



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2005 Volume II: Art and Identity in Mexico, from Olmec Times to the Present

Representations of Family in Mexican Art

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Introduction

I teach 7th and 8th grade Spanish in an inter-district communications and technology magnet school in New Haven. The middle school World Language program schools is a two-year course, and is equivalent to the Spanish I course in high school. I am fortunate to see my students five days per week, in 47-minute periods.

In the time that I have been in my school, Language has only been offered to those students that have achieved high scores on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT). Unfortunately, the numbers of students enrolled in World Languages in my school have traditionally been quite small as a result. My Spanish students are generally very bright and eager learners, which allows me to incorporate a lot into their language learning.

The majority of students in my school are from the city of New Haven. At least thirty percent of my school's students come from such diverse districts as East Haven, West Haven, North Haven, Hamden, Derby, Naugatuck, Ansonia, and Milford. Most of these are suburban areas, but they vary greatly in populations and incomes. Because of this diversity, the student population in my school has a range of ethnic backgrounds. Most of the students in my school are identified as Black, or African-American. The next largest ethnic group in the school is Hispanic, or Latino/a, followed by Whites, or European-Americans. There are very few (if any) Asians in the school during a given year.

Most of the students in my school are native English speakers, but many of the Hispanic students in my school speak Spanish at home, or have parents that do. Very few of the Hispanic students are fully literate in both spoken and written Spanish. The majority of Spanish-speaking students in my school can understand and speak Spanish, but cannot read or write in the language. While these Spanish-speaking students hail from a variety of backgrounds, most are of Puerto Rican, Mexican, or Dominican origins.

Teaching in an urban environment offers me the unique opportunity to work with a widely diverse student population, in a culturally rich community. Students will be able to take the knowledge they gain from this unit and use it to identify, appreciate, and create Spanish speaking communities in their own local areas. Also, the Yale University Art Gallery is located in New Haven, offering my students and me reasonable access to original artworks. Students are especially fortunate to attend school in New Haven, where they are surrounded by all kinds of exciting learning opportunities.

The diversity within the student population, as well as within the community, allows for a very enriching educational experience. Various aspects of Hispanic culture are present throughout the city. For example, Mexican and Puerto Rican restaurants, Hispanic markets, and Spanish billboards can be seen in many areas of New Haven (not to mention the Hispanic people!). In spite of this, the majority of my students base their knowledge of Hispanic cultures solely on what they see in movies and on television (which is often inaccurate, stereotypical, and/or negative).

It is sometimes difficult to "un-teach" students the false information that they are so sure they know about Hispanics. It can be very challenging to teach students the Spanish language and Hispanic culture in a way that honestly relates to their own individual lives. Ideally, by the time we reach the family unit, students will have shed any negativity toward Spanish and Hispanics, and adopted a more open view of world cultures. If students still view Spanish-speaking people as completely different from themselves at this point, the family unit will help to broaden their minds.

Because family is part of one's identity, it is something each and every one of my students can relate to in some way. When learning a language, family is always a major topic (usually the theme of an entire chapter or unit in the textbook). While its practical definition varies from culture to culture, and from situation to situation, the concept of 'family' is universal. This important theme of 'family' is often seen in art, literature, film, music, and other media, and offers much insight into the values and cultures of the people portrayed, as well as into those of the artists.

This coming year, we will be using a new text in our Spanish classes in New Haven, *Realidades*. Tema 5 (Chapters 5A and 5B) addresses the family in the context of birthday parties and restaurant outings. While the chapters focus on a few different Spanish-speaking regions, many of the cultural aspects featured are Mexican. I found it interesting that even though each chapter opens with a work of art created by a Hispanic artist, the family chapters incorporate more of these than any others in the book. Several of the artists mentioned in this unit are actually included in the text.

We will spend between three and four weeks on the family unit, most likely at the end of the 7th grade and/or beginning of the 8th. The unit can be adjusted as necessary to suit any level of Spanish learning, by adding or eliminating vocabulary. Other modifications may include adding readings of different difficulty, as well as using different works of art. Where possible, this unit might also be timed to tie in nicely with Cinco de Mayo celebrations. This unit may also be used to support Social Studies lessons on Mexico and Central America, or as part of an art class.

Investigating other peoples' ways of life and families will help my students relate the Spanish language and Mexican cultures to their own lives; making learning more fun, more authentic, and more successful.

Rationale

This unit is a means for me to share the understanding and appreciation of Mexican peoples and cultures with my students. Students will be able to connect what they learn with what they already know and see on a daily basis. Discovering and examining evidence of diversity in their own neighborhoods will allow students to recognize and create Spanish-speaking communities.

It makes sense to me to teach the family unit in a medium and context that is accessible to my students. Art is the medium, and Mexico is the context. Mexico's history and culture are incredibly rich, and both weave in and out of our own American story. My students are familiar with at least some small aspects of Mexican culture, and study Mexico as part of the seventh grade Social Studies curriculum (if they haven't already learned about Mexico in elementary school).

Using Mexican and Mexican-American art will help me teach Spanish in a cultural context, while keeping students learning and engaged. Using visual aids lessens the need for English translation (which I try to avoid whenever possible) by giving meaning to vocabulary and language concepts in an interesting and meaningful way.

What is Family?

Everyone knows what family means, right? Not exactly. When I ask my students the (seemingly) simple question, "How many people are there in your family?," I always get a wide range of answers, and even more questions. Students often ask for clarification such as: "Do you mean who do I live with? What about my grandparents? Well, I have a half-sister..." and so on. Families can be very simple or complex in structure, and might have different meanings for different people.

The Oxford English (online) Dictionary defines 'family' as: "1. a group consisting of two parents and their children living together as a unit. 2. a group of people related by blood or marriage. 3. the children of a person or couple. 4. all the descendants of a common ancestor. 5. all the languages derived from a particular early language. 6. a group united by a significant shared characteristic."

The Merriam-Webster (online) Dictionary offers similar definitions with one addition I find interesting. Definition 5a offers this as the meaning of family: "the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their own or adopted children; *also*: any of various social units differing from but regarded as equivalent to the traditional family [i.e.:] a single-parent *family*>." I think that this postscript-like definition reveals the ways in which society has changed, acknowledging the heterogeneity of modern family constructions.

I think it is not only interesting, but also telling that so many definitions abound relating to the word 'family.' Every family is (at least slightly) different in structure, and as unique as any human being or snowflake. Family structure and values are some of the important factors in learning culture and forming identity. Each family has its own culture and history, and identifies itself in terms of these.

What is Identity?¹

'Identity' means different things to different people. My students, for example, often identify themselves based on where they are from, what their race and ethnicity is, who they live with, what type of music they listen to, and what clothes they wear. For some, religion is an important part of who they are, while others define themselves in terms of academic or extracurricular achievements. The Oxford English (online) Dictionary defines 'identity' as: "1. the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. 2. the characteristics determining this. 3. a close similarity or affinity." In my own words, I would define 'identity' simply as "who and what you are."

The identity a person chooses for him/herself is not always the same identity that is assigned to him/her. "Externally created labels" that describe identity are not necessarily used or accepted by the people that

belong to a particular group. In most cases, all members of a given group do not agree on one sole identifying term (Ore xiv). For example, some people identify themselves as "Hispanic" while others use the term "Latino" to describe their Spanish-speaking origins. This is important to understand, particularly when talking about a group of people with a variety of ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural influences (like Mexicans and Mexican-Americans). It is for this same reason that Americans cannot all be lumped together into a uniform identity.

What is Culture?

First and foremost, culture is *learned*, and is one of the greatest contributors to identity formation. 'Culture,' as I am using it, refers to the "customs, institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or group" (OED). Aspects of culture may include (but are not limited to) language, cuisine, ethnic makeup, family structures, traditions, education, dress, celebration, arts, crafts, music, and literature. It is important to understand that because culture, like language, is learned, it can change over time and in different circumstances.

It is difficult to discuss culture or identity without discussing what it means to belong to the aforementioned "nation, people, or group." In the U.S. the most common terms used to describe these categories are 'race' and 'ethnicity,' but in some cases, 'family' can be substituted for these words. Race refers to "a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as possessing distinctive hereditary traits" (Ore 9). Ethnicity, on the other hand, refers to "a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as sharing cultural traits such as language, religion, family customs, and food preferences" (Ore 9).

Culture helps shape identity by providing a frame of reference for all social interaction. I know who I am because of the surroundings in which I was raised. I identify myself as a Hispanic American because I am equally American and Bolivian-American. My American mother and Bolivian father raised me to honor and celebrate both cultures. I am familiar with the major foods, music, traditions, history, religious practices, and language of each culture. I know that I am a good person because I adhere to the ethical norms of my cultures. This does not, however, mean that others identify me in this same way. Others might identify me based on the standards of their own cultures.

Art, You Say?

Art often has the incredible ability to transcend language barriers. Art can cross all of the cultural and economic gaps between people. Art is very personal, and yet speaks to broad audiences. Art can express stories, emotions, histories, opinions, and identity. Art is integral to culture, and can be timeless.

Some of the earliest surviving artwork on Earth was discovered in a cave in Altamira, Spain. These paintings depicted what we assume are scenes from everyday life; animals are clearly detailed, along with what seem to be spears or arrows. Whether these paintings served a historical or artistic purpose, they have endured over 12,000 years. These paintings can still, after so much time has passed, offer us a very real glimpse of the past.

That is just one example of the way that art can impress us so profoundly. Throughout time art has served as a means of historical documentation. Art has also served to satisfy our human desire for aesthetics, and sends a message in that manner. No matter what its specific intention, successful art aims to communicate. Just like oral or written communication, visual art has to have an audience in order to send a message.

Background Information

How did Mexico come to be Spanish?²

The Iberian Peninsula (which is now home to Portugal and Spain) was known as "Hispania" under the Roman Empire. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella united several regions of the peninsula to create the nation of Spain (España) after the Reconquista (re-conquering) of Granada, the last Moor-controlled territory in Europe. In this same year, Isabella and Ferdinand also expelled the Jews from the region and established a unified, Catholic nation.

In an extension of their military success from the Reconquista, Los Reyes Católicos (the Catholic King and Queen, as Isabella and Ferdinand are often referred to) sponsored Christopher Columbus's famous voyage, beginning a long series of explorations and land acquisitions in the New World. Even though everyone knows that "in fourteen-hundred-ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," many of us also know that Columbus didn't discover the New World. Every one of the lands that Columbus (and the explorers that followed) "discovered" was populated with indigenous peoples with established and distinct languages and cultures.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish expanded their explorations of the New World, as conquistadores claimed more and more land for Spain. This empire at one point during the "Siglo de Oro" (Golden Era) included not only Spain, but most of Central and South America, as well as parts of Africa and the Philippines. Spanish control extended in the Americas up into the modern-day United States, and in Europe included occupations in Austria, Italy, and the Netherlands.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés, a Spanish conquistador (conqueror), arrived in the area we now know as Mexico and encountered several indigenous groups throughout the region. By this time, the Aztecs (who called themselves "Mexicas") had already been dominating the land for two centuries, and had created an extremely advanced civilization complete with elaborate cities. Tenochtitlan was the Aztec capital city and boasted canals, aqueducts, and massive pyramids. By 1521, Cortés had conquered the Aztecs, having turned the rival groups of natives against each other and against the emperor Montezuma. The Aztecs provided ideal labor for the Spanish, as they had been accustomed to the harsh work Montezuma had demanded of them and were used to turning most of the wealth over to the ruling class. In this time, large tobacco, coffee, and sugar plantations were yielding crops for the Spanish to sell in Europe. Natives were also hard at work in the mines, finding silver and gold that the Spanish craved in this area which came to be called "New Spain."

In the southern part of Mexico and much of Central America the Spanish found remnants of a highly advanced and elaborate civilization: that of the Maya. Mayans were living in villages scattered in the jungle, and concentrated along the coast, when the Spanish arrived. The Maya civilization had peaked during its Classic period, from about 200 to 900 A.D. Most of the Mayan cities had been abandoned by the end of the Classic period. The Mayans were not accustomed to the harsh labor that the Aztecs had endured, and did not have fertile soil for agriculture. These factors, combined with the general harshness of the weather in this region prompted the Spanish to remain mainly along the coast.

In 1535, the king of Spain declared Mexico a viceroyalty. He named this viceroyalty New Spain, and appointed Antonio de Mendoza as viceroy. During much of the colonial period, an encomienda system was in place. This system granted land to Spanish encomenderos (overseers) and allowed them to demand tribute from the natives that worked the land. In return for this tribute, the natives were allowed to live on the land and were

protected by the encomendero. The encomendero, in addition to offering protection and land to live on, was responsible for the religious education of the natives on that land.

Just as they had done in Spain, the Spanish invaders attempted to eradicate all rival religions. Spaniards killed and enslaved many of the natives in these regions, and tried to convert them to Catholicism, as well as requiring encomenderos to teach Catholicism to the natives on the lands they oversaw. In large part, the Spanish succeeded in their conversion attempts, but some of the original Aztec and Maya religious beliefs and practices remain today. Most natives maintained their ancestral cultures, as is evident in language and family customs, with (perhaps) the exception of religion.

During the Spanish reign, many Spaniards took indigenous wives to bear their children, creating Mestizos (people of mixed European and Native American descent). Marriage between Spaniards and members of the native nobility was a fairly common practice. African slaves were also mixed into the Spanish and Mestizo blood. As children born of Africans and natives were not born into slavery, and African slaves could purchase freedom, many free Blacks intermarried with other groups (Pierce 26). Mexicans may be of Spanish, Indigenous, or African descent, or any combination thereof, and often display cultural and language facets of each.

In 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain after a long and bloody revolution. Mexico lost Texas to the United States in 1836. Then, at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, Mexico lost the area we now call California, Nevada, and Utah, most of Arizona and New Mexico, as well as parts of Wyoming and Colorado, to the U.S. Modern Mexico's borders have since remained unchanged.

Mexicans & Mexican-Americans

Over 35 million people identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino on the 2000 U.S. Census. Hispanics have recently replaced Blacks/African-Americans as the largest ethnic minority group in the U.S., comprising an estimated 13.7% of the population (excluding the 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico). Nearly 60% of Hispanic Americans claim Mexican heritage, which makes sense since at least one-third of the contiguous United States was once part of Mexico (or, New Spain).

Nearly ten percent of Connecticut's residents identified themselves as Hispanic-American on the 2000 census (U.S. Census Bureau). Though the majority of Hispanics in Connecticut claim Puerto Rican or Dominican ancestry, Mexican-Americans make up a large portion of the Hispanic population in the state. As in New Haven, many aspects of Mexican heritage have become ingrained in popular U.S. culture generally, and American political issues often deal with our "neighbors to the South."

Modern Mexicans exhibit evidence of the cultural exchange that occurred centuries ago. While Mexicans share many cultural practices with Spain and the rest of the Hispanic world, many of their traditions and customs are Native American in origin. For example, El Día de los Muertos is a major religious holiday in Mexico. This is celebrated on All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day (Catholic holidays), but embraces the ancient pagan beliefs about the after-life. Mexicans celebrate with masses and feasts, in the Catholic holiday tradition. In a very Mexican way, people decorate and eat candy skulls, create altars in their homes (complete with offerings of food and drink), and share picnics on the graves of their loved ones. This duality of Spanish and Mexican identity is evident in so much of modern Mexican culture.

Just as Spanish and indigenous cultures intertwined to create new cultures, the Mexican and American cultures have combined to foster even more of a sense that Mexico is indeed our "neighbor." A taco is a great

example of how European influences mixed with New World staples to create amazing new things. The corn tortilla shell of the taco, tomatoes, peppers, and spices originated in Mesoamerica, while the lettuce, cheese, and beef were introduced from the Old World. To break this transference down further, tacos in the United States have become a typical American dish in many places, rather than an "exotic" Mexican appetizer. I can buy tacos at midnight from a drive-thru window, thousands of miles away from Mexico. Tacos have joined pizza, spaghetti, and chow mein as American staples, though each is a slight twist on an originally foreign dish.

Objectives

By the completion of this unit, students will be able to:

- Communicate in Spanish using appropriate vocabulary and grammar.
- Define the following: culture, tradition, identity, family.
- Identify Mexico and describe some of its different regions.
- Identify and explain similarities and differences found throughout Mexican cultures.
- Compare and contrast Mexican, American, and Mexican-American cultures.
- Observe, interpret, and Respond to Mexican and Mexican-American art, literature, and other media.
- Recognize Mexican contributions in the U.S. (and Connecticut, more specifically).

Strategies

The primary goal of any language education is always communication. As a Spanish teacher, my number one concern is to teach my students as much of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultural points as possible. It is my job to encourage language learning and cultural appreciation. This appreciation needs to first be fostered in the classroom, and is most effectively attained through creative, interesting, and relevant lessons.

Review History

I will challenge my students to tell me what they know about Mexican history. We will then explore the Spanish Conquest, and modern Mexico. I want students to note how the territory that was New Spain changed over time. We will talk about the significance of Mexico in our country today.

Discuss Culture and Identity

First, students will create working definitions for 'culture' and 'identity.' As a class, we will discuss how and why these are important. We will observe several pieces of art from various points in Mexican history and interpret them for their historical and cultural value. Specifically, we will be looking for the Spanish and Native influences visible, along with perspectives of the family. We will view Mexican-American art, looking for these cultural and historical themes, in addition to U.S. influences in the works.

Discuss Family

As I noted earlier, the Family unit is a required theme in the Spanish I course in my district. Before launching into any new theme, I like to discuss with my class what the purpose and major points of that theme are. We will define the word 'family,' and talk about the basic cultural construction of a family in the U.S. compared to that of one in modern Mexico. We will also examine the differences between the colonial-era European family norms and those of the natives in Mexico. We will discuss the members of the family, and identify the difference between 'immediate' and 'extended' family members.

Express Personal Family Culture

Students will take what they learn from various English and Spanish sources, interpret it, and relay the information to others. Both formal and informal assignments will give students opportunities to share knowledge with each other. These written and oral tasks will not only offer assessment opportunities, but will comprise aspects of presentational communication.

Students will speak with one another on many occasions in Spanish about a variety of topics related to the themes of family, history, and culture. As they engage in this interpersonal communication, students will speak in Spanish with me as well. In this way, students will have ample practice both hearing and speaking Spanish.

Students will make comparisons between English and Spanish vocabulary and language structures. As they draw parallels between historical and cultural points in Mexico and those of the U.S., they will note differences and suggest causes for both similarities and variations found.

Students will learn about several aspects of the cultures of Mexico. They will compare and contrast these facets and infer from lectures, readings, music, art and other media causes of similarities and differences within the Mexican culture. Students will also explain how history and geography have played important roles in shaping the identity and culture of Mexicans.

This unit provides an excellent opportunity to draw in interdisciplinary connections. Students will use previous knowledge as a basis to incorporate new material from this unit. Lessons will combine aspects of history, geography, art, music, home economics, math, science, and technology with Spanish language learning to create a broad view of Mexican culture and a careful look at family. This wide-ranging view will encourage students to seek out connections— in other classes, and in their own lives.

Through the examination of the Mexican art, literature, and family, students will see a real connection to the lives and stories of other people. Discovering and examining evidence of diversity within communities (in the U.S. and abroad) will offer students numerous opportunities to find and perpetuate learning outside the classroom walls.

The 5 Cs & The 3 Ps

As a Spanish teacher, all of my lessons are designed with the "5 Cs" (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities) in mind (see Appendix A for a list of national standards for foreign language learning), as well as the "3 Ps" (Perspectives, Practices and Products). This unit will provide my students with the opportunity to expand their understanding and appreciation of other peoples and cultures, while learning important language concepts.

Through the careful examination of Mexican history and culture (especially art), students will get a glimpse into other people's family lives. This will help my students to connect their own lives to those of the Mexicans we will study. Learning about the perspectives, practices, and products of Mexicans will give my students exciting ways to explore each and every one of the 5 Cs.

Incorporating the study of the products, practices, and perspectives of Mexicans allows for exploration of every one of the 5 Cs. In studying the 3 Ps of different Mexicans, students will gain a more comprehensive understanding of the cultures found throughout Mexico, and a better understanding of their own customs.

A people's practices and products offer clear examples of culture and tradition. These practices and products are often the result of historical and geographical influences. These also reflect the (general) perspectives of the culture. My students enjoy discovering the many differences and similarities between the cultural practices of others and those of their own. Discussing cultures and practices is one of the most effective ways to inspire children to communicate (in any language). We will study several Mexican family traditions, including holidays, birthday celebrations, weddings, as well as everyday customs.

Classroom Activities

Firstly, I recommend looking at each of the resources mentioned in the *Teacher Resources* section. Much of the information provided in those resources is commonly known, but there are also a lot of interesting (and less well-known) facts contained within the websites and books listed. These resources are excellent means to glean background information to share with students.

We will revisit the history of the Spanish conquest of the New World. We will look at the way that the Spanish language has evolved in different regions. Students will discuss the way that cultural aspects of Mexico might resemble those of Spanish culture, and how they may maintain aspects of native culture.

Throughout the course of the unit (and the year), students will communicate with one another and me in Spanish about Mexican family, art, culture and heritage, as well as about their own families, cultures, and heritages. Communication will take many forms, and will be a vehicle for all types of learning in Spanish. I will utilize strategies and create activities for every type of learner, from logic-based learners to hands-on learners, to encourage communication and learning in every student.

The majority of the unit will be taught in Spanish, but I have found that English is often better used for in-depth discussions at this level (especially discussions about history). I use as much Spanish in my teaching as my students can comprehend. When I describe communication activities, I mean Spanish communication. If a particular activity involves reading or writing, unless otherwise noted, I am referring to a task to be performed in Spanish.

Sample Lesson #1: Vocabulario de la Familia/ Family Vocabulary

Duration: 2 Days

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Identify and pronounce Spanish vocabulary about the family
- Communicate in Spanish (oral and written communication)
- Use appropriate Spanish vocabulary to describe families
- Identify Frida Kahlo and describe her in Spanish³

Preparation:

- Students will have already learned basic language structures by this point in the course.
- Students will be familiar with the Spanish alphabet and phonetic sounds.
- Students will have studied Mexico in their Social Studies classes (or else should be studying Mexico simultaneously).

Materials:

- Power Point and computer access
- Power Point presentation using real photos and art
- A projector for use with the presentation

Activities:

- View Power Point presentation of my family members (with actual photos and labels). Read labels aloud.
- Identify unlabeled photos of my family members with appropriate vocabulary.
- View second presentation with descriptions of individual family members. Read descriptions aloud. Answer oral questions regarding presentation.
- View two images of Frida Kahlo (one photograph, and one painted self-portrait). Briefly discuss Frida Kahlo's background.
- View Frida Kahlo's paintings "My Family" and "My Grandparents, My Parents, and I." Identify family members shown. Answer oral questions based on pictures.
- Ask and answer questions based on one another's families.

Closure:

- Each student will provide one new fact they learned that day.

Assessment:

- Assess oral comprehension and pronunciation through a series of oral questions.

Modifications:

- This lesson can be condensed or expanded depending on student need.
- Students may be provided with a printed version of a Power Point presentation for note-taking.
- Different works of art may be substituted for those suggested.

Extension Activities:

- The presentations used for this lesson should be viewed again (I suggest every day) as a vocabulary reinforcement

Sample Lesson #2: ¿Cómo es tu Familia?/ What's Your Family Like?

Duration: 1-2 Days

Preparation:

- Students will have been practicing speaking about the family.
- Students will have viewed several Mexican artworks.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Communicate with others about the family.
- Create an accurate family tree based on others' descriptions.

Materials:

- Pens and/or pencils
- Paper for light note-taking
- Pre-designed (blank) family tree templates (These should include spaces for student's name and partner's name, as well as spaces for grandparents, parents, siblings, and self. A space should be designated for writing in whether the student's family tree was accurate, and whether the partner's was accurate.)

Activities:

- In pairs, students interview one another about their families (yes, in Spanish!) and take notes.
- Based on the notes taken, student A will create a family tree (on the provided template) depicting their partner's family.
- Paired students will compare family trees to check for accuracy. Students will note on the family tree whether their partner's depiction was accurate.

Closure:

- Every student will have to briefly tell the class about their partner's family, based on their interview.

Assessment:

- Assess communication, comprehension, and pronunciation by observing interviews.
- Assess comprehension by evaluating content and accuracy of family trees.

Extension Activities:

- Students can create visual family trees using drawing, painting, or collage of Mexican images. Students would label family members and provide descriptions in Spanish.

Sample Lesson #3: Una Fiesta de Cumpleaños/ A Birthday Party

Duration: 3-4 Days

Preparation:

- This lesson will come at the end of the unit, so at this point students will be familiar with many aspects of Mexican culture, and will be able to communicate about family and culture.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

- Communicate with others in Spanish (oral and written communication).
- Identify and partake in the preparations for a birthday party.

Materials:

- Books by Carmen Lomas Garza (as listed in *Resources*).⁴
- Colored tissue paper and papel picado (pierced paper) patterns
- Pencils, scissors, gluesticks or clear tape, and string (yarn and ribbon work, too)
- (Simple) Recipes for traditional Mexican dishes
- Stereo and Mexican music
- Piñata with prizes or candy

Activities:

- Discuss what we know about Mexico, Mexican families, Mexican customs, and Mexican art.
- Plan a Mexican-themed party (including assigning everyone a food or drink to bring recipes will help with this). View paintings by Carmen Lomas Garza for inspiration.
- Create papel picado and use it to decorate the classroom.⁵
- Enjoy a 'Mexican' birthday party.

Assessment:

- Participation is the most important component of this activity, and students should be assessed accordingly.

Modifications:

- Depending on your particular situation, you can add or eliminate aspects of this lesson. For example, food can be prepared during class time (instead of at home) or students can create their own piñatas. The time allotted for this lesson would have to be adjusted to accommodate any modifications.

Extension Activities:

- If plausible, students can be taken to a Mexican restaurant for an authentic meal or to a museum to view Mexican art.
- Parents can come in to help set up, and then celebrate with the class.

Notes

1. For more information about identity and/or culture, refer to my curriculum unit titled "Hispanic Heritage Month: What are We Celebrating, Anyway? (Examining the Role that Culture Plays in Forming Identity)." The *Teacher Resources* section has a list of many useful books, articles, and websites for further study of identity and culture, as well as various Hispanic issues.
2. For basic information (which is available from a large number of sources), I consulted several books and websites. Unless otherwise cited, I obtained facts primarily from the following authors' books, whose works are cited in the *Teacher Resources* section: Kattán-Ibarra, Ochoa, and Pierce. I gathered information from the following websites as well: www.education-world.com, www.factmonster.com, and www.infoplease.com.
3. Frida Kahlo was a Mexican painter who lived in the first part of the twentieth century and was, for a time, married to the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera. Kahlo is famous for her self-portraits which often express pain and are sometimes quite graphic. Because of the graphic nature of some of Kahlo's work, I would recommend that you choose images to share with your class that are appropriate. Several biographies and art books have been written about Kahlo, and many of her works are widely accessible on the internet.
4. Carmen Lomas Garza is a Mexican-American artist and children's book author. Many of her works are about Mexican and Mexican-American families and customs. Several of her books are listed in the *Resources* section. For more information about her and examples of her work, visit her official website, <http://www.carmenlomasgarza.com>.
5. For information and instructions on how to make papel picado, I suggest the following websites: http://www.art.unt.edu/ntieva/news/vol_7/issue3/96falp11.htm and http://www.dltk-kids.com/world/Mexico/mpapel_picado.htm. Carmen Lomas Garza also wrote a set of books about papel picado, listed in the *Resources* section. I have found that it is a good idea to have a few different patterns for the students to choose from, as some children need a more structured assignment. Students who prefer to be creative do not have to use patterns, but can use their own designs. Also, I recommend that teachers collect individual pieces and attach them to the string (these are fragile and you don't want students handling them any more than is necessary).

Works Cited

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Kattán-Ibarra, Juan. *Perspectivas Culturales de España*. Chicago: National Textbook Company, 1995.

Lomas Garza, Carmen. *Cuadros de Familia/ Family Pictures*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1990.

—. *In My Family/ En mi Familia*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2000.

—. *Magic Windows/ Ventanas Mágicas*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1999.

—, Carmen. *Making Magic Windows: Creating Papel Picado/ Cut-Paper Art with Carmen Lomas Garza*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1999.

Ochoa, George. *The New York Public Library Amazing Hispanic American History: a Book of Answers for Kids*. New York: John Wiley &

Sons, Inc., 1998.

Ore, Tracy E. *The Social Construction of Difference & Inequality*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Pierce, Donna. "At the Crossroads: Cultural Confluence and Daily Life in Mexico, 1521-1821." *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life 1521-1821*. Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2004.

<http://merriamwebster.com>

http://www.art.unt.edu/ntieva/news/vol_7/issue3/96falp11.htm

<http://www.askoxford.com/?view=get>

<http://www.carmenlomasgarza.com/>

http://www.dltk-kids.com/world/Mexico/mpapel_picado.htm

www.actfl.org

www.census.gov

Kahlo, Frida. Painting: "My Family." <http://www.masterpiece-paintings-gallery.com/kahlo-family.htm> 1951.

—. Painting: "My Grandparents, My Parents, and I (Family Tree)." <http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/m/mexican.html> 1936.

—, Frida. Painting: "Self Portrait." http://www.paintingstogo.com/gallery_images/kahlo_self_portrait_1940_sm.jpg 1940.

Murray, Nickolas. Portrait of Frida Kahlo. <http://www.photographsdonotbend.com/Kahlo/kahlo.html> 1939.

Appendix A

ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages)

Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Communication (*Communicate in Languages Other Than English*)

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 1.2: Students understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics.

Standard 1.3: Students present information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics.

Cultures (*Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures*)

Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections (*Connect with Other Disciplines and Acquire Information*)

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

Comparisons (*Develop Insight into the Nature of Language and Culture*)

Standard 4.1: Students demonstrate understanding of the nature of language through comparisons of the language studied and their own.

Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.

Communities (*Participate in Multilingual Communities at Home & Around the World*)

Standard 5.1: Students use the language both within and beyond the school setting.

Standard 5.2: Students show evidence of becoming life-long learners by using the language for personal enjoyment and enrichment.

Annotated List of Teacher Resources

Boyles, Peggy, et al. *Realidades 1*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.

The recommended Spanish I textbook for New Haven Public Schools. Integrates culture with vocabulary and language structure to teach basic Spanish. Tema 5 focuses on the family, birthday parties, and family restaurant outings, and includes several Mexican artists' work.

Carrera, Magali. *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*. University of Texas Press, 2003.

An interesting collection and analysis of casta paintings from colonial Mexico.

Fane, Diana. *Converging Cultures: Art and Identity in Spanish America*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996.

A look at the way art and identity in colonial Latin America were shaped by the Spanish influence.

Fields, Virginia and Victor Zamudio-Taylor. *The Road to Aztlan: Art from a Mythic Homeland*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2001.

A great collection of Mexican artworks from pre-colonial times to the present

Grimberg, Salomon. *Frida Kahlo*. North Dighton, MA: World Publications Group, 1997.

A beautiful compilation of Kahlo's works, with a biographical introduction and great photos.

Kattán-Ibarra, Juan. *Perspectivas Culturales de España*. Chicago: National Textbook Company, 1995.

An overview of Spanish history beginning with the prehistoric peoples of the Iberian Peninsula, moving to the present.

Kettenmann, Andrea. *Diego Rivera*. Los Angeles: Taschen, 2003.

A concise biography of the muralist, complete with images of his works and photos.

Ochoa, George. *The New York Public Library Amazing Hispanic American History: a Book of Answers for Kids*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998.

A fabulous source (for anyone) of general information as well as specific facts about all kinds of Spanish- and Hispanic-related topics. This book is extremely easy to navigate, and includes a glossary, an index, and a great list of recommended reading.

Ore, Tracy E. *The Social Construction of Difference & Inequality*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Discusses how differences in group identities affect individuals, and how they are perpetuated and institutionalized.

Pierce, Donna. "At the Crossroads: Cultural Confluence and Daily Life in Mexico, 1521-1821." *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life 1521-1821*. Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2004.

Interesting article about the way of life of the Mexicans during the colonial period.

Yorba, Jonathan. *Arte Latino: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2001.

Highlights works from Hispanic artists from the Smithsonian's exhibit, "Arte Latino."

Zamora, Martha. *Frida Kahlo: The Brush of Anguish*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books LLC, 1990.

A collection of Kahlo's works, with a substantial biographical angle and photographs.

"Papel Picado: The Art of Mexican Cut Paper." *North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts* (1996): Vol.7, No.3.
http://www.art.unt.edu/ntieva/news/vol_7/issue3/96falp11.htm

A brief overview of what papel picado is, with instructions on how to make your own.

<http://lasculturas.com>

A great collection of articles on a diverse range of Spanish and Hispanic themes.

<http://merriamwebster.com>

The website of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2005 edition.

<http://www.askoxford.com/?view=get>

The website of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) 2005 edition.

www.actfl.org

The official website of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Provides national standards and guidelines for language learning.

www.census.gov

The U.S. Census Bureau's official website. Chock full of interesting facts and statistics about all aspects of American life.

http://www.dltk-kids.com/world/Mexico/mpapel_picado.htm

Simple directions for making papel picado.

www.factmonster.com

A great encyclopedia-like website designed for children. Very easy to navigate with activities, games, and interesting articles on a variety of subjects in addition to basic encyclopedia entries.

www.infoplease.com

A basic encyclopedia/almanac website. The adult version of FactMonster. Very useful when looking for general information.

Kahlo, Frida. Painting: "My Family." <http://www.masterpiece-paintings-gallery.com/kahlo-family.htm> 1951.

An oil painting depicting Kahlo's grandparents, parents, siblings, and self. Interesting details of this painting include a faint baby, along with two erased faces and the indistinct figure of a child.

—. Painting: "My Grandparents, My Parents, and I (Family Tree)." <http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/m/mexican.html> 1936. This oil and tempera painting shows Kahlo as a child, holding a red ribbon which connects her to her parents and grandparents. Kahlo is standing, nude in the courtyard of her childhood home, surrounded by the Mexican scenery and ocean.

—. Painting: "Self Portrait." http://www.paintingstogo.com/gallery_images/kahlo_self_portrait_1940_sm.jpg 1940. One of several self-portraits Kahlo painted, this one dedicated to Dr. Eloesser. In this painting, Kahlo depicts herself in front of encroaching plants, and wearing a necklace of thorns that is scratching and causing her to bleed.

Murray, Nickolas. Portrait of Frida Kahlo. <http://www.photographsdonotbend.com/Kahlo/kahlo.html> 1939.

Annotated List of Student Resources

Boyles, Peggy, et al. *Realidades 1*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.

The recommended Spanish I textbook for New Haven Public Schools. Integrates culture with vocabulary and language structure to teach basic Spanish. Tema 5 focuses on the family, birthday parties, and family restaurant outings, and includes several Mexican artists' work.

Lomas Garza, Carmen. *Cuadros de Familia/ Family Pictures*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1990.

A bilingual children's picture book featuring color reproductions of Lomas Garza's artwork and a small story about each painting.

—. *In My Family/ En mi Familia*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2000.

A bilingual children's picture book featuring color reproductions of Lomas Garza's artwork and a small story about each painting.

—. *Magic Windows/ Ventanas Mágicas*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1999.

A bilingual look at Lomas Garza's history and art, as well as the Mexican tradition of papel picado

—. *Making Magic Windows: Creating Papel Picado/ Cut-Paper Art with Carmen Lomas Garza*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1999.

This instructional book is the companion book to *Magic Windows/ Ventanas Mágicas*. Instructions, patterns, and ideas for making papel picado are featured.

Ochoa, George. *The New York Public Library Amazing Hispanic American History: a Book of Answers for Kids*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998.

A fabulous source (for anyone) of general information as well as specific facts about all kinds of Spanish- and Hispanic-related topics. This book is extremely easy to navigate, and includes a glossary, an index, and a great list of recommended reading.

Rowen, Beth, ed. *Time for Kids Almanac 2005*. New York: Time for Kids Books, 2004.

An almanac designed for kids to use, has very current facts about a vast amount of information.

Suarez-Rivas, Maite, ed. *An Illustrated Treasury of Latino Read-Aloud Stories*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2004.

A variety of stories written in both English and Spanish, with themes and beautiful illustrations that can be appreciated by people of any background.

<http://lasculturas.com>

A great collection of articles on a diverse range of Spanish and Hispanic themes.

<http://merriamwebster.com>

The website of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2005 edition.

<http://www.askoxford.com/?view=get>

The website of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) 2005 edition.

www.census.gov

The U.S. Census Bureau's official website. Chock full of interesting facts and statistics about all aspects of American life.

www.factmonster.com

A great encyclopedia-like website designed for children. Very easy to navigate with activities, games, and interesting articles on a variety of subjects in addition to basic encyclopedia entries.

www.infoplease.com

A basic encyclopedia/almanac website. The adult version of FactMonster. Very useful when looking for general information.

Suggested Classroom Materials

- Maps: Old World, Modern, Europe, North America, South America.
- A globe.
- Spanish-English/English-Spanish dictionaries.
- Computer with internet access and projector.
- Construction paper.
- Tissue paper.
- Scissors.
- Gluesticks.
- String, yarn, or ribbon.
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils.
- Magazines (for cutting up).
- Paint, glitter, feathers, sequins.
- A stereo and Mexican music.
- The resources mentioned in "Student Resources" section of the unit.
- Lots of Mexican Realia (authentic products from Mexico)!

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

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