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NEH Summer Institute

Final Project

Lesson #1 Introduction to Mexican History and Culture

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade Level: 8

Purpose of the Lesson: Students will begin to understand the general course of Mexican history and begin to learn about the culture of Mexico in the past and present.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will discuss what they already know about Mexican history and culture.
2. Students will take notes on the teacher's lecture.
3. Students will respond orally and in writing to a discussion of Diego Rivera's painting "Sueno De Una Tarde Dominical En La Alameda Central" based on how it represents the history and culture of Mexico.
4. Students will begin to create a "muralistic" timeline of Mexican history.

Materials

1. Each student needs a course notebook and a writing utensil.
2. Print of Diego Rivera's "Sueno"
3. Map of Mexico
4. Blank white paper (12 ft. X 4 ft.) taped to classroom wall for timeline.
5. Colored markers

Activities:

1. Students will engage in a discussion of what they know about Mexican history and culture. The discussion will be prompted by teacher questions such as "What do you know about Mexico? Mexicans? What comes into your mind when you think of Mexico? What famous Mexicans can you think of? Who do you know from Mexico? What are they like? What do you think it is like to be Mexican? What is good about it? What might be hard? What do you think it is like to be a Mexican American or a Mexican immigrant living in the US? Why is it important for us to learn about Mexican history and culture?"
2. Teacher will introduce five important divisions of Mexican history: pre-Columbian, colonial, Independence, Revolution and modern Mexico. Students will take notes in their course notebooks.
3. Teacher will introduce a map of Mexico and point out important geographical features such as highland and coastal areas and emphasize how geography has influenced the development of Mexican culture. (Also how the proximity certain areas to the US has influenced Mexican culture.)
4. Teacher will introduce Diego Rivera print and ask students to comment on how it represents the culture and history of Mexico.
5. Students will begin a group timeline mural project by drawing a timeline on the blank paper on the wall and affixing it with pivotal dates covered in the lecture. (1525, 1810, 1910).
6. For homework students will write a 1 page response to the Diego Rivera painting explaining what it says to them about Mexican history and culture.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluation on their level of participation in the discussion, their understanding of the material as indicated by their oral responses and their written response to the Diego Rivera painting.

Preparation for next lesson: Read *The World and It's People* (Boehm, et al.) Chapter 6, Section 2, "Mexico's History", pages 197-199.

Lesson #2: Pre-Columbian Mexico

Grade Level: 8

Purpose of the lesson: to familiar students with the diversity of cultures that existed in Mexico prior to the conquest.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will identify the sources of information from which our knowledge of pre-Columbian Mexico is drawn.
2. Students will be introduced to the Olmecs, Mayans and Aztecs.
3. Students will be introduced art and architecture of ancient meso-America.
4. Students will read from a text and be able to answer questions about the reading.
5. Students will take notes on the teacher's lecture in their course notebooks.

Materials:

1. Text: *The World and It's People* (Boehm, et al.) Chapter 6, Section 2, "Mexico's History", pages 197-199.
2. Video Documentary "Sentinels of Silence: The Ruins of ancient Mexico". (18 minutes)
3. Student notebooks

Activities:

1. Teacher will give a brief lecture on how we know what we know about ancient Mexico, emphasizing the role of archaeology, art, architecture, the codices, and the records of the conquistadors. In this lecture students will also be introduced to key archaeological sites. Students will take notes in their course notebooks.
2. Students will watch the video documentary film "Sentinels of Silence" and discuss.
3. Students will be asked to begin to think about how they might characterize Mexico's ancient civilizations on their timeline mural and be prepared to discuss their ideas for the next lesson.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on participation in class discussion and note taking.

Homework: Read in *The World and It's People*, Chapter 6, Section 1: Mexico's Land and Economy.

Lesson # 3: Cortez and the Conquest

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade: 8

Purpose:

1. Students will be introduced to the history of the conquest of Mexico by Spain
2. Students will appreciate the complexity of the pre-Columbian culture of the Aztecs.

Materials:

Reading: *Ed Mercado de Tenochitlan*, by Diaz de Castillo

Print of painting: *La Gran Tenochitlan*, by Diego Rivera

Map of Mexico showing the path of Cortez from Vera Cruz to Tenochitlan

Activities:

1. Students will listen as the teacher gives a brief lecture on the history of Cortez, the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish and traces Cortez's path through Mexico from Vera Cruz to Tenochtitlan.
2. Students will read "The Market at Tenochtitlan" by Diaz de Castillo in class
3. Students will engage in a discussion of the reading.
4. Students will discuss what they see and how they respond to Diego Rivera's painting of the market in Tenochtitlan.

Evaluation: Participation, one page typed written response to Diaz's "The Market at Tenochtitlan" and Rivera's painting.

Homework: Read "The Spiritual Conquest," by Fray Jeronimo de Mendieta

Lesson #4-Mythology and Mystery in Ancient Mexican Civilizations

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade: 8

Purpose:

1. Students will be introduced to ancient meso-American mythology.
2. Students will be introduced to some of the architecture that aligns with geography and stellar formations.
3. Students will begin to realize that important knowledge and information may have been lost forever because of the lack of understanding the Spanish had for native cultures.
4. Students will draw parallels between the conquest and subjugation of the ancient cultures of Mexico and the subjugation of the aboriginal population in Australia based on their viewing of the movie "Rabbit Proof Fence" in another class.

Materials:

Reading: Popul Vuh, anonymous

The Cost of Courage in Aztec Society, by Inga Clendinnen
student notebooks

Activities:

1. Students will take notes as the teacher outlines the major deities in the ancient meso-American pantheon (with special emphasis on Quetzalcoatl, Huitzupochil, Coatlique and Tonantzin.
2. Students will view slides of ancient art representations and temples to these deities.
3. Students will take notes on the Mayan story of the sixth sun.
4. Students will view slides of examples of architecture that is aligned with natural and astronomical phenomenon.
5. Students will engage in a discussion drawing parallels between the conquest of Mexico and the conquest of aboriginal people of Australia.

Evaluation: notebooks, participation

Lesson #5--Pre-Columbian Research Projects

Grade level: 8

Purpose of the lesson: students will use library and internet sources to learn about pre-Columbian history and cultures in Mexico.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will choose a topic of research.
2. Students will find three sources of information about their topic.
3. Students will summarize what they learn about their topic from the sources they use and put their findings into a three page written report.
4. Students will make a 5 minutes oral presentation on their research to their class.
5. Students will prepare visual aides to demonstrate their research.

Materials:

List of topics

Handout on how to write a research paper

Activities:

1. Teacher will write a list of possible topics on the board and ask students to consider which topic they would like to research (or to submit other topics if they like).
2. Students will choose topics and discuss possible sources of information with the teacher.
3. Teacher will pass out the 'How to Write a Research Paper' handout and discuss the information on the handout with students.

Evaluation:

List of sources in MLA format

Written research paper

Oral presentation to class

Visual aides and other materials used in presentations

Lesson #6: Day of the Dead

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade Level: 8

Purpose of the lesson: Students will be introduced to the Day of the Dead celebration which takes place in Mexico from October 31-November 2.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will learn the traditions and customs surrounding the Day of the Dead and how it is celebrated in Mexico.
2. Students will understand the pre-Columbian roots of the celebration.
3. Students will compare the attitude toward death as demonstrated in the Day of the Dead celebration to the attitudes toward death in American culture.
4. Students will discuss how they will build altars for the classroom.

Materials

video: Rite of the Day of the Dead (Mexican Video, Paramuscia, S.A., Mexico D.F.)

Activities:

1. Students will watch the movie.
2. Students will discuss their impressions of the holiday, what they liked and what affected them most about the celebration as portrayed in the film.
3. Students will discuss the different attitude toward death in Mexican culture and their own culture.
4. Teacher will present information on different kinds of altars and students will discuss how they would like to go about building altars--individually or as a group.

Evaluation:

Participation

Lesson #7-Altar Building Presentation

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade Level: 8

Purpose of the Lesson: Students will learn the traditions, customs and methods of building an altar for the Day of the Dead. Guest speaker: Jeannette Del Rio, president of the Latin American Parents Organization at Paideia School.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will learn about the customs and traditions used in building an altar for The Day of the Dead.
2. Students will learn about how Day of the Dead is celebrated in Mexico, as well as how it is celebrated by the Mexican community in Atlanta.
3. Students will learn various ways they might begin to construct their own altars for Day of the Dead.

Materials:

table
altar cloth
candles
dead bread
salt
water
candy skeleton heads
incense
food-chips, salsa, fruit
skeletons
skulls
photos of those deceased
personal mementos from the deceased
sacred altar objects

Activities:

1. The guest speaker, Jeannette Del Rio, president of the Latin American Parents Association at our school, will demonstrate how she sets up an altar to her grandmother each year.
2. The speaker will go over the traditional way to set up an altar and how some altars do not follow the same traditions.

3. The speaker will discuss the various types of altars--altars to deceased family members, altars to famous people or groups of people, etc.
4. The speaker will discuss the attitude toward death that the celebration of Day of the Dead demonstrates.
5. Students will be asked to talk about how they would like to set up their own altars.

Evaluation: participation

Lesson #8--Preparation for Building an Altar to Mexican History and Culture

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade Level: 8

Purpose of the lesson: Students will combine what they have learned about how to build an altar for Day of the Dead and Mexican history and culture.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will cooperate with each other to design and build a class altar to celebrate great personages of Mexican history and Mexican culture.
2. Students will prepare pictures and presentations to summarize and depict the lives of famous Mexican personages and/ or cultures.
3. Students will include traditional elements of a Day of the Dead altar (such as pan de los muertos, salt, candles, water, skulls, skeleton art and picture of the deceased)

Materials

List of important mythological figures and places in Mexican history

List of important historical figures in Mexican history

List of possible ways to represent Mexican history and culture

Activities:

1. In a brainstorming session, students will come up with ideas on how an altar to Mexican History and Culture can be prepared.
2. Students will decide based on what they have learned so far about Mexican history which important person should be honored on the class altar.
3. Teacher will assign historical figures not yet covered to class members who will briefly research their contribution of Mexican history, find a pictorial representation and prepare it with a frame and brief description for the altar.
2. Students will divide responsibilities for bringing in materials, finding pictures, doing research and finding artifacts that represent Mexican history and culture.
3. Students will prepare of list of what will appear on the altar and who is responsible for bringing in each item.

Evaluation:

participation
organization
leadership

List of possible pre-Columbian history and culture representations

- photo or sculpture of an Olmec head
- a pyramid
- photo of the statue of Coatlique, ancient goddess
- photo or drawing of Quetzacoatl, the feathered serpent god
- picture of Cuauhtemoc, last emperor of the Aztecs
- corn
- statues or reproductions of mesoamerican artwork

List of possible representation for the Hispanic period

- picture of Cortez
- picture of Malinche
- candle or representation of the Virgin of Guadalupe
- skeleton or art in Hispanic dress

List of possible representation of Independence period

- picture of Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez
- picture of Sor Juana
- picture of Miguel Hidalgo
- picture of Benito Juarez

List of possible representations of the Revolutionary period

- picture of Emiliano Zapata
- picture of Pancho Villa

Representations of Mexican culture

- art work
- musical instruments
- works of muralists
- Mexican clothing
- Mexican food
- Mexican flag
- paintings

Traditional elements of a Day of the Dead altar

- bread
- salt
- candles
- water
- copal

Lesson #9: Building the altar and preparing for the fiesta

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade level: 8

Purpose of the lesson: Students will cooperative assemble their altar objects into an altar that honors Mexican history and culture. Then they will prepare a menu for a fiesta for November 2.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will actively participate in assembling a Day of the Dead altar to honor Mexican history and culture.
2. Students will begin to learn about Mexican food.

Materials:

Table for the altar
Altar cloth in Mexican colors (green, white and red)
Mexican flag
empty boxes to create a multitiered effect (optional)
copal
dishes for salt and water
pan de los muertos (made by the students)
pictures of famous Mexican historical figures (made by the students)
items to represent Mexican culture (brought in by the students)

List of possible Mexican dishes students may want to prepare for the fiesta

Activities

1. Students will collectively place the items they have brought from home and the items they have made on the altar.
2. Students will brainstorm for ideas on Mexican food they can make at home and bring to school for our Day of the Dead fiesta on November 2.
3. Students will choose a dish to research and prepare at home to bring to the fiesta.
4. Students will prepare the dish according to a recipe and bring the recipe (as well as the food they have prepared) in to share with the class

Evaluation:

participation

Lesson #10: Day of the Dead Fiesta

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade level: 8

Purpose of the lesson: to eat, drink and be merry, Mexican style

Instructional Objectives:

1. To end our Day of the Dead Unit with a grand fiesta.
2. To learn to eat Mexican cuisine.

Materials:

1. paper plates, napkins, knives, forks, spoons, cups
2. serving utensils
3. microwave for warming up food
4. food prepared and brought in by students

Activities:

1. Students will set up a buffet style table and arrange food attractively on it.
2. Students will eat.

Evaluation:

recipe shared with class and turned in in writing
food prepared at home and brought in for fiesta

Lesson #11: Ancient Meso-American Art: Visit to The Carlos Museum at Emory University

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade level: 8

Purpose of Lesson: Students will see examples of meso-American art and learn characteristics of art from various areas and time periods of ancient Mexico.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will see examples of art created by the ancient cultures of Mexico.
2. Students will hear explanations and interpretation of the art by the museum curator who is in charge of the collection.
3. Students will learn how the art was collected.
4. Students will gain a sense of the timeline along which the Olmecs, Mayan and Aztec cultures existed.
5. Students will gain a sense of the art characteristic of each group.

Activities:

1. Students will tour the museum with the curator as their guide.

Evaluation:

Students will write a one page summary of what they learned about a particular culture of ancient Mexico.

Participation and engagement.

Lesson #12: Meztizo Identity-Part One

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade level: 8

Purpose of the lesson: Students will begin to understand some of the effect of cultural subjugation on personal identity.

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will begin to understand the nature of political oppression on cultural groups.
2. Students will identify the indigenous cultures of Mexico as oppressed.

3. Students will extrapolate the oppression of the native cultures of Mexico by the Spanish to the oppression of other colonial cultures.
4. Students will refer to sections of the article when bringing up points they wish to discuss in class.

Materials

Reading: Hijos de la Chingada (Sons of La Malinche), by Octavio Paz
Handout on Dominator/Partnership Model of Relationships (based on Riane Eisler's The Chalice and the Blade).
Handout: What is Oppression?

Activities:

1. Students will take a short reading quiz on the article by Paz.
2. Students will engage in a discussion of their responses to the reading, introducing points they found intriguing, asking questions about sections they didn't fully understand, or relating the issues in the article to issues we have studied in regard to other oppressed cultures (slavery in the US, the aborigines in Australia, women, gays and lesbians), or to issues they have experienced themselves.
3. Students will go over the "What is Oppression?" handout and discuss dominator and partnership politics.

Evaluation:

quiz
participation

Homework: Read "It's the Fault of the Tlaxcaltecs" by Elena Garro. Students are to read the story twice and come to class with three points written down that they would like to discuss about the story.

Lesson #13 Meztizo Identity--Part Two

Subject: Mexican History and Culture

Grade: 8

Purpose: Students will begin to understand the effect of history on identity

Instructional Objectives:

1. Students will understand the necessity of reading a difficult piece of writing more than once to increase understanding.
2. Students will be able to introduce points into a discussion of a reading.
3. Students will be able to extrapolate the issues addressed in the story to their own experience.
4. Students will understand the effects of culture and history on personal identity.
5. Students will be introduced to the concept of magical realism in Mexican literature.

Materials

Reading: "It's the Fault of the Tlaxcaltecs" by Elena Garro

Activities:

1. Students will take a short 5 question reading quiz.

2. Students will introduce points they would like to discuss based on the reading.
3. Students will be able to discuss how the story demonstrates that history and culture affect personal identity.
4. Students will discuss their responses to Garro's use of magical realism.
5. Students will discuss how the history of their own culture (southern, Jewish, Black, Christian, etc) influences their identity.

Evaluation:

quiz
participation in the discussion
specific points introduced into the discussion.

Homework:

Write a one to two page paper about how your cultural heritage and history effects the way you think of yourself.