



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1994 Volume III: Understanding the Ancient Americas: Foundation, Flourishing, and Survival

Artful Connections between New Haven and Mexico

Guide for Curriculum Unit 94.03.05
by Joan Jacobson Zamore

I teach art, grades three to five, in a public elementary school where students are predominantly Afroamerican and Puerto Rican. Spanish is often a second language. Mesoamerican art is my choice of subject for an art curriculum.

My broad objectives or general goals are, first, to make a link between past and present by recognizing the connections between ancient Mesoamerican culture and the other cultures I teach. Secondly, since the unit is based on simple techniques of printmaking and paper construction, I shall be making a direct historical link between the ancient art of Mexico using its architecture, calendar and its writing system as the basis for the curriculum which I shall call "Artful Connections Between New Haven and Mexico." For the unit on printmaking I will attempt to make a direct correlation with early Aztec and Maya pictographs and the children's own graffiti. We will make a "Book of Our Names" out of stamps made of clay. For the second unit on "Constructing Paper Mache Pyramids," we will build pyramids and refer to ancient building types such as the stone pyramids of the Aztec and Maya culture. The pyramids will be multi-layered. We'll build the inner structures from oak tag and the outer structure in paper mache. The layers of construction will be like the layers of a Mesoamerican pyramid. It will allow us room for caches of rocks and treasures.

In my curriculum unit, I will try to minimize the differences of the various ethnic groups I teach by reaching them on a common ground and inspiring their needs for self-expression through fantasy and myth. Although the differences of the children are physical, cultural and age related, the children share a commonality of school, place and community. I hope this will help minimize the differences when each is asked to participate. What contribution will each one bring from his own family and community? This will add to a zesty unit.

(Recommended for Art, grades 3-5)

Keywords

Art Latin American Arts Crafts Printmaking

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