even while the teacher may provide comprehensible input, if the students are not at ease in their environment, little learning will take place. Learners of all ages will need the confidence of a low-anxiety environment to feel secure. These students, including the Mexican American students, need to expand their knowledge of the world in order to relate more effectively. In order to enhance the overall academic success of our students, we need to build their self-esteem. One method of building self-esteem includes the provision of cultural experiences in this low affective environment.

This teacher resource, then, is based on the integration of these theories and beliefs regarding children, education, and learning.

CHAPTER IV
PROJECT DESIGN
Resource Book

This teacher resource provides general background information, as well as specific suggestions for classroom activities. All information and activities can be easily adapted to meet the needs and capabilities of unique learners.

The history, culture, and customs of Mexico vary by land region--the Pacific Northwest, the Plateau, the Gulf Coastal Plain, The Chiapas Highlands, and the Yucatan Peninsula. These regions are further divided into thirty-one states and one federal district. For the purposes of this resource, however, the five major land regions will be used to separate the lessons.

Based on varied research, Big Ideas, or general notes, are compiled. These Big Ideas form the introduction to each section, and highlight important information pertaining to the region. While these Big Ideas are not meant to be all-inclusive, they do provide enough information for the teacher and student to gain an appreciation and a general understanding. These Big Ideas can be used as part of the lessons, or simply as introductory material for each study. They are written for use by teachers and students alike. Geography, sociology, anthropology, economics, and history will be briefly explored in this section.

Following the Big Ideas in each section, there are Cultural Clues providing more specific insight into the activity. Cultural Clues set the scene for the activity, while helping the teacher and student focus specifically on the information pertinent to the concept.

Learning activities reflect the ten thematic strands of social studies. The fundamental knowledge of these areas, however, is drawn

from many academic disciplines, and learning activities. Included are integrated activities, drawing on the students' capabilities in both cognitive and affective areas. Each suggested activity also includes clear listings of curriculum areas addressed, necessary materials, and directions for successful implementation. Variations of the suggested activity, or additional ideas may also be included where appropriate.

A glossary of terms will be included, as well as an annotated bibliography of appropriate classroom literature. Appendices will include related maps, forms, and other significant information.

Project Evaluation

The overall effectiveness of the resource will be assessed by the author, as lessons are presented in a piloting program. Changes and additions will be made throughout the drafting of each lesson. Additional assessment will be carried out by professional colleagues in the elementary setting, including teachers and resource persons. Their reactions, suggestions, and recommendations will be considered before the resource proceeds to completion.

CHAPTER V

LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

There are two limitations to consider for this project. The first concerns the grade level for which this book was designed. While the activities can be modified to fit almost any grade level, they are designed specifically for the intermediate grades. Moderate adaptations will need to be made to accommodate the needs of divergent learners.

The second limitation is that this resource is not intended to be used in isolation, but rather, in conjunction with other materials relating to the specific topics studied.

TORTILLA SOUP

A Teacher Resource Guide
for the
Elementary Social Studies Classroom

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

TORTILLA SOUP is a teacher resource book which focuses on Mexican culture and history. More specifically, this book provides activities to examine the culture of Mexico, as it relates to changes in society. This book is not meant to be used alone, but rather, in conjunction with many other materials and resources. When combined with other resources, the content examines past and present culture of Mexico.

The history, culture, and customs of Mexico vary by land region--the Pacific Northwest, the Central Plateau, the Chiapas Highlands, and the Yucatán Peninsula. These regions are further divided into 31 states and 1 federal district. For the purposes of this particular resource, however, the five major land regions are used to separate the lessons. The five land regions form the organizational basis for the chapters in this book.

Each chapter contains five unique ideas for regional learning experiences. These ideas include foods, games, art, literature, legends, geography, history and culture. It is imperative to note however, that each activity relates to multiple curriculum areas, and the activities are not meant to be done in isolation. The integration of these ideas, with supplemental activities will provide a thorough study of Mexico. Although this book is written specifically for the intermediate grades, all activities can be adapted to meet individual needs.

The following components are provided for teacher and student use:

FAST FACTS: Brief facts regarding Mexico's geography, anthropology, economy, history, politics, religion, currency, holidays, major cities, foods, and climate are provided to highlight the country.

REGIONAL REALITIES: The REGIONAL REALITIES form the introduction to each chapter, and highlight important information pertaining to the particular region. While these ideas are not meant to be all-inclusive, they do provide enough information for the teacher and students to gain an appreciation and a general understanding. These REGIONAL REALITIES can be used as part of the lessons, or simply as introductory material for each study. These are written for teachers and students alike. Geography, sociology, anthropology, sociology, economics, and history are briefly explored in each section. A short description of the chapter's activities is included in this section as well.

CULTURAL CLUES: These clues set the scene for individual activities by providing very specific cultural insights. The teacher and students are enabled to focus more clearly on the specific time period, region, or activity.

MATERIALS AND DIRECTIONS: Following the CULTURAL CLUES in each chapter are the specific classroom activities. Materials are listed, with complete directions for carrying out the individual activities. Activities may require minor adjustments to fit the needs, capabilities and resources within your classroom.

LITERATURE LINKS: Many activities included in this resource rely heavily on the recommended children's literature. Other literature is suggested merely to enhance the lessons. The short annotations included in each chapter show that these selections are suitable for a wide range of learners. The teacher should make every effort to secure additional resources for each lesson, since a wealth of children's literature and other materials is available on these topics. Additions and modifications personalize the units, and may better meet the needs of the unique learners in your room.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: Complete bibliographic information for all sources suggested is included for the reader's convenience.

FAST FACTS

GEOGRAPHY

Mexico is located in the southern part of the North American continent. Because of its historical and political connections, Mexico is considered one of the Latin American countries. Mexico is bordered on the north by the United States, and on the south by Beliz, Guatemala, and the Caribbean. The Gulf of Mexico is on the east, and the Sea of Cortez and the Pacific Ocean border Mexico on the west.

Mexico is a land of great contrasts. Even though most of Mexico is mountainous, the remaining terrain is quite varied. When Hernan Cortes was asked to describe the land he found, he is said to have crumpled up a piece of paper and thrown it on the table. The resulting crumpled paper exemplified a relief map of the country. Except for the Central Plateau, the coastal lowlands, and the southern part of the Yucatán peninsula, Mexico is filled with high peaks and huge plateaus.

ANTHROPOLOGY

The people too, are varied. Most are a blending of ancient Indian and colonial Spanish. This blend is known as mestizo. When the Europeans conquered Mexico, they brought their Spanish language. Today Mexicans speak Spanish, and many speak their own Indian language, as well. They are proud of their Indian heritage, since Indian tribes lived there for thousands of years before Europeans arrived. Many Indian words are reflected in contemporary English and Spanish, such as tomato, avocado, and chocolate.

ECONOMY

During the colonial period, mining and farming were very important industries in Mexico. Today they are still basic to the economy, but banking, advertising, and tourism are also important. One quarter of the working population is employed in agriculture, forestry, or fishing. Maize (corn) is Mexico's most popular crop. Two thirds of Mexico's trade is with the United States.

HISTORY

As can be expected, the history of Mexico is filled with contrasts and complications. The history of Mexico is bloody. The history of Mexico is often divided into three time periods: the ancient period (before Spaniards arrived), the colonial period (while the Spanish ruled), and the modern period (after Mexico achieved independence). In Mexico City there is a plaza that includes distinct architecture from each of these three periods. Ancient pyramid ruins, a fading Spanish church, and modern glass and steel housing exemplify each of the time periods.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

The Constitution of Mexico was created during the Revolution in 1917. The Constitution provides for a government that functions in three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial. The Institutional Revolutionary party (PRI) regularly wins the elections.

RELIGION

Mexico is predominantly Roman Catholic. This religion was introduced to the natives by the Spaniards during the Conquest of Mexico. Evidence of pre-hispanic Catholicism can be found in the Chiapas Highlands, also. Village festivities and the curanderos in the markets reflect this ancient influence.

CURRENCY

The monetary unit in Mexico is the peso. One hundred centavos make up one peso.

HOLIDAYS

Mexico has many celebrations and special days, but the following is a sample of the national holidays: New Year's Day, Constitution Day, Birthday of Benito Juárez, Holy Week, Labor Day, Battle of Puebla, (Cinco de Mayo), President's Message to Congress, Independence Day, Day of the Race (Columbus Day), All Saints and All Souls Day, Anniversary of the Mexican Revolution, Feast Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Christmas.

MAJOR CITIES

Prominent cities include the capital, Mexico City, and Chihuahua, Mazatlán, Guadalajara, Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Mérida.

FOODS

With certain staples like beans and tortillas, Mexico has a variety of basic foods depending on the region. Mexican food and drink vary greatly by region. For example, the tamales are traditional Mexican food, but will reflect the regional differences. Popular belief is that Mexican food is spicy hot. In reality, the spices, garnishes, and sauces are added at the table.

CLIMATE

Like other things in Mexico, the climate too, is varied. Areas of Mexico enjoy warm, balmy temperatures year round, while other areas experience chilly blasts, rain, and extreme drought.

CHAPTER ONE

NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST

REGIONAL REALITIES

Lowlands make up a big portion of the north and pacific coast of Mexico. This region includes the Baja Peninsula and the Sonora Desert.

The Baja Peninsula separates the Gulf of California from the Pacific Ocean. This peninsula is generally mountainous and arid. There is some agriculture in the north, around Mexicali. Resorts and deep-sea fishing support a growing tourist industry. Shrimp fishing is also very popular in this region.

The Sonora Desert area has always been a cattle grazing area. Cowboys tend to the cattle, in the hot, dry, arid weather. The temperature is perfect for rattlesnakes to relax on the sun-warmed rocks.

Rainfall can be heavy along the southern parts, but northwestern Mexico is generally dry and desolate.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST:

FLOUR TORTILLAS

LA CHARREADA

OJO DE DIOS

SHARK BENEATH THE REEF

OFRENDAS: HUICHOL INDIAN BASKETS

NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST



NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

It is important to note that tortillas are as important in the Mexican diet as bread is in the North American diet.

In almost all other areas of Mexico, corn tortillas are the most common, but Northern Mexico is unique to offer flour tortillas. Most hostesses will make both types available. While tortillas of either variety accompany every traditional Mexican meal, special dishes require tortillas. Tacos, enchiladas and tamales require tortillas. In addition to crisp fried tacos, you'll find soft tacos, made by wrapping filling in steamed tortillas. Enchiladas are usually rolled and served at once without baking. Tamales are traditionally served at Christmas, although they are enjoyed throughout the year as well.

Care should be taken to ensure that homemade tortillas are uniformly shaped, evenly cooked, and free of ragged edges. Experienced Mexican cooks warm the tortillas over the open flame, but the safest way is to heat them in the microwave for just a few seconds.

FLOUR TORTILLAS

MATERIALS

2 cups flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 cup solid vegetable shortening (Crisco)
1/2 cup warm water
additional vegetable shortening
additional flour

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine flour and salt in a medium bowl. Rub in 1/4 cup solid shortening with your fingers until evenly mixed.
2. Gradually stir in enough water to make a soft dough.
3. Divide dough into quarters. Then divide each into three equal pieces, making twelve equal parts. Shape each into small balls. Coat each ball with a little more shortening, and place in a bowl. Cover with a towel, and let stand for at least 15 minutes.
4. Preheat a heavy skillet. Shape each ball into a flat round patty. Sprinkle both sides with flour, roll each piece into an 8 inch circle.
5. Place tortillas individually on the hot skillet. Cook until bubbles form on top, and the underside is flecked with brown. Turn tortilla and press down. Cook again, until lightly browned.
6. Stack cooked tortillas and cover with a towel. Serve immediately, or reheat before serving. Makes 12 tortillas.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Students will enjoy mixing and rolling tortillas in small groups. It is recommended to have extra adult hands available in the cooking stages.

Students may enjoy taste-testing flour and corn tortillas to establish their preference. See recipe for corn tortillas also included.

LITERATURE LINKS

Too Many Tamales by G. Soto

This is a heart-warming story about Maria's desperate attempt to correct a serious problem. A treasure is thought to be lost in the pile of tamales, but the family pulls together to make a perfect Christmas.

The Tortilla Factory by G. Paulson

The cycle of life is explored in this story about the making of tortillas. The entire process, from seed, to plant to tortilla, is beautifully displayed.

NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

Horsemanship and bullfighting go hand in hand in this region of Mexico. The Spanish people brought bullfighting to Mexico. Although not as popular as in Spain, bullfighting is undoubtedly one of the biggest spectator sports in Mexico.

The Charreada, a form of rodeo, is a popular sporting event. Elite horsemen, wearing richly embroidered costumes and huge decorated sombreros, perform spectacular feats of riding. They try to lasso young bulls and wild horses. The Plaza de Toros fills to capacity on Sundays.

The object of the game of bullfighting is to kill an untamed bull with a sword. This matador (horseman) is assisted by two mounted helpers (picadors) and three capemen on foot (banderilleros). Although a matador's performance is considered an art of grace and beauty, critics have denounced bullfighting as an inhumane spectacle.

Although the following game does not involve the bulls, blood, horses, or dangerous fighting, it does have the sense of competitive excitement similar to the real bullfights.

LA CHARREADA

MATERIALS

Big open space
Even number of players

DIRECTIONS

Form two equal teams, facing each other. One team is called charros (horsemen) the other is called toros (bulls). A charro is chosen to travel over to the toros. All toros lift their right hand with palm facing out. The charro player walks by the line up, rubbing his palm over the palm of each toro player. Finally the charro CLAPS the hand of a toro who chases the charro back to his home team. If the toro catches the charro before he reaches home, the charro becomes a member of the toro team. Play continues until one team has captured all the players of the other team.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Students will enjoy creating a decorative sombrero with paper scraps, beads, feathers, and other trimmings. See pattern included.

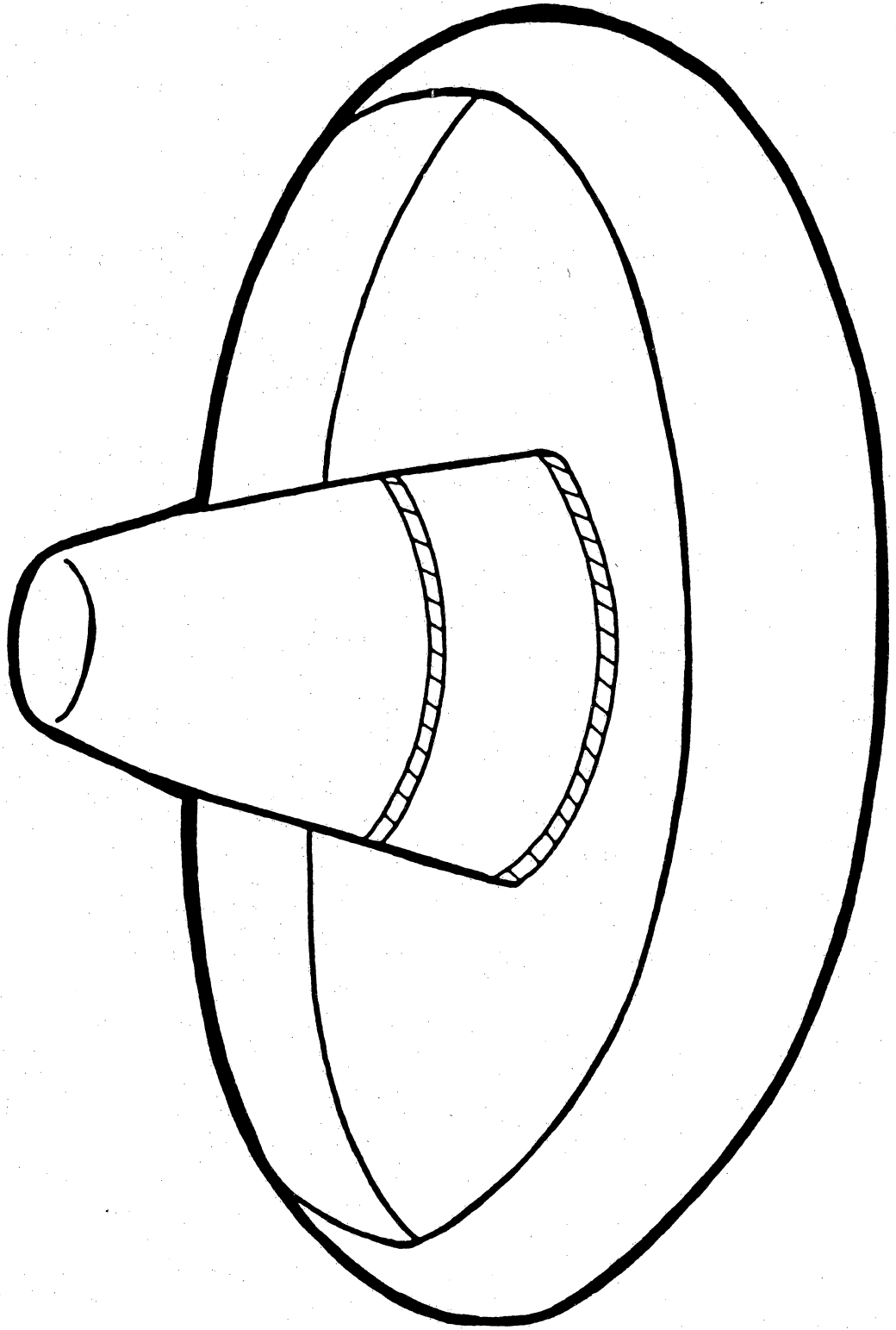
LITERATURE LINKS

Anatomy of a Bullfight by A. Greenfield

This story provides a great description of a bullfight.

El Chino by A. Say

A young boy tells his story of his involvement with the bullfights.



NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

To the wise Mexican Indians, The God's Eye was a sacred decoration that brought one good fortune, luck, health, and a long life. The colorful weaving represented the "eye of God" and all His good powers. Even today, God's Eyes are believed to bring happiness and good luck.

God's Eyes can be of many different shapes and sizes. They may be hung on the walls, in windows, or hung as mobiles. Some Mexicans wear them as hair ornaments or jewelry, or carry them as good luck charms.

The custom of making God's Eyes is believed to have begun in the Indian tribes of the Pacific Coast. The father of a new-born starts a God's Eye to bring a long and healthy life to the child. At birth, the father weaves the center of the God's Eye. An additional God's Eye is added on each birthday until the child turns five.

The Ojo de Dios seems to be a universal symbol that is used as decorative art in Egypt, Africa, Native North America, and Mexico.

OJO DE DIOS (GOD'S EYES)

MATERIALS

white glue
scissors
yarn
popsicle sticks, or other long skinny sticks

DIRECTIONS

1. Cross two sticks in the middle, making a "+." Tie with a piece of yarn to keep in place. This yarn piece will be the beginning of the weaving. Tie this piece in the back.
2. Begin weaving by bringing the yarn to the front between any two sticks. Pull the yarn over a stick, and over the one next to it. Bring it to the back.
3. Again, bring the yarn over a stick, and over the next one. Bring yarn to the back.
4. Continue wrapping, making sure the yarn is next to, not on top of the last yarn wrap. After several turns, you have an eye. Change colors. Continue winding. Change colors as often as you like. Create an interesting pattern.
5. Tie the last thread neatly to the bar.
6. Each stick may be covered by wrapping yarn from center outward.
7. You can attach another smaller stick to each end to make the second, third and fourth God's Eyes, as the ancient Indians did for each birthday of the child.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Hang God's Eyes from the ceiling, over the doorways, or in the windows. Students can also research the similar god's eye weavings by other cultures. They will be interested to note the significance and the related legends.

LITERATURE LINKS

The Art and Architecture of Ancient America: The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples by G. Kubler.

Numerous descriptions of Indian art and architecture are given.

Arte Popular de Mexico by F. Torre.

Includes information on Mexican social life, customs, cookery, and folk art.

NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

In parts of this region, many people are fisherman. At a young age children learn to propel their cayuco (small wooden boat). The Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez provide both entertainment and employment for the Mexicans of this region.

This book presents a unique view of change and conflict. The fishermen in the area have been severely restricted in order to build tourism. The lifestyle of Tomás and his family is about to change dramatically. Tomás also struggles with the problem of whether to continue in school, or to carry on in the family fishing business.

SHARK BENEATH THE REEF

MATERIALS

Shark Beneath the Reef by J. George
Additional materials as desired

DIRECTIONS

1. Read aloud the book, or if a class set is available, have students read together, or in small groups.
2. Offer additional learning activities to explore the concepts of Mexican political, cultural, and natural history, marine biology, geography, and contemporary issues.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

This lesson could be part of a whole language literature unit utilizing this book as the main literature. Supplement with other appropriate literature.

LITERATURE LINKS

Shark Beneath the Reef by J. George.

Tomas lives in Baja, California, and faces the dilemma of whether to continue in school, or leave school in order to carry on the family tradition in the fishing industry.

NORTH AND PACIFIC COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

Many people from all over the world enjoy the intricate yarn paintings of the Huichol Indians. These Indians of Northern Mexico tell stories about their history and religion through their colorful designs. Their yarn works are often called Ofrendas, or offerings to God. A true yarn painting is made by pressing yarn into beeswax that has been warmed and softened by the sun.

OFRENDAS: HUICHOL INDIAN BASKETS

MATERIALS

many colors of yarn
paper bowls in varying sizes
glue
popsicle sticks

DIRECTIONS

1. Squeeze glue in swirl design in the inside of the bowl.
2. Begin with the end of the yarn in the middle of the bowl's bottom. Press the yarn in a circular pattern around and around. Make sure the yarn lies flat, not on top of the previous ring. Use the popsicle stick to press the yarn flat.
3. Change colors. Make a pattern if you like.
4. Continue wrapping the yarn until you reach the rim of the bowl.
5. Flip the bowl over, and swirl glue again on the outside bottom of the bowl.
6. Continue pressing the yarn in the same way. Change colors.
7. Turn the bowl over again, and finish the rim with yarn, so no bowl shows through.
8. Let dry. Display. The baskets may be hung on the wall, or set around the room.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Combine this basket project with a further study of the Indian tribes of this region. Myths, legends, and art will provide additional insights.

LITERATURE LINKS

The Tree that Rains: The Flood Myth of the Huichol Indians by E. Bernhard.

Great Grandmother Earth Watakame helps an Indian survive a great flood and begin a new life.

CHAPTER TWO

CENTRAL PLATEAU

REGIONAL REALITIES

Between the two long mountain ranges along the east and west coast of Mexico, there lies a broad flat plateau. This is Mexico's largest land area. Most of the population live in this region, particularly in and around Mexico City.

The high altitude gives this area a beautiful climate, despite the lack of rainfall. A big portion of this area is desert. Many farmers try to grow corn, but often face disaster due to the lack of rain.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CENTRAL PLATEAU:

CORN TORTILLAS

JAI ALAI

SKELETON CLAY MASK

STRING PUPPETS FOR EL DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

DIEGO RIVERA STUDY AND MURAL PAINTING

CENTRAL PLATEAU



CENTRAL PLATEAU

CULTURAL CLUES

Corn has always been important in the Mexican kitchen. The Mayans even believed that man was created from masa, or corn dough. The Aztecs worshipped corn gods. According to one tradition, cooks would heat the corn with their breath prior to cooking it, so the corn would not suffer shock from the change in temperature. Before eating it, corn would be treated with delicacy and reverence. If a loose kernel was found on the floor, it would be picked up and a prayer would be offered, begging pardon for the neglect. This prayer would help avoid the wrath of the gods.

Although corn is no longer worshipped, it is still bad form to waste any corn, or any tortillas. Leftover tortillas are cut up and fried to make totopos (corn chips). Although flour tortillas are popular in the north, most of the other regions of Mexico enjoy corn tortillas.

CORN TORTILLAS

MATERIALS

1 cup instant masa
1/2 cup water

DIRECTIONS

1. Place instant masa in bowl. Work in water with your fingers to make a soft dough. Add enough water so the dough is not crumbly or dry.
2. Shape dough into ball. Cover with a damp towel. Let stand 20 minutes.
3. Preheat a large skillet.
4. Divide dough into equal pieces. Shape each piece into small balls. Press each piece flat, or use a tortilla press.
5. Roll each ball into a flat circle. If dough is too wet, work in another teaspoon of dry masa.
6. Cook tortilla in the skillet, one side at a time. Stack and cover with a towel.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Include the making of corn tortillas with this poetry project:

Bring an ear or two of fresh corn to class so that children can experience husking it. Ask them to look at the silk, smell the corn, and touch the rows of kernels. Have the children complete the poem starter. They can complete this in pairs, small groups, or individually.

CORN

Sounds like...

Looks like...

Smells like...

Feels like...

Students can share their poems with the other students, and you could compile the poems into a class book of CORN POETRY.

LITERATURE LINKS

Three Stalks of Corn by L. Politi

Angélica learns all about tortillas, tacos, and enchiladas while listening to her grandmother's wonderful stories. The true significance of corn is explained through the legends.

People of Corn by M. Gerson

This book is a blend of myth and imagination about the significance of corn. The Mayan reverence for the natural world is explored.

CENTRAL PLATEAU

CULTURAL CLUES

Many of the traditional games of Mexico are taken from Mexico's ancient Spanish and Indian heritage. Jai Alai (pronounced high lie) means "merry festival" in the Spanish Basque language. The ball used for the game is about the size of a baseball, but much harder. The "cesta" is a long, curved, wicker basket made of special chestnut wood and Spanish reeds. This basket has a glove attached, and is strapped to the player's hand. Players use a three-walled court to serve the ball to each other. The object of the game is to make the other player miss the ball, or foul it out.

Jai Alai is a fast, exciting, and dangerous game requiring much skill and coordination. Since many injuries occur, helmets are always worn. In 1935, Florida passed a law to allow wagering on the sport. Since that time a few other states have encouraged the game, as well.

This child-friendly version of the game will allow the class to experience the general feel of the baskets and balls, and the competition as well.

JAI ALAI

MATERIALS

groups of two students
tennis balls (one per group)
gallon milk jugs, cut in the shape of a basket, utilizing the existing handle (one per student)

DIRECTIONS

1. Partners line up facing each other, about 3 feet apart.
2. Player 1 puts the tennis ball in his basket and tosses it to his partner. Player 2 catches the ball in the basket, and tosses it back to player 1. When they successfully catch and throw the ball, each player takes one step backwards.
3. Play continues until one team is declared the winner because they are the greatest distance apart.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

This game may be included with a variety of other Mexican games, or games from other cultures. Students will enjoy hearing or reading stories about how other children play and relax.

LITERATURE LINKS

Games, Games, Games by R. Sandoval

This book has a sampling of games played by Mexican children.

CENTRAL PLATEAU

CULTURAL CLUES

Halloween is not typically celebrated in Mexico. The next two days, November 1 and 2, are very important holidays, however. The Mexicans celebrate All Saints Day on November 1, and All Souls Day on November 2. These two days are known as El Día de Los Muertos, or Day of the Dead. This is a historical celebration that dates back to the 1800's BC. This commemoration is a way to honor ancestors, and to view death in a humorous manner.

It is believed that on these two days, the spirits of the dead return to earth to be fed. These dead are received as honored guests. The family prepares a special altar on a table covered with the favorite foods of the dead family members. The altar is adorned with yellow marigolds, which are the traditional flowers of death. One candle for each dead soul is placed toward the back of the table, with a picture of the loved one toward the front of the table.

On All Saints Day, the souls of the departed children return to their homes. There is no reason for sadness, since these little ones have become angels. The next day, November 2, All Souls Day, is the day when all adult souls return to their homes. People visit cemeteries all day long, and bring flowers and candles to the graves of their loved ones. The visiting spirits are treated to special foods left by the family. This nourishment is necessary for their long return to the other world.

Special breads, candies and toys are made for these two days of celebration. A traditional symbol is the skeleton. Skeletons are seen on toys and decorations, and on the candies and breads, as well.

SKELETON CLAY MASK

MATERIALS

modeling clay
strips of newspaper
liquid starch
plain white paper towels
paint
Krylon or hair spray

DIRECTIONS

1. Begin with a piece of clay the size of a baseball. Flatten it into an oval.
2. Scoop out a hollow for the eyes.
3. Add more clay to build up the nose, forehead, cheeks and chin. Be sure to exaggerate these features so they will stand out.
4. Smooth the clay with your fingers. Cover the clay mask with 5 or 6 layers of the newspaper strips soaked in liquid starch. Smooth these layers.
5. Make a final layer of the plain white paper towel strips.
6. Let the mask dry for several days.
7. Remove the clay from the back of the mask.
8. Paint the mask in bright colors. Spray with Krylon or hair spray to keep the colors from smudging.
9. If the clay mask is also intact, it may be painted and displayed as well.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Combine this mask-making project with an in-depth study of El Día de Los Muertos.

LITERATURE LINKS

Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead by G. Ancona
Pablo experiences a very special Día de los Muertos as he remembers his dear grandmother during the fun, preparations, and traditional festivities.

CENTRAL PLATEAU

CULTURAL CLUES

For the celebrations surrounding El Día de los Muertos, children enjoy many different types of toys, games, and candies. Since they are a prime symbol of this holiday, many things are decorated with skeletons.

The hand carved wooden string puppets are frequently sold in Mexican markets.

STRING PUPPETS FOR EL DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

MATERIALS

heavy tagboard
small brads
markers
balloon sticks
fishing twine

DIRECTIONS

1. Trace and cut the puppet pattern on tag.
2. Decorate as desired.
3. Attach the arms and legs with small brads.
4. Glue a 17" balloon stick down the center of the back of the puppet.
5. Cut two pieces of twine 13" and two pieces 10".
6. Puncture a very small hole on the dot at the top of each arm and leg.
6. Thread and tie the longer pieces of twine through the armholes and the shorter twine through the holes of the legs.
7. With the arms and legs in a parallel position with the body, tie all four string together three inches from the ends. Keep an even tension on all the strings.
8. Pull the strings. The legs and arms will jump. If the legs and arms don't rotate very much, loosen the brads a little.

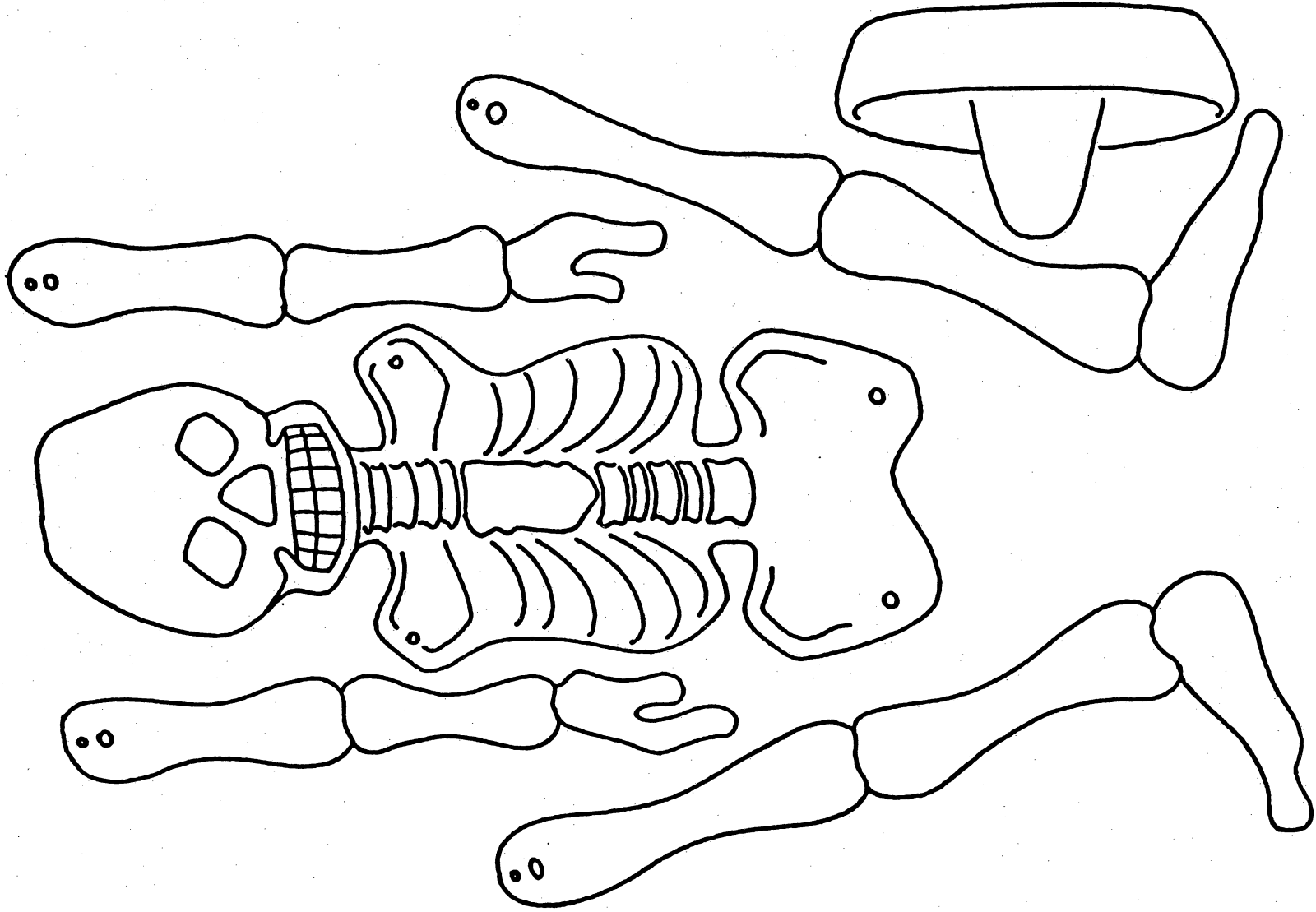
CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Combine these puppets with other decorations for El Día de Los Muertos or Halloween.

LITERATURE LINKS

Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead by G. Ancona

The traditional bread is being baked for the fiesta, candy makers are making the special candies, and children are making their little skeletons. Pablo anticipates a very special celebration this year as he remembers his grandmother, who passed away two years ago.



CENTRAL PLATEAU

CULTURAL CLUES

One of the greatest Mexican arts is mural painting. Even before the Spanish conquest, murals were popular with the Mayans. Diego Rivera is one Mexican artist who helped revive this wall painting technique. Influenced by the Mayans and by the Aztecs, Rivera painted about Mexican history, politics and society.

Diego Rivera was born in this Central Plateau region in 1886, and attended art classes from a very young age. Later in life, he studied art in Spain, France and Italy. When he returned to Mexico in 1921, he became a leader in the government-sponsored Painter's Syndicate. He developed his own unique style for painting murals. Many of his murals showed Mexican culture and society in general. Rivera was very instrumental in persuading lawmakers to allow Mexican artists to decorate government buildings.

For a brief period of time, Rivera changed from painting on murals, and concentrated on painting with an easel. In the 1940's, however, he returned to painting murals.

DIEGO RIVERA STUDY AND MURAL PAINTING

MATERIALS

The book Diego by Jeanette Winter
Other informational books about Diego Rivera and murals
Poster paper for sharing ideas
Large paper for painting the mural
Poster paints and brushes

DIRECTIONS

1. Read aloud the story of Diego Rivera.
2. Ask thought questions orally or print them, and have students work in groups to prepare their answers.
Thought Questions:
 1. Who are some of the people who helped Diego Rivera? How did they help?
 2. What are murals? Where did Rivera get his ideas for the murals he painted?
 3. How did Rivera show his love for his people and for his country?
3. Share ideas and answers on big poster paper.
4. Provide each group with large paper for the mural. (You may choose to do this as a whole class project, with students assigned specific tasks in the process).
5. Students should first sketch a large scene from either their daily life, or the daily life of a Mexican. The drawing could show something

that is important to everyone in the class. It could be something you are currently studying, a familiar scene or place, or a picture of each person doing what they love to do best. Paint the mural with bright, bold colors in Rivera's style, and display.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

This study of Rivera may be planned to coincide with Open House, or other activities at school when parents may enjoy the artwork.

LITERATURE LINKS

Diego by J. Winter

This is a discussion of Diego Rivera's childhood, and how it influenced the famous painter's art.

CHAPTER THREE

GULF COAST

REGIONAL REALITIES

Trade winds blow across this Gulf Coastal region, and drop lots of moisture in their path. Some areas can receive as much as 120 inches of rain per year.

Many refineries and other industries operate in this region, allowing Mexico to be the fourth largest producer of oil in the world. The large harbor is ideal for shipping, so Mexico has the ability to export. The main port, Veracruz can be reached by sea, land, air or rail.

The coasts of Mexico are obviously the best place to find a huge variety of fish. Red snapper is the most popular. Ceviche is made by marinating the snapper in citrus juices and onion.

Since the coastline is very tropical, many fruits and vegetables are grown here. Avocados, one of the staples of Mexican cuisine, are also grown in abundance in this region.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE GULF COAST:

FLAN
SACOS
BARK PAINTING
TISSUE PAINTING
FAMILY PICTURES

GULF COAST



GULF COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

In the Gulf Coastal Region of Mexico, particularly in the city of Veracruz, you may see Indians in baggy white pants and voluminous white shirts. These people are Totonac Indians who sell vanilla in the streets. Strong vanilla bean extract flavors many Mexican desserts, particularly Flan, one of the most popular Mexican delicacies.

FLAN

MATERIALS

1/2 plus 1/2 cups sugar, separated
2 cups milk
4 eggs, beaten
vanilla
casserole dish

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Caramelize the flan mold: Place 1/2 cup sugar in a small skillet. Cook over medium heat until sugar begins to melt. Reduce heat a little. Heat until the sugar is melted and golden brown. Stir constantly. Spoon the caramel over bottom and sides of flan pan. Pour on flan mixture.
3. Flan mixture: Heat the milk until it is very hot, but not boiling. Pour slowly into the bowl containing beaten eggs, sugar, vanilla. Mix well. Pour into casserole dish.
4. Place this casserole dish in a shallow pan of water. Bake at 350 degrees for about 1 1/2 hours. Run a knife along the outside of the flan, place a flat dish over the flan, and turn upside down. Serve warm, or refrigerate.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Students will enjoy sampling the flan with a choice of fresh fruit toppings, honey, or whipped cream.

LITERATURE LINKS

Mexican Food and Drink by M. Alvarado.

Explores a wide variety of the foods and beverages of Mexico.
Included are many pictures and regional facts.

GULF COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

Children of all ages enjoy some friendly, energetic competition. This game is similar to the North American sack races, and is played by the same rules. The only difference is the Spanish name for sacks, sacos.

SACOS

MATERIALS

even number of players
judges at the end of the course
sacks or other large, sturdy bags for hopping
whistle

DIRECTIONS

1. At the whistle, the first player from each team jumps into the sack, and begins hopping toward the goal line. A judge or referee should be there to double check. Players should decide in advance what should happen if someone falls out of the bag: start at the beginning again, or continue from that same point.
2. Player returns to his home team, hops out of the bag, passes it to player number two, and goes to the back of his line.
3. Play continues in this manner until all players have hopped. The first team to finish their entire line-up is the winner.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Enjoy this game, and other traditional Mexican games outside the classroom. Other country's traditional games may also be explored at this time.

LITERATURE LINKS

Games, Games, Games by R, Sandoval.

This book presents a sampling of traditional games played by Mexican children.

GULF COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

From the time that he was very young, David Afario Siqueiros had an interest in painting and politics. When he was twenty-three years old, he went to Europe to study art, and to travel. He returned three years later to work in politics. He was very active in Mexican government, and organized labor unions.

He painted many murals in schools across Mexico. He, and other painters of his time, also developed another form of interesting art: bark painting. Amatl paper was made by pounding several layers of wet bark. This was pressed flat and allowed to dry. The paper resembled brown wrapping paper, although it was thicker and wrinkled. Some Indians made dolls from this dark paper. Other people painted on it. This look can be created by painting on brown paper grocery bags. The paintings were usually of birds, animals or flowers, and were painted in fluorescent colors. They used a heavy black paint to outline the design.

BARK PAINTING

MATERIALS

brown paper grocery bags
brown paint
bright paints
brushes

DIRECTIONS

1. Roughly tear the bag into a rectangular shape.
2. Paint the rectangle with heavy, dark brown paint. Allow to dry.
3. Crumple the bag into a loose ball. Unfold it and smooth it open.
4. Sketch a design pertaining to some aspect of Mexican culture or history.
5. Paint it with bright colors, taking care to outline the design with black. Display.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Combine this art project with a more complete study of Mexican or Latino artists.

LITERATURE LINKS

Read about labor unions, mural painting, and Siqueiros' contemporary, Orozco.

GULF COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

Almost any fiesta or Mexican celebration will include colorful tissue paper flowers. They are a traditional craft in all of Mexico. These flowers vary in size and style, and are readily available in the markets and on street corners.

TISSUE PAPER FLOWERS

MATERIALS

tissue paper squares (5 to 10 inches)
crafters' wire
green floral tape
stapler

DIRECTIONS

1. Make a neat stack of 8 tissue paper squares.
2. Keeping the stack together, fold the stack in half two times, making a small square.
3. Cut a heart shape, using the point as the bottom of the heart. Keep parts of the folded edges intact.
4. Unfold the first square, so the stack still looks like a long rectangle. (Keep one fold).
5. Firmly staple the very center of the tissue paper.
6. One layer at a time, lift and crimp the tissue paper. Squeeze firmly at the base where the staple is.
7. Tie the wire at the base of the flower, and wrap securely with green floral tape.
8. Mount several together in an arrangement, or display them individually.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Students may wish to decorate the classroom for Cinco de Mayo, or for the celebration of any Mexican holiday. Flowers can be grouped together, or displayed individually.

LITERATURE LINKS

Piñatas and Paper Flowers by L. Perl.

Contains brief descriptions of several Hispanic holidays as celebrated in various areas.

GULF COAST

CULTURAL CLUES

In most Mexican families, the family unit is of utmost importance. Often a household will include extended family, including grandparents, and in-laws. There are many examples of the warmth and closeness of a loving family.

In the book, Family Pictures, the author shares some of her own experiences in her Hispanic family. Although she grew up in Texas, her town is very close to the Mexican border, and the Gulf Coastal influences are very similar across the national borders.

FAMILY PICTURES

MATERIALS

vocabulary list
map that show Texas and Mexico
paper for student book

DIRECTIONS

1. Introduce some new words that students will experience in the book. See Vocabulary list included.
2. Share the story Family Pictures.
3. Individually, or in groups, students should make a list of 10-12 things they remember from their own childhood. Group sharing, and generating ideas should begin this stage.
4. Stop to share frequently, so their memories can be freshened by others' ideas.
5. Compile these ideas into a personal Family Pictures book. Each page should be illustrated and explained in a sentence or two. Advanced students will be able to write more completely about each memory, and will be able to put the events in chronological order, or other significant order.
6. Share these books with another class.

Suggested Introductory Vocabulary:

Mexico	mesquite
cakewalk	curandera
tamales	tortillas
nopal cactus	piñata

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

This activity may be combined with the AZTEC CODEX book activity also explained in this book. Children may also bring in their own baby picture for a classroom display.

LITERATURE LINKS

Family Pictures by C. Garza.

The author describes her own experiences growing up in Texas. Text is in English and Spanish, and many fabulous illustrations are included.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS

REGIONAL REALITIES

The Chiapas region is also filled with great contrasts. There are long stretches of beach on the Pacific Coast, and rugged mountains with dense forests and deep valleys. There is also open land with cactuses and scrub.

The state of Oaxaca is rich with minerals such as gold, silver, coal, uranium, and onyx, however, it is still considered one of the poorest states in Mexico.

The famous Benito Juarez, a Zapotec Indian, came from a poor peasant family in this region, and rose to become President of Mexico in 1858. Oaxaca and the surrounding areas are famous for their music, dance and religious festivals.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS:

PAN DE MUERTOS
LA PIÑATA
LA PIÑATA
HILL OF FIRE
BENITO JUAREZ

CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS



CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS

CULTURAL CLUES

In addition to the toys and games that children enjoy during El Día De Los Muertos, there is a special bread prepared. This bread is either taken to the cemetery, or placed on the altar at home. See additional ideas for El Día De Los Muertos in Chapter two.

PAN DE MUERTOS

MATERIALS

1/2 cup milk
1/4 cup butter
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1 envelope dry yeast
2 eggs
2 1/3 cups flour
1/2 tsp. cinnamon

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat milk to scalding. Remove from heat and stir in butter, bit by bit. Add sugar and salt. Let cool.
2. In a bowl, mix yeast with 1/4 cup warm water. Let stand about 5 minutes. Add milk mixture, 1 egg, 1 egg yolk, and flour. Blend well.
3. Place dough on a floured surface and knead until smooth and velvety, about 5 minutes. Place in a bowl, cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size. Takes about 1 1/2 hours.
4. Knead again on the floured surface.
5. Cut off about 1/3 cup size piece of dough. Set aside. Divide remaining dough in 3 equal parts. Shape each section into a rope about 12 inches long.
6. Braid these rope together, pressing ends to hold securely. Place on a greased baking sheet and join ends firmly to make a wreath.
7. Divide reserve dough in half. Form each piece into a bone shape. Cross these two bones on top of wreath.
8. Cover lightly and let rise in a warm place for about 30 minutes or until puffy looking. Brush gently with 1 slightly beaten egg white.
9. Mix cinnamon and 2 tsp. sugar, sprinkle onto wreath, avoiding the bones.
10. Bake at 350 degrees for about 35 minutes, or until nicely browned.
11. Cut in wedges. Serve warm, with butter.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Include this bread making lesson with a complete study of El Día de los Muertos.

LITERATURE LINKS

Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead by G. Ancona.

The traditional bread is being baked, the candy makers are preparing the special candies, and the children are making their skeletons for the Day of the Dead. Pablo remembers his grandmother who passed away two years ago. The celebration will have special significance this year.

CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS

CULTURAL CLUES

All throughout Mexico, the piñata is a vital part of nearly all Christmas and birthday celebrations. Some Mexicans make their own special piñata for the particular celebration, but they can be easily purchased in the markets as well.

The usual way to play this game is for the piñata to be suspended from a rope, and someone raises and lowers it randomly. Blindfolded children strike at it until one succeeds in breaking it.

LA PIÑATA

MATERIALS

one filled piñata (see directions included for making a piñata)
blindfold
long wooden stick
long rope
low hanging tree branch or other device to hang piñata

DIRECTIONS

1. Hang the piñata from a low tree branch or other device. Someone needs to control the end of the rope.
2. One at a time, tie the blindfold on a child.
3. Place the stick in their hands and gently spin the child around a few turns.
4. Tell him to try to hit the piñata.
5. Have the person controlling the rope, pull the rope up and down to make the piñata dance.
6. Make sure each child has a chance to hit the piñata before it breaks and the candy scatters.
7. As the children are hitting the piñata, have them chant the poems.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

No true Mexican celebration is complete without a piñata filled with candies for the children. Have the students learn the traditional chants to repeat during the game.

PIÑATA

No quiero oro,
Ni quiero plata.
Yo lo que quiero
Es quebrar la piñata.

PIÑATA

I don't want gold,
I don't want silver,
But what I want
Is to break that piñata!

LITERATURE LINKS

Pancho's Piñata by S. Czernecki

This book is the story of Pancho, and how he reveals the true meaning of Christmas.

The Piñata Maker by G. Ancona

This is an English/Spanish modern-day picture of an immigrant family involved in the making of piñatas. It also includes information on the integration of Mexican and American culture.

CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS

CULTURAL CLUES

The piñata has an interesting history. The Chinese were probably the first to fill a container with candy. It was quite likely Marco Polo who brought the idea to Italy. In Italy, rich matrons filled a clay pot with jewels and trinkets for their guests. There it was called a pignatta.

Soon the idea spread to Spain. An olla (clay pot) was used to hold the gifts. The Spaniards brought the idea to Mexico when they came, and the Mexicans are the ones who elaborately decorated the piñata with paper mache and tissue paper.

LA PIÑATA

MATERIALS

large round balloon
1 inch wide newspaper strips
liquid starch
tissue paper in at least 3 different bright colors
newspapers
masking tape
rubber cement
heavy twine or cord
cardboard for cones to make star
aluminum foil
hard wrapped candies

DIRECTIONS

1. Blow up the balloon. Knot.
2. Dip the newspaper strips in the liquid starch and apply to balloon. Wrap about three or four layers smoothly. Leave exposed about three inches around knot.
3. Glue 5 cardboard cones on wet piñata to make a star. Allow to dry completely.
4. Deflate the balloon by snipping the knotted end of the balloon. Remove balloon.
5. Attach twine or heavy cord by circling piñata several times. Use masking tape to hold the cord in place. Make a sturdy loop at the top.
6. Decorate the piñata with tissue paper ruffles (see directions included). Glue on securely. Leave a space open so you can fill the piñata with candies.
7. Wrap each cone tip with aluminum foil. Include tassels on the end of each cone shape.
8. Fill the piñata with the hard candies. Carefully decorate over the hole.

Directions for tissue paper ruffles:

1. Begin with a piece of tissue paper 6 inches wide, and as long as possible.
2. Fold the tissue paper in half the long way, so it is a long 3 inch wide strip.
3. Cut slashes every 1/8 inch along the folded edge. Cut to about 1/2 inch of edges all along.
4. Unfold strip and refold to reverse side. Glue together.
5. Glue on piñata.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Use this piñata with the poem and directions included in the previous activity. Be sure to include plenty of treats inside.

LITERATURE LINKS

Pancho's Piñata by S. Czernecki

This is the story of how Pancho reveals the true meaning of Christmas.

CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS

CULTURAL CLUES

Most of the mountains in Mexico are volcanoes. While not too many are actually active today, there are many legends and stories about these mountains. The Aztecs and Mayans both have stories of the significance of certain volcanoes and mountains.

Hill of Fire is a true story of the 1943 eruption of the Paricutín volcano in Mexico. A farmer was unhappy because he thought nothing exciting ever happened to him. One day, the ground opened up, and a volcano erupted right in the middle of his field. The whole village was covered with lava and ash. Fortunately, everyone reached safety. Eventually, they built new homes, and a whole new village. From that point on, the farmer was content with his life.

HILL OF FIRE

MATERIALS

Hill of Fire by T. Lewis
paper
pencil

DIRECTIONS

1. Share the story of Hill of Fire.
2. Students should write their own legend of why this volcano is called El Monstruo (The Monster). They may base their ideas on facts from the story, or create a completely unique version.
3. Share or compile into a class book of Paricutín.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Students could research the four types of volcanic activity: extinct, dormant, intermittent, and active. They will enjoy learning about locations, and activity of various volcanoes.

LITERATURE LINKS

Hill of Fire by T. Lewis

A story based on the eruption of the volcano Parícutín. Also available in a cassette/book version.

Additional research materials on volcanoes

CHIAPAS HIGHLANDS

CULTURAL CLUES

Benito Juarez was a Zapotec Indian born in Oaxaca. He practiced law there, and became governor of the state of Oaxaca. Later he was elected President of Mexico. He tried to solve many of Mexico's problems, and sought public education for women. Benito Juarez is best known, however, for his commitment to assuring civil liberties for all Mexicans.

BENITO JUAREZ

MATERIALS

groups of four
large poster paper, one per group
markers
research materials on Lincoln and Juarez

DIRECTIONS

1. After a brief introduction to Benito Juarez, students should peruse the research materials in search of similarities between Abraham Lincoln and Benito Juarez. For example, both became President in their country, despite a very humble beginning; both were very poor and had to teach themselves to read and write; both fought for the rights of the poor people of their country...
2. The poster paper should be divided into a T-chart. LINCOLN should be printed at the top on one side, and JUAREZ printed on the other. Under each heading, the similarities should be written.
3. A T-chart on another poster paper can be drawn to note any major differences the students find.
4. Share these charts and display.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

This study of Benito Juarez could be combined with a study of American Presidents. Since there are so many similarities between Abraham Lincoln and Benito Juarez, this would be a good time to have students realize the connection.

LITERATURE LINKS

Research materials for Abraham Lincoln
Research materials for Benito Juarez

CHAPTER FIVE

YUCATÁN PENINSULA

REGIONAL REALITIES

In the south of Mexico, the Yucatán Peninsula juts out into the Gulf of Mexico. The peninsula is generally a flat, low-lying plain. In the north, the Yucatán is dry and rich with oil. The south is a steaming jungle, filled with exotic animals. Until the last thirty years, this region was quite isolated. Recent improvements in roads and railway have connected the Yucatán to the rest of the mainland, however.

Centuries before the Spaniards arrived, the Yucatán was the home of the Mayan Indians. They lived in huts and built impressive temples, pyramids, palaces, and tombs.

Many Mayan ruins still remain at least partially intact in this region. This area is known to have the most powerful indigenous culture still remaining in Mexico. They are keeping their unique Mayan identity.

The plants in the Yucatán are very important. The sisal plant has strong fibers used to make rope. Sapodilla trees produce chicle, which is processed into chewing gum.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE YUCATÁN PENINSULA:

CHOCOLATE CALIENTE

SPANISH VOCABULARY BINGO

CODEX BOOKS

JUAN DIEGO Y LA VIRGIN DE GUADALUPE

TISSUE PAPER FLAG

YUCATÁN



YUCATÁN

CULTURAL CLUES

In a hot country like Mexico, beverages are a very important part of the culture. Fruit juices are popular in the south, and coffee is drunk everywhere. However, a drink that has special roots in this particular part of the country is Chocolate Caliente--a version of hot chocolate. This drink was a specialty for the kings.

The origins of the cacao bean can be traced to Mexico. It is believed that an Aztec Indian first found the bean, and tossed it into the fire. He was captivated by the rich aroma we now associate with baking brownies, hot fudge, and chocolate chip cookies. When Cortes arrived, he was so impressed with the bean that he carried some back to Spain. Soon chocolate was spreading throughout Europe.

Since milk cows were not common yet in the Americas, Chocolate Caliente would have been made with water. Today it is almost always made with milk.

CHOCOLATE CALIENTE

MATERIALS

4 squares Baker's chocolate, broken into small pieces
2 cups skim milk
2 or 3 drops vanilla extract
pinch of cinnamon
pinch of ground cloves

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the ingredients in a saucepan and heat gently. Stir constantly.
2. Do not allow the mixture to boil. When it gets hot, whisk rapidly. (The beautiful Mexican wooden tool is called a molnillo).
3. Pour into cups. Sprinkle with a little more cinnamon if desired.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

Students will enjoy sipping on this warm beverage while listening to stories about the history of chocolate, the legends of Mexico, or while watching videos of the Mexican landscape.

This recipe will need to be adjusted according to the number of students in your class. Students may also enjoy sharing some of these ingredients from home.

LITERATURE LINKS

Mexican Food and Drink by M. Alvarado.

This book provides a thorough investigation of Mexican regional foods and their specific preparations.

YUCATÁN

CULTURAL CLUES

Our English language is really quite a mixture of languages. We have taken words from other languages, and modified some words to suit our language patterns. The Mexican Spanish language is also a mixture of language roots. Some words date back to the colonial Spanish era, while others reflect the Indian influence. Still other Spanish words used in Mexico are variations of English. Certain words and expressions vary by region in Mexico, but there are some common words that would be useful in any area of Mexico.

Playing this game is an excellent way to teach children some basic vocabulary and expressions.

SPANISH VOCABULARY BINGO

MATERIALS

BINGO cards, one per student (included)
markers or chips
BINGO word cards for the caller (directions included)

DIRECTIONS

To prepare BINGO cards:

1. Copy each word on a separate 2x2 inch card.
- 2 Randomly assign each word a letter B-I-N-G-O, or make a little card to correspond with each letter/word combination.

Suggested Spanish words for game cards:

Spanish:	English:
plaza	public square
patio	courtyard
sombrero	wide-brimmed hat
fiesta	feast or party day
piñata	container filled with candy
buenos días	good morning
buenos tardes	good afternoon
hola	hello
adios	good bye
muchas gracias	thank you
por favor	please
mañana	tomorrow
el ojo	eye
la cara	face
la mano	hand

la pelota	ball
la calle	street
la cama	bed
la silla	chair
la escuela	school

1. Distribute blank BINGO cards.
2. Post the list of Spanish words, so students can copy any word for each square.
3. Practice saying the words as they write them.
4. When all cards are complete, the players put a marker on the free space.
5. The caller announces the letters and words.
6. Player calls out BINGO when he has 5 squares covered in a row. BINGO may be scored horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.
7. Player then repeats each Spanish word as he removes the marker.
8. Prizes may be awarded. Play continues.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

A fun way for students to see basic Spanish around them is to label basic classroom objects in Spanish. For example, a small construction paper label printed with the word "reloj" will help students learn the Spanish word for clock.

Supply several easy Spanish/English dictionaries for students to browse through at their leisure.

LITERATURE LINKS

Spanish Picture Dictionary by A. Wilkes.

A simple, colorful picture dictionary for learners of all ages.

		!		

YUCATÁN

CULTURAL CLUES

The Aztec Indians developed a twelve part calendar that corresponds with our current twelve month calendar. A sample of a twelve-ton disk calendar is on display in a museum in Mexico City. This disk calendar is very important since it shows us how the Aztecs communicated in written form. They used a collection of symbols to write their ideas. We have learned many Aztec symbols from this one artifact.

Unfortunately, the other great sources for Aztec symbols were destroyed by the Spaniards during the Conquest. The fold-out books containing history and other cultural facts were called "Codex." The Spaniards destroyed almost all these books during the Conquest. We do know what they looked like, and can imagine some of the information they recorded, but we do not know exactly. These fold-out picture books recorded history, calendars, gods, and daily life of the Aztecs. Their method of communication was by pictures and symbols.

CODEX BOOKS

MATERIALS

2 sheets 8 1/2" x 11" white paper,
2 pieces white poster board 5"x6"
markers
pencils
glue

DIRECTIONS

1. Fold each of the 2 papers in half the long way, so they look like tacos.
2. Cut each paper along the fold. Now you should have four long, narrow sheets.
3. Fold each in half the long way, so it looks more like a hamburger.
4. Glue all four sheets in a long chain, end to end. Overlap the pages just a little.
5. Glue the end pieces of the long folded paper to the poster board. The book should now fold up accordion style.
6. Decorate your pages and cover with pictures, poems, or illustrate a story.
7. Share.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

You may wish to assign a topic for these codex books, or have the students illustrate things they have been studying. Another suggestion is to have them research an Indian tribe, and record the facts on these fold-out pages.

LITERATURE LINKS

The Sad Night by S. Mathews

The illustrations are very colorful and show the Aztec style used for the CODEX books.

YUCATÁN

CULTURAL CLUES

In almost all Mexican towns, the church is located next to the zócalo, or central plaza. Religious festivals center around the church or cathedral. The entryways are often decorated with flowers and leaves, reflecting the Indian style.

The year round calendar of the Mexicans is packed with holidays and religious festivals. One of the most important feast days honors their national patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe. In many villages, celebrations begin the week before December 12. A huge fair is held, and people visit the churches to honor their saint.

JUAN DIEGO Y LA VIRGIN DE GUADALUPE

MATERIALS

teams of three or four
pencil
paper

DIRECTIONS

1. Have students act as new reporters preparing for an interview with Juan Diego. Before the interview, they need to prepare a list a questions.
2. Have students prepare a list of leading, prodding questions that will enable Juan to share his story.
3. When lists are complete, ask for volunteers to play the part of Juan. As he is interviewed, he can share his own ideas, or recall the actual events as accurately as possible.
4. Allow several students to be "Juan."
5. Students may also wish to act out the roles of the Virgin and the bishop.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

It is suggested that the students either read or listen to the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe. If this book, or a similar one, is not available, the teacher can share the following information about this special holiday.

According to legend, Juan Diego had a vision while he was out gathering herbs. The woman he saw told him to go to the bishop and have him build a shrine in this exact location.

When Juan Diego approached the bishop, Juan was told to go away, and that he was crazy. Three days later, the Virgin appeared again.

This time she told him to go to a barren hillside and pick the roses he would find there. Juan knew that no roses grew there, but only cacti could grow in the sandy hillside. He went anyway, and was amazed to find roses growing there when he arrived.

Juan Diego gathered the roses and brought them back to the Virgin. She wrapped up the roses in his cloak and sent him back to visit the bishop again. When Juan opened the cloak, the roses disappeared, and a picture of the Virgin appeared. The bishop then realized that it was a miracle, and built the church to honor the Virgin. She later became the patron saint of Mexico.

LITERATURE LINKS

The Lady of Guadalupe by T. de Paola

Retells the story of the poor Mexican Indian's experience with the appearance of the Lady of Guadalupe.

YUCATÁN

CULTURAL CLUES

Long ago in Mexico, when volcanoes still spewed lava, and jaguars hissed messages to man, wandering peoples listened to their leaders. A Mexican legend explains that the Aztecs were led to a land where they saw an eagle with a snake in its mouth, sitting on a cactus. They named this place Tenochtitlán, which means "the place of the cactus stone." Today we call this place Mexico City. The Aztecs worked hard, built stone pyramids with temples on top. They built a huge empire in less than two hundred years. Moctezuma, their king, was the most powerful man in Mexico. Eventually, through a long and gruesome battle, the Spaniards overtook the Aztecs. The stone pyramids and temples were torn down, and Spanish style churches and public buildings were constructed, using the very same stones.

The Mexican flag still reflects this Aztec journey with an eagle perched on a cactus on a rock, with a snake in its beak. To remind the Mexicans of these great Indian ancestors, today's national flag of Mexico has three vertical stripes. The green on the left stands for independence. The white section in the middle stands for religion, and also has the nopal (cactus) and snake coat of arms. This emblem is based on the ancient Aztec legend about the founding of Mexico City. The red third section on the right stands for union.

TISSUE PAPER FLAG

MATERIALS

prepared flag pattern if necessary
white 11" x 18" paper
tissue paper in green, white, red, gray, light brown, dark brown, and yellow, cut into 1"x1" squares
glue
small paper plates or paper towels
pencil with eraser intact
heavy tag for mounting completed flag

DIRECTIONS

1. Divide white paper into equal thirds. Have students sketch flag on the white paper, or provide a prepared copy for them. The design should be balanced, and fill the entire 11" x 18" piece.

** Tissue paper procedure: squeeze a generous amount of white glue on the paper plate or paper towel, wrap a tissue paper square evenly around the eraser end of a pencil, hold tightly, dip in the glue, carefully place the tissue paper on the design and hold for a few seconds.

2. Beginning with the center design, have students fill in the emblem with appropriate tissue paper squares. Less experienced students may choose to include just the eagle and snake. More advanced students may include the cactus and garland, etc...
3. Continue the tissue paper procedure until all sections are filled in. Let dry flat.
4. Mount the flag on heavy tag or cardboard and display.

CLASSROOM SUGGESTIONS

This flag project would be fitting around Cinco de Mayo, or with a study of Mexico or the Aztec Indians.

Learn the following poem:

La Bandera Mexicana

Verde, la eperanza amada,
Blanca, la inocente vida,
Colorado enrojecida
Es la llama del amor.

The Mexican Flag

Green the beloved hope
White thin innocent life
Reddish red
Is the flame of love.

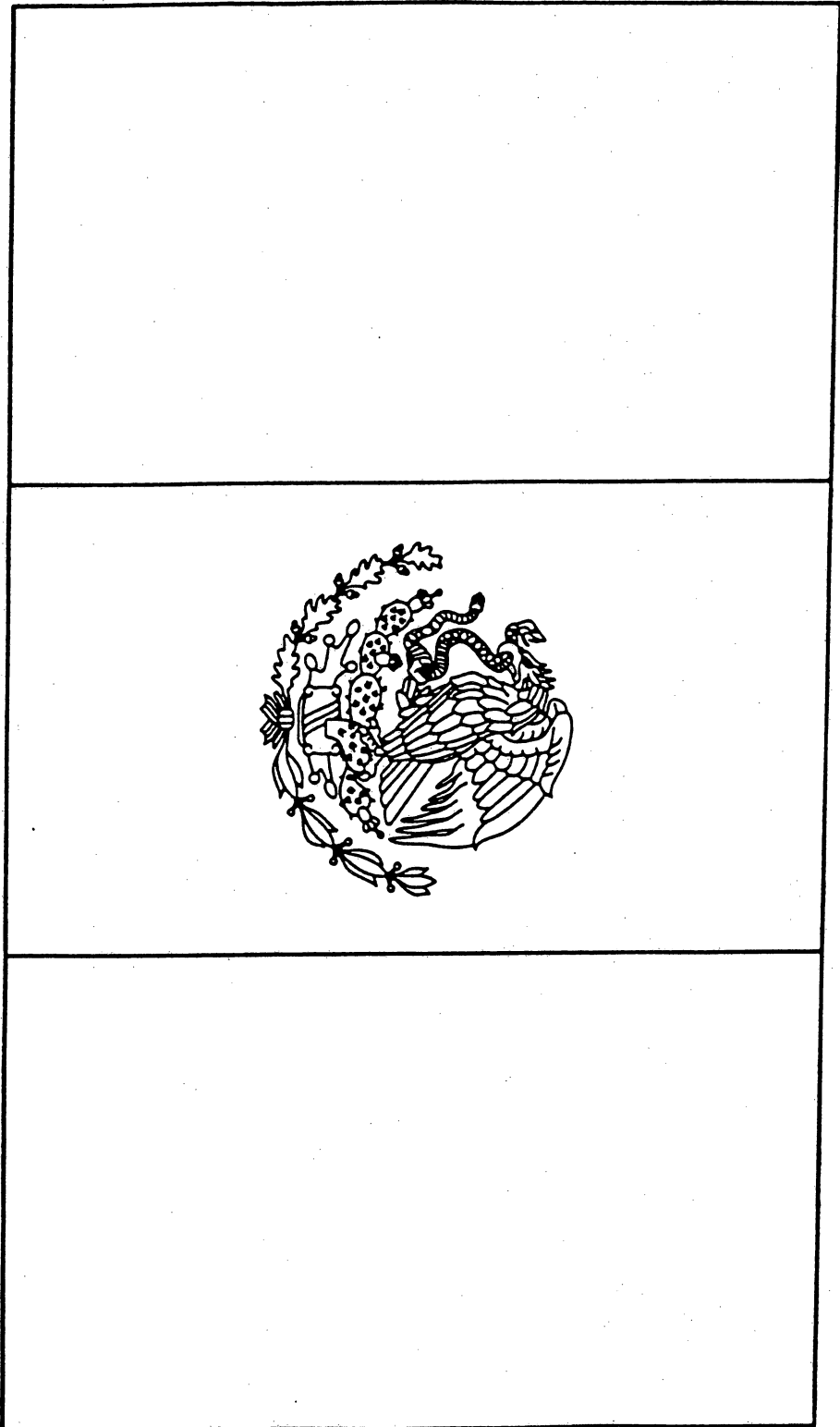
LITERATURE LINKS

The Sad Night: The Story of an Aztec Victory and a Spanish Loss by S. Mathews

The illustrations are very colorful and show the Aztec style used for the CODEX books.

Pyramid of the Sun, Pyramid of the Moon by L. Fisher

A history of pyramids in Teotihuacán and the Aztecs. Tells the story of how the Aztecs evolved from the Toltecs, how they lived and worshipped, and how they were eventually overcome by the Spaniards.



TORTILLA SOUP

4 5-6 inch corn tortillas
2 tsp olive oil

2 14 1/2 ounce cans low-salt chicken broth
2 cups water
3/4 cups canned Mexican-style stewed tomatoes with juices
1 bay leaf
1 garlic clove, pressed
1/4 tsp ground cumin
1/8 tsp dried crushed red pepper
12 ounces skinless boneless chicken breast halves, cut into 1/2 inch-wide-strips
2 green onions
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
2 TBSP fresh lime juice

To make tortilla strips:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brush one side of tortillas with oil; cut in half. Stack halves and cut crosswise into 1/4 inch-wide-strips. Spread strips on nonstick baking sheet. Bake until light golden, about 15 minutes. Cool on baking dish and set aside.

Combine broth, water, tomatoes, bay leaf, garlic, cumin and red pepper in saucepan; bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer for 5 minutes. Add chicken; simmer just until cooked through, about 5 minutes. Stir in green onions, cilantro and lime juice. Season with salt and pepper.

Ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with tortillas strips and more chopped cilantro if desired. Serves 4.

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