



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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The Mexican and Chicano Mural Movements

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by María Cardalliaguet Gómez-Málaga

As an educator and as a language teacher, my priority is to inculcate a global consciousness and an international perspective based in respect to all my students. I consider it crucial to teach them to value how lucky they are to grow up in a multi-cultural society. Most of the high school students I teach are not aware of the innumerable personal and educational advantages this society/environment provides them. As a Spanish teacher, I try to do this through the study of identity, society and culture of the many countries that form what has been called the Hispanic/Latino World. I have always in mind the "5Cs"- Cultures, Connections (among disciplines), Comparisons (between cultures), Communication, and Communities- that the National Standards of Foreign Language Learning promote, and I intend to put them into context in this unit.

The present unit offers me the opportunity to introduce art in the classroom in a meaningful way and as an instrument to teach history, culture and language. Some of my students have not yet been exposed to different artistic movements, and they find it difficult to interpret what they see. In this unit, students will learn about the renaissance of public mural painting in Mexico after the Revolution (1910-1917) and about Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros, the three leading Mexican muralists, who turned revolutionary propaganda into one of the most powerful and significant achievements in the 20th century art. They will recognize the importance of images and how art reflects and influences the social, political and cultural development of society. After considering the artists' international influence, and how they trespassed boundaries when assigned different projects in the United States as part of Roosevelt's New Deal, we will move to the young Chicano artists and activists who developed a strong new mural movement to support social activism during the 1960s. We will then focus on learning how this Chicano movement developed and we will discuss how to comprehend and interpret the symbols Chicano artists represented.

By exploring Mexican and Chicano muralism, the present unit will help students value, recognize, analyze and interpret art by using their critical thinking skills. They will practice reading, writing, and speaking in Spanish.

The unit will be used at The Sound School Regional Vocational Aquaculture and Agriculture Center in New Haven. It is a unique magnet school with a hands-on marine and agriculture program which offers students a blend of academic and practical education, and which encourages interdisciplinary study. The Sound School enrolls students from New Haven and twenty-one surrounding towns, creating a diverse community that reinforces student's social and intellectual learning. The result is a racially, ethnically and socio-economically diverse student body with a broad range of academic abilities in which we encourage students to be participants in a multi-cultural society by involving them in a wide based exciting high school experience.

I will use this unit with my Spanish 4 students, who have an Intermediate level on the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Performance Guidelines for K-12. Because they are able to use advanced grammatical structures, and we will be working in their proficiency in all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students will hone their higher order thinking skills as they learn to express complex opinions and analyze history through art, and art through history in Spanish.

Most of the class activities for this unit will be conducted in Spanish, but English will be used when necessary. With proper modifications, the unit could also be taught in Spanish 3 or in Advanced Placement Spanish classes.

The material will be covered over a period of about 20 sessions, each of which will be from forty to seventy minutes in length, depending on the rotational period system we follow in my school. This system allows me to use the longer periods to implement different more complex strategies and activities such as the "SPARC lesson," movies...

The Mexican Mural Movement: "los tres grandes"

Most leading Latin American artists had been influenced by Europe until the late-19th century, when the figures began acknowledging their own uniqueness. This process reached its zenith in the 1920s, with the Mexican Mural Movement.

The Mexican mural movement was born in the 20s, right after the Revolution (1910-1917) as a vehicle to represent the government's ideology and its vision of history. Along with other political, social and institutional changes which the country went during these post revolutionary years, there was a substantial change in art: Many Mexican artists demanded a new School of Art in order to break with any kind of academicism, and to create "real" Mexican art that would strengthen and reaffirm Mexican identity and the values of the Revolution. In 1913 President Victoriano Huerta appointed Alfredo Ramos Martinez director of the Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas, it was him who started the reform. Gerardo Murillo (also known as Dr. Alt) later became one of the first painters to rely heavily on Mexican themes.

The most important patron of the Mexican Mural Movement was José Vasconcelos, president Álvaro Obregón's Secretary of Public Education, during the late 1920s. Vasconcelos urged artists to paint murals as part of a broader effort to reinforce the knowledge of revolutionary history. The main purpose was to highlight and magnify Mexico's history, its pre-Columbian past and its national identity.

The government commissioned artists to decorate buildings with images of the cultural history of the country. Some of the first murals commissioned by Vasconcelos were in public buildings such as the chapel of San Pedro and San Pablo. Artists involved in these murals included Dr. Alt and Roberto Montenegro. The patios of the National Preparatory School were commissioned to José Clemente Orozco, Fermín Revueltas, Ramón Alba de la Canal and Jean Charlot. Diego Rivera began to work on the Bolívar Amphitheater in 1922. The following year, in 1923, David Alfaro Siqueiros was commissioned to work in the Colegio Chico.

Three figures were considered the artistic leaders of the mural movement in Mexico. They were internationally renowned and their work masterfully defined the essence of the movement. These three painters were José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros. They believed art was the highest form of human

expression and a key force in social revolution. ⁽¹⁾

José Clemente Orozco (1883-1949)

Orozco was born in Zapotlán, Jalisco, on November 22, 1883. When he was only seven years old his family moved to Mexico City, where he studied in La Academia de San Carlos (Saint Charles Academy). He became one of the great Mexican muralists. Contemporaries admired the social and political themes represented in his murals. Orozco met José Guadalupe Posada in an early stage of his life, and Posada's influence remained present in all of his work.

In 1922 Orozco began working on new projects with Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Their early murals painted together in these early 1920s, can be divided into two groups: The first consisted of works commissioned by Vasconcelos and completed before the end of his term in 1924, which represented his ideological and aesthetic vision. Desmond Rochford mentions Diego Rivera's first mural *Creation*, painted at the Bolivar Amphitheater as an example of this first group. The second group consisted of works (some also commissioned by Vasconcelos) that moved toward a more openly didactic, political and populist art, with which the Mexican mural movement has come to be popularly associated (Rochford, 33.)

Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros together created the Labor Union of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, with the goal of seeking to recuperate the art and mural painting sponsored by the Mexican government. The three painters shared the idea that art had to be public and for the people. They devoted themselves to large-scale murals in which they illustrated the history Mexico, its people, its society and the Revolution. They wanted to see the ideals of the Revolution put into practice in order to improve Mexican society.

When Orozco painted murals in the National Preparatory School (1923-1926), he chose the walls on the big patio. He used the first floor to deal with social criticism, and he developed themes related to the revolution on the second floor. On the ground floor, he erased some of his first murals in order to create works such as *Maternity* (1923), the only Orozco mural that remains at the school today. On the ground floor he painted more radical, "revolutionary" images such as *Destruction of the Old Order*, *The Trench*, *Revolutionary Trinity* (worker, farmer and soldier). The paintings in the stairwell dealt with the conquest, and with allegories about indigenous communities and evangelization: *Cortés* and *La Malinche*.

His work at the National Preparatory School was interrupted twice: in 1925 to paint *Omniscience* in the main staircase of La Casa de los Azulejos (House of Tiles) in Mexico City, and in 1926 to work on another mural in the Escuela Industrial de Orizaba (Workers Education Center of Orizaba) in the state of Veracruz, an interpretation of the post-revolutionary period titled *Social Revolution*.

Orozco moved to the United States in 1927 after his frescoes at the National Preparatory School were received negatively. He soon created paintings which showed the dehumanized and mechanical character of the big city, and which explored revolutionary Mexican themes. He worked in several colleges and universities: At Ponomo College in Claremont, California he painted the first murals in the United States; at the New School for Social Research in New York City he created an allegory of ideal human social orders; and at the Baker Library in Dartmouth College, New Hampshire he painted murals documenting American History. These frescoes represent Orozco's vision of America in two main parts. He painted the first part representing the pre-Columbian civilization, and on the second part he represented the post-Cortez America, starting with the conquest and ending with a portrayal of contemporary America formed by the constituent parts of its Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon experience. (Rochford, 103)

Back in Mexico he worked on a big project in the Fine Arts Palace. From 1936 to 1939, he worked in Guadalajara, where the identity of Mexico as a country and its history was considered an evolving process. He undertook one of his most important works at Guadalajara's Hospicio Cabañas, a cycle named *The Spanish Conquest of Mexico*. He created a conceptual review of historical Mexico, which represented the indigenous world, the heroic, and the religious inspiration of the conquest, and the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz before 1910.

Some other murals Orozco painted between 1939 and 1949 included: *Dive Bomber*, painted in 1940 in the Museum of Modern Art in New York; *Allegory of Mexico* in the Gabino Ortiz Library in Jiquilpan in 1940; *National Allegory* painted seven years later at the National Teacher's School in Mexico City; *Juárez, the Church and the Imperialists* painted in 1948 at The National Museum of History in Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City; and his final mural called *Hidalgo: the Great Mexican Revolutionary Legislation and the Liberty of Slaves* painted in 1949 in the Chamber of Deputies' Government Palace in Guadalajara.

He died in Mexico City, in 1949, but his work remained well known, and extremely influential, throughout the 20th century.

Diego Rivera

Diego María Rivera was born in Guanajato in 1886, but his twin brother died a couple of years later. The Rivera family moved to Mexico City where Diego entered the National School of Fine Arts (old Academy of San Carlos) when he was 11-years old. At his father's insistence, he enrolled in a military college but this adventure only lasted two weeks. Diego went back to San Carlos as a full time student. His teachers at the academy included Félix Parra, José María Velasco, and Santiago Rebull. All of them influenced Diego, but it was José Guadalupe Posada who exerted the greatest influence on the young artist. Rivera involved himself in political movements to oppose dictator Porfirio Díaz; in 1902 he was expelled because he took part in student protests.

In 1907 Teodoro Dehesa, governor of Veracruz, offered Diego Rivera a scholarship to study in Europe. He first went to Barcelona, where he studied for two years with the painter Eduardo Chicharro Agüera. He made friends with leading members of the Spanish avant-garde movement. In this prolific period, he produced a large amount of paintings, some of which he sent to Teodoro Dehesa as evidence that he was learning and improving.

Two years later Rivera went to Paris, Ghent and London. After a brief trip to Mexico, he settled in Paris, where he studied with the painter Victor Octave Guillonet. He met artists like Juan Gris, Picasso, Braque and Modigliani. His work then began to transition into cubism, as Rivera devoted himself to the cubist movement from 1913-1918. In 1918, after a controversy with some artists, he rejected cubism and returned to the classic forms.

In 1920 Rivera went to Italy, a trip that marked a change in his artistic style. There he studied the Renaissance, discovered Italian frescoes, and started conceiving of the possibility of painting for a larger public. He began to emphasize the idea of popular art which all the people could enjoy. This idea coincided with some of the concepts Vasconcelos, new minister of Public Education in Mexico, was establishing with his national program of popular education that included painting of murals in public buildings. Diego Rivera soon returned to his country after fourteen years in Europe.

Vasconcelos commissioned Rivera's first mural, called *Creation* and painted in 1922-1923 in the Bolívar Amphitheater, in the National Preparatory School in Mexico City. This work stylistically revealed the great

influence of Italian and Byzantine painting. Neither the theme nor the style was conceived within any popular or revolutionary Mexican tradition. The mural instead represented the dual male-female idea of creation, showing natural elements like fire, water or air.

Between 1923 and 1928, Rivera began painting some of his most important creations, a series of frescoes on the Ministry of Education in Mexico City and the National Agricultural School at Chapingo. These murals took on Mexican themes, and they represented the most significant stage in the development of the Mexican mural movement as a radical public art. (Rochford, 51)

By the time Diego had completed his work at the Ministry of Education, he and his assistants had painted 235 fresco panels, an area of 15,000 square feet. The building was divided in different sections, each with a set of courtyards and two floors. Rivera divided this space by different themes: "The Courtyard of Labor" -he depicted industrial, agricultural and artistic labors of the Mexicans-, "The Courtyard of Fiestas" -Mexican traditions, religious and political festivals-, *Corridos* , *Agrarian and Proletarian Revolutions* ...

From 1929 to 1935 Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco started painting a series of murals about the history of Mexico in the National Palace. Those murals were meant to reflect on the nation's past in order to explore and promote the layers of national meaning derived from the mistreatment and domination of indigenous peoples by Europeans since the colonial period. Two of the four cycles of murals were painted by Rivera and the other two by Orozco. Nowhere was the dual process of cultural institutionalization and emergent national identity more keenly articulated than in Rivera's *The History of Mexico* . (Rochford, 84)

Almost at the same time, the artist was commissioned to paint another mural by Dwight Morrow, the United States Ambassador to Mexico, in the Cortez Palace in Cuernavaca. This mural was significantly smaller than the one in the National Palace. In this piece, Rivera once again illustrated the history of Mexico by using the history of Cuernavaca as a metaphor of the conquest of the country.

Political fights in Mexico changed Rivera's career. Expelled from the Communist Party and criticized as a "false revolutionist" in his country, Rivera decided to go to the United States in 1930, where his reputation was completely different, and where he was considered the leading figure in Mexican muralism. He painted murals in San Francisco (at the Stock Exchange and the San Francisco Art Institute), Detroit (Detroit Institute of Arts). But probably the best-known mural was *Man at the Crossroads* commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller in the Radio Corporation Arts Building in the Rockefeller Center. In that New York location, Rivera shocked Rockefeller and others by painting the Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin. Rockefeller asked Rivera to remove Lenin's image and replace it with an anonymous figure, but the painter refused, and the mural was covered and then destroyed in February 1934.

The next project for Rivera was in the New Worker's School in New York, where he created a series of 21 small murals titled *Portrait of America* . He represented some of the heroes of the American history such as Benjamin Franklin, Thoreau, Emerson...

Back in Mexico, Rivera painted a recreated and smaller version of the *Man at Crossroads* in the Palace of Fine Arts in 1934. Some other notable murals by Rivera included the ones he painted in the National Palace in Mexico City from 1942 to 1951; *A Dream of a Sunday Afternoon In Alameda Park* , in the Alameda Hotel's main lobby in Mexico City or *A History of Medicine* in La Raza Hospital, 1953.

Diego Rivera died in Coyoacán November 24, 1957.

David Alfaro Siqueiros

Siqueiros was the most controversial of the three Mexican mural masters. An active critic of the government, he went to prison several times for his radical views, and he was forced to go into exile. He was extremely creative and innovative, and always interested in new materials and techniques. Like Rivera and Orozco, Siqueiros also firmly believed in using art as a public statement.

David Alfaro Siqueiros was born in Ciudad Camargo, Chihuahua in 1896. Like many Mexican painters of his generation, he studied at the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City, where he participated in a year-long student strike to force changes in teaching methods in 1911. The students succeeded in their demands and a new director was appointed, who transformed the teaching methods and opened an open-air School of Santa Anita which Siqueiros briefly attended. When he was 18 years old, under the influence of Dr. Alt, Siqueiros joined the Mexican Revolutionary forces of the constitutional armies led by Venustiano Carranza. He became captain in only two years.

The late-1910s saw Siqueiros refining a new artistic vision. In 1918 he came into contact with a radical group of painters and organized the *Centro Bohemio*. The artists met and discussed the function and role of the revolutionary art. Their important discussions eventually shaped the ideological framework for the mural artists' activities during the 1920s. In 1919 Siqueiros traveled to Europe, where he met Fernand Lèger in Paris, a figure who influenced the Mexican artist greatly. Although there is little extant work from his period in Paris, Siqueiros appears to have been absorbed by Cubism, Cezanne and the Italian Futurism. (Rochfort, 30.) Siqueiros went to Italy in 1920 where he discovered Baroque paintings that would influence his murals later on.

His experiences by 1920 led Siqueiros to publish "Manifiesto para los Artistas de América" in the magazine *Vida Americana*, in Barcelona. This manifesto was a synthesis of the multiple conversations and views he had shared with Diego Rivera in Paris, and it would have a big impact on the mural renaissance in Mexico. Siqueiros went back to Mexico in 1922 and began his first murals in the Colegio Chico. While *The Elements* did not concern itself with revolutionary themes, Siqueiros, Rivera and fellow painter Xavier Guerrero were busy founding the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors to defend artists' interests. Siqueiros and Guerrero edited the union paper called *El Machete*, for which Rivera wrote articles. The seventh issue of the paper included the Syndicate's Manifesto written by Siqueiros.

Siqueiros finished the *Burial of the Sacrificed Worker* in el Colegio Chico in 1924. This mural represented a dramatic change in the painter's style. This mural and those to come later represented the realities and demands of the post-revolutionary years, creating social and political context. This same year his position as a painter on the public role came to an end. Puig Cassauranc, Vasconcelos' successor as Secretary of Public Education, did not tolerate the Syndicate's attacks on the government and suspended the muralists' contracts. Siqueiros' contract was terminated. The artist moved to Guadalajara, where he worked with Amado de la Cueva who was an old friend from el *Centro Bohemio*.

Siqueiros, like Rivera, suffered from the political-fighting that affected post-Revolutionary Mexico. In 1930, Siqueiros was expelled from the Mexican Communist party and sent to prison for his participation in a May Day demonstration. He was released in November, but he was exiled internally and sent to Taxco (a silver mining town). There, he created a great amount of studio work and met many intellectuals and artists who were key to his artistic growth. He was forced to leave Mexico in 1932 as a result of him leaving his exile without permission. He traveled to Los Angeles where he painted three murals after a six-year break from mural painting. He painted *Street Meeting* at the Chouinard Art School, *Tropical America* at the Plaza Art

Center and Portrait of Mexico Today in a film director's home. The political content of Tropical America, which depicted the domination of Latin America by the United States, nearly led to his deportation, and Siqueiros decided to travel to South America to paint murals. After spending time in Montevideo (Uruguay), he painted the experimental Plastic Exercise in Buenos Aires (Argentina), which made no explicit political or social demands. Siqueiros was forced to leave Argentina as a result of having attended a union meeting restricted to him by the Buenos Aires police.

Siqueiros then went to New York City as a delegate to the American Artists Congress, where he started *The Experimental Workshop*, an enterprise in which young artists such as Jackson Pollock, Harold Lehman, and Luís Arenal discussed innovative techniques. They shared the idea that to be socially transformative, art needed to adopt new materials, and Siqueiros encouraged his helpers to use commercial paints.

Shortly thereafter, in 1937, Siqueiros left New York to fight for three years with the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War. The fight against fascism would become an important theme for the artist. After Franco's victory in 1939, Siqueiros returned to Mexico, where he began working on *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie* in the Mexican Electrician's Syndicate. The mural best represented Siqueiros' radical and innovative views on the aesthetics of muralism since he broke with all previous methods and themes used before in the art of drawing murals. He painted a radical social content mural -fascism as a war machine, - with new materials.

After he was imprisoned for participating in the murder of Leon Trotsky, the Mexican government exiled Siqueiros again. With the help of Pablo Neruda, the Chilean ambassador to Mexico, Siqueiros was able to travel to Chillán, Chile, where he was to complete the mural entitled *Death of the Invader* at the Escuela de México. That work echoed Vasconcelos' earlier representation of Mexican history, since Siqueiros dealt again with historical heroes who defended the nation's integrity against Spanish subjugation.

Released from his political and contractual obligations in Chile, he traveled through Latin America to gather support from artists against fascism and support for democracies, going to Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama and Cuba. He planned to travel to New York soon after to work with North and Latin American artists to create an antifascist mural. But when the Department of State denied the renovation of his visa, Siqueiros was forced to remain in La Habana. There, he painted a private mural for the Carre-o-Gómez family titled *Allegory of Racial Equality* in 1943. With the assistance of Nelson Rockefeller, he also created a mural for the Cuban-American Cultural Center of Habana titled *Two American Mountains: Lincoln and Martí*.

Siqueiros returned to Mexico in early-1944 to paint one of his most notable murals, *Cuauhtémoc Against the Myth*. He also established the *Centro de Arte Realístico* (Center for Realist Art.) The mural was painted inside the building designated as the headquarters of the Center, and Siqueiros used the mural's inauguration to publicize the Center's manifesto. (Rochfort, 189.) Several years later Siqueiros painted two other large murals at the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City on the Cuauhtémoc theme -- a hero who symbolized Mexico's historical battles against oppression. That same year he painted *New Democracy*, a gigantic work that depicted an enormous female figure erupting from a volcano and breaking the chains of her oppression.

In 1945 Siqueiros started the most ambitious, difficult and frustrating of all the murals, which was never completed. *Patriots and Parricides* was painted in the Ex-Aduana de Santo Domingo in Mexico City (old customs house). The theme of this mural was familiar to the author since it followed the work he had already done at Chillán (Chile) years before: the struggle for national liberty and independence. The idea was to represent the great Mexican figures such as Juárez, Morelos, Zapata on one side of the stairs while on the opposite side, the Mexican traitors such as Santa Anna Iturbide and Victoriano Huerta were to be shown descending into hell. (Rochfort, 198)

In 1950, Siqueiros began to work with more contemporary themes. The exception was *From the Dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz to the Revolution*, a work painted from 1957 to 1965 in Chapultepec Castle. More representative of Siqueiros' new interests was *Man the Master, not the Slave, of Technology*, painted in 1951 for the Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City. Other major murals painted over the following decade included: *Apologia for the Future Victory of Medicine over Cancer*, painted in 1958 in the Centro Médico of Mexico City; *For the Complete Safety of all Mexicans at Work* in from 1952 to 1954 in the Hospital de la Raza, Mexico City; *The People for the University. The University for the People: For a Neo-Humanist National Culture* painted from 1952 to 1956 in the National Autonomous University of Mexico in Mexico City, which is an sculptured painting; *Theatrical Art in the Life of Mexico* painted in 1959 in the Jorge Negrete Theater in Mexico City (which remains technically unfinished); and finally, *The March of Humanity* created in 1971 in the Parque de la Lama in Mexico City.

Siqueiros died in 1974 in Cuernavaca, but his large body of work influenced subsequent generations of muralists who still work on commissions and projects.

The Work Projects Administration (1930s)

Originally named the Works Progress Administration, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt established this federal agency in 1935 to try and get control over the Great Depression in order employ people who could not find a job. The WPA also represented a significant federal investment in the arts. In 1933, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) had given a grant to the Public Works of Art Project which allowed 3600 artists to make murals and sculptures for public buildings. This art project had ended in 1934 when the CWA dissolved. Luckily, the CWA had set the stage for the WPA's art, music, theater, and writers' projects, which became independent from each other. In 1935 they became the Federal Art Project (FAP), Federal Music Project (FMP), Federal Theatre Project (FTP), the Federal Writers' Project (FWP), and the Historical Records Survey (HRS).

Close to 10,000 drawings, paintings, and sculptured works were produced through the WPA, and many public buildings (especially post offices) were decorated with murals. Many of these works were not particularly remarkable, since the paintings were not provocative enough, and art historians have written much more glowingly about the contemporary murals in Mexico by Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros, and others. Still, the WPA was important in the United States, and it influenced the careers of the leading Mexican muralists. When a more conservative government took power in Mexico in the early 1930s, Rivera, Orozco y Siqueiros, came to the United States. Even though the communist political ideology of Rivera and Siqueiros was contrary to the capitalistic principles of the United States, public institutions and individuals employed the three of them.

Chicano Murals and the Civil Rights Movement (1960s)

The Chicano Movement and the Civil Rights

The term Chicano, derived form Mexican Spanish, became popular in the late-1960s among politically active

groups. Chicano and Chicana are still in frequent use but have become less politicized in recent decades. However, some Mexican-Americans with less militant political views might find the terms offensive.

It could be said that the Chicano Movement timidly started at the end of the Mexican American War in 1848, when the border changed and roughly 80,000 Mexicans became American citizens overnight. From then on, Chicanos have fought for their rights and the end of discrimination and racism. Their efforts attracted new attention during the 1960s, one of the most turbulent decades in American History. In California, César Chávez struggled to unionize farm workers in the Central Valley of California. Efforts on behalf of farm inspired many Mexican Americans during this era. Colorado saw the appearance of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, and important figure who reached out to Chicano youth, who founded the Crusade for Justice in Denver in 1966, and who defined Chicano Nationalism through his poem "*I am Joaquín.*"

Community leaders, scholars, educators, students, activists and artists joined the movement. Leaders such as Corky Gonzalez, César Chavez, Dolores Huerta and José Ángel Gutierrez gave a great impulse to the movement and worked toward a broad cross section of issues. In New Mexico, Reies López Tijerina and members of his Land Grant Movement tried to convince the federal government to honor the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), and they worked to regain control of ancestral lands. These leaders gave a voice to the Movement and called attention to the issues Chicanos faced for a long time. Many Chicanos became politically active during these years demanding the restoration of land grants, farm worker's rights, the right to vote and equal employment opportunities.

A very important element of the Chicano Movement was education. Many activists struggled to minimize the number of dropouts from schools, to develop bilingual-bicultural education programs, to increase financial aid programs and to expand the number of Chicano faculty and administrators in schools.

A major element of the Movement was the development of Chicano art as a prime vehicle of political activism and as a way to stimulate cultural pride. The murals, as well as all the artistic manifestations helped define Mexican Americans' sense of their own common history.

"La Raza Unida"

The Chicano Population in New Mexico became politically active in the late 19th century. In cooperation with the Populist Party, they organized El Partido del Pueblo Unido (the United People's Party) in 1890. It was the first Hispanic political party in the United States' history. In 1968, the Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres formed the Peoples Constitutional Party and ran candidates in New Mexico. It was disbanded in 1971. But perhaps the most important effort began in south Texas in 1969. ⁽²⁾

José Ángel Gutierrez, a native of Crystal City who helped to found the Mexican American Youth Organization, organized La Raza Unida in 1970. Gutiérrez firmly believed in the importance of education, la Raza Unida demanded better public services for Chicanos, hiring bilingual government employees, an end to job discrimination, bilingual education in public schools or a better education for migrant children.

La Raza Unida held its first convention in 1972. In addition to Gutierrez, prominent members were Corky Gonzalez, Reyes Lopez Tijerina, and César Chávez. The party became a crucial symbol of Chicano power.

Although the party did not last too long, it was dissolved in the late 1970s; it became a crucial symbol of the Chicano power and transformed the politics in the Southwest.

Chicano Murals

The Chicano Mural Movement began as an artistic renaissance in the U.S. Southwest during the 1960s. Unlike in Mexico, its first murals were not commissioned, promoted or sponsored by the government, companies or individuals; the Chicano artists instead painted on neighborhood buildings, schools, and churches. This reemergence of muralism was in part a reaction to the social situation of the time. The artists were young Chicanos; African Americans and European Americans (many of whom never went to art school) who supported social movements actively, expressed their non-conformist New Left ideology openly, and used their skills to aid political movements.

Some Chicano artists were professionally trained, but the remarkable artistic quality of the best of their murals was due to the influence of earlier Mexican muralism on their work.

These Chicano artists worked in neighborhoods with self-taught artists, residents and young people teaching them the techniques so they would join the mural movement.

The Chicano movement evolved in two directions, one emphasizing the Chicano cultural identity, and the other one stressing the political one. These two overlapped in many cases. The images of the first murals derive from both sources. The cultural murals portrayed common images of the pre-Columbian history: copies of ancient Mayan murals, Olmec sculptures, pyramids, different representations of indigenous Mexicans, religious motives: the Virgin of Guadalupe (patron saint of Mexico)-the only representation of a woman-, the "tripartite head" (representing the Indian, Mestizo and Spanish traditions)...

The political murals represented different events of the history of Mexico, paying special attention to political leaders like César Chavez (founder of the UFW -United Farm Workers Association) or Mexican revolutionary heroes like Emiliano Zapata and/or Francisco (Pancho) Villa. Other prominent revolutionaries or solidarity figures such as Ernesto (Ché) Guevara or Martin Luther King Jr. were also represented.

The Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) and the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC): Judy Baca

Beginning around 1970, muralists began to move from highly political and militant works to representations of unity and self-pride. This was the end of political muralism and the beginning of a calmer, more institutionalized stage in which there was not real racial mixing or collaboration.

In 1976 the first national meeting of muralists took place in New York. It gave these artists the sense of identity and of belonging they were lacking up to that point.

CETA was a federally funded government program enacted in 1973. It included funding for arts programs

intended to help economically disadvantaged communities including African Americans, Latinos, underprivileged whites and seniors. It also provided grants to local and state government to support public and private job trainings. After 1973, CETA supported artists who created murals, paintings, photography and sculpture for public parks, public schools, agency lobbies and waiting rooms. It provided meaningful artistic experiences for many artists, and helped new muralists until the program was ended in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan.

Judith Baca, a Chicana artist, relied upon CETA support to found the City of Los Angeles' first mural program in 1974. Two years later, in 1976 she co-founded the Social and Public Art Resource Center, an organization which promoted community-based, participatory public arts projects. The SPARC was born after a period of time (1970-75) characterized by the lack of racial mixing and all the projects in different cities, were funded and controlled locally with the assistance of community centers of art like the Centro Cultural de la Raza in San Diego or the Mechicano Art Center or Goez Gallery in Los Angeles. (Sperling Cockcroft, 3)

In that same summer, Judy Baca started working on a gigantic project with a new multicultural emphasis: the Great Wall of Los Angeles. That summer, artists led by Baca worked with five historians and a team of 80 teenagers referred by the criminal justice department to paint a 1000 foot-long wall in the Tujungo Wash flood control channel in the San Fernando Valley. They intended to depict the history of California from prehistoric times to 1910. But Baca wanted to continue, so the project continued in the summers of 1978, 1980, 1981 and 1983. Each year the teams added 350 feet and a decade of history seen from the viewpoint of the various California ethnic groups.

After the completion of the Great Wall in 1984, the mayor thought that the same process could be repeated throughout the city of Los Angeles. Judy Baca and SPARC created and implemented Great Walls Unlimited: Neighborhood Pride. Since 1988, the program has produced 105 murals in almost every ethnic community of Los Angeles. In these fourteen years, Great Walls Unlimited: Neighborhood Pride has employed over 90 different established and emerging muralists from Los Angeles and around the country, it has trained hundreds of youth apprentices, it has collaborated with countless community based organizations. The project has worked with minority owned businesses, scholars, and the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks all to produce images that speak to the multi-ethnic communities that make up Los Angeles. As the first program of its kind in the nation, Great Walls Unlimited: Neighborhood Pride has become one of the country's most respected model mural programs, setting a standard which has inspired other cities across the United States. ⁽³⁾

In the mid 1970s, community murals were favorable accepted as a form of art, but Chicano and black artists still rarely cooperated with each other, and minority artists rarely engaged other "public artists." SPARC helped bring those groups together, but the 1980s also brought muralists many new challenges. By the mid 80s there were fewer artists interested in political activism, and cities started to offer significant funds to public art. Community muralists started to compete for city projects that were sponsored by cities.

Classroom Activities

Strategies

In order to give my students the opportunity to understand murals and decode many of the symbols, political, social and cultural references comprised in them, I am going to introduce different themes that will give them a more comprehensive picture of the complexities of this very particular form of art.

The unit will be carried out once or twice a week, starting in January, when students will be familiar with the structure of the course and more confident with their Spanish oral and grammatical skills. There will be a final project that will imply students teaching the material previously learned. I have used this strategy a couple of times with my upper level classes (Spanish 3 and 4) since it is a very good way to determine whether students have understood concepts or not. Students usually like this project and they usually develop really creative, well-structured lessons.

Each part of the unit will be accompanied by a written questionnaire that will interrelate the aspects previously used and that will facilitate the ability to provide support for their ideas. This phase of the unit is truly important for me, since I consider students this age to be capable of reflecting and reinforcing this critical thinking in order to have their own points of view without having to repeat or agree with other people's points of view or ideas.

First of all, we will be working with history. We will briefly go over the Mexican Revolution since I consider it key to my purposes. Students need to understand the complexities of this particular time in Mexico in order to better apprehend the many political and social implications in all of the murals. In order to achieve this purpose, we will be working with a variety of materials such as articles and pictures of that period. These will lead us to various discussions- a very convenient time to start working in critical thinking skills. The discussions will be monitored but students will lead to conclusions by themselves.

Once students have an idea of what was the context and implications of the revolution, we will work on the Mexican muralists and murals. We will start with the three main figures in the Mexican Muralist Movement: Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros. We will explore the main elements of the movement presented in the rationale of this unit, and then students will search for information on the painters. We will closely analyze some of the murals together. Students will do the same with murals of their choice: every student will explain a mural to the rest of the class orally.

We will then move to the Chicano movement. We will work on the Chicano Civil Rights movement by reading texts and searching information on the main figures of the movement. I will give students a list of material to be covered and they will pick their topic so we will go to the library to research. Then, they all will get together and start planning how are they going to put all of the information together in order to present it to me as a whole, since we will be making a "mini-documentary" on the Civil Rights Chicano movement.

Finally, we will work with the many murals Chicano artists have created in the country, paying special attention to the works of Judith Baca and her Great Wall of Los Angeles, which deals with history, one of the main focuses in the unit. We will be exploring the SPARC web page, a wonderful tool which will give students the opportunity to reflect on the importance of community, as well as to understand historical perspective through art.

Final project

As I previously mentioned, there will be a final project in which students will be assigned an earlier section of the unit and teach it to the rest of the class. They will have to be "teachers for a day," so they will have to have a plan for the lesson. This is a valuable and highly effective activity for the students since they learn a lot and apply the maximum effort to it.

Sample Lesson Plans

Lesson One: Introduction to the Mexican Revolution

(This lesson plan is to be developed in a 70-minute class. However, it can be changed according to teachers needs)

Goal

To briefly introduce my students to the Mexican Revolution (understanding another culture to reinforce and expand their knowledge of other disciplines)

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Practice their reading comprehension skills.
2. Build on their oral reading skills.
3. Develop understanding of other countries and cultures.
4. Understand the importance of history as part of the identity of countries.
5. Read and gather information of a text written in Spanish in order to select the main ideas.
6. Broaden vocabulary.
7. Express relevant information in their own words.

Materials

Text on the main events of the Mexican Revolution, timeline graphic organizer, map of Mexico.

Initiation

"Pass the bull" strategy: I usually start all of my classes passing around a foam bull toy asking questions- could be grammar, or anything. It is a great strategy because you assess students daily and it helps to start the class on a good tone, since they love it!

Students will be asked what they know about the Mexican Revolution.

Procedure

1. The teacher will write the responses on the board so students can go on adding up to their classmates' answers.
2. Students will read handout out loud in turns.
3. Students will have 3 minutes to underline the vocabulary word they do not know.
4. Students will ask the new words in turns. (I like them to ask vocabulary to their classmates, only if they do not know, I will answer.)
5. The teacher will ask students questions about the text in order to find out if they have understood the main ideas.
6. The teacher will focus on the main concepts again to make sure they are understood.
7. Students will write in the graphic organizer what they consider to be the most important concepts or ideas of the lesson.
8. Common exposure of the previous exercise- discussion.

Closure

To wrap up the lesson the teacher will ask the students to brainstorm what they learned that day.

Assessment / homework

For homework the students will be asked to write a 25-30 line paragraph in Spanish answering the question "¿Cuáles crees que fueron las razones que desencadenaron la Revolución Mexicana y cómo se podría haber evitado?" ("What are the reasons that led to the Mexican revolution and how might it have been avoided?")

Lesson Two: Murals, murals, murals

(This lesson plan is to be developed in a 60-minute class. However, it can be changed according to teachers needs)

Goal

To introduce my students to the process of viewing, interpreting and recognizing art.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Practice their reading comprehension skills.
2. Build on their oral reading skills.
3. Observe and describe specific details of a mural.
4. Recognize different Mexican history figures or events.
5. Read and gather information of a text written in Spanish in order to pair up the description of murals to the actual mural.
6. Broaden vocabulary.
7. Express reactions to a particular mural.

Materials

Numbered transparencies of the main and most representative murals created by "los tres grandes": Orozco, Siqueiros and Rivera, overhead projector, written Spanish description of the murals in the transparencies

Initiation

Teacher will "pass the bull" asking students questions about the Mexican Muralism Movement already discussed in the classroom

Procedure

1. The teacher will give students a set of untitled, separated brief descriptions of different murals painted by Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros.
2. Different students will read the descriptions aloud.
3. Students and teacher will closely look at the murals (that are numbered)
4. One student at a time will explain a single mural and will try to guess the author.
5. Students will be given some time to pair the descriptions of the murals with its author and with the number of transparencies they have seen.

6. Students and teacher will correct the exercise and further comment on the murals.

Closure

Students will write the name of their favorite Mexican muralist on a piece of paper and give 3 reasons for their choice.

Assessment / homework

Students will choose their favorite Mexican Mural and explain their choice in a 30-line essay.

Lesson Three: Judith Baca, the SPARC (The Social and Public Art Resource center) and the Great Wall I

(This lesson plan is to be developed in a 70-minute class as well)

Goal

To guide students to understand the social, political and even pedagogical importance of art as an instrument of identity.

Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson the students will be able to:

1. Recognize the importance of the sense of community.
2. Observe specific parts of the Great Wall of Los Angeles and recognize the different historical periods in which it is divided.
3. Recognize the suffering Chicanos have experienced throughout history by decoding images in the mural.
4. Observe and analyze.
5. Search for relevant information and express it in the target language orally.

Materials

Smart board, computer with Internet access, speakers.

Initiation

"Pass the bull": the teacher asks students questions about the Mexican Revolution and/or the Mexican murals:

-¿Me puedes decir en qué año comenzó la Revolución Mexicana? (When did the Mexican Revolution start?)

- "¿Cuáles fueron algunas de las razones que llevaron a la Revolución en México?" ("What are some of the causes of the Mexican Revolution?")

-Nombra algunos de los heroes de la Revolución. (Name some of the revolutionary heroes)

Procedure

1. The teacher will show on the smart board 3 videos from the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) web page, ⁽⁴⁾ pausing after each one in order to ask students to express their reactions to them.

1. Historical Footage: PBS Special - Bill Moyers
2. Great Wall Participant Testimonial: Ernestine Jimenez
3. Historical Footage: Independent Filmmaker Donna Deitch

2. The teacher will navigate through the page in order to facilitate them some of the information about Judy Baca and what the Great Wall means and represents.

3. Students will read some of this information out loud.

4. Students and teacher will look at the Great Wall of Los Angeles in the same web page: the 4 sections for the 1940s-1950s.

5. Students will identify and discuss orally some of the relevant events and people on the mural.

6. Students will write down in their notebooks 10 of these events or figures in order to remember them for their homework assignment.

Closure

To wrap up the lesson the teacher will ask the students to discuss whether or not they consider murals as an effective form of expression.

Assessment / homework

Students will write a 30-line paragraph on what they consider the 6 main events of the history during the 50s-60s and why have they chosen them.

Lesson Four: Judith Baca, the SPARC and the Great Wall II

(This lesson plan is to be developed in a 50-minute class. However, it can be changed according to teachers needs)

Goal

To let students to search for relevant information independently with some given tasks

Learning Objectives

Special Needs

Students and teacher will go to the school's library

Materials

Computer with Internet access, printer

Initiation

Teacher gives students a paper with questions on the information they should find in the SPARC's web page

Procedure

1. Teacher will pair up students so they can work together
2. Teacher gives students time to search for the information asked
3. Students will be asked some of those questions orally before the end of the period
4. Teacher will collect the work

Closure

To wrap up the lesson the teacher will ask the students what part of the SPARC project dot they like the most/the least and why

Endnotes

1. Sussman, Donna. "The Influence of Mexican Muralists on WPA Art." *Yale New Haven Teachers Institute* , 2005. May 2006. <http://>>
2. Digital History. June 16 2006. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/mexican_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=114>
3. The Social and Public Art Resource Center. May -July 2006 <http://>>
4. The Social and Public Art Resource Center. May-July 2006<http://>>

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Rochfort, Desmond. *Mexican Muralists* . Chronicle Books. San Francisco, 1993. Invaluable resource to understand the Mexican Mural Movement in the 1920s in Mexico. It presents a detailed portrait of José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros and their works. The book contains color images of all the major murals they painted in Mexico and the United States.

Sperling Cockcroft, Eva and Barnet-Sánchez, Holly (ed.), *Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* . Social and Public Art Resource Center. University of New Mexico Press, 1993. Four essays on educational, historical and artistic essence of the California Chicano Murals.

Sperling Cockcroft, Eva. "Contradiction or Progression: The Mainstreaming of a Mural Movement." May 2006 <http://www.zonezero.com/magazine/essays/distant/zcontra2.html>> Useful article that provides a general overview of muralism, from its renaissance in Mexico to its development in the United States.

Sussman, Donna. *The Influence of Mexican Muralists on WPA Art* . May 2006. </nationalcurriculum/units/2005/2/05.02.09.x.html>> Yale New Haven Teachers Institute unit which serves as an extraordinary resource on the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Websites

Brown Pride. 22 July 2006. <http://>> Images of many California Chicano / Latino murals and art galleries, Chicano/Latino Murals from the State of Texas, Mexican / Latino artists and links to Mexican museums. Very useful to show examples of murals to the students.

Judy Baca's Artwork. June 15 2006. <http://www.judybaca.com/>> More information on this brilliant Chicana artist. It contains a short video on Baca's opinions on education.

La Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros. June 20 2006. <http://siqueiros.inba.gob.mx/>> Very complete and useful web page centered in the figure of Siqueiros. Contains some of his murals and detailed information of the works the painter painted in different countries.

Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles. May 12 2006. <http://www.lamurals.org/index.html>> Images and specifications of murals in Los Angeles, California.

The Social and Public Art Resource Center. May-July 2006 <http://www.sparcmurals.org:16080/sparcone/index.php>> Extraordinary interactive web page with many different sections including the history of the Great Wall of Los Angeles and interactive images of the mural, videos with testimonies of people, development and state of some of Judy Baca's old and new projects such as the World Wall, the César Chávez Monument at San José State University... This web page is an incredible tool for the classroom.

The Virtual Diego Rivera Web Museum. July 22, 2006. <http://www.diegorivera.com/index.php>> Virtual Web art gallery that includes many of Rivera's paintings and murals, as well as minivideos on his art and works. It also includes a links section.

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