

# Mexico: Did You Know?

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## Unit Overview:

This is an English Language Arts unit on informational writing. It will be taught with collaboration from the librarian and technology teacher along with the classroom teacher, but could be taught by one discipline alone if necessary. The unit is designed for third graders but could be adapted to work with many different grade levels. It is taught through four lessons that may take more than one class period each. The unit will begin with an introduction to the genre of informational writing. Students will discuss the purpose of writing informationally and discuss the differences between expressive, persuasive, and informational writing.

Students will be introduced to informational writing with appropriate grade-level texts about Mexico such as *Look What Came from Mexico* by Miles Harvey.

Students will be in groups named: history, arts and handicrafts, food, holidays and music (group subjects could be added or changed depending on teacher's focus). Students will use a text set of non-fiction books on Mexico to search for interesting facts about their subcategory. Students create "graffiti boards" (a large poster with information written from all students about their shared topic).

Groups will present their information and afterward students will choose one specific topic they'd like to learn more about and will use print and electronic resources to research further. They will write a paragraph, learning to share information found in their own words, and create an informational piece to be included in a class book with fun facts about Mexico. Each page will begin with "Did you know...?"

Students will increase their technological skill and create an attractive and satisfying final product by publishing their writing in PowerPoint. All the children's work will be compiled and printed together as a class book for everyone to read, enjoy, share, and learn.

## Goals:

Students will scan and read printed text in order to gather information about Mexican culture. They will use their research to write an informative piece about one aspect of Mexican culture.

This unit will address all four of Delaware's English Language Arts content standards as quoted below:

Students in Delaware public schools, using the processes of effective readers, writers, listeners, viewers, and speakers, will be able to:

- Standard 1:** Use written and oral English appropriate for various purposes and audiences.
- Standard 2:** Construct, examine, and extend the meaning of literary, informative, and technical texts through listening, reading, and viewing.
- Standard 3:** Access, organize, and evaluate information gained through listening, reading, and viewing.
- Standard 4:** Use literary knowledge accessed through print and visual media to connect self to society and culture.

## Enduring Understandings:

From Delaware State Writing Curriculum, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade informative writing:

- Audience and purpose (i.e., to inform, persuade, entertain) influence the use of literary techniques (i.e., style, tone, word choice).
- A writer selects a form based on his purpose.

## Essential Questions:

From Delaware State Writing Curriculum, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade informative writing:

- Where do ideas come from?
- What makes writing flow?
- Why does a writer choose the form of writing he/she does?
- What is the relationship between reader and writer?

## Performance Tasks:

- In groups, students will create “graffiti boards” with facts they found new, interesting, or intriguing.
- Groups will present orally the information from their “graffiti boards” in front of the class.
- Students will research and write (including planning, writing, editing, and revising) an informative piece about their Mexican culture topic.
- Students will publish their writing using PowerPoint and it will be a part of the class’ final product.

## Overview of Learning Activities:

Day	Activities
1	Introduce genre of informative writing (What is it? Why do we need it? How is it different from expressive?) Read <i>Look What Came From Mexico</i> by Miles Harvey as an example of informative text. Introduce the different topics they’ll be able to research further about Mexico. Put students in interest groups for the next day.
2	Students make and present “graffiti boards” to the class. They each pick one topic to research further and write their piece about.
3	Students research, take notes, and plan writing piece.*
4	Students write, revise, edit, and conference about their writing piece. *
5	Lesson on integrating technology and writing using PowerPoint.*
6	PowerPoint is presented to the class as a whole. As the PowerPoint is played for all students, each has a chance to read his/her work aloud and students can ask questions and discuss different aspects of Mexican culture.

\* An extra work day may need to be inserted at any of these points based on student ability and their progress toward their final goal.

## Lesson 1: Informational Writing and Mexico Background

Timeframe:

1 day/ about an hour

Objectives:

Students will learn and be able to state orally the purpose of informational writing.

Students will choose a topic about Mexico to research further.

Materials needed:

An example of informational writing about Mexico

Any related Mexico artifacts or photos

Introduction:

Show three examples (attached) of the different genres of writing: informational, expressive, and persuasive. One is a journal entry describing a day in Mexico, one a letter persuading someone to visit Mexico, and one a news article giving information about Mexico. Ask the children how the writer's purpose was different in each of the examples. While all three are about Mexico, how are the forms of writing different in their style and purpose? Who are the intended audiences of each?

Body:

1. Read aloud parts of *Look What Came from Mexico* by Miles Harvey that correspond with the topics you will offer later in the unit. For example, read excerpt "Marvelous Mexico" (pg. 4–5) as an introduction. Continue with specific topics such as: Food (pg. 6–9), Music (pg. 14–15), Animals (pg. 20–21), and Festivals and Holidays (pg. 24–25).
2. Discuss conventions of informational text such as captions and headings.
3. Tell students what your subtopics will be (e.g., food, music, animals, and traditions/holidays).
4. Have students pick two that they would be interested in researching further so you can put them in interest groups for the next lesson.

Conclusion:

Review three types of writing from the introduction (expressive, persuasive, and informative). Ask which type we will be focusing on (informative). Review what the purpose of informative writing is and who the audience might be. Explain that tomorrow they will research informational texts themselves and collect information (notetaking) to write their own informational piece.

Assessments:

This lesson provides opportunity for informal teacher observation through conversation and questioning. If students seem to need more reinforcement to understand the concept of informational text, teacher can present more text to help illustrate the idea and purpose.

## **Lesson 2: Research Presented with Graffiti Boards**

Timeframe:

1 day/ about an hour

Objective:

Students will use non-fiction texts to find information on a subtopic of Mexico and share information both in writing and orally.

Materials:

A variety of informational texts about Mexico (see bibliography list for a selection, teacher may select their own based on class' subtopics)

Posterboard or large paper (1 per group)

Markers or other writing implement for students

Introduction:

Show an example of a graffiti board. Should have topic written large in the middle with facts written in different colors all over the board. Discuss how informational texts are used for research and that they are going to use informational text to find out more about topics they heard about yesterday about Mexico.

Body:

1. Explanation: Tell how to make the graffiti board. Show students how to skim a text for interesting information. Explain that they can write anything about their topic that they find interesting on their board to share. Information does not have to be in complete sentences or explained yet. This step is just to get ideas together and explore what they might like to research further in the next lesson.
2. Procedures: Remind students of how to work in a group and how to treat materials. Books that contain many different topics should be marked with a post-it note. Books can be marked for more than one group and circulated during work time. Explain to students that books can be passed and shared.
3. Work time: Students should have about 30 minutes to skim books and record information (time may need to be adjusted depending on reading level of students and ability to record information in writing).
4. Sharing: Groups should come forward to share their topic and interesting information they found. Use presentation time for discussion to bring up ideas to expand and explore ideas further.

Conclusion:

Students should write on an index card what they want their topic to be for their informational writing piece and the title of the book they think they will use to research the topic.

Assessment:

Informal teacher observation and the index card topic can be used to see if students are following the lessons or if they need further support and/or clarification of objectives and goals.

### **Lesson 3: Researching and Writing**

Timeframe:

2 days/about 2 hours

Objective:

Students will use non-fiction texts to find facts about a chosen topic relating to subtopics of Mexico and write them in their own words with the hook, “Did you know...?”.

Materials:

Non-fiction text set from lesson 2

Students: Index card with topic/book title and writing notebooks and pencils

Introduction:

Review and share students’ topics chosen from yesterday’s research and presentations.

Body:

1. Modeling: Show students how to read information and paraphrase without copying. Model how to do this for class. Explain that copying an author’s exact words is stealing (plagiarism) and what they are trying to write are the facts and ideas but not in the same exact words.
2. Researching: Students should use the book to find information and write at least three pieces of information about their topic. They must also have the book’s title and author written in their notebooks with information.
3. Writing: Student should use notes to create a short paragraph beginning with the hook, “Did you know...?”. Students should use the writing process of drafting, editing and revising, and conferencing to prepare for publishing in the next lesson.

Conclusion:

Students should share pieces aloud and classmates can give constructive advice or kudos to the writer.

Assessment:

As a formative assessment, teacher can use the Delaware writing rubric to give students scores so that they can use this input to revise their work.

## **Lesson 4: Integrating Technology into Writing**

Timeframe:

2 days/ approximately 2 hours

Objective:

Students will publish their informational writing piece by creating 1–3 slides using Microsoft PowerPoint.

Materials:

Computers and software

Students: Writing notebooks, pencils

Introduction:

Show students a teacher-created model of published slides (example presentation, “Chocolate: Did you know?” is available for download from this Web site:

<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/etext/llilas/outreach/fulbright09/> ).

Body:

1. Review how to use PowerPoint\*: creating text boxes, adding clip art or photos, and changing the background. Teachers can differentiate complexity based on students’ previous experience with program and interest.
2. Work time: Students should take their writing piece from lesson three and create between one and three slides to contribute to a class book called “Mexico: Did You Know?”
3. Finishing: Students should share with three classmates when finished to collect constructive advice about how to improve their work.
4. Publishing: Students should print their work and turn in to be a part of class product.

Conclusion:

Teacher should collect all files electronically to show as a class slide show. If that’s yet to be compiled, teacher can share a few with either hard copies or on projector from computer to celebrate the excellent finished products created by students.

Assessment:

Teacher will use the Delaware writing rubric to give both holistic and trait scores for the writing piece submitted. Use the rubric provided to give a score for writing, group work, and use of technology. Teachers can decide how to weigh the different areas for a final grade.

\* Students must have prior knowledge about how to use the program or use a program they are more familiar with such as Microsoft Word or Kidspiration.

***Mexico: Did You Know?***



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Criteria</b>				<b>Points</b>
	1	2	3	4	
<b>Writing</b>	Delaware Writing Rubric holistic score 1	Delaware Writing Rubric holistic score 2	Delaware Writing Rubric holistic score 3	Delaware Writing Rubric holistic score 4	_____
<b>Group Work</b>	Student was unable to successfully work in a group and had to be removed to work independently.	Student had to be reminded about how to be a good group member.	Student worked in a group and shared materials well.	Student helped his/her group work more efficiently and effectively through excellent teamwork, communication, and cooperation.	_____
<b>Use of Technology</b>	Student was unable to publish his/her project in PowerPoint or other given program.	Student did not fully publish his/her project.	Student completed inputting project at the basic level.	Student was able to publish writing with correct conventions and added details such as graphics.	_____
					_____
					_____
				<b>Total----&gt;</b>	_____

Teacher Comments:



*Writing Example 1: Journal (Expressive)*

July 7, 2009

Today was amazing! Most of the group and I took the bus to a nearby town called Celestún. We took boats out into the estuary to see where the flamingos live. The sun was so bright and the wind blew on us as we sped out toward where the birds live. I was afraid I was going to get sick but I ended up feeling fine. I was relieved because I didn't want feeling motion sick to ruin my opportunity to see the beautiful flamingos. When we got there, the man who was driving our boat turned off the engine so we could enjoy seeing the large group of flamingos. They were very graceful and peaceful. Unfortunately, one of the other boats went too close and they were frightened so they all flew away. They looked magical and they all took off from the water and went gliding through the air. I will remember today forever. It was so special to see such stunning wildlife in its habitat.



*Writing Example 2: Letter (Persuasive)*

June 1, 2009

Dear Mom and Dad,

Zzzzzzzzzzzzz. What's that noise? That's right, it's me snoring! That's what I'll be doing all summer if we don't plan an excellent and educational vacation. I know you're busy and don't have time to decide where we should go, so I've figured it out for us. Our summer travels this year should be to Mexico!

Wondering why Mexico is so magnificent? Well, there are many reasons. The first reason is its history. In Mexico, we can visit more archaeological sites than you can even believe and see evidence of civilizations from so long ago it hurts my brain to try to imagine it. Seeing those places can help me learn more about how life is the same now and how things have changed. Also, climbing all those pyramids has to be good for our health, right?

Another reason to go to Mexico is try out real Mexican food. I know Taco Bell isn't Mexican and I've heard that they have lots of interesting things to eat different from what we've heard of. I read that some places eat grasshoppers, ant eggs, and worms! I really want to go and find out more about how and why people eat these insects. Maybe they're really healthy, too, and we're missing out on some special nutrients.

My third reason to go to Mexico is the music. We saw in school that there are so many different kinds of musicians who perform for the public in Mexico like mariachi singers and marimba players. I am very interested in instruments and I'd like to see some that are different from the instruments in the school band and hear how the music is different.

So, all I think I have left to say is, "Let's pack!" because I'm sure now that you are as excited about the idea of visiting Mexico as I am. Please let me know if you'll take the planning from here. Muchas gracias.

From,  
Your son

*Writing Example 3: News Article (Informative)*



Weaving Women Working Together

By Miss Sites

In southern Mexico, in Teotitlán del Valle, there is a group of women working together to support themselves, maintain their traditions and culture, and help others. These women are the weavers of the Vida Nueva Women's Weaving Cooperative in the Zapotec community in Oaxaca, Mexico.

The women work together to make beautiful tapestries, rugs, and purses. The women of the cooperative demonstrated how they carded wool that they bought from a neighboring village and spun it into yarn. They then use all natural materials like leaves, wood, fruit, and even bugs to create yarn of all different hues. Once the yarn is colored, they use large pedal looms to weave beautiful designs passed down from generation to generation, as well as new designs they create.

The women work to sell their handiwork not only for their livelihood but to support their community projects. Every year, they do a project to help their community. One project consisted of painting public service messages on communal trash cans from their community in order to raise awareness for public health. Their messages included reminders such as "Wash your hands frequently." The purpose was to help their community stay healthy and safe. A different project was to put together gifts and deliver them to mothers who were alone on Mother's Day for various reasons like the death of a child or children living in the States to help support the family.

The women of the cooperative are inspirational in their love of work, culture, and tradition as well as their support of others.

**Possible Texts for Mexico Text Set:**

Cordero, Flor de Maria. M is for Mexico. London: Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 2007.

Golden, Nancy. Exploring Mexico with the Five Themes of Geography. New York, NY: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2005.

Harvey, Miles. Look What Came From Mexico. New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1998.

Markle, Sandra. Chocolate: A Sweet History. New York, NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 2005.

Pohl, Kathleen. Looking at Mexico. Pleasantville, NY: Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2008.

Supples, Kevin. Civilizations Past to Present: Mexico. Washington, D.C: National Geographic School Publishing, 2003.