



## **The Influence of Mexican Muralists on Wpa Art**

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I have always lived in the South. My entire family lived in the South. I was the first of all my cousins to move away from Atlanta to Savannah and later to semi-tropical Florida. I know that this sounds pretty corny. But, the best thing about living around your extended family is the knowledge that you always have them "watching your back" as young people would say today. There were ice cream churns hand-cranked on Sunday afternoons, holiday eggnog that was "for adults only," and sweet tea with dinner. Those were the things that you could count on. You regularly visited your Grandparents, who lived close by. I was the oldest grandchild and I actually got to know them before they got too old to remember who I was.

My grandparents were exceptional. Grandmother was optimistic and positive about everything. If someone did something really awful she would say that "they had a good heart." She never worked outside of the home, so I spent a lot of time with her. She was the oldest of 8 children and I was fortunate enough to know 7 of them. My grandparents both read the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal* each day cover to cover until the paper consolidated into one daily edition. They watched *I Love Lucy* and the evening news, which always ended with "Goodnight Chet, Goodnight David." Like all southerners, they voted Democratic until the 1960's, and they spoke of Franklin D. Roosevelt as if he were a deceased uncle. When I was older, Grandmother took me to the "Little White House" in Warm Springs, Georgia. Here, in what amounted to a shrine for most Georgians, I saw the "Unfinished Portrait" in the very bedroom where President Roosevelt slumped over in his chair and died unexpectedly.

I studied history and learned that this man, the most powerful leader of the free world, was crippled much of his adult life. As evidence of the power of images, there were very few photographs of Roosevelt being carried or assisted. Prior to the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, such a condition was considered a sign of weakness and perhaps unfitness for the job. I wondered in recent years if President Roosevelt would have approved of his likeness seated in a wheelchair at the World War II monument. In school, I saw movies showing Roosevelt's funeral train. Along the railroad tracks from Georgia to Washington, all people, black and white, shamelessly wept at the nation's loss. Here was one of the first places that I recognized the power of visual images. From such experiences, I decided that I wanted to develop a unit using art as a medium for teaching history.

Symbolic communication was used for thousands of years to convey meaning, share experiences, record events, and influence other humans. Some of these symbols are as obvious as the skull and cross bones sign on a bottle of poison. Many symbols are the results of political or humanitarian activities, such as the use of Uncle Sam to represent the United States or the flag of the International Red Cross. Use of "worker caps and hard hats" came to symbolize the workers of the industrialized world. Where do these symbols come from and

what is their origin? Further, why are some recognized universally by people worldwide, and others remain obscure? During our course of study, we will explore symbolism and probe the meanings of the symbols widely painted by both Mexican and American artists during the 1920's and 1930's. In our study, we will explore common symbols as well as create a set of easily recognizable and decodable symbols. Students will choose a symbol to represent themselves. They will create designs which use symbols to create support for political, economic, or social ideas.

Today, understanding visual and symbolic communication is more important than it was in 1950 when TV was a fledgling medium. Constant bombardment by television and advertising makes us acutely aware of the persuasive power of visual and symbolic images. There is nothing like a controversy such as the upcoming Supreme Court nominations to remind us of the persuasive arm of the media. Learning to decipher the changing images that hurl like a meteor toward us is essential for everyone. One of the lessons in the unit deals with the effects of symbols in the creation of murals by Mexican and American WPA muralists and by our class.

How were people informed and influenced prior to the mass communication era? Artists and their patrons knew for centuries that art was a powerful tool for educating, enlightening, influencing, and recording events for all strata of society. The exact purposes of the Lascaux Cave drawings in France remain unknown. Resplendent with drawings and symbols, they were created about 30,000 B.C.E. Were they recalling a famous hunt? Were they instructional designs for training young hunters? Stained glass windows in Gothic cathedrals illustrated Biblical stories to educate the unlettered masses about the word of God. Renaissance frescos retold both Biblical and mythological stories. In fact, murals were created by most early people including the Chinese and Egyptians. In Mexico, artists painted murals from earliest days right through the colonial period with dramatic effect in the 20th century. A trip through Latin America confirmed the existence of exterior and interior murals trying to convey urgent but as yet undecipherable messages to the 21st century. Unlike easel paintings with limited public exposure, murals were up for viewing, contemplation, and education.

In *The Influence of Mexican Muralists on WPA Art* curriculum unit, we will examine paintings created in the United States by Mexican and American muralists from 1920-1940. Using the works of Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros, and Jose Orozco and the American Works Project Administration muralists, we will study the influence that the Mexican artists had on their American counterparts. In our study, we will explore common symbols and messages in the State of Florida WPA murals that I photographed and those created by Mexican artists in the United States. Another lesson in this unit deals with the manipulation of symbols in the creation of murals by both Mexican and American artists. Student activities include choosing a symbol to represent themselves and eventually combining symbols to create persuasive images that send a message or garner support for school programs like Students Against Drunk Driving or Prom Promise. The culminating performance standard for the unit of study is to create a set of murals (or mural) which captures the lives and experiences of the very diverse student groups at our high school just as the WPA artists captured the spirit of Americans facing the uncertainties of the Depression.

Why study Mexican muralists? Trained in Mexico and Europe, they were recognized in the 1920's as the greatest fresco painters since the Renaissance. Mayan and Aztec murals decorated the Mexican landscape for hundreds of years dating from the earliest Indian inhabitants. The Mexican muralists were unparalleled in their commitments to resurrect an art form from their past to tell the story of and shape the future of post revolutionary Mexico. The Mexican government supported art academies as early as the founding of The Academy of San Carlos in 1785. Virtually every Mexican artist studied at this school under the patronage of the government and wealthy Mexicans. At this time there was no recognized national art of Mexico. Foreign

art styles were imported and taught by master Spanish artists. Initially, the early murals depicted non-political settings with universal themes. In the beginning, the style of art was tightly controlled (like the closely controlled WPA Art subjects). The young artists rejected Spanish art as foreign and yearned to create a national art for Mexico (Patterson, 1964, 376-79). Many of the more promising artists, such as Diego Rivera, were given government grants to study in Europe. There he sampled the new art forms in Paris, studied the Renaissance painters, and gained an international reputation.

After the Revolution came to an end in 1920, Jose Vasconcelos was appointed Mexico's Minister of Education. Vasconcelos recruited feisty, young artists, and lured famous artists from Europe, including Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros (Patterson, 1964, 379). Lenient policies at the Academy gave more freedom to the dissatisfied young artists in choosing their subjects which only created more dissent. Subsequently, unrest and violent protest at the academy frequently occurred as the artists used the school as a forum for their revolutionary political ideas on labor, agriculture, cultural, and foreign policy.

The Mexican Revolution freed the country of foreign political influence, but authoritarian rulers retained power and the issue of inadequate or non-existent land reform persisted. The Communist Revolution in Russia attracted the land poor and oppressed workers of every nation. Two of the leading muralists, Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros, were heavily involved in the Communist party both locally and internationally. Each contributed to *La Marchete or Frente a Frente* where they successfully used their prodigious talents to create cartoon-like illustrations in tract flyers to indoctrinate the illiterate peasants of Mexico into the brotherhood of communism (Azuela, 1993, 82-83).

Mexican Muralists created many public and private murals in Mexico and the United States. Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros believed that art was the highest form of human expression and a key force in social revolution. After the 1st Congress of Soviet Writers' in Moscow in 1938, their commitment to social realism became more militant and focused on contemporary social issues. One manifesto signed by Rivera, Siqueiros, and Guerrero declared that "art and politics are inseparable." Through *El Machete*, art attempted to awaken an awareness of history and Civil Rights in Mexico's poor. In this publication, no by-lines were added to identify bourgeois individualism, adding to the belief that many more contributors wrote for the publication. A popular trio, the Trinity of Soldiers, Farmers, and Workers, was created and repeated in various revolutionary tracts (Azuela, 1993, 83). These images recurred on newspaper mastheads and murals alike.

By the early 1930's, art conscious Americans were familiar with the work of Diego Rivera, David Siqueiros, and Jose Orozco. The three giants of Mexican art took America by storm. Although the communist political philosophy of Rivera and Siqueiros ran contrary to the capitalistic principles of the United States, American private institutions and individuals employed their impressive talents as early as the 1920's. Early Rivera murals were commissioned by the California School of Fine Arts, the San Francisco Stock Exchange, a private home owner, and the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts. The painting in Detroit integrated workers into the machines themselves and was clearly anti-capitalist. Siqueiros was invited to the United States where he conducted workshops in New York and Los Angeles at the Chouinard Art School for 10 local artists. He completed three outdoor frescos in Los Angeles in the early 1930's. His most controversial piece, *Tropical America*, combined a loin cloth clad Indian figure crucified on a double cross topped with eagles perched on North American coins. Although the painting was hailed as a success by the art community, the anti-imperialist theme resulted in the fresco being painted over. He also conducted workshops in New York. Orozco completed murals in California, New York, and New Hampshire (Goldman, 1974, 325). However controversial the American drawings were, they were subdued compared to the grotesque and controversial figures and forms depicted on the commissions in Mexico.

Although they shared many similar ideas, Orozco, Siqueros, and Rivera were different in their artistic styles and temperaments. Orozco was an expressionist who painted in broad strokes. He opposed the separation of painting and folk art. Diego Rivera's early works are heavily influenced by his years in Europe where he experimented with numerous styles. He painted smoothly, cramming each centimeter of space, while creating a narrative surface. Diego Rivera created over 6000 square meters of murals (Craven, 2001. 222). Unlike the others, Siqueros rarely used themes from Mexican history. He experimented with the airbrush and pyroxillin paint to find a material that could resist sun and rain. Absorbed in depicting the class struggle, he was the first muralist to use photographs in developing his murals (Goldman, 1974,323).

*The Influence of Mexican Muralists on the WPA Art Projects* unit take takes us back to a time before television. The election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 came when the nation was on the verge of crisis after three years of Republican inability to solve the deepening financial morass. Within 100 days of his inauguration in 1933, Roosevelt presented comprehensive plans to Congress for putting the ailing nation back on its feet. Roosevelt understood the power of the modern media as he reported to the nation via radio in his fireside chats. Roosevelt and his inner circle worked tirelessly to put together legislation that would ease the welfare rolls and put Americans back to work. One of the legislative initiatives was the Works Progress Administration. Initially, the WPA constructed buildings nation-wide, including post offices, the Treasury and Interior Buildings in Washington, and countless other public buildings Combined with the Civilian Conservation Corps and other New Deal "make work" programs, the WPA was slowly returning labor to work.

The inclusion of art as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects was unquestionably a stroke of genius. One must credit not only the Roosevelts, but artists, friends, and supporters of the President and First Lady such as George Biddle and Holger Cahill. Biddle, himself an artist, studied under Diego Rivera and greatly admired his work. Biddle reportedly told the President that artists had to eat, too (O'Connor.1973, 457). Cahill was a pivotal figure who formulated a plan for bringing art into mainstream society.

Holger Cahill, a museum curator, expressed fears that "without the community's aid, [during the Depression] the arts would enter a dark age from which they might not recover for generations". Influenced by the ideas of Thomas Dewey, Cahill declared that "industrialism created a vulgarity of taste that excluded the fine arts". A new social order was needed in which all members of the community would see the value of art as an outlet for everyone in society. Artists were entitled to employment. To Cahill, appreciation of art was not a birthright, but a product of experience. He formulated a plan to set up art education classes and community art centers. To repair the breach between artist and public, Cahill sought to create a partnership by localizing WPA Art projects. This led to the joint planning of local projects by artists and the community leaders. Through the mural projects, art was taken to the heartland through the beautification of local WPA projects. The murals were intended as a sign of pride and hope for a better tomorrow. The mediation that resulted from the negotiations between the two groups resembled the type of cooperation and compromise frequently found in our democratic government (Mavigliano, 1984, 26-29).

Like many other countries, the Mexican government supported art projects to garner citizen approval and foster national art. In the 1920's, the Mexican government began offering commissions for the decoration of public buildings. This influenced American leaders to recognize the importance of creating a national art that would bind citizens together especially in very troubling economic and political times. Events abroad further forced U.S. leaders to consider initiating programs to increase American pride and forge the nation together under a set of recognizable values. The timing of the project came at the moment when United States workers faced massive unemployment (up to 25% among white Americans) and even artists of stature faced the prospects of abandoning their aspirations and seeking work in any field to make ends meet.

Unlike the Mexican artists who had enjoyed both private and public support for their projects, American artists were dependent on wealthy art collectors, institutes, or the whims of the market. Artistic freedom was sacrificed for dollars. What was unique about the role of art in the United States during the Great Depression was the government's \$74 million dollar financial support allowing artists to continue their craft (Beckh, 1960, 4). For the first time in the history of the United States, the government actively set into motion a policy to free art from its elitist past, extend the appreciation of art through art education and community art centers, while eliminating artists from the relief rolls.

There were many noticeable differences in the ways in which art contracts were executed under the WPA. Artists were forced to adhere to the strict rules under which they were contracted and paid. Artists were not paid for preliminary work or sketches. This caused some artists, such as Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, to refuse contract work. All topics required local approval. Later, local governments were required to pay 25% of the non-labor costs of the projects. Payments of \$23.50 to \$42.00 a week were withheld until completion (Mavigliano, 1984, 28). The democratization of art demanded that the artists confer and compromise with local officials to meet community standards. The topics included mainly provincial American scenes and social realism. The present was described as enlightened compared to the past. Many of the Florida WPA murals that I have photographed are pastoral and cling to the idealized past. Erica Rubenstein, in her unpublished thesis in 1943, stated that "topics emphasized labor, the reward for a man's work, and the dignity and right of a man to work" (Berman, 1977, 653). There was little negativism as the artists were grateful for the opportunity to work. Like other naïve New Dealers, the artists believed in democracy, the future of the United States, peace, and Franklin Roosevelt.

Traditionally, Americans harbored an attitude that art was a luxury. Virginia Mecklenburg stated that "there was a negative assessment of the contemporary public's artistic consciousness, but expressed confidence that the public could be awakened to the beauties of art" (Mecklenburg, 1979). An appreciation of fine arts was considered upper-class, if one could define such a group in a nation where "all men are created equal." Executive Order # 7046 stated that WPA work would be non-discriminatory (Javis, 2000, 241). African Americans participated primarily as writers and in theater productions, with one documented mural at the Harlem Hospital. In spite of the executive order, *The Index of American Design* did not include Native American artifacts. There was a series of paintings in the Interior Department building by the "5 Kiowa Artists" (Mecklenburg, 1979).

Although Roosevelt remained adamant that relief was the primary reason for the arts projects, Henry Moganthau created the Treasury Department Section Art that emphasized quality art. Section projects were viewed as more elitist due to the competitions held to secure the best artists for beautification of new construction. A panel of artists carefully conducted anonymous competitions. The names of artists were not revealed until the award was announced. Submitted projects were considered on the basis of accuracy in drawing, color, compositional balance, and appropriateness of scale. A list of runner-ups was maintained and used to award smaller projects. The Treasury Department awarded 1400 contracts valued at over \$3 million dollars (Mecklenburg, 1979).

The influence, popularity, and the recognized Communist tendencies of influential Mexican muralists brought them to the attention of the United States Congress. Congressional subcommittee members questioned the loyalty of the project artists. Congressman Dies convened Congressional hearings that ultimately resulted in reduced funding in the 1940's. New Deal artist, Edward Lansing, reported that Congress, the press, and the public did not fully support the art projects (Monroe, 1973, 457). By the 1940's, war industries were supplying the Allies and WPA relief was suspended. Many artists disassociated themselves from the WPA due to the

postwar red scares and McCarthyism. It was not until the post war period of the 1960's that many former recipients came forward to retell their stories.

## Rationale

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In a republican form of government, the highest possible level of education must be maintained through either public or private means. It is the people, through their elected officials, that ultimately must approve or reject the decisions and actions of their government. What is fair or biased, equitable or discriminatory toward the citizens of the nation and of the world is essential to know. Without the ability to evaluate information, either written or visual, and make rational choices as to its validity, a citizen cannot actively and honestly participate in the democratic process. The impressive role of art in influencing the public and formulating their reactions to political and economic events is clear from this unit.

Twenty-five per cent of our school is ESOL (English for the Speakers of Other Languages). Approximately 40% of our school population is economically disadvantaged. It is our duty to pass on the skills to recognize symbols and propaganda (either government or private) and create informed citizens who seek the truth and recognize attempts to manipulate public opinion.

## Overview

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The purpose of this unit of study, *The Influence of Mexican Muralist on the WPA Art Projects*, is to use art to help students to understand the political, social, cultural, and economic changes that occurred after World War 1 and how art is used to influence opinions. The period of the 1930's, labeled the Great Depression, was one of the most difficult economic times in United States history. Massive unemployment, farm and home foreclosures, business closings and bank failures were addressed with limited actions and little success by President Hoover, who responded with true *laissez faire* policy (hands off). Added to the economic woes of the United States, the threat posed by the newly emerging Union of Soviet Socialist Republics raised the specter of class warfare between communists and the floundering capitalist economies of the west.

Advised by some of his closest associates, in 1933 the newly inaugurated President of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, initiated a series of comprehensive social welfare programs that attempted to stem the tide of the rapidly failing economy by creating jobs. This was a brilliant ploy which shortened the relief rolls and rekindled the American hope of a better tomorrow. At the insistence of President Roosevelt and his inner circle, the United States Congress created the Works Project Administration and followed the model of other governments, including Mexico, in subsidizing art projects. The intention of this project is to examine the mural projects of both the Mexican and American artists found in the United States and particularly in the State of Florida and use the information to closely examine the purposes of art and detect efforts by the government or artists to influence the public.

The critical question is whether Mexican muralists influenced their American counterparts. The Mexican style of fresco was studied and imitated by many Americans muralists. David Siqueros presented workshops for

artists in News York. Diego Rivera received private American commissions in spite of his anti-capitalists images and obvious distain for the American system. The American muralists did not have the freedom to choose their subject matter. Therefore, the WPA art did not become the focal point for social unrest as it did in Mexico. In spite of the close controls placed on the WPA workers, it was ultimately the communist accusations against the artists which caused the initial loss of funding in the early 1940's.

The limitless possibilities for this unit of study include American History, World History, American Government, Psychology, Economics, and 2-D Art. In American History we are primarily using Florida WPA pieces and works of Mexican artists in the United States. World History classes could cover the more controversial and political pieces by Diego Rivera Mexico. Latin American Studies or world history could use this opportunity to show more positive aspects of Mexican culture which has been obscured by immigration issues. Government and Economics classes discuss forming the federal budget and the need to make tradeoffs between guns and butter. The social welfare vestiges of New Deal Programs such as Social Security and farm subsidy payments open the door to the discussions on the proper role of the government and the controversies surrounding government funding for the National Endowment for the Arts. The possibilities of the 2-D Art class are endless in creating murals for school programs such as Students against Drunk Driving and Prom Promise.

## Objectives

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Students will use a variety of primary and secondary art resources to explain the political, social, cultural, and economic outcomes of the post World War 1 period. Students will use a variety of primary sources to gain understanding about the power of art in influencing citizens. Students will create a Venn diagram on the differences and similarities in Mexican murals and WPA mural art. Students will create murals (mural) for our school for specific purposes.

## Materials

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Primary source materials for this unit of study were personally photographed by the writer from sources still existing in the State of Florida. They include the U.S. Post Offices in the State and Andrew Robinson Elementary School in Jacksonville, Florida. Secondary materials include murals art citings by Mexican Muralists and U.S. Artists working in the United States from 1920 to 1940. To obtain art go to [www.WPAArt.com](http://www.WPAArt.com). Handouts in the unit include materials on symbolism, art's influence, and notable muralists. Rubric for Mural Production

## Essential Questions

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Should the government use art to influence the behavior of its citizens?

Should government resources (tax money) be used to pay artists for their work?

What is the value of art to the community?

## Strategies

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Strategies used in this unit of study include **KWL** (What do you know? What do you want to know? and What have you learned), pair-share, sentence frames, summarizing, retelling, an annotated time-lines, journaling, response to literature, an internet scavenger hunt, reading circles, RATATA (Read aloud, think aloud, talk aloud), and assorted co-operative strategies.

## Performance tasks

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Students will study all of the New Deal programs for providing economic relief during the Great Depression. Our class will focus on the WPA Arts Project and the efforts to keep artistic creativity alive during this time. We will use the internet to show works by artists who benefited from WPA contracts. In addition, we will study commonly accepted symbols and create new symbols for specific groups within the school. Furthermore, we will study how art was used to create public opinion and influence decision-making. Using a sample rubric, students will create a rubric for judging the quality of their murals. Ultimately, the murals are being judged/displayed in the Media Center, or a part of the annual Cinco de Mayo festival.

## Lesson Plans

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This unit has three lesson plans that will probably extend for five days. The plan used in this unit is modeled on the Duval County Florida School Board model for the Modified Workshop Model. The plan begins with a rationale, materials needed, standards listed, student warm-up, teacher modeling period, student work period, real life connections,

and closure. Prior to beginning the unit, Use the KWL chart to determine the background knowledge of the students. See Appendix 1.



## Lesson #1 Symbolism in Art

### Rationale

Visual symbols are the language of 2-D art. A clear understanding of symbols is essential to understand the work of Mexican and American muralists.

### New Standards Performance Standards and Sunshine State Standards

Students will use art to demonstrate an understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural changes that followed World War 1. Students will demonstrate their critical thinking skills by recognizing common symbols and creating new symbols. Students will practice their listening skills during the teacher directed period.

### Materials

Unlined paper, 4 computers set up online for murals by Diego Rivera (*Machines of Industry and San Francisco Stock Exchange*, [www.DiegoRivera/Diego Rivera Museum](http://www.DiegoRivera/DiegoRiveraMuseum)) and Thomas Hart Benton (*Boom Town and Miners*, [www.ThomasHart Benton.University of Indiana.com](http://www.ThomasHartBenton.UniversityofIndiana.com)), or handouts on symbols provided by the teacher. See Appendices 1,2,3.

### Opener (Bell ringer, hook):

Use the unlined paper to write your name and draw an animal to represent yourself. Share aloud about the symbol and why you chose it. Post them on the board.

### Teacher Instructional Period

Ask the class to work in pairs to identify examples of easily recognizable symbols such as donkeys, elephants, wolf, fox, top hat, or sombrero. Discuss the symbols with the whole group. Ask the class to look at pairs of images that have multiple meanings, such as a cartoon pig and a pig in mud and an industrial worker and an agricultural worker. Ask students what impressions do each convey. Ask students to form groups of 4 and give symbols that have double meanings like the last set of images. Images may be easily obtained by clicking on "Insert" then "Pictures". See Appendices 2,3.

### Student Work Period

Students conduct a symbol scavenger hunt. Form students into groups of 4. Each student is a recorder for this assignment. From the internet sites, each group views examples of mural art. The murals are of both Mexican and American Artists. Write the name of the artist, mural, and location. List all symbols in the mural. What do you think these symbols mean? Why? (Appendix 4)

### Real Life Connections

What murals have you seen in Jacksonville? What was the purpose of those murals? Share some of the murals that you have photographed in your city.

### Closure

Each group presents their findings from the murals. Other groups share their ideas on the mural. Teacher will

facilitate, confirm and expand on the discussions. Using complete sentences, answer this question in your journal: What did you learn that will help you to understand art's influence on social, political, and economic issues of the time? Journals are reviewed during student-teacher conferences.

## **Lesson #2 Diego Rivera, Reading Informational Text**

### Rationale

Reading informational text is essential to obtain information in life. Selecting the main ideas is a skill important to both college, vocational, and work bound students.

### New Standard Performance Standards

Students will use art to demonstrate an understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural changes that followed World War I. Students will practice their informational reading skills on a biographical piece. Students will select the main ideas and create a summary.

### Materials

A Reading on the life of Diego Rivera may be obtained from your library or online. (Cockcroft, *Diego Rivera: Hispanics of Achievement*). Teacher may use a read-aloud, think-aloud for challenged readers. Provide rulers or graph paper for timeline. Create an annotated timeline for your life to demonstrate with. (If you do not wish to personalize the experience, create a time line for a contemporary famous person.) Provide each student with a copy of the sentence frame. See Appendix 2,6.

### Opener (Bell ringer, hook)

Individually, students will select and write 5 important events from their life. On a line piece of paper, create a timeline from 0 (for your birth) to 30 years. Place the 5 events of your life at the correct place on the timeline. See Appendix 6.

### Teacher Instructional Period

Teacher displays a personal annotated biographical timeline or one of a contemporary famous personality. Explain why you have chosen the events on your timeline. Ask students the following questions: Why have you chosen these events? Why do you think we call these milestones? What are the notes on my timeline (annotation)? Look at the word "annotation". What do you think the base word is? Does this give you a clue about the word's meaning? Ask students to annotate their timeline.

### Student Work Period

Students will participate in reading circles. Teacher will read or provide handouts on the life of Diego Rivera. Everyone will be a recorder and write down the important events in Diego Rivera's life. When students are finished with the reading, ask them to decide as a group on the seven most important events in his life. Create a timeline of Rivera's life. Use the sentence frame to summarize Diego Rivera's life. See Appendix 5 or teacher may use the reading as a "Read Aloud-Think Aloud-Talk Aloud" (RATATA).

### Connection to real-life

When did Diego begin his work as an artist? Do you think that he knew he would become a great muralist? What could you do to ensure your future success?

Closure

Using complete sentences, answer this question in your journal. In your own words, why do you think that Diego Rivera was popular with Americans? Journals are reviewed during student-teacher conferences.

### **Lesson #3 The Tone of Art**

Rationale

Muralists manipulate symbols in art to express ideal and influence the viewer. In a society where visual expression is so evident, students should recognize its power.

New Standards Performance Standards

Students will use art to demonstrate an understanding of the political, economic, social, and cultural changes that followed World War I. Students will practice their informational reading and writing skills. Students will demonstrate their critical thinking skills by recognizing the tone of pieces of art.

Materials

Provide copies of WPA murals. You may go on line to [www.wpa art projects.com](http://www.wpa art projects.com) and use the Nancy Lorange website to obtain information about WPA projects in areas of your State. I have photographed several in Florida and will use them for this lesson. See Appendix 7 for 5 examples in Florida.

Opener (Bell ringer, hook)

Individually, students will make a list of words that express emotion. Pair-share with a partner, adding words to each list. Form groups of 4 and expand you list. Prepare to share this with the class.

Teacher Instructional Period

The whole group shares their emotional words. Project the sample of the WPA mural from your State. Ask students to make observations about the piece. (Be sure to include all symbols and the tone of the picture.) What do you think that the artist is trying to convey to the viewer. How do you feel when viewing the work? How is this mural different from the Diego Rivera mural that you saw previously?

Student Work Period

Most of the murals in today's lesson are from the State of Florida. [www.wpa mural art.com](http://www.wpa mural art.com). They can be viewed in Post Offices, schools, and other public buildings in Florida and other States. For each of the sites follow the directions to complete your study. Use the above website of examples of murals. I am using the photographs that I have taken. For each site that you visit, provide the following information: Name of mural, location, artist, symbols, tone of the painting, and purpose of the artist (Appendix 6).

Real-life Connections

Last year, our school was one of many schools that participated in a mural project for Super Bowl XXXIX. In

your opinion, what was the purpose of this project? How did the quality of the Super Bowl mural or the Media Center mural compare with the murals you have seen this week?

## Closure

Debriefing of the findings. Teacher facilitates the discussion led by students. In complete sentences in your journal, record your individual response to this question: How do the WPA murals differ from the works of Diego Rivera in their use of symbols and tone? Journals are reviewed during the student-teacher conferences.

## Student Resources

The following resources are located in our school library.

Castedo, Leopoldo. *A History of Latin American Art and Architecture: From Pre-Columbian Times to the Present*, 1969. A comprehensive book including prominent Latin American artists and architects.

Ergas, Aimee. *Artists from Michelangelo to Maya Lin*, 1995. A comprehensive book including formidable post Renaissance artists with a short readable section on Diego Rivera.

Cockcroft, James. *Diego Rivera: Hispanics of Achievement*, 1991. A very readable, illustrated book covering the life and works of Diego Rivera.

Frazier, Nancy. *Frida Kahlo: Mysterious Painter*, 1992. A very readable book that covers the life of Frida Kahlo and her life with Diego Rivera.

Garza, Hedde, *Frida Kahlo: Hispanics of Achievement*, 1994. A very readable book that covers the life of Frida Kahlo and her life with Diego Rivera.

Landi, Ann, *Schirmer Reference Encyclopedia of Art*, 2002. A comprehensive multi-volume work on art with a short excerpt on Diego Rivera.

Shirley, David, *Diego Rivera: Artist of the People*.1995. A very readable and well illustrated book that covers the life and works of Diego Rivera.

## Resources

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Azuela, Alicia, "*El Machete and Frente a Frente: Art Committed to Social Justice in Mexico*", *Art Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Political Journals and art, 1910-40, Spring, 1993.

The article gives information with illustrations on the use of art in Mexico in the socialist movement.

Beckh, Erica "Government Art in the Roosevelt Era: A Appraisal of Federal Art Patronage in the Light of Present Needs," *Art Journal*, Autumn 1960. A pre-Kennedy article which uses New Deal expenditures as a rationale for government sponsored art.

Goldman, Shifra, "Siqueiros and 3 Early Murals in Los Angeles, *Art Journal*, Vol.33, No.4, Summer 1974. This article details the self-

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## Appendices for "The Influence of Mexican Muralists on WPA Artists"

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### Appendix 1. KWL Chart

Activate background knowledge Prepare an overhead, use chart paper, or provide individual student copies for the KWL chart.

(table 05.02.09.01 available in print form)

### Appendix 2. Using Symbols

Prepare an overhead or download from the "insert" "picture" on your computer with the following symbols:

1. (image 05.02.09.01 available in print form)

2. (image 05.02.09.02 available in print form)
3. (image 05.02.09.03 available in print form)
4. (image 05.02.09.04 available in print form)
5. (image 05.02.09.05 available in print form)
6. (image 05.02.09.06 available in print form)
7. (image 05.02.09.07 available in print form)

### **Appendix 3. Creating tone through images.**

Prepare an overhead or download from the "insert" "picture" on your computer with the following symbols:

1.

(image 05.02.09.08 available in print form)

(image 05.02.09.09 available in print form)

2.

(image 05.02.09.10 available in print form)

(image 05.02.09.11 available in print form)

Why would the tone of the art work differ by using the above symbols?

### **Appendix 4. Symbols Scavenger Hunt**

(table 05.02.09.02 available in print form)

### **Appendix 5. Sentence Frame**

(table 05.02.09.03 available in print form)

### **Appendix 6. Format for Annotated Timeline**

(table 05.02.09.04 available in print form)

Looking for persuasive clues in art

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Block \_\_\_\_\_

Mural Title \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

Symbols: \_\_\_\_\_

Mural Tone: \_\_\_\_\_

Why did the artist create this mural?

### **Appendix 7. Florida WPA Murals**

(image 05.02.09.12 available in print form)

(image 05.02.09.13 available in print form)

West Palm Beach, Florida — Post Office

(image 05.02.09.14 available in print form)

(image 05.02.09.15 available in print form)

West Palm Beach, Florida — Post Office

(image 05.02.09.16 available in print form)

Presently Located at Andrew Robinson Elementary School Jacksonville, Florida

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