



#3637

MEXICO

Grade Levels: 3-8

21 minutes

FILM IDEAS, INC. 1998

2 Student Activity Sheets

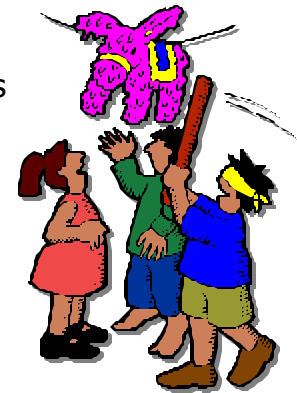
DESCRIPTION

Presents an overview of the United Mexican States, more commonly known as Mexico. Highlights the Mayan and Aztec civilizations with photography of important ruins. Reviews Cortez's conquest of the Aztecs and notes the continued mix of ancient and modern. Looks at Mexico's size, population, geographic features, capital, major cities, economic resources, and climate.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Geography of Places and Regions

- ◆ Standard: Understands the concept of regions
 - Benchmark: Knows areas that can be classified as regions according to physical criteria (e.g., landform regions, soil regions, vegetation regions, climate regions, water basins) and human criteria (e.g., political regions, population regions, economic regions, language regions)
 - Benchmark: Understands how regions change over time and the consequences of these changes (e.g., changes in population size or ethnic composition; construction of a new shopping center, a regional hospital, or a new manufacturing plant; changes in transportation; changes in environmental conditions)



Subject Area: History

- ◆ Standard: Understands family life now and in the past, and family life in various places long ago
 - Benchmark: Understands family life in a community of the past and life in a community of the present (e.g., roles, jobs, communication, technology, style of homes, transportation, schools, religious observances, cultural traditions)
 - Benchmark: Knows ways in which people share family beliefs and values (e.g., oral traditions, literature, songs, art, religion, community celebrations, mementos, food, language)

- ◆ Standard: Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns
 - Benchmark: Knows how to impose temporal structure on their historical narratives (e.g., working backward from some issue, problem, or event to explain its causes that arose from some beginning and developed through subsequent transformations over time)
 - Benchmark: Knows how to diagram the temporal structure of events in autobiographies, biographies, literary narratives, and historical narratives, and understands the differences between them

VOCABULARY

Aztecs: Descendants of the Paleo-Indians, this Indian tribe created one of the most powerful empires in Central America from the 15th to 16th centuries, until the arrival of Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortez.

Calendar Stone: A circular stone sculpture, which represents the Aztec universe. Measuring 12 feet in diameter, this stone was used in ceremonies honoring the sun god Tonatluh. Included in its carvings are the days of the Aztec month and religious symbols related to the worship of the sun god.



El Castillo: Also known as “The Castle,” this Mayan pyramid is located at Chichen Itza in the Yucatan Peninsula. At the fall equinox, thousands of travelers visit the pyramid to witness the sun’s pattern of a serpent slithering down its ancient steps.

Flower Wars: Throughout history, most Indian cultures in Mexico practiced human sacrifice. Instead of being killed, the soldiers captured during Indian tribal wars, otherwise known as “flower wars,” were used as a human sacrifice. These human offerings would hopefully bring special favors from the ancient Indian gods.

Hacienda: Most commonly described in Spanish-speaking countries as a large estate, plantation or dwelling. After Cortez destroyed the Aztec empire, many Spanish settlers established haciendas throughout Mexico. Built on thousands of acres of land, many of these haciendas produced crops for its owners, through the labor of Indian peasant slaves.

Hernando Cortez: In the early 1500s, Cortez, a Spanish conquistador, landed at the port city of Veracruz and eventually conquered the Aztec empire.

Mayas: An Indian culture, which occupied the Yucatan Peninsula from 250-900 A.D. As a developed civilization, the Mayas improved upon the inherited practices from

earlier societies to further advance the methods used in agriculture, astronomy, architecture (pyramids) and hieroglyphic writing.

Mayan Trail: This popular route is used by travelers to circle the Yucatan Peninsula while viewing the most important Mayan cities.

Mexico: Known as the far south region on the North American continent. Officially called the "United Mexican States," it is divided into 38 states with the nation's capital in Mexico City.

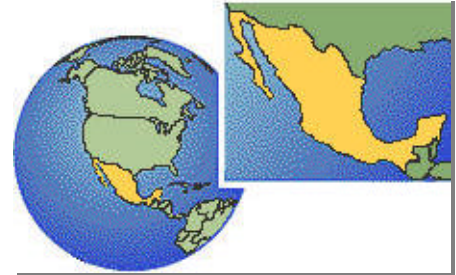
Miguel Hidalgo: A priest and a leader of the Mexican Revolution in 1810.

North America: The third-largest continent in the world consisting of Canada, the United States, Mexico and Central America.

Temple Mayor: Discovered in 1970 while digging a subway tunnel, this main Aztec pyramid, located in Mexico City, housed many artifacts including the calendar stone.

Teotihuacan: Located about 30 miles northeast of Mexico City, this area is the home of great ancient pyramids and other mass structures, making it known as one of the largest archeological sites in Mexico.

Stele: Stone tablets discovered at the Mayan ruins of Coba, near the coastal city of Tulum on the Yucatan Peninsula. These stone tablets produced hieroglyphic writings detailing the stories of kings and wars fought during the history of the Mayan people.



AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Today such conveniences as computers, telephones, automobiles, electricity, and other technological advances are used to enhance our modern-day lives. Explain how these enhancements differ to those used during the time early Indian tribes discovered Mexico. Use this information for the following study point/activities.
2. Imagine what it would be like to be a member of an early Indian tribe. Discuss issues, which may have concerned these early tribes: weather conditions, commerce, regional terrain, food/vegetation, dealing with foreign policy issues with Mexico, France, or Spain, etc.
3. Both geographical and historical information has been documented throughout the world. Explain why this type of information is important when studying the Mexico, and how it relates to our everyday lives? Furthermore, how do the disciplines of geography and history interact or relate with other areas of study in your school's curriculum?
4. Since tensions must have existed between the United States and Mexico (i.e., The Alamo, Mexican War), assemble the students into small groups to negotiate or debate the interests of these groups.

Applications and Activities

1. Draw a map of Mexico, indicating significant points of interest. For example, the capital cities, i.e., Guadalajara, Jalisco; important events, i.e., the Mexican War in 1846-48; or the names of early explorers, i.e., Hernando Cortez, and others.
2. Mexico is well known for its Indian influence. Name some of these cultural influences (i.e., architecture), and explain why these influences remain so vital to the growth of this region.
3. If possible, arrange a trip near your community to visit museums, cultural centers, state parks, and other points of interest to simulate your imagination to explore the history of Mexico.



SUMMARY

Descendants of the ancient Indian cultures were the first-known inhabitants to occupy this land. Later, the first European settlers, mostly from Spain, began to explore this region during the mid 1500s.



Throughout its early history, Mexico had been dominated by numerous Indian cultures. Migrating from Asia, these ancient people settled throughout Mexico and into the southern tip of South America.

For many years, archeologists have studied one of the most famous of Mexican Indian tribes, the Mayas. These studies indicate that Mayan society was very well-educated and had developed an organized system in hieroglyphic writing, advanced math, agricultural methods and other related disciplines.

After the decline of the Mayan civilization, another dominant tribe, the Aztecs, surfaced in Mexico. The Aztecs built and finally settled in the city of Tenochtitlan, known today as Mexico City. Like the Mayas, the Aztecs developed sophisticated systems to eventually become a powerful empire. While these were the two primary tribes, smaller Indian cultures also existed throughout the region. Regardless of size, virtually all of these communities practiced human sacrifices to request favors from the gods. These early tribes claimed this land until the arrival of Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortez in 1521.

Along with its rich history, Mexico also has geographical significance. From its colorful sunsets, mystical deserts, grandiose canyons/mountains, and ancient Indian ruins, Mexico offers the ultimate diversity in natural wonders. Each year, millions of travelers visit this region to capture its unique artistry.

As we study Mexico, we do not only begin to witness the results of nature, but also the birth of a nation. Embedded in rich tradition, this region cultivates the knowledge from the past, which reexamines the present, to further inform the future.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Andres Orosco of Mexico #3434
- The Aztecs #3567
- Mexico: The People and Their Customs #3156

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **MEXICO FOR KIDS**

http://explora.presidencia.gob.mx/index_kids.html

Kids' site from Mexico. Pictures, time lines, and fun-filled facts. Well-done.

- **MAYAN KIDS**

<http://www.mayankids.com/sitelite.htm>

Graphics are found in this Mayan Kids' site.

- **MAYA ADVENTURE**

<http://www.sci.mus.mn.us/sln/ma/>

From the Science Museum of Minnesota. Anthropological artifacts, a variety of Maya sites, related activities, and a photograph album.

STUDENT ACTIVITY SHEET

- Chronology of Mexico
- Regions of Mexico



Chronology of Mexico



10,000 years ago:

Descendants of the Paleo-Indians cross the Bering Strait land bridge between Alaska and Russia, eventually migrating into the area known today as Mexico.

600 B.C.:

Rise and fall of Teotihuacan.

250-900:

The Mayas occupy the Yucatan Peninsula and develop one of the first major tribal societies.

Early 1300s:

The Aztecs begin to build the city of Tenochtitlan.

1400-1500s:

The rise and fall of the Aztec empire.

Early 1500s:

Spanish conquistador, Hernando Cortez, conquers the Aztec empire.

1530:

Guadalajara is founded.

1810:

Guadalajara is named city headquarters by Fr. Miguel Hidalgo, a leader of the Mexican Revolution.

1836:

At the Alamo, 187 Texans, while seeking Texas independence, battle 5,000 Mexican soldiers.

1846-48:

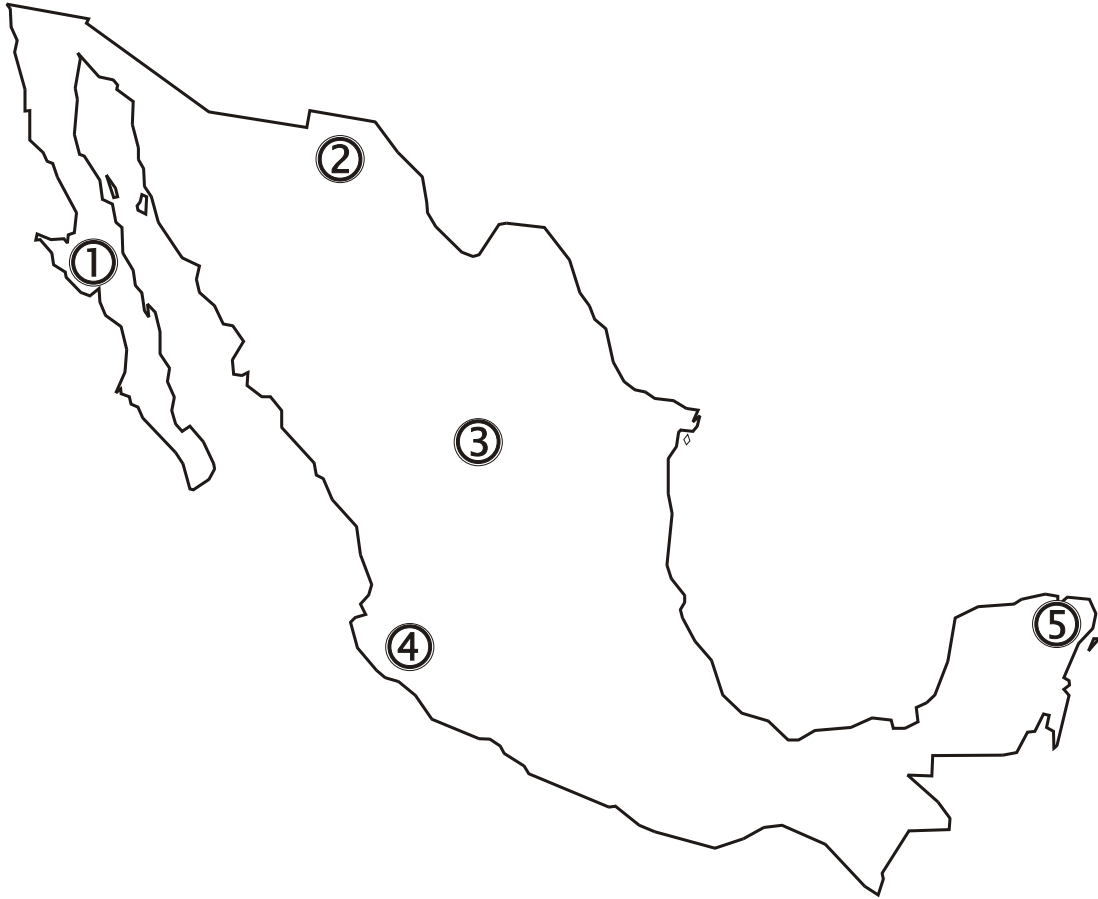
Mexican War begins between the United States and Mexico over the territory existing along the U. S.-Mexican border.

1970:

The discovery of Temple Mayor, the main Aztec pyramid. Also included in this discovery is the calendar stone used by the Aztecs.

REGIONS OF MEXICO

Directions: List the name of the regions as discussed in the video.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____