



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1999 Volume II: Art and Identity in Mexico, from the Olmec to Modern Times

Mexicans: Mythology, Movement and Masterpiece

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.02.03
by Mary E. Brayton

Fifth graders study the Maya and Aztec (*Living in Our Country* , Chapter 9, "The First Americans") as part of their Social Studies curriculum. In Theatre classes, they are introduced to storytelling as represented in folk tales and mythology, which in turn reflect the cultures in which such stories came to be. Since nowadays, great focus is placed on interdisciplinary curricula, some of the early history of the Mexican people will be introduced through the vernacular of art and those voices, hands, and imaginations that helped to tell it. Students will gain a flavor of early Mexican civilization in visualizing a journey through the ancient city of Teotihuacan, visiting the Feathered Serpent, Quetzalcoatl, and learning to play a ball game with Hunter and Jaguar Deer, the twin brothers of the *Popol Vuh* , the Maya creation myth.

Approximately twelve and one half million Mexican Americans make up the second largest minority in the United States. Students will explore aspects of the early ancestral history of this group from the Paleo-Indians who crossed the Bering land-bridge some 30,000 years ago to Aztec merchants establishing trade (circa 1300). Artwork and photography, as well as stories, children's poetry and mythology will serve as background for the students' exploration into this culture.

Creative dramatics for the unit include: oral reading, discussion and analysis; characterization plotting; bio writing; story mapping; improvisation; tableaux vivants; storytelling; inventing a game; script writing; poetry recitation.

(Recommended for Theatre and Social Studies, grades 5-8.)

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