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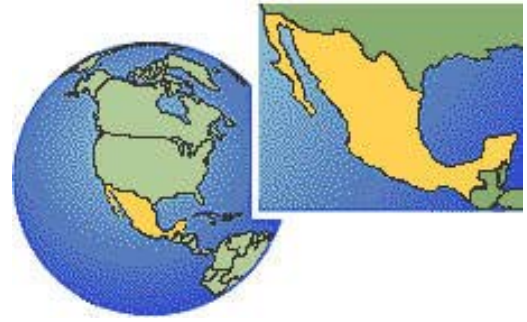
ACTEAL, CHIAPAS

MARYKNOLL WORLD PRODUCTIONS

2000

Grade Levels: 4-8

14 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Guadalupe tells of the massacre that killed her family and others in 1997. Her life in Acteal, a town in the state of Chiapas, Mexico, is very different now. She reveals what her world is like, how they live, and her hope for peace.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Geography--Environment and Society

- Standard: Understands how physical systems affect human systems
 - Benchmark: Knows the ways in which human systems develop in response to conditions in the physical environment (e.g., patterns of land use, economic livelihoods, architectural styles of buildings, building materials, flows of traffic, recreation activities)

Subject Area: Geography--Human Systems

- Standard: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics
 - Benchmark: Knows the similarities and differences in characteristics of culture in different regions (e.g., in terms of environment and resources, technology, food, shelter, social organization, beliefs and customs, schooling, what girls and boys are allowed to do)

Subject Area: Geography—Places and Regions

- Standard: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place
 - Benchmark: Knows the human characteristics of places (e.g., cultural characteristics such as religion, language, politics, technology, family structure, gender; population characteristics; land uses; levels of development)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To introduce the country, geography, and people of Mexico.
2. To dramatize the life of a 13-year-old girl, who is a Maya Indian and lives in the state of Chiapas in the village of Acteal.
3. To examine the history of the Maya Indians.
4. To review the causes for conflict between the Maya Indians in Chiapas and the Zapatista rebels.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Write the name of "Guadalupe Vázquez Luna" and the name of her village, "Acteal," on the blackboard. Why does she have two last names?

2. On a map, point out the state of Chiapas and the capital city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, if found.
3. Do you know the names of the two principal Indian civilizations that flourished in Mexico? They both left immense buildings or pyramids.

AFTER SHOWING

1. What are your impressions of Guadalupe?
2. Violence is so common in the world today—in wars between countries, robberies and homicides, and in schools. What are the causes of violence? Can they be eliminated?
3. Countries spend a lot of money on making tanks, bombs and weapons. What organizations are involved in making peace?
4. What did you feel as Guadalupe pointed out the pictures of her parents and five sisters on the wall?
5. Guadalupe visits her 6-year-old friend, Zenaida, who is now living with her grandmother and uncle. What do you think will be Zenaida's future?
6. There are some hopeful thoughts in Guadalupe's words. Can you pick them out?
7. What would you say to Mexican government and the Zapatista rebels that would bring peace to Chiapas?

SUMMARY

Guadalupe Vázquez Luna, 13, is a Maya Indian, living in the state of Chiapas in the very small village of Acteal. Acteal has drawn worldwide attention due to an outburst of violence that took the lives of 45 villagers in 1997.

Chiapas was never a stranger to violence. Mexican authorities have long neglected its Indian majority, which has lagged behind in the country's recent prosperity. Chiapas holds last place among Mexican states in health care, education, sanitation and food production. Many accuse the government of bias against the Indians.

In 1994 Chiapas and the social situation of the Maya Indians came to the forefront with the revolution of the Zapatista rebels, led by subcomandante Marcos. On January 1st of that year, in coordinated attacks, the guerrillas took over and held numerous townships. Soon after, government soldiers forced them into hiding places deep in the forests. Since then the Mexican army has occupied the land, sending helicopter gunships and 60,000 soldiers to control the area. It is, at best, an uneasy situation, showing that there is no peace without justice.

This is the land in which Guadalupe has lived all of her life. Hers is a simple lifestyle based on farming the steep hillsides with corn and beans. Pigs and chickens mix with dogs, cats and rabbits, walking in and out of open doorways. A few people are able to make a bit more money by cultivating coffee bushes.

It was on December 22, 1997 that a group of armed, masked men entered the village and gunned down the villagers. It was later determined that the group was trained and equipped by the Mexican army. Most of the perpetrators are still free. Guadalupe's parents were both killed, as were a number of her sisters. She lives now with her aunt.



RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Andres Orosco of Mexico #3434
- Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua #9069
- Mexico #3637
- 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**

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mx.html>

From the CIA World Factbook, presents information on Mexico, such as a brief background on its history, economy, government; its geography; statistics on its literacy, birth and death, ethnic groups, and other rates; and more.

- **MAYA RUINS.COM**

<http://mayaruins.com/>

A photographic tour of selected sites in Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala allows you to check out the archaeological sites, background, and to visit different cities to view clear pictures of Mayan ruins.

- **LOST KING OF THE MAYA**

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/maya/>

Provides a brief description of Mayan civilization. Click on one of the 15 better-known Mayan cities to read a description and to view a picture of this site.

- **DISCOVERING MEXICO**

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/mexico/>

Click on "Learn More" and scroll down to the last picture to click on "Chiapas" and read about its "Rough Road to Reality." Follow the drama of the Zapatistas and the landless Indians in Chiapas.