

**Unit Title: We're Moving to Mexico—Where Will We Live?**

**Summary:** Your mom/dad works for the U.S. Department of State and have been assigned to one of three places in Mexico: the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, D.F.; the U.S. Consulate in Mérida, Yucatán; or the U.S. Consulate in Oaxaca City, Oaxaca. Your parents have asked you which of the three cities you want to live in. Using traditional library resources and reliable Internet sources for information, write a persuasive essay explaining which city you would most like to live in.

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**Subject Area:** Information Literacy (Library Media) /Social Studies/  
Language Arts

**Topics:** Geography / Using Research to support a point of view /  
Persuasive writing / Mexico

**Grade:** 4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> grade

**Time Frame:** 8 30-minute classes

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

- What is important to your family in choosing a place to live?
- What kind of research must be done to help you make a decision?
- How do you use this information in a letter to your parents persuading them to move to the city of your choice?

**UNDERSTANDINGS**

Students will understand...

- Mexico has different climates and landforms.
- The lifestyles of modern Mexicans.
- Mexico has a variety of indigenous peoples.
- Locations of the Aztecs and Mayas.

**INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS**

- Students will be able to access Web sites and determine pertinent information for their purpose.
- Students will be able to use non-fiction text features to find information.
- Students will be able to write a persuasive paragraph using information from their research.
- Students will be able to take notes and write a bibliography.

**ESTABLISHED GOALS** The benchmarks addressed in this unit are taken from the Washington State Standards for Library Information Skills, Writing/Language Arts and the National Council for the Social Studies

- Explore and use various forms of information to support a point of view.
- Recognize that information gathering is based on a need.
- Apply a research process to decide which information is needed, find sources, use information, and check sources.
- Apply effective reading comprehension strategies, including summarizing and comparisons using information in text, between texts, and across subject areas.
- Respond to text in critical and creative ways.
- Establish and adjust purpose for reading including to find out, to understand, to interpret, and to solve problems.
- Use information in persuasive writing.
- Use information to understand other cultures.

**PERFORMANCE TASKS and EVIDENCE OF LEARNINGS**

- Participation in the group reading and note-taking while reading The True Book of Mexico.
- Using a variety of information resources students will find information that will support their choice of a favorite city in southern Mexico.
- Organization of information in a graphic organizer.
- Students will assemble the information into at least a two-paragraph letter supporting their choice of a city in which their family will live.

Students will demonstrate their learning through:

- Use of a graphic organizer
- Class discussions
- Ability to locate supporting data
- Writing persuasive paragraphs in friendly letter format
- Self-assessment

**LEARNING PLAN**

This unit is designed to help students use research to support a point of view as well as introduce the southern regions of Mexico, which will be unfamiliar to most of the students I work with. It is done as part of a collaborative unit with the classroom teacher who is teaching writing skills. Students will be introduced to non-fiction text features through the group reading of The True Book of Mexico. Most of the lesson times will be spent in small groups and individually doing research. This lesson plan focuses on the library portion of the unit. After research has been done, students will write the paragraph in their writing classes.

A research project like this makes it impossible for students to cut and paste information they have found. They must take the information and use it in a specific manner to help them make an informed decision.

See the resources page for resources used in this lesson. Students will also have to find at least one traditional library resource using the library OPAC.

For more information about persuasive writing:

[http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/curriculum/writing/elem\\_writing/Bib/Persuasive.htm](http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/curriculum/writing/elem_writing/Bib/Persuasive.htm)

An excellent Web site for more information about teaching friendly letter writing:

[http://www.eduref.org/Virtual/Lessons/Language\\_Arts/Writing/WCP0224.html](http://www.eduref.org/Virtual/Lessons/Language_Arts/Writing/WCP0224.html)

Teachers/librarians should support the students working independently by:

<b>Student Task</b>	<b>Teacher/Librarian Step</b>
Use the graphic organizer to compare and contrast the characteristics of each city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guide students in using appropriate resources.</li><li>• Give students time in class to compare and contrast the cities and reasons they like a city using the graphic organizer.</li></ul>
Analyze the data to make an informed decision, and organize the most convincing reasons that support their decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give students time in class to analyze the various characteristics in order to make their own decision.</li><li>• Allow students sufficient time in class to organize convincing reasons that support their decisions using the graphic organizer.</li></ul>
Write, revise, and edit a persuasive friendly letter making sure that the position is in the introduction and includes at least two accurate reasons supporting the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review characteristics of persuasive writing using your school district's persuasive writing rubric.</li><li>• Give students opportunities to review and revise their writing.</li></ul>

## STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

**Session 1:** Students will be introduced to the need for research through the concept of having to move to another country (Mexico), by pretending that their parents, who work for the U.S. Department of State have been asked to work in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City D.F.; the consulate in Mérida, Yucatán, or the consulate in Oaxaca City, Oaxaca. Students will use an atlas to find the cities. Their parents have asked the family to help in the decision making by doing research about Mexico and determining which city would be the most interesting to work in. Their findings will be presented in a persuasive friendly letter written to their parents. The class as a group will discuss what information will be important in making this decision and the graphic organizer will be introduced.

**Session 2:** After reading the first chapter of The True Book of Mexico, and taking notes on important facts about Mexico, students will divide into small groups. Each group will read a chapter of the book and prepare a presentation about the chapter for the group, pointing out things that will be interesting for students who are moving to Mexico.

**Session 3:** Each student group will present their findings on the chapter read to the group, making sure that the area in which the city is located is discussed. If it is specific information about the city's state, students will take notes using their graphic organizer.

**Session 4:** Before letting students do individual research, the librarian will go over the bibliography information needed to be written for each item. For the finished bibliography, the students will use the "citation writer" in World Book Online. Students will be divided between the library to find books and the computer lab to do online research.

**Sessions 5, 6, and 7:** Individual research. In session 5 the students who have used the Internet for information will be in the library and those who used the library will be in the computer lab.

**Session 8:** Begin with a group discussion of best resources found and a review of the final project, the letter to their parents. Students will discuss pros and cons of each city and decide the city in which they want to live.

# YOU DECIDE: MEXICO

Use your graphic organizer to help you decide on the best city

	MEXICO CITY, D.F.	MÉRIDA, YUCATÁN	OAXACA CITY, OAXACA
Temperature/Climate			
People			
Fun activities			
Interesting detail 1			
Interesting detail 2			
Interesting detail 3			
My decision for the best city			

## We're Moving to Mexico Self-Assessment

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Use this checklist to guide your work.  
Make sure you do each task on the checklist.

<b>Researching the Move:</b>	
	I participated in the brainstorming about things families would like where they move.
	I researched at least two different places to live.
	I used at least two print sources and two electronic sources.
	I documented the sources that I used.

<b>Getting Ready to Write:</b>	
	I used the graphic organizer to compare and contrast the different cities where we might live.
	I analyzed what my family liked to do when making a decision on where to move.
	I organized convincing reasons that supported my point of view.

<b>Writing:</b>	
	I wrote a draft of my persuasive letter to my parents.
	I stated my position (where I wanted to live) in the introductory paragraph.
	I included at least two accurate reasons supporting my decision.
	I revised and edited my work to make it easier for others to read.
	I wrote a final draft of my persuasive letter to my parents.

# YOU DECIDE: MEXICO

## RUBRIC

	<b>4 Excellent</b>	<b>3 Proficient</b>	<b>2 Partial</b>	<b>1 Minimal</b>
<b>Provides clear reasons why the city was chosen</b>	Constructs an informed decision supported convincingly and explicitly by three (or more) clear, accurate reasons and/or specific examples.	Constructs an informed decision supported convincingly and explicitly by two clear, accurate reasons and/or specific examples.	Decision is supported by only one clear, accurate reason.	Makes decisions but it is not supported OR provides reasons but does not make a clear decision.
<b>Create a letter that demonstrates understanding of information and responds to central question of which city would be the best to live in</b>	The letter uses correct friendly letter form in MS Word, uses correct paragraph construction.	The letter shows mostly correct letter form and paragraph construction.	The letter fails to follow correct format.	The letter is lacking correct form.
<b>Includes a bibliography</b>	The bibliography includes at least two electronic sources and two books used in research.	The bibliography includes at least 3 sources and includes both book and electronic forms.	The bibliography fails to include more than two sources.	The bibliography is not present or shows only one source for information.
<b>Use of graphic organizer</b>	The graphic organizer clearly shows the research done by the student.	The graphic organizer fails to show data for all three cities.	The graphic organizer does not show data for all cities or fails to show important data.	The graphic organizer is not present or fails to show data that is pertinent to the issue.

## Sample of a Level 4 letter

Dear Mom and Dad,

I'm VERY excited about moving to Mexico!! After spending time looking at various Internet sites and books, I've decided that I would like to move to Oaxaca. I know that it might not be as interesting for you as if you worked at the embassy in Mexico City, but Mexico City is just too big and there is too much smog!

You know how I like crafts. Well, the villages around Oaxaca are filled with villages that make rugs, clothes, wooden animals, and pottery. I read a book called Saturday Market that told about a market in a small village outside Oaxaca City. I would love to be able to visit a local market! I also read about the food in Oaxaca. They are famous for lots of good food, including fried grasshoppers. I'm not sure I want to try eating a grasshopper but it sounds interesting! I found a website that told about Christmas in Oaxaca. The 23<sup>rd</sup> of December they have a special event called Night of the Radishes and people bring in these really big radishes that are carved into all sorts of things. They also have a very special celebration for Dia de los Muertes—the day of the dead at Halloween. For these reasons I have chosen Oaxaca as the place to live while you are working in Mexico. Mérida sounds too hot! Mexico City is too big! Oaxaca is just right!

Love,

Mary



## Annotated List of Resources—We're Moving to Mexico

**DK First Atlas.** New York, NY: DK, 2004. Although this atlas is aimed at primary grades its interesting maps and pictures make it an ideal atlas for introducing a country.

**Landau, Elaine.** Mexico (A True Book). Danbury, CT: Children's Press, 2008. This is a perfect book for introducing a country and its important features. It includes many non-fiction text features.

The books and Web sites listed below are available at:

<http://www.cv.riverview.wednet.edu/mexico.htm>

### Sources for Mérida, Yucatán

#### CHILDREN'S NON-FICTION

**Ancona, George.** Mayeros, a Yucatec Maya Family. New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1997. Text and photographs present the life and customs of the descendants of the Maya now living in the Yucatán Peninsula area of Mexico.

**Coulter, Laurie.** Secrets in Stone: All About Maya Hieroglyphs. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 2001. Describes the Maya and their language, and examines how the Mayan writing system was deciphered. Includes a selection of related activities.

**Ganeri, Anita.** Ancient Maya. Mankato, MN: Compass Point Books, 2006. Introduces the civilization of the ancient Maya with simple text and illustrations. Explores how the Maya ruled their cities, what they studied, and how they worshipped, along with facts about everyday life.

**Garcia, Guy.** Spirit of the Maya. New York, NY: Walker and Company, 1995. A boy in Palenque, Chiapas explores his Mayan heritage at the ruins of Palenque.

**Harris, Nathaniel.** Ancient Maya: Archaeology Unlocks the Past. Washington, DC: National Geographic, 2008. An excellent resource for upper elementary students.

**Morris, Ting.** Arts and Crafts of the Aztecs and Maya. North Mankato, MN: Smart Apple Media, 2007. Children's art activities that include sculpture, mosaics, clay and pottery, paper cuts, and painting.

**Staub, Frank J.** Children of Yucatán. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, 1966. Describes life in Yucatán, Mexico focusing on the daily activities and cultural history of some modern Mayan children.

## FOLKTALES

**Baker, Betty. No Help at All. New York, NY: Greenwillow, 1978.** An easy reader folktale. In return for saving a boy's life, Chac, the Mayan rain god, expects some help around his house—but the boy is really no help at all.

**Dalal, Anita. Myths of pre-Columbian America. Austin, TX: Raintree, 2001.** Myths include Mayan and Aztec. Of particular interest is the story about the Mayan ballgame of the underworld.

**Lattimore, Deborah Nourse. Why There is No Arguing in Heaven: A Mayan Myth. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1989.** Hunab Ku, the first Creator God of the Maya, challenges the Moon Goddess and Lizard House to create a being to worship him, but the Maize God succeeds where the others fail.

**Lightning Inside You: And Other Native American Riddles. New York, NY: W. Morrow, 1992.** Presents a collection of 140 American Indian riddles translated from twenty different languages including Aztec, Maya, Comanche, and Pawnee.

**Lowery, Linda. The Chocolate Tree: A Mayan Folktale. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook, 2009.** Tells the story of Kukulcan the god who brought not only chocolate, but others foods, the calendar, music, and books, to the Maya.

**Rockwell, Anne. The Boy Who Wouldn't Obey: A Mayan Legend. New York, NY: Greenwillow, 2000.** When Chac, the great lord who makes rain, takes a disobedient boy as his servant, they are both in for trouble. Rockwell has used traditional Mayan symbols in her illustrations, as explained in a forward.

## CHILDREN'S FICTION

**Kirwin, Anna. Lady of Palenque: Flower of Bacal. New York, NY: Scholastic, 2004.** In 749, the Maya princess Green Jay, of the Kingdom of Bacal, writes in her diary about her arduous journey to Xukpip to meet King Fire Keeper, her future husband.

**Scieszka, Jon. Me Oh Maya! New York, NY: Viking, 2003.** Joe, Fred and Sam find themselves whisked by The Book to the main ring-ball court in Chichén Itzá, Mexico in 1000 A.D., where they must play for their lives against a Mayan High Priest who cheats.

<h2>OAXACA CITY, OAXACA</h2>
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## CHILDREN'S NON-FICTION

**Ancona, George. The Piñata Maker/El Piñatero. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1994.** Describes how Don Ricardo, a craftsman from Ejutla de Crespo, Oaxaca, makes piñatas for all the village birthday parties and other fiestas.

**Wolf, Bernard. Beneath the Stone: A Mexican Zapotec Tale. New York, NY: Orchard Books, 1995.** The customs and daily life of Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca are shown through the eyes of a six-year-old Zapotec Indian boy.

## **FOLKTALES**

**Cruz, Alejandro. The Woman Who Outshone the Moon. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1991.** This English-Spanish legend of Lucia Zenteno is part of the oral history of the Zapotec Indians of Oaxaca, Mexico

**Gollub, Matthew. The Twenty-Five Mixtec Cats. New York, NY: Tambourine Books, 1993.** Although not a true folktale, this legend about a good healer and his 25 cats is based on Oaxacan folktales. The illustrator is from Oaxaca.

## **CHILDREN'S FICTION**

**Cohn, Diana. Dream Carver. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2002.** In this story, inspired by Oaxacan wood carvers, a young boy dreams of colorful exotic animals that he will one day carve in wood.

**Dorros, Arthur. Julio's Magic. New York, NY: Harper, Collins, 2005.** A young artist discovers the power of friendship when he helps his mentor win a prestigious wood-carving contest.

**Grossman, Patricia. Saturday Market. New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1994.** A fictional account of the variety of the people and things that they sell at a village market, including tortillas, birds, flowers, and rebozos.

**McAlister, Caroline. Holy Molé. Little Rock, AR: August House, 2007.** A retelling of the traditional Mexican tale explaining the origins of mole, the savory chocolate sauce that is served over turkey or chicken.

**Weill, Cynthia. ABeCedarios: Mexican Folk Art ABC's in English and Spanish. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puentes Press, 2007.** Using wooden animal carvings from the Jiménez family of Oaxaca State, a bilingual animal alphabet is presented.

## **ADULT RESOURCES**

**Haden, Judith Cooper. Oaxaca: The Spirit of Mexico. New York, NY: Artisan, 2002.** An absolutely beautiful photo essay about the artisans of the Oaxaca Valley.

**Rothstein, Arden Aibel. Mexican Folk Art: From Oaxacan Artist Families. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Books, 2002.** Includes biographies of Oaxacan artist families including people of Teotitlán and the Dolores Porres family of Atzompa.

<b>MEXICO CITY, D.F.</b>
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## **CHILDREN'S NON-FICTION**

**de Paola, Tomie. The Lady of Guadalupe. New York, NY: Holiday House, 1980.**

Recounts the appearance of the lady of Guadalupe to a poor Indian farmer in Mexico in 1531.

**Winter, Jonah. Diego: in English and Spanish. New York, NY: Knopf, 1991.** A picture book that discusses the childhood of Diego Rivera and how it influenced his art.

## **FOLKTALES**

**Lightning Inside You: And Other Native American Riddles. New York, NY: W. Morrow, 1992.** Presents a collection of 140 American Indian riddles translated from twenty different languages including Aztec, Maya, Comanche, and Pawnee.

**Sahagún, Bernardino de. Spirit Child: A Story of the Nativity. New York, NY: Morrow, 1984.** An English translation of the Aztec version of the birth of Jesus Christ told in 1583.

**Kimmel, Eric. The Fisherman and the Turtle. New York, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2008.** A retelling of the Grimm tale about the fisherman's greedy wife, set in the land of the Aztecs.

## **CHILDREN'S FICTION**

**Garza, Xavier. Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask, a Bilingual Cuento. El Paso, TX: Cinco Punto, 2004.** When Carlitos attends a wrestling match in Mexico City with his father, his favorite masked-wrestler has eyes that are strangely familiar.

## **AZTEC EMPIRE**

**Arnold, Caroline. City of the Gods: Mexico's Ancient City of Teotihuacán. New York, NY: Clarion Books, 1994.** Describes the ancient Mexican ruins and discusses the culture, religion and daily life of the people who preceded the Aztecs.

**Bingham, Jane. The Aztec Empire. Chicago, IL: Raintree, 2007.** Designed as a time travel guide, students learn about the Aztec empire.

**Fisher, Leonard Everett. Pyramid of the Sun, Pyramid of the Moon. New York, NY: Macmillan, 1988.** Discusses the history of the pyramids of Teotihuacán and the Aztecs, how they evolved from the Toltecs, how they lived and worshipped, and how they were overcome by the Spaniards.

**Hewitt, Sally. The Aztecs. New York, NY: Children's Press, 1995.** Describes the traditional way of life of the Aztecs. Includes activities in which common items represent

what the Aztecs used, such as making a fan out of strips of colored paper representing the feathers of tropical birds.

**McDonald, Fiona. You Wouldn't Want to Be an Aztec Sacrifice. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, 2001.** A humorous and gory look at the ancient Aztec tradition of sacrificing enemy warriors to the gods.

**Morris, Ting. Arts and Crafts of the Aztecs and Maya. North Mankato, MN: Smart Apple Media, 2007.** Children's art activities that include sculpture, mosaics, clay and pottery, paper cuts, and painting.

## **BOOKS ABOUT MEXICO THE COUNTRY**

### **CHILDREN'S NON-FICTION**

**Ancona, George. The Fiestas (Viva Mexico). New York, NY: Benchmark Books, 2002.** Ancona looks at the celebrations of Mexico.

**Ancona, George. The Folk Arts (Viva Mexico). New York, NY: Benchmark Books, 2002.** In photos and text Ancona explores the variety of folk arts in Mexico

**Ancona, George. The Foods (Viva Mexico). New York, NY: Benchmark Books, 2002.** Ancona looks the variety of foods in Mexico

**Ancona, George. The People (Viva Mexico). New York, NY: Benchmark Books, 2002.** Ancona looks at the variety of peoples who live in Mexico.

**Ancona, George. The Murals. New York, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2003.** Presents a photo essay about murals, a form of art the photographer, George Ancona, regards as authentically for the people or “para el pueblo.”

**Asher, Sandy. Mexico (Discovering Cultures). New York, NY: Benchmark Books, 2003.** An introduction to Mexico, highlighting the country's geography, people, foods, schools, recreation, celebrations, and language.

**Bingham, Jane. Mexico (Costume around the World). New York, NY: Chelsea Clubhouse, 2008.** Through text and pictures, the variety of traditional clothing found in Mexico is explored.

**Christmas in Mexico. Chicago, IL: World Book Education, 1976.** Includes information about celebrations in Chamula, Oaxaca, Mitala, Puebla, and Mexico City.

**Conlon, Laura. Products of Mexico. Vero Beach, FL: Roarke, 1994.** Explores the industries and agriculture of Mexico.

**Gray, Shirley. Mexico (First Reports). Mankato, MN: Compass Point, 2000.** An introduction to the geography, history, culture, and people of Mexico.

**Gomez, Paola. Food in Mexico (International Food Library). Vero Beach, FL: Roarke, 1989.** Surveys food products, customs and preparations in Mexico, describing regional dishes, cooking techniques, and recipes for a variety of meals.

**Harvey, Miles. Look What Came from Mexico. New York, NY: Franklin Watts, 1998.** Describes some familiar foods, arts and crafts, music, sports, holidays, and more that originated in Mexico.

**Illsley, Linda. A Taste of Mexico. New York, NY: Thomson Learning, 1994.**

**Illsley, Linda. Mexico (Food and Festivals). Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1999.** Discusses some of the foods enjoyed in Mexico and describes special foods that are part of specific celebrations like baptisms and weddings, Easter, the Day of the Dead, and Christmas. Includes recipes.

**Kalman, Bobbie. Mexico (Lands, People and Culture Series). New York: Crabtree, 2008.** A three-book series (Mexico: the Land, Mexico: the Culture, Mexico: the People) gives an in-depth look at Mexico.

**Krupp, Robin Rector. Let's Go Traveling in Mexico. New York, NY: Morrow Junior Books, 1996.** Describes a trip through Mexico guided by Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent, and celebrating each season of the year.

**Landau, Elaine. Mexico (A True Book). Danbury, CT: Children's Press, 2008.** Introduces children to the history, culture, historical landmarks, and people of Mexico.

**Olawsky, Lynn Ainsworth. Colors of Mexico. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda, 1997.** Explores the different colors found in Mexico's nature and history.

**Streissguth, Tom. Mexico (Globe-trotters Club). Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda, 1997.** Examines the geography, history, economy, society, and culture of Mexico.

## **CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE**

**Gersson, Mary-Jane. Fiesta Femenina: Celebrating Women in Mexican Folktale. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books, 2005.** A collection of folktales from various cultures in Mexico, all focusing on the important roles of women—including Rosha (Mayan), a young girl who rescues the sun, the goddess Tangu Yuh (Isthmus of Tehuantepec), Kesne, a Zapotec princess, and the Virgin of Guadalupe.

**Kimmel, Eric. A. The Two Mountains: An Aztec Legend. New York, NY: Holiday House, 2000.** Two married gods disobey their orders and visit Earth, where they are turned into mountains so that they will always stand side by side.

**Madrigal, Antonia Hernández. The Eagle and the Rainbow: Timeless Tales from Mexico. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Kids, 1997.** Includes a Mayan and Aztec legend.