

¡Vamos! Let's Go!

Road Trip: Southern Mexico

Author:

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School:

Tussing Elementary School, Pickerington, Ohio

Grade Level(s):

3–5

Subject Areas:

Social Studies, Language Arts, Life Science, Art

Topics:

Geography of North America; Architecture; Tropical Forests; Mexican Folk Art and Artists; Mexican Food; Mexican Culture and Traditions; Mayan Civilization

Time Frame:

Six lessons, 45–90 minutes each

Unit Summary:

Designed as an integrative learning experience for elementary students with special emphasis on Social Studies content standards for grades three through five. Students and teachers alike are invited to experience the vibrant culture, food, architecture, traditions, and folk arts of southeastern Mexico as they take a road trip of discovery through the region. As you stop to visit each city and location designated along the way, students will have the unique opportunity to examine one or more important aspects of Mexican culture through the use of photographs, books, teacher-guided lessons, and technological resources. If you and your students are ready to uncover the hidden beauty and rich culture of Mexico:

¡Vamos! Let's Go!

Companion Web site:

A Web site accompanies this unit and is designed to give teachers and students immediate access to visual images and materials that support each lesson. This Web site can be accessed at: http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2

Enduring Understandings:

Students will have the opportunity to gain the following essential skills and enduring understandings at the completion of this unit:

- Collect, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information from multiple sources.
- Understand the interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity.

- Acquire knowledge of geographic patterns, locations, and processes through the use of maps.
- Analyze the perspectives of different cultural, ethnic, and social groups.
- Compare practices and products of cultural groups in North America.
- Utilize resources and reference materials to select effective vocabulary.
- Write informational reports that include the main ideas and details from text.
- Communicate their ideas effectively in a variety of manners.
- Investigate assigned issues, topics, and problems.

Key Questions:

Lesson 1: Geography

Where is the country of Mexico located on a world map?
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Where is Mexico located on a map of North America?
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How does Mexico compare to the U.S. in shape and size?
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What are the names of states in southeastern Mexico?
--

What culturally significant cities are located in southeastern Mexico?
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Lesson 2: Architecture

What are the different types of architecture found in Mexico?

What function do different types of Mexican architecture serve?

What are the basic components of Mexican architecture?
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Lesson 3: Tropical Forest

What is a tropical forest like?

What kinds of plants and animals can be found in a tropical forest?

How have humans affected the habitat of the tropical forest?
--

What is the purpose of a nature reserve?
--

What is the difference between a rainforest and a tropical forest?
--

Lesson 4: Art

What is folk art?

What type of folk art is produced in Mexico?
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What is the connection between Mexican art and everyday life?

What type of tools and materials do Mexican artists use?
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Lesson 5: Food

What kinds of foods do Mexican people eat?
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How does food consumption differ in different parts of Mexico?
--

How is food grown, produced, and sold in Mexico?
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What is the role of the marketplace in Mexican culture?

Lesson 6: Holidays

What are some important holidays and festivals celebrated in Mexico?
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How are certain religious and spiritual beliefs expressed by Mexican people?
--

How do Mexican families celebrate certain traditions?

Lesson 1

Geography: Where in the World is Mexico?

Objective(s): *After completing the lesson, students will be able to:*

Identify Mexico on a map.
Obtain information about Mexico by using a map.

Relevant Content Standards:

Social Studies

Use map elements or coordinates to locate physical and human features of North America.
Identify the physical and human characteristics of places and regions in North America.
Read and interpret a variety of maps.

Anticipatory Set:

Review the continents with students and have them locate Mexico on a world map.
Ask students to locate Mexico on a map of North America.
Compare the size, shape, and location of Mexico to the United States.
Take a cyber class trip to learn more country facts and information about Mexico: http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Places/Find/Mexico
Students choose a book from the recommended list and write three facts about Mexico on an index card.

Materials:

Large world map
Large map of North America
Index cards
Individual student maps of Mexico (from companion Web site: http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2)
Map skills worksheet (attached)
Map of cities in southeastern Mexico (from companion Web site: http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2)

Procedures:

Hand out individual maps of Mexico with the outlines of states.
Students will look at their map of the United States of Mexico and compare it to a map of the United States of America.
<p>Possible discussion questions related to this comparison are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of states in Mexico (31) versus the number of states in the U.S. (50). • Compare the size and shape of states in both countries. • What three bodies of water surround Mexico? • Which direction is Mexico in relation to the U.S. and vice-versa? • Name the different types of landforms that can be found in Mexico (islands, peninsula, isthmus, mountains, etc.). • Find the Mexican states of Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Mexico on a map.

- How is the Distrito Federal in Mexico related to Washington, D.C.? (They are both capital cities of a country. D.F. means *Distrito Federal* or Federal District.)

Assessment:

Students will successfully complete the maps skills worksheet.

Extension Activities:

Have students choose one of the following informational Web sites and write a paragraph about one aspect of Mexico or Mexican culture:

<http://elbalero.gob.mx/kids/explora/home.html>

Virtual Tour of Mexico for Children

<http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212302/mexico.html>

A Kid's Life in Mexico

www.kidsculturecenter.com/mexico/mexico.htm

Information about Mexican customs, traditions, celebrations, and holidays

Resources and Background Builders:

Streissguth, Thomas. *Country Explorers: Mexico*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 2007.

Saffer, Barbara. *Mexico*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2006.

Frost, Helen. *A Look at Mexico*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2000.

Marx, David F. *Rookie Read-About Geography: Mexico*. Danbury, CT: Children's Press, 2000.

Landau, Elaine. *True Books: Mexico*. Danbury, CT: Children's Press, 2008.

Harvey, Miles. *Look What Came From Mexico*. Danbury, CT: Children's Press, 1999.

Geography of Mexico

Map Skills

Look at the map of the United States of Mexico:

1. Color the state of Yucatan RED.
Color the state of Quintana Roo PURPLE.
Color the state of Campeche ORANGE.
Color the state of Chiapas YELLOW.
Color the state of Oaxaca GREEN.
Color the state of Puebla BLUE.
Color the state of Mexico BLACK.
2. Draw a compass on your map and label the directions: North, South, East, and West.
3. Which body of water is WEST of the state of Mexico?
4. Which two states labeled on the map are located SOUTH of the state of Yucatan?
5. The state of _____ is between Puebla and Chiapas.
6. Is the United States of America located NORTH or SOUTH of the United States of Mexico?
7. Look at the legend. What does the letter C stand for?
8. Draw three types of landforms found in Mexico and label them.

Lesson 2

Mérida: Touring the Town

Objective(s): *After completing the lesson, students will be able to:*

Recognize several basic styles of Mexican architecture.

Create and label a drawing using vocabulary terms related to Mexican architecture.
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Relevant Content Standards:

Social Studies

Describe the cultural practices and products of diverse groups in North America including: artistic expressions; religion; language; food; clothing; shelter.

Describe similarities and differences in the ways different cultures meet common human needs including: food; clothing; language; artistic expression.
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Anticipatory Set:

Introduce students to basic architectural styles, concepts, and terms with the book <i>Arches to Ziggags: An Architecture ABC</i> .

Materials:

Individual student maps of Mexico

Mérida fact sheet (attached)

Architecture Vocabulary List (attached)

Photos from companion Web site: <i>Architecture</i> http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2

Drawing paper with architecture words (attached)
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Pencils, crayons, colored pencils

Book: <i>Arches to Ziggags: An Architecture ABC</i>

Procedure:

Have students locate the city of Mérida on their individual maps.

Review the architecture vocabulary list with students.
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Hand out the Mérida Fact Sheet, read aloud and discuss.

View the companion Web site for examples of Mexican architecture.

Have students draw their own Mexican cityscape by choosing and combining different architectural elements from the vocabulary list and Web site photos.

Assessment:

Students will draw and label correctly their Mexican cityscapes using the architecture vocabulary terms and book/Web photos as resources.

Extension Activities:

Visit Draw Your House (www.arts.ufl.edu/ART/rt_room/sparkers/house/house.html) for a lesson in which students draw their own homes.

Students will draw a picture of their own house or apartment incorporating their knowledge of architectural details and terms.
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Resources and Background Builders:

Crosbie, Michael. *Arches to Zigzags: An Architecture ABC*. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams Publisher, 2000.

Merida: Touring the Town

Mérida is the capital of the Mexican state of Yucatán. With a population of about 750,000 people, it is the largest city in the Yucatán Peninsula. Established by the Spanish conquistador Francisco de Montejo in 1542, Mérida was built on the site of the ancient Mayan city T'ho. Mayan people had already been living in the area for centuries before the Spanish explorers claimed it for the King of Spain.

Originally known as “The White City” for its colonial buildings covered in white limestone and paint, modern day Mérida is now an important cultural center within the Yucatán region. Many museums, art galleries, restaurants, shops, and colonial-style homes line its narrow cobblestone streets. In the evening, music can often be heard playing in one of the many plazas throughout the city. Local residents hold outdoor dances in the main plaza, or Zócalo, when the weather is good.

One unique feature of the colonial architecture found in Mérida is that carved Mayan stones from the ancient city of T'h'o were used to build many of the Spanish colonial buildings located throughout the city. Ancient Mayan designs can still be seen on many buildings in Mérida if you look closely.

Architecture Vocabulary List

Plaza:

A public square in a city or town featuring walkways, trees, shrubs, and places to sit

Zócalo:

The main square of a Mexican city or town

Balcony:

An enclosed platform with access from a window or door

Arch:

A curved symmetrical structure used for support

Courtyard:

An unroofed area that is enclosed by the sides of a building

Cathedral:

A large church

Ornate:

A decoration made up of complex patterns and shapes

Column:

A pillar that supports an arch

Façade:

The main wall or face of a building, sometimes covered with ornate details

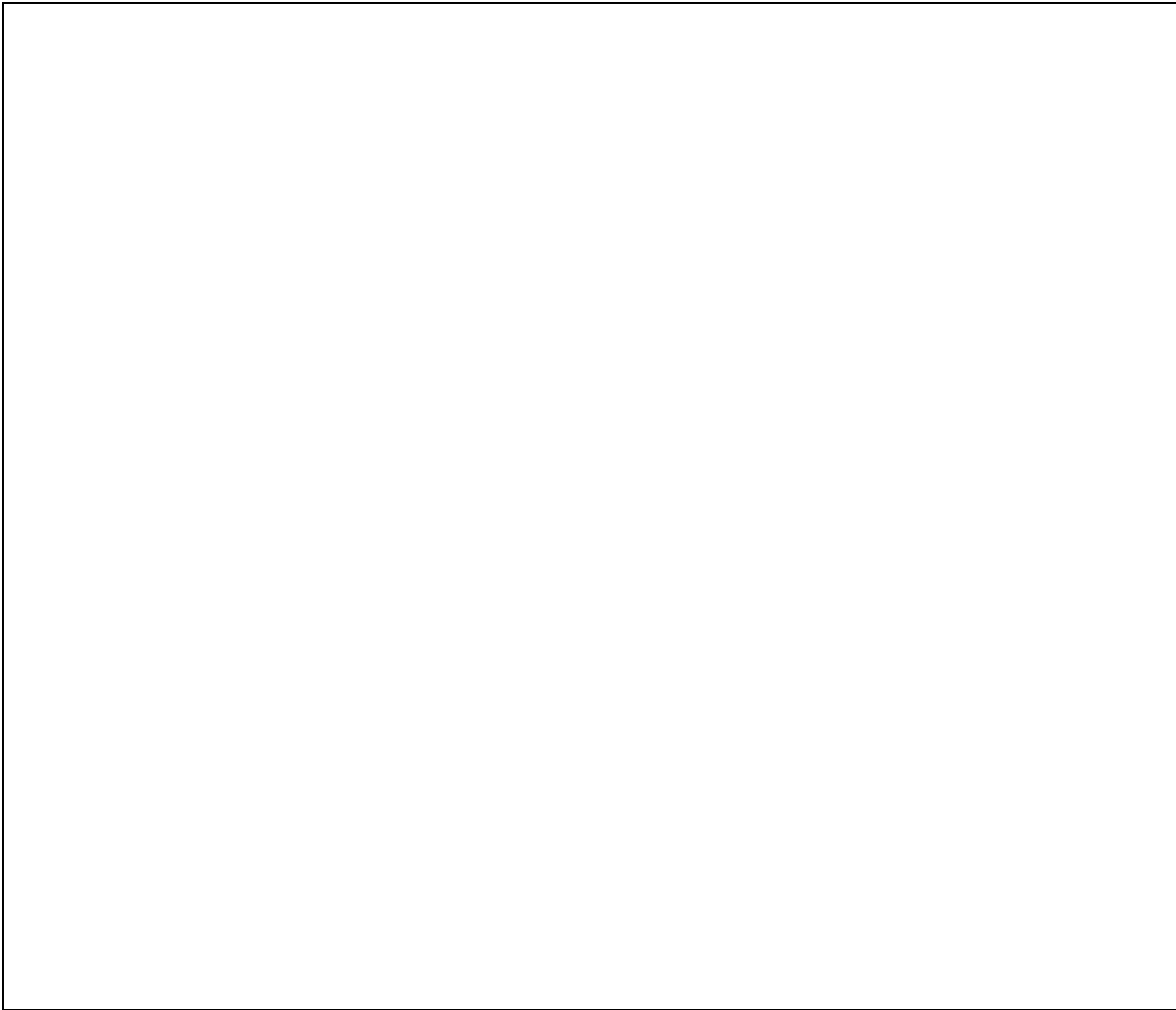
Casita:

A small house

Word Bank

arch	balcony	casita	plaza	cathedral	column
courtyard	fountain	statue	garden	zócalo	

Draw a picture of a city in Mexico using the words from the word bank. Label your picture with the words.



Lesson 3

Life in a Tropical Forest: Calakmul

Objective(s): *After completing the lesson, students will be able to:*

Identify plants and animals that live in the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve.
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Explain how humans have made an impact on the tropical forest in Calakmul.
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Relevant Content Standards:

Life Science

Summarize that organisms can survive only in ecosystems in which their needs can be met (e.g. food, water, shelter, air, carrying capacity, and waste disposal). The world has different ecosystems and distinct ecosystems support the lives of different types of organisms.
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Identify that there are many distinct environments that support different kinds of organisms.

Geography

Identify ways in which people have responded to and modified the physical environment such as building roads and clearing land for urban development.

Anticipatory Set:

Define the difference between a <u>tropical forest</u> and a <u>rainforest</u> :
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<i>Tropical Forest</i> is a general word for describing what could be one of many different types of ecosystems, including rainforests, cloud forests, dry forests, pine savannas, or a jungle.

<i>Rainforest</i> is a type of tropical forest characterized by high amounts of rainfall (between 68–78 inches per year.) The western part of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve is a dry forest, while the eastern part is considered a subperennial rainforest.

Share a book about tropical forests/rainforests from the recommended list.
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Materials:

Individual student maps of Mexico

Calakmul Biosphere Reserve fact sheet (attached)
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Tropical Forest Vocabulary List (attached)
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Web site: http://rainforest2reef.org

Photos from companion Web site: <i>Tropical Forest</i> http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2
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Student comprehension questions

Procedures:

Visit http://rainforest2reef.org to orient students to the size and location of the Calakmul Biosphere reserve in Campeche, Mexico.
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Have students locate Calakmul on their individual maps.

Review the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve vocabulary list; discuss definitions.

Hand out Calakmul Biosphere Reserve Fact Sheet, read aloud and discuss.

View the <i>Tropical Forest</i> page of the companion Web site for photos of plants and animals.
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Assessment:

Students will complete the Student Comprehension Questions based on the reading passage and <i>Tropical Forest</i> photos from the companion Web site.
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Extension Activities:

Students will brainstorm and discuss different methods of conservation to help preserve a tropical forest.
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Resources and Background Builders:

http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/resources.cfm?id=tropical_forest

An excellent and extensive source for information on tropical forests

http://www.Rainforest2reef.org

Calakmul conservation Web site and video: Guardians of the Selva Maya

http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Canopy/8484/

All about jaguars

http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/mexico/work/art8631.html

The Nature Conservancy Web site focusing on Calakmul
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http://www.videopediaworld.com/video/20412/Bats-at-Calakmul-Biosphere-Reserve--The-Nature-Conservancy

Video of bats at Calakmul

Landau, Elaine. <i>Tropical rainforests around the World</i> . London, UK: Franklin Watts, 1991.
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Mitchell, Susan K. <i>The Rain Forest Grew All Around</i> . Mount Pleasant, SC: Sylvan Dell Publishing, 2007.

Aloian, Molly. <i>A Rainforest Habitat</i> . New York, NY: Crabtree Publishing Company, 2006.

Castaldo, Nancy F. <i>Rain Forests: An Activity Guide</i> . Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2003.
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Albert, Toni. <i>The Remarkable Rainforest: An Active Learning Book</i> . Mechanicsburg, PA: Trickle Creek Books, 2003.

The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve

The Calakmul Biosphere Reserve is located in the state of Campeche, in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. It is Mexico's largest tropical forest and nature reserve. It contains 1.8 million acres of land. The purpose of the reserve is to preserve the ecosystem of the surrounding jungle.

Tropical forests are habitats rich with interesting plants and animals. In Calakmul, there are many different species of trees, butterflies, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Many of the species living in the reserve are endangered. Types of birds and animals found in Calakmul include monkeys, ocelots, jaguars, tapirs, toucans, green parrots, bats, frogs, armadillos, vultures, and eagles.

Many indigenous people who are living near the reserve are farmers. They grow maize, beans, calabaza, and chili peppers. Some have cattle ranches. Others raise bees for their honey, which is a delicious and well-known product of the region. However, the tropical forest is in danger due to human population and overdevelopment of land. People continue to clear more and more land for cattle ranching and agriculture within the forest. New roads are being built that are disturbing the wildlife habitat. Pollution from ranches and farms has put pressure on the limited freshwater resources available. All of these activities threaten the plants and animals within the biosphere.

Calakmul now receives support from organizations all over the world to help protect its tropical forest. These organizations support plant and wildlife conservation through research and careful monitoring of human activities. Scientists are helping people understand the importance of the tropical forest in giving the earth food, water, and medicines used in the treatment of cancer.

Tropical Forest Vocabulary List

Biosphere:

A region inhabited by living organisms such as plants and animals

Nature Reserve:

Land that is protected from harm by humans

Ecosystem:

A community of living organisms and their environment

Habitat:

The natural home or environment of a plant or animal

Endangered:

A species at risk of extinction

Indigenous people:

People born into and living in a region before colonization

Maize:

Corn

Calabaza:

A type of gourd that can be dried and hollowed out to make into items such as water containers or tobacco pipes

Wildlife Conservation:

The preservation and protection of wild animals

Tropical Forest Comprehension Questions

1. Name three animals that live in the tropical forest of Calakmul.

2. Which is your favorite animal in the tropical forest? Why?

3. Draw a picture of your favorite animal on the back of this paper. Label it with *at least* four describing words and details.

4. Explain what a nature reserve is.

5. Name three ways that humans are harming the tropical forest.

6. What do you think people can do to stop the destruction of the forest?

7. Where is the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve located?

8. What is the difference between a *tropical forest* and a *rainforest*?

Lesson 4

Oaxaca: Artists and Artesanías

Objective(s): *After completing the lesson, students will be able to:*

Identify design, color, and style elements of Zapotec textiles.
Recognize vocabulary terms related to Mexican art.
Discuss the significance of traditional art in Mexican culture.

Relevant Content Standards:

Social Studies

Describe the cultural practices and products of diverse groups in North America including: artistic expressions; religion; language; food; clothing; shelter.
Describe similarities and differences in the ways different cultures meet common human needs including: food; clothing; language; artistic expression.
Identify different cultures through the study of holidays, customs, and traditions utilizing language, stories, folktales, music, and the arts.

Anticipatory Set:

Introduce students to the art and culture of Oaxaca with the DVD: <i>Oaxaca: Valley of Myth and Magic</i> (25 min.)
Possible discussion questions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the people living in the Central Valley? • What type of art is produced in Oaxaca? • What is the historical connection between the art being produced in Oaxaca today and the art produced in Pre-Hispanic Mexico? • What is the connection between Mexican art and everyday life?

Materials:

DVD: <i>Oaxaca: Valley of Myth and Magic</i>
Individual student maps
Photos from companion Web site: Art http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2
Book: <i>Mexican Textiles</i>
White construction paper
Pastels or crayons
Word search puzzle of vocabulary terms (on companion Web site: http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2)

Procedures:

Students will locate the city and state of Oaxaca on their maps.
Introduce students to Zapotec textile styles, colors, and designs using <i>Mexican Textiles</i> .
Visit the companion Web site for images of weavers preparing wool and natural dyes for making textiles in Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca.
Have students design their own rug or wall hanging using Zapotec colors, designs, and styles based on the images from the book and Web site.
Students will create their weaving using the construction paper and pastel crayons.

Assessment:

Students will successfully complete the word search: Art of Oaxaca.

Extension Activities:

View the DVD: <i>The Village of Textiles: Teotitlán del Valle</i> .

Resources and Background Builders:

Mack, Stevie and Fiore, Jennifer. <i>Oaxaca: Valley of Myth and Magic</i> . CRIZMAC Art and Cultural Education Materials, Inc., 2003. DVD.
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<i>The Village of Textiles: Teotitlan del Valle</i> . CRIZMAC Art and Cultural Education Materials, Inc., 2001. DVD.
--

Rothstein, Arden. <i>Mexican Folk Art: From Oaxacan Artist Families</i> . Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2007.
--

Milford, Susan. <i>40 Activities to Experience Mexico Past & Present</i> . Charlotte, VT: Williamson Publishing Company, 1999.
--

Takahashi, Masako. <i>Mexican Textiles</i> . San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2003.
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Lesson 5

Puebla: Let's Eat!

Objective(s): *After completing the lesson, students will be able to:*

Describe different kinds of Mexican foods.
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Understand the basic role of a <i>mercado</i> in Mexican culture.

Relevant Content Standards:

Social Studies

Describe similarities and differences in the ways different cultures meet common human needs including: food; clothing; shelter; language; and artistic expressions.
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Compare the cultural practices and products of diverse groups in North America including: artistic expressions; religion; language; food; clothing; and shelter.
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Anticipatory Set:

Read aloud the story <i>Saturday Market</i> .

Discuss with students how <i>mercados</i> are part of Mexican culture.
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Possible discussion questions:

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|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role does the <i>mercado</i> play in Mexican culture? • What types of food and products can be found in a Mexican market? • How does a Mexican market differ from a store in the U.S.? • How do foods and goods get to a market in Mexico? • What is a common role for women in the market? |
|--|

Materials:

Individual student maps

Puebla food fact sheet (attached)

Book: <i>Saturday Market</i>

Photos from companion Web site: <i>Food</i> http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2

White construction paper: size 8 1/2 x 17, folded in half like a book

Colored pencils, crayons

Ten random vocabulary terms taken from the fact sheet

Procedure:

Have students locate the city and state of Puebla on the map.

Read aloud the Puebla fact sheet.

Together with your students, select the vocabulary terms from the fact sheet that they will use in their narrative descriptions.
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View the companion Web site: <i>Food</i> http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2
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Students will choose food items from the Web site, storybook, and fact sheet to create a Mexican meal they would make for a friend.

Students will draw and label their meal on the outside flap of the white construction paper.
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Students will describe and tell about their meal on the inside of the paper using the vocabulary terms selected from the fact sheet.
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Assessment:

Students will successfully complete a descriptive narrative about a Mexican meal using selected vocabulary terms.

Extension Activities:

Visit: <http://dltk-kids.com/recipesdb> for easy Mexican cuisine recipes for kids

For fun facts about Mexican mole sauce:

<http://www.extremechocolate.com/fun-facts-about-mexican-mole-sauce.html>

Resources and Background Builders:

Grossman, Patricia. *Saturday Market*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1994.

Puebla: “Let’s Eat!”

The city of Puebla, in the state of Puebla, is a food lover’s paradise. Not only can you find all of Mexico’s basic foods here, but you can sample some of Mexico’s most interesting and flavorful dishes, too.

A meal anywhere in Mexico, whether at home or in a restaurant, starts with a visit to the market. Most cities have a *mercado*, or marketplace, where food and basic items for everyday use are sold. Markets open very early in the morning so people are able to shop and prepare their meals for the day. It is common for women to work in the market selling fruits, vegetables, breads, and meat. Others sell jewelry, clothes, flowers, colorful piñatas, or homemade meals to earn money for their household. All of the basic ingredients used in Mexican cooking can be purchased in a *mercado*. Rice, beans, corn, spices, and chicken, pork, beef, and fish can all be found here.

Some of the most common foods you can find anywhere in Mexico include: corn tortillas, fresh cheeses, chili peppers, and vegetables like pumpkin and squash. In the countryside, women fry homemade corn tortillas on a hot griddle over an open flame. They can be served with fresh beans, cheese, and a spicy habanera chili sauce. Delicious! In other places, people consume interesting and unusual items that have been fried with spices and salt. Grasshoppers fried in lime and chili powder, called *chapulines*, can be used as a seasoning or eaten with guacamole (mashed avocado) and crispy corn tortillas.

Puebla is a region famous for its food. It is especially well known for *mole poblano*, a spicy sauce made up of more than twenty ingredients, including chocolate, chilies, spices, and nuts. Because they are so special, *moles* need to be carefully prepared and can take a long time to make.

Mexico offers many different kinds of food for you to taste. Whatever you like, whether it is sugary, salty, spicy, mild, or rich and flavorful, you are sure to find something that you will like to eat in Mexico!

Lesson 6

Mexico City: Celebrating Día de los Muertos

Objectives: *After completing the lesson, students will be able to:*

Use a graphic organizer as a pre-writing activity.
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Demonstrate an understanding of <i>Día de los Muertos</i> by writing a narrative story.

Relevant Content Standards:

Social Studies

Identify cultural practices of a culture on each continent through the study of the folktales, music, and art created by people .

Identify different cultures through the study of holidays, customs, and traditions utilizing language, stories, folktales, music, and the arts.

Anticipatory Set:

Visit the Web site: http://www.kidsculturecenter.com/mexico/mexico.htm to explore information about a variety of Mexican customs, traditions, celebrations, and holidays.
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Students read the <i>Día de los Muertos</i> vocabulary list.
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Materials:

Book: <i>Day of the Dead: A Celebration of Life and Death</i>

Mexico City: Celebrating <i>Día de los Muertos</i> fact sheet (attached)
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<i>Día de los Muertos</i> Vocabulary List (attached)
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Individual student maps

Photos from companion Web site: <i>Festivals</i> http://web.me.com/duffyjamieson/Site_2
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Word web graphic organizer

Chart paper

Writing paper

Pencils, colored pencils, crayons

Procedures:

Students will locate Mexico City on their individual maps.
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Read aloud with students the fact sheet <i>Mexico City: Celebrating Día de los Muertos</i> and share the picture book <i>Day of the Dead: A Celebration of Life and Death</i> .

Discuss with students the symbolism and meaning of <i>Día de los Muertos</i> .
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Possible discussion questions:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is <i>Día de los Muertos</i>? • Why is it celebrated? • How is it celebrated? • What are some of the symbols associated with <i>Día de los Muertos</i>? • What are some popular types of food associated with this holiday? • How is <i>Día de los Muertos</i> different than the American holiday <i>Halloween</i>? • What is an <i>ofrenda</i>? • What items might you find on an <i>ofrenda</i>? |
|---|

Using the large chart paper, record students' answers to the discussion questions using as
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many of the vocabulary words from the vocabulary list as possible.
Go to the companion Web site to look at more images of <i>Día de los Muertos</i> .
Students will choose an image or idea from the book or Web site to use as a writing prompt for a story about <i>Día de los Muertos</i> .
As a pre-writing activity, students will generate ideas for their story using the word web.
After completing the word web, students will write a fiction or non-fiction narrative about <i>Día de los Muertos</i> that includes vocabulary words from the list.
Students will illustrate their story after it is edited and completed.

Assessment:

Students will write a one-page fiction or non-fiction narrative about <i>Día de los Muertos</i> .

Extension Activities:

Art: Make paper flowers for decorations using the instructions in <i>Day of the Dead: A Celebration of Life and Death</i> .
View the Web site: http://gomexico.about.com/od/dayofthedead for photos of Day of the Dead altars and instructions on how to make your own altar

Resources and Background Builders:

Doering, Amanda. <i>Day of the Dead: A Celebration of Life and Death</i> . Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2006.
Harris, Zoe. <i>Piñatas and Smiling Skeletons: Celebrating Mexican Festivals</i> . Berkeley, CA: Pacific View Press, 1998.
San Vicente, Luis. <i>Festival of Bones: The Book for the Day of the Dead</i> . El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press, 2002.
Levy, Janice. <i>The Spirit of Tío Fernando: A Day of the Dead Story</i> . Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Co., 1995.
http://gomexico.about.com/od/dayofthedead
Photos of Day of the Dead altars; how to make your own Day of the Dead altar
http://www.mexicansugarskull.com/mexicansugarskull/recipe.htm
Sugar skull making instructions and expert tips for the classroom teacher

Mexico City: Celebrating *Día de los Muertos*

Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world. It is the capital city of Mexico. Located in a large valley in the high plateaus of central Mexico, it was originally an ancient city built by the Aztecs. Today, more than nineteen million people live and work in Mexico City. Many people have migrated to the city from smaller towns and pueblos throughout Mexico in search of better jobs and opportunities.

Mexico has a diverse population characterized by a mixture of European, Spanish, and indigenous peoples. Many important cultural traditions in Mexico are the result of the blending of ancient Indian tradition with Catholic ritual.

One of the most interesting and colorful festivals celebrated in Mexico began with the Aztecs hundreds of years ago. *Día de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead, takes place throughout Mexico the first two days of November. It is during this time that families believe the spirits of their loved ones who have died return to earth to visit their living relatives.

In Mexico City, *Día de los Muertos* is celebrated in many forms. Food and drink are an important part of the festivities. Special foods, such as *pan de muerto*, are prepared and sold throughout the city. Tiny skulls made of sugar are decorated and placed in shop windows. It is customary for a family to create an *ofrenda*, or special altar, in their home to honor the deceased. A table is covered with food, flowers, and candles to welcome the spirits and guide them back home. In the southern part of the city, a famous celebration takes place in the village of San Andrés Mixquic. Relatives gather in the cemetery throughout the night to sing songs and make offerings.

Although *Día de los Muertos* is a solemn time for honoring the souls of loved ones, it is also a happy time to laugh and enjoy life. Elaborate altars are constructed in public places throughout the city and competitions are held to see which one is the largest and most beautiful. Children dress in skeleton costumes and parade through the city streets, feeling happy to participate in this time-honored family tradition.

Día de los Muertos
Vocabulary List
from *Day of the Dead: A Celebration of Life and Death*

Altar:

a table used for ceremonies or rituals

Aztecs:

Indian people who lived in Mexico before Spanish people settled there

Christian:

a person who follows a religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ

Culture:

a tradition in a culture or society

Offering:

a gift or contribution

Spirit:

the part of a person that is believed to control thoughts and feelings; the spirit is also called the soul

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Spanish-English Picture Dictionary

<http://elbalero.gob.mx/kids/explora/home.html>

Virtual Tour of Mexico for Children

<http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212302/mexico.html>

A Kid's Life in Mexico

<http://www.kidsculturecenter.com/mexico/mexico.htm>

Information about Mexican customs, traditions, celebrations, and holidays

<http://www.teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/reproducibles/instructor/cyberhunt>

Take a cyber class trip to Mexico!

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/Places/Find/Mexico>

Mexico country facts, information, photos, and videos

http://www.maps-of-mexico.com/mexico_states.shtml

Interactive maps of Mexican states

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<http://www.extremechocolate.com/fun-facts-about-mexican-mole-sauce.html>

Fun facts about Mexican Mole sauce

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<http://gomexico.about.com/od/dayofthedead>

Photos of Day of the Dead altars; how to make your own Day of the Dead altar

<http://gomexico.about.com/od/festivalsholidays/p/guelaguetza.htm>

The Guelaguetza Festival in Oaxaca

<http://MexicanSugarSkull.com>

Day of the Dead, Mexican folk art merchandise and sugar skull molds; papel picado, fabric, jewelry

<http://www.mexicansugarskull.com/mexicansugarskull/recipe.htm>

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<http://Mayadiscovery.com>

A good Web site for general information on Mayan people and culture

<http://Mayaexploration.org/resources>

The Maya Exploration Center. Contains a worksheet for students to calculate their Mayan birthdates.