

**The Legacies of Mexican Artists, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo
And Their Influences on Mexican Culture**
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Overview

This curriculum unit is designed for a fourth grade art class that will focus on the legacies of two prominent Mexican artists, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. It gives an overview of Diego's influence on Mexican culture and Kahlo's role in promoting Mexican culture during the 20th Century. The purpose is to provide students with a framework to understand both folk art and mural painting. To accomplish this, I will establish the connections these artists had to Mexican folk art and to Mexican murals. Both artists loved Mexico and focused on the concept of identity; Rivera's pursuit of it was for his country, whereas Kahlo desired it more for herself on a personal level.

Students will learn about murals and develop an appreciation of how the subject matter in Diego's public art elevated the image, the acceptance, and self-worth of the common man throughout Mexico and beyond. Students will learn about the conflicts that led to the Mexican Revolution, the social climate in Mexico, and the Mexican Renaissance in the arts. After students learn about these two fascinating artists, they will create large paper mache puppets representing Frida and Diego, making the artists "come to life." Throughout the unit, students will be involved in many interdisciplinary activities including understanding customs and Mexican traditions, recognizing and interpreting Spanish words and terms, discovering pre-Columbian animal symbols, sketching, creating paper-mâché figures, painting murals, map reading, and conducting research.

Rationale

When we immerse ourselves into an historical era, one way to discover what it was like is to look closely at the facts along with the stories that have been handed down. My students will meet an outstanding figure in Mexican history, artist Diego Rivera (1886-1957) and be introduced to the tremendous and sometimes even larger than life contributions that he made during his lifetime. They will observe and analyze Diego's paintings and several of his murals that depict so much of Mexico's history. They also will meet Diego's wife, Frida Kahlo (1907-1954). A widely celebrated artist, Frida painted what she knew best, herself, and in doing so she too promoted the culture of Mexico. Through the art of these two artists, students will be immersed in much of the culture of Mexico, including its language and customs, and come to understand much of the country's history, including the Mexican Revolution and the Renaissance of Mexican art.

Diego was a complex man with a multifaceted personality that affected his approach to his art. In this unit, I will explore a number of fascinating issues related to Diego's artistic endeavors. For example, Who was the "Revolutionary with the paintbrush?" How was he involved in the Mexican Renaissance? Where was he from? Where did he live and travel? Where did he paint? How did he accomplish this feat? How did individuals in the United States come to know him? What legacy did he establish in this world? According to Diego's biographer, Gladys March, Diego summed up his own life, and although much of it could be substantiated, he did create, enhance, and contribute to some of his own myth about his life. He had a colorful recollection of it with many details. After all, it was Diego who largely transformed the history of Mexico into one of the greatest myths in the past century (March, 1960). This was his legacy.

Diego has suggested that he took events and transformed them into legends. Perhaps he did this because he firmly and consciously decided that his mission was to teach the masses, the people that were not as likely to

venture into a museum. "Before the coming of the Spaniards, the Mexican Indian artists had shown great force and genius. Like all-first rate art, their work had been intensely local: related to the soil, the landscape, the forms, animals, deities, and colors of their own world. Above all, it had been emotion-centered. It was molded by their hopes, fears, joys, superstitions, and sufferings" (March, 1960, p. 43). Diego felt that the descendents of these great Indian creators had discarded the aspects that had given Mexico its glory, partly out of feeling inferior to the conquerors. Some felt pressured to imitate European standards or models of classical European art. But Diego trusted his emotions, was well grounded, and always had an awareness of pre-Columbian art in his life (March, 1960). If art was on the side of a building, how could anyone resist stopping, being curious, and taking time to look at it? Larger than life murals surely could make an impression.

As an artist, Diego realized that he could take the knowledge he had acquired when he was in Italy studying the masters of the Italian frescoes, and adapt the technique of fresco painting to create a powerful vehicle for sharing and promoting his pride and devotion to his country. Diego was instrumental in developing true nationalism that was not dominated by a European presence by painting the beauty and the richness that was evident in his diverse country. After finding a site that was large and visible, Diego would begin to plan and execute a mural. Beginning with chalk and then using paint, he would sketch and develop dynamic images; people and characters that were 10 feet tall, and make a story come to life. By the end of this curriculum unit, I hope we grasp the essence of why many feel Diego Rivera is the greatest artist that the Americas have ever produced.

This curriculum will expose fourth grade students to the Mexican culture over a period of 8 to 12 weeks in the art classroom. At this grade level, students study Mexico and Latin America in their social studies curriculum in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. The art class meets for 45 minutes twice a week. Activities and slides are part of the lessons. Each lesson will consist of approximately four class meetings. The option exists for all lessons to be taught or a select few. This timeline can be modified to meet students' needs.

Student participation is an integral part of the lessons. The activities include viewing and discussing images of pre-Columbian art, Mexican folk art, Diego Rivera's murals, and Frida Kahlo's paintings. The learning environment in the art room will be structured to promote curiosity and interest in Mexico and provide many sources for discovery. There will be folk art displays, books on Mexico, posters and prints exhibited on the walls and opportunities to listen to Latin music. Students will have a suggested reading list and access to a collection of books for them to research specific topics.

In the Pittsburgh Public School District, we align our curriculum to over 60 content standards. This curriculum unit satisfies a number of those standards. The arts and humanities standards and the communication standards that are utilized in the district are included in the back of this unit and will be referred to by number immediately after each set of student objectives in each lesson.

Diego Rivera, "The Revolutionary with a Paintbrush"

My first lesson of this unit will focus on the life of Diego Rivera, and the art form for which is so famous for—mural painting. Diego Rivera was born in Guanajuato in 1886, in central Mexico. His real name was Diego Maria de la Concepcion Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodriguez. Because he was in poor health, Diego was sent to live in the mountains for two years where he was nurtured and cared for by Antonia, an Indian nurse to whom he held a special fondness for the remainder of his life. As a man, he was extremely proud of his heritage.

I will begin to introduce the concept of mural painting by describing Rivera's early experiences as a budding artist. As early as the age of two he was drawing and painting and his father set up a room with the sole purpose of letting Diego color anywhere that he wanted. In this setting he created his first murals. He liked to

draw trains, machinery, bridges, battles, the mines and mountains. To this day, a drawing of a locomotive going up a hill has been preserved.

Rivera's father was in the service before he became a teacher. He recognized a need for reform when he witnessed the misery and illiteracy of the people and he was sympathetic to the oppressed, the miners and the peasants. This became his passion and it had a significant effect on his family. Diego's family moved to Mexico City for three years, then they relocated to the district of San Rafael, comprising the *ejido* of Mexico City, which was the communal land of the Indian people. This was the playground for young Diego.

When Diego was eight, he attended Colegio del Padre Antonio School for a few months. Next, he was sent to Catolico Hispano, and was advanced from the third grade to the sixth grade. At eleven, even though he was much younger than most of the students, he entered the School of the Fine Arts. For a while he was self-absorbed with military drawings but then he discarded the rigidity of the military, and clearly expressed that art was to be his destiny (March, 1960). When he went to the San Carlos School of Fine Arts, he discovered the pre-Conquest art of Mexico, which eventually became a lifelong passion. Although exposed and schooled in the European academic forms, Diego did not embrace these traditions, rather he held a strong attraction to the old art of Mexico. He rebelled at school, organized a student riot, and as a result he was expelled (March, 1960). In 1916, at sixteen, he ended his formal training in Mexico and he accepted scholarship money to study in Europe. He moved away.

So who influenced Diego? Were there any teachers that he admired?

In his biography, he refers to three instructors who were influential in his life. First, there was Felix Parra, a traditional painter by trade but a man who was passionate about pre-Conquest Indian art. Diego expressed mutual regard for this passion and clung to it his entire life. The second teacher, Jose M. Velasco, a landscape painter, was the person who schooled Diego in perspective. Diego ventured up and down the countryside imitating this man's style as he painted people, homes, the natural landscape, street scenes, and churches. The third man was Rebull, an elderly man in his seventies who took a liking to Rivera's work. Diego learned proportion and harmony from him (March, 1960).

Suggested Student Activity: Meet Diego Rivera, "The Revolutionary with a Paintbrush"

The objectives of this activity are to discover one of Mexico's greatest artists, Diego Rivera, and understand his significance in Mexico and in the world. Students will

research historical information about Rivera and his country and see how it was revealed in his pictures that tell a story. They will become familiar with the concept of mural painting and understand the process. They are encouraged to search for and identify symbols that Rivera chose to paint. The students will begin to understand his contribution of elevating the Indigenous people in Mexico and promoting Mexican nationalism.

Materials

Books, reading list, computer, vocabulary labels, pictures, prints, photos.

Source

Photos of Murals from the Education Building, the National Palace, and the Alameda Hotel (An Afternoon in the Park) in Mexico City; Diego's autobiography, *My Art, My Life* by Gladys March.

Procedure

1. Engage students in setting the stage. Divide students into small groups with specific questions to research.
2. Focus on specific mural beginning with Creation at the Education Building (1923) and ending with "An Afternoon in Alameda Park (1947), analyze the composition, look at the people.
3. Introduce Spanish terms, record them, and define them in an art journal.

Pre- Columbian Art and Its Influence on Diego

As I direct my students to collect data reflecting exactly who and what influenced this painter, I will introduce folk art and show examples of a variety of pieces that I have collected. I will supplement these with photographs or images on the Internet. The purpose of this is to spark curiosity, provide new knowledge, and share a visual language to understand this art form. These whimsical examples, so colorful and creative, are produced for the ordinary person. It is important that my students grasp that these artists use ordinary materials that are readily available, organic and inorganic, and they "fashion a fantastic array of utilitarian and decorative objects ranging from simple toys to highly elaborate ceremonial and religious art" (Oettinger, 1990, p. 45). Some are regionally created while others are more local, yet they share a common and distinctively Mexican character that gives them an outstanding and significant sense of national identity. Diego was convinced that these pieces that were "carved, molded, woven, painted; some grotesquely beautiful, others inventively decorated utilitarian objects—represented a truly indigenous art expression that sprang from the hearts of the people. They saw in these objects a connection to Mexico's archaeological past, a national heritage, to be appreciated and preserved, something to be championed in the wider world of art (Oettinger, 1990, p. 26).

Folk art is ordinary yet unique. I want students to realize that these pieces possess beauty and a sense of artistic power as they mirror the skill and ability of their creators and carry a lasting value. Why is this? Perhaps because of the bright colors, the energy, and the type of materials used easily appeal to our spirit. It is a form of personal expression. Folk art can reflect sacredness in everyday routines, activities, and rituals. The concepts of birth, infancy, adolescence, courtship, marriage, old age, and death are prevalent themes depicted. The purpose of viewing and talking about this art is that it can renew and reinforce our individual experiences. It gives us a window to view human creativity, and appreciate that as humans we share many of life's passages.

Diego was largely influenced by the folk art that he enjoyed collecting. Perhaps this interest was sparked by the influence of artist Jose Guadalupe Posada—a very productive craftsman in Mexico (1852-1913). Posada had a significant influence on Diego, making him aware and sensitive to the struggles of the common people. Rivera honored Posada and paid homage to him in two murals. Here, I will select several prints found in *Posada's Popular Mexican Prints* (a collection of 273) to show in the classroom. Students will view the prints and make some simple comparisons between the two men.

Posada was an artist who earned significant recognition and fame after his death and was proclaimed one of Mexico's acclaimed national artists. His work was not costly and it was distributed extensively throughout Mexico on brightly colored paper. He was a self-taught engraver and he etched illustrations for songs, jokes, and tales for the common people. What exposure to him did Diego actually have? Diego, when he was young, told others that he would go and visit Posada and watch him work in his printing shop. He instilled in Diego a fondness and respect for the beauty of the ordinary Mexican people, and art that was created through feeling and emotion (March, 1960). Why did Rivera focus so extensively on this man? Posada was vehemently opposed to the oppression that was so prevalent in Mexico, he was enthusiastic over the Revolution, and the symbols that enveloped his work were inspirational (Berdecio, 1972). What type of artist was he? He had a limitless imagination featuring a tremendous humor. He was talented regarding compositional elements in his work and for draftsmanship and layout.

He championed and promoted a liberal stance on book covers and broadsides, featuring commemorations of crimes, sensational events, miracles, and national events. He elevated pop culture figures, some who were anti-establishment. The point of view reflected a lower middle-class perspective; he was appealing because he focused on the day-to-day experiences, the acceptable events as well as the blunders. He featured news about bullfights, the circus, political imagery, religious figures, and theatrical venues. It has been coined street literature that could appeal and be read by the uneducated people.

Posada captured a variety of images including disasters, both natural and supernatural. These were called *exemplos*, incorporating a moral message, illustrating some horrific activity around events such as firing squads for criminals and also unpopular political people. These images promoted the beliefs, ideology, and behavior of well-known political figures. Posada also wrote texts, known as *corridos*, which purposefully increased awareness and information about criminals, guerillas, and promoted political views, especially anti-establishment. "Posada's *corridos* served as models for the further elaboration of the genre by Rivera, Mendez, and others" (Berdicio, 1972, p. xix).

Diego was captivated by the *calaveras* (the Spanish word for skulls) that pervaded Posada's work. Posada frequently featured skeletons engaging in all types of human activity in his art. I want students to see that these images are reflective of a popular Mexican theme combining both an Indigenous and a Spanish influence. When we look at pre-Columbian art and ruins, we find the skull and death-goddesses.

One classroom activity will be to involve students in a discussion about the Day of the Dead, a day of special significance in the Indian folklore of Mexico. *El Dia de los Muertos* (*elDEE-ah day lohs MWAIR-tohs*), or the Day of the Dead, is a celebration in Mexico on November 1 and 2. The entire community spends weeks preparing for the celebration as local craftsmen "create original, colorful, and exotic figures, decorations, costumes, and carvings that become an integral part of the celebration. The Day of the Dead, as no other festival in Mexico, brings forth joylessly the traditions of past centuries. It reveals in heightened form the unique qualities of the Mexican people, qualities that combine an inherent sense of human dignity with sensitivity and gentleness; great imagination and fantastic ability with love of family and pride in the country's rich and varied cultural heritage" (Oettinger, 1990, p. 13). We will discuss how many cultures dedicate some special time to remember their loved ones. The Spaniards tried to replace the Mayan religion and convert the native population to Christianity, mainly by force. The missionaries did their work well, blending their medieval Catholicism—a type of religion that abounded in revelations of *memento mori* and the afterlife—and with this religion they captured the imagination of the natives, due in part to the sheer misery brought by the Spaniards to the rest of the population. The combination has produced Mexico's unusual culture, as evidenced in architecture and folk art, for the native Mexicans identified strongly with the saints, and with the medieval cult of death" (Hardin, 1997, p. 14). Two cultures are blended together; the ancient Indian traditions and the Catholic customs. The people thought that their deceased relatives returned once a year to be fed, therefore, they prepared and put out food for them. The European tradition surrounding Catholicism is All Saint's Day is November 1 and All Soul's Day is November 2.

Here I will describe to my students the practices surrounding this day in Mexico. On this holiday children and their families decorate the graves of their family members who are deceased. As I talk to my students, I will contrast Mexican customs to those of which they are familiar. For example, "You may think that skeletons are scary. They may remind you of images that many American children see at Halloween. In Mexico, they are not scary; they are considered comical. In Mexico much significance and importance is apparent as we see that popular images of skeletons are often dancing figures. The purpose is to show that life and death are interwoven and go hand in hand." I will share other practices, including, "In every city and village, families go out to the cemeteries, carrying flowers, sweets, food, and drink to the graves of the dead. Children make cardboard skeletons dance and amuse themselves with little figures of death made of metal foil, with chick-peas serving as heads, or with small coffins made of cardboard or clay. Death is also eaten in the form of sugar-candy skulls or figures made of sugar or marzipan"(Oettinger, 1998, p. 58).

The Mayans also had a custom focused around their belief that children who had died came back for a night. As part of this celebration, October 30 was designated as a time to remember them; they prepared treats and decorations for them (Milford, 1999). When you go to the Mayan ruins where the pyramids were built, such as Chichenitza, in Mexico, you will notice skulls carved onto stone.

In Mexico City, at the Ministry of Education, Diego painted a mural of the Day of the Dead ceremony. This is a good mural for students to see the skeletons, skulls, and the people. Perhaps they will look for Diego in the picture. There is a skeleton dressed in overalls, like a peasant, wearing a *sombrero*, a straw hat. Coincidentally, this is how Rivera dressed and thus, this will provide an opportunity for some interesting observations.

So where did Diego Rivera get inspiration and gather material for his paintings? Our research will reveal several ways. Sometimes he went to visit pre-Columbian sites. For example, before his first mural assignment, he went to the Yucatan peninsula and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to visit archaeological ruins.

Most Pre-Columbian art that is in existence is funerary, objects that people had placed in tombs. Archaeologists have found this practice was done for the elite, as a way of honoring the deceased. Its purpose was to make provisions for the afterlife. These were practically the only items that were not destroyed during the Spanish Conquest. Most of the books were burned, with the exception of a few codices there were hidden by priests (Hardin, 1997). These items that were found in temples and city ruins, give us clues to piece together a scenario of what the civilization was like. Some of the characteristics of these civilizations were: "temples with adjacent pyramids mounds; stylized imagery of fanged felines and raptorial birds; the working of gold (by 1500 B.C.); elaborate personal adornment; suggesting a stratified society; the ability to weave extraordinary fine cloth; and the creation of ceramic pots in human and animal shapes that are more like pieces of three-dimensional sculpture than utilitarian pottery container" (Watts, 1990, p. 7).

"Supernatural beings, rulers, priest, warriors, and animals are the predominant images in pre-Columbian art. Ancient Americans believed spiritual and supernatural forces that dwelled in animals, the sky, and in the mountains possessed the power to control everything that happens" (Watts, 1990, p. 7). If you look at pre-Columbian art, there are obvious combinations of symbols reflecting animals and humans that were easily recognizable that people of the time could grasp, such as dangerous and awe-inspiring jaguars, snakes, and birds of prey which were often used to symbolize supernatural beings, rulers, and even entire cultures. Artists combined parts of animals and humans to depict these concepts about earthly and supernatural powers. Some combinations illustrate transformation. "Such powers of transformation seem to be the only explanation for works of ancient American art that display an extraordinary mixture of human and animal forms. Some human-animal combinations are so complex that they probably illustrate well-known sections of myths" (Watts, 1990, p. 7). Significance is placed on gestures, poses, attire, headdresses, feathers, and jewelry.

After I teach the content, I will focus on the form. There is a variety of forms or styles that represent pre-Columbian art. One can see naturalism, stylization, and abstraction. At this time, I will show a few slides of pre-Columbian art so that students can see the exaggeration, which demands attention, power, and control. How did the artists depict people and animals? How do they convey power and strength? The content, the form, and the materials stayed the same without changes unless a major upheaval occurred to change it.

A Suggested Student Activity: Pre-Columbian Art Collected by Diego Rivera

The objectives of this activity include being able to recognize pre-Columbian art, viewing slides or photos of pre-Columbian art, listing the animals that they recognize, and suggesting traits that these animals may exemplify. Students will either draw individually or discuss in a small group the animals that have the most appeal and be able to explain why.

Source

The Art of Ancient Mexico and Peru, An Introduction for Teachers, with Slides and Materials, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990. Includes a brief history, content, and role of the artist in pre-Columbian art. Includes slides, archaeological methods, and locations of U.S. museums with pre-Columbian art.

Materials

Slides, student art journals.

Procedure

1. Select and show slides that are representative of pre-Columbian art.
2. Involve students in a search for animals that they recognize. Guide them to identify traits and characteristics of each one. In Pre-Columbian art, the animal symbols used most were the: jaguar, cougar, birds of prey, spider, snake, crocodile, monkey, bat, frog, and butterfly. Discuss the habits of each. What unusual, or magical characteristics do each animal have that would make it an appropriate symbol for a supernatural being and for rulers of this world? Draw or describe the work of art that you find appealing. Which do you think is magical, scary, and awesome and explain why? Look for attributes.
3. Explain the meaning and significance of the ancient pottery as they see it in the slides. Some questions to initiate the dialogue would be: Who is it? What is it? Let's focus on proportions of the forms, for example, what is enlarged and exaggerated? How is it altered? Why? Do you think these are symbols? Are they supernatural? Is it frontal or turning? Is it symmetrical or asymmetrical? One strategy that may give students an insight would be to discuss the animal symbols, which could be used to represent people. For example, what do you visualize when you think of the following: a lion, a hawk, an owl, an elephant, a jaguar, and an eagle? Notice the frontal view, both sitting and standing figures. Look for symmetry. Most of the examples have rectilinear shapes as well as contours. They are massive and block-like. More curvilinear shapes are noticeably with the Maya and the people of western Mexico. These show ease and movement around them. The painting in temples and palaces is not in good condition and most of the books have been destroyed. We find most remnants of paintings on pottery.

Other Major Sources of Inspiration for Diego's Artistic Expressions

In addition to roaming through the ruins, Diego visited villages where the Indians lived. He developed a great respect for their customs, daily lives, and colorful attire. He enjoyed the beautiful dresses and the long braided hair that was so similar to the pre-Columbian ancestors. After absorbing as much as possible, he began to focus on the Mexican way of life and its beautiful culture, rich and varied in his artistic expression. He focused on the diverse regions, varied landscapes, vibrant celebrations, and difficult struggles. His desire was to elevate the Mexican people and strengthen their identity with its uniqueness.

There were other influences in Diego's life, such as the European influence. He was acquainted with Picasso, Ammedeo Modigliani, Piet Mondrian, and Robert Delaunay. Who was most influential in redefining art at this time? He met a fellow Mexican, an artist named David Siqueiros, who was studying abroad too. They got together in Paris while Diego was living in Europe and Sequieros was visiting in 1919. They were well aware of Mexico's struggle to rediscover itself after years of social unrest and civil war. Common opinion shared by these men was that their homeland could benefit from their inspiration and influence as artists as they opposed a government dictatorship. Another major influence for Diego, which he emphasized in his biography by March, expresses his political interest in social-democratic action, and later on, in communism (March 1960). This impacted his thoughts, actions, and painting. It was only a matter of time before Diego made his aspiration of returning to Mexico a reality. Although they were enjoying themselves in Europe, they always thought of their homeland. Diego's strongly asserted that the riches and wealth held by the European minority should be shared more fairly with the Indians and *mestizos*, people with mixed Indian and European ancestry.

He wanted them to have the opportunity to have a better life in their own land, free from dominance. Diego wanted to return to pre-Columbian roots and focus on his ancestry.

Another way Diego prepared for mural painting occurred by close scrutiny and observation of what masters had done before him. For a year and a half, Diego studied European murals. It was no accident that he was so capable of painting such monumental works. When did Diego start to gear up for muralist paintings? In his autobiography, Diego said he saw the influence of pre-Conquest tradition and Mexican influence in his work. He created a self-portrait as he was searching for inner truth and reflection. He painted *The Zapatistas*, (1918), a "Mexican peasant hat hanging over a wooden box behind a rifle. Executed without a preliminary sketch in my Paris workshop, it is probably the most faithful expression of the Mexican mood that I have ever achieved"(March, 1960, p. 114). Although Picasso, as did the critics, voiced their approval, Diego seemed to feel he was still searching for a medium to convey what he had seen and still wished to communicate. He knew the war (1910-1920) was approaching an end and he felt new roads of expression and opportunity would prevail. He felt uncertain about anything dominating the art world, whereas cubism, surrealism and other movements had done so in the past. The bourgeoisie would be fading and the masses would be appearing. Wouldn't this be an opportune time to reach out and captivate the people, leaving behind form and color and thrusting ahead with exciting subject matter? Rather than creating art for a gallery or a museum, why not paint it in public places where the people were everyday, such as schools, universities, public buildings, and railroad stations. Although some agreed with Diego, they questioned how he would achieve this. They suggested that his work looked like all the others. Frustrated, he returned to his memories of his old friend Posada. Then it clearly came to him, the key was to paint what he knew and felt. Mexico, his country, was where his allegiance was and what he knew best. He departed from cubism. By 1919, Diego was ready for murals. So, he embarked to Italy, and in a period of a year and a half, Diego completed more than 300 sketches of the masters' frescoes. He studied Michelangelo and Giotto. He sketched life, he captured street scenes involving fascist and socialist dispute. Equipped with sufficient knowledge about mural painting and pondering where to initiate this, "An artist with my revolutionary point of view could now find a place in Mexico—a place in which to work and grow" (March, 1960, p. 123). And so the Mexican exile returned home.

In addition to studying Italian frescoes in Europe, Diego went to see what the Aztecs had painted in Mexico. The Aztec artists had decorated public buildings with painted murals. In Mexico and Central America, murals have been discovered in the earliest known cities. "Places such as Teotihuacan and Bonampak (which means "city of painted walls" in the Mayan language) appear to have been centers for artists to practice their skills" (Capek, 1996, p. 40). These give rich information about ancient practices. The city had been long gone 600 years before the Spaniards arrived; however, the murals that survived in Teotihuacan suggest what it may have been like. The symbols and their interpretations are lost but their incredible beauty lives on and survives. Mexico is actually one of the few countries in the world where we see a mural tradition that has been long and withstanding. Diego drew upon the spirit of his ancestors, talked about them and acknowledged that they influenced him in his course of mural painting. Diego is quoted as saying, "Above all it had been emotion-centered. It was molded by their hopes, fears, joys, superstitions, and sufferings.... This tradition was in me, too, buried in my subconscious. Yet I was continually aware of the greatness of pre-Conquest art" (Capek, 1996, p. 41).

Directly in the midst of the Mexican Renaissance begun by the government, Diego began painting. This Renaissance, or the Mexicanidad Movement, according to Jones, was a movement in the arts that was initiated by intellectuals and artists. They supported various revolutionary leaders by giving them advice and keeping records of their accomplishments (Jones, 1993). When the Revolution and the battles terminated in 1920, the need to proclaim Mexican heritage and to elevate it was recognized by the Mexican government. "The government funded the excavation and restoration of archaeological sites and commissioned painters to decorate the walls of public buildings with murals. The only requirement of the painters was that their subjects be Mexican" (Jones, 1993, p.13). What was the purpose of the Renaissance and what was Diego's role? The goal was to rekindle the native political and artistic traditions after 400 years of European dominance. Diego's role was to paint murals that were highly accessible for the common people, elevating and dignifying their image. Was Diego tackling this alone? No, in this muralist movement, two other artists emerged, David

Siqueiros, and Jose Clemente Orozco, and along with them were many craftsman, masons, artists, and artisans. A union was formed to promote their common interests. Discarding the abstract images they had painted in Europe, they promoted realistic images that would easily be identifiable. "The native myths and history of Mexico—from its days of Mayan and Aztec glory through the horrors of the Spanish Conquest to the wars for independence and revolutionary change—were brought to life in monumental display" (Jones, 1993, p.13).

Diego was exhilarated and overjoyed and within six months, he was handed an assignment to paint a wall at the National Preparatory School of the University of Mexico (1922-1923). "The subject of the mural was Creation, which I symbolized as the core of human history. More specifically, I presented a racial history of Mexico through history representing all types that had entered the Mexican bloodstream, from the autochthonous Indian to the present-day, half breed Spanish Indian" (March, 1960, p. 130). Each figure was painted 12 feet tall. He was not completely satisfied after a year of work. The composition of symbolic figures and elements from nature resembled Italian Renaissance frescoes of religious subjects. His next venture was the murals at the Ministry of Public Education between 1923 and 1928. He had many onlookers and assistants. Soon, monumental painting was showing up on public buildings, even though criticized by the bourgeois and their followers in the press. Thus, the Mexican Renaissance was being born as many art students and others were embracing the movement. In order to support this movement, Diego painted watercolors and oil paintings and sold them to American patrons who were eager to buy them. He canvassed the countryside searching for subject material. He wanted to paint landscapes that reflected pure, basic images of Mexico. He painted Mexican social life through his eyes, featuring frescoes of festivals, agriculture, industrial labor, scientific activities, and the arts, including sculpture, dance, music, poetry, folk epic, and theatre (March, 1960).

Diego exhibited amazing stamina, working seven days a week, eighteen hours a day. With the exception of a brief excursion to Russia, he devoted four years to the painting of a total of 124 frescoes, which encompass more than five thousand square feet. What exactly did he portray? Observing the murals, one can see people weaving, cloth dyeing, farming and mining. Diego showed the exhausted miners, a rural teacher, armed peasants, and partisans fighting to free the peons. Then, he highlighted a contrasting mood of Mexican life. From exhaustion to their creative life, he painted weddings and fiestas, the Burning of the Judases, The Dance of the Deer, the Tehuanas Dance, the dance of the Ribbons, the Corn Harvest Dance, the May Day Dance, and others. The Mexican revolution, another topic, gave him a focal point to portray heroes, songs, enemies, battles, and victories. He chose scenes from the history of the region to paint on sixteen consecutive panels, beginning with the Spanish conquest. The episodes included the seizure of Cuernavaca by the Spaniards, the building of the palace by the conqueror, and the establishment of the sugar refineries. The concluding episode was the peasant revolt by Zapata.

Frida Kahlo, Mexico's Most Famous Woman Artist Who Promoted Diego Rivera, As Wife and Artist as well as Her Homeland of Mexico

As famous and well known as the murals in Mexico City were making Diego, it was his marriage to Frida Kahlo that really drew attention. She was a student at the national Preparatory School and only fourteen when she was attracted to him. They later married in 1929. It was an unusual relationship in several ways. He was 42 at the time, married several time before, and she was 22, and this was her first marriage. He was a nationally known artist. She was just beginning to paint. He was a large man, almost 300 pounds; she was petite and slender. The two artists sharply contrasted one another. He was strong, working long hours for days on end. Frida was fragile and painted for periods of an hour and a half. She had suffered trauma often in her life. She had polio as a child. When she was a teenager, she was in a horrible bus accident in which she suffered severe injuries to her pelvis, resulting in multiple surgeries over the remainder of her life. Rivera painted on a large scale on public buildings geared for the masses. She painted small easel and retablo paintings, the subject matter very personal and reflective of her pain, emotions, and suffering. He was nicknamed, Elephant; she was called the Dove (Krull, 1995).

Suggested Student Activity: Frida Kahlo, Mexico's Most Famous Woman Artist Who Promoted Diego Rivera, As Wife and Artist

The objectives and strategies include discovering Frida Kahlo and being able to recognize her work. Students will research her life, appearance, attire, and facial expressions by analyzing her self-portraits. They should be able to recognize and define: retablos, robozos, ixquintle dogs, nopal, Judases (figures). They will compare and contrast the purpose for easel painting with mural painting. Students will research and understand why she became Mexico's most famous woman artist, then discuss some ways in which she promoted Mexican culture. Finally, they will recognize and discuss surrealism.

Source

Books, the Internet, and prints.

Materials

Books about Frida Kahlo, her diary, prints.

Procedure

1. Divide students into small groups with specific tasks to research.
2. Analyze a variety of her paintings, including several self-portraits.
3. Discuss what was learned.
4. Involve students interactively as they pose as Frida Kahlo using stuffed monkeys, potted tropical plants, small oval sketch attached to forehead.

What did Frida and Diego have in common? They had similarities in family backgrounds. Both of their father's were free thinkers. Their mothers were both of Spanish and Indian descent, and Catholic. They both had a deep concern for Mexico. He wanted to be an artist ever since he could remember. She became interested in art after tragedy invaded her life and she tossed aside becoming a doctor. Rivera's name and reputation as an artist and his popularity was known all over Mexico. They both were masters of exaggeration; both liked pranks. Their collaborative mission was to initiate social change after the Revolution as they participated in marches and other events related to their political and social causes. They were involved with the Communist Party. They were charismatic and drew crowds in public. They became known in art circles outside of Mexico in the United States and Europe.

Students could look at Frida Kahlo's family history in a painting called My Grandparents, My Parents and I (1936). She painted herself as a little girl in front of a blue house, the place where she was born and where she died in Coyoacan, Mexico. She used significant symbolism, including a flower being pollinated to represent birth and development. She embraces a red ribbon entwining her mother and father and her grandparents. She painted her grandparents over a Mexican landscape and a nopal, a Mexican cactus which" features in the myth of the foundation of the state of Mejiaca and is found in symbolic form of the Mexican flag, and which effectively represents the national plant of Mexico (Kettenmann, 1997). Her mother, Mathilde Calderon y Gonzalea was born to Spanish general, and her father was of Indian descent, Antonio Calderon. Symbolically she depicted her paternal grandparents floating above the sea, since they came from across the ocean. Wilhelm Kahlo, Frida's father was born in Germany where his Hungarian Jewish parents had

emigrated. Her father immigrated to Mexico and changed his name to the Mexican equivalent, Guillermo. He learned photography from his father-in-law. He was appointed by the government to be the first official photographer of Mexico, given an assignment to photograph and compile an inventory of pictorial resources of architectural monuments of the pre-Columbian and colonial eras. The Revolution terminated this assignment school. She felt close to her father and more distant towards her mother.

Her childhood was marked with the affliction of polio when she was six. She took three fourths of a year to recover, and used to cover her leg with pants and long Mexican skirts. She was made fun of by her peers, a nickname of peg leg. Ironically, the beautiful Mexican attire brought her much fame later on because it was exotic. She later adorned herself with large Mexican beads and elaborate hairdos with braids and flowers. Her dad taught her much about photography and this helped her later on with her painting. She was certainly tormented by polio, a bus accident, and much pain, but she went on to live a rich and adventurous life, with many ups and downs, for another 30 years, and while doing so, became one of the 20th century's most original and memorable artists.

Frida went to Colegio Aleman, Mexico's German school. Later she attended Escuela Nacional Preparatoria in 1922. In 1925 her life changed overnight. She was in a horrible bus accident when her bus collided with a tram, and she was a survivor amidst several who were killed. "In addition to the terrible wound in her abdomen, her spine had been fractured in three places; she had also suffered a fractured pelvis, a dislocated shoulder, two broken ribs, and shattered bones in her right leg and foot. She was almost in unbearable pain, an agony that would persist for most of the rest of her life (Garza, 1994, p. 33). She had problems with her spine and had to endure many surgeries and wear a plaster corset. Aside from caricatures she scribbled in school and the drawings for Frenando Fernandez, Kahlo had never paid much attention to art. She began teaching herself from art books and, studying the works of Italian Renaissance artists and experiencing with the colors in her father's paint box. She painted portraits of visitors and relatives who were willing to sit and pose for her and gave the paintings away as gifts (Garza, 1994). To escape boredom and pain, she began to express her feelings by painting. She asked for her father's paint box and her mother had a special easel constructed so that she could paint while she was restrained to a reclining position. And what was her first painting? It was a portrait of a friend. For the rest of her life this pain was expressed in her art. Her bed was given a canopy and a mirror was attached so that she could be her own model for self-portraits. She painted a record of her life's stages with self-portraits. She later said; " I paint myself because I am so often alone and I am the subject that I know best." (Kettenmann, 1997, p. 18). Much of her work suggests loneliness, although there is some comfort apparent particularly when she is surrounded by her pet monkeys, dogs, and birds. Her head and half-length portraits are frequently accompanied by attributes with a symbolic meaning. Her full-length portraits, on the other hand, which are often represented in a scenic setting, are predominantly linked to real biographical events; the artist's relationship with her husband Diego Rivera, her physical condition-her ill health following the accident, her inability to carry a child through a full term pregnancy, as well as her philosophy of nature and life and her view of the world. With her highly personal images, she broke the taboos of her day. Already in the 1950's, Diego Rivera was acknowledging her as "the first woman in the history of art to treat, with absolute and uncompromising honesty, one might even say with impassive cruelty, those general and specific themes which exclusively affect women (Kettenmann, 1997, p. 18).

After her brush with death, Frida saw things in a different light. Much introspective analysis occurred. She said she was painting what she saw with her own eyes. Her love for nature revealed itself as she painted fruits, animals, and things that were positive.

Frida seemed to deal with the theme of identity in her self- portraits. Her face usually remains, almost as if she has put on a mask. Her thick dark eyebrows are her trademark. She used symbols in her art. The rich imagery, which fills Frida's work, is derived first and foremost from Mexican popular culture and pre-Columbian culture. The artist also draws upon the stylistic vernacular of *retablo*, votive paintings of Christian saints and martyrs, which have a permanent place in popular religious belief. She refers to traditions, which, however surreal they may strike the European, continue to flourish in Mexican daily life even today. Frida borrowed ideas or elements from the anonymous votive paintings and pre-Columbian art. She preferred Mexican

19th century Mexican portraiture. Folk art was displayed in her home décor where she had rustic furniture, lacquer-painted objects, masks, paper-mâché Judas figures, and votive panels. She borrowed the Judas figures from popular art and sometimes included them in her paintings. Many of her works contain surreal and fantastical elements, but they cannot be called Surrealist, for in none of them does she entirely free herself from reality (Kettenmann, 1940). Frida was aware of surrealism, according to Jones, but she insisted that she just painted simply what was on her mind and in her heart (Jones 1993). Fact and fiction fuse as they do in many Mexican works of art.

Her early portraits resemble European-influenced Mexican portrait painting. Later, there is a clear trend toward Mexicanism, an obvious Mexican National consciousness. Everyone shared this sense of identity after the revolution.

When the Ministry of Public Education wanted to battle illiteracy in Mexico after the Revolution, cultural reform was also taking place. The goal was to attain equal status for the Indian culture in which had been repressed since the Spanish conquest. The European art models were being replaced with folk art and a search for Mexican roots. She used to go to watch him paint and sometimes pose for him. She did consider mural painting, but Diego encouraged her to pursue her own path. He was willing to guide her in technique, but he insisted that she pursue her own ideas and creative energy. She was influenced by the way he elevated the Indians of Mexico. In 1928, Frida was in the midst of this movement and was politically active and interested in the efforts of the Mexican Communist Party that was attempting to improve the lives of peasants and workers. Frida was good friends with Tina Modotti, In 1928, Frida was in the midst of this movement and was politically active and interested in the efforts of the Mexican Communist Party that was attempting to improve the lives of peasants and workers. an American photographer, and they were in the same bohemian circles. Frida joined the Communist party, but according to Jones, she was an ardent supporter but a non-doctrinaire Communist (Jones, 1993). Shortly after this, Frida and Diego got together. She went to him to ask him to assess her talent as an artist. He later wrote that Kahlo quickly became the most important fact in my life (Garza, 1994). He encouraged her to pursue her painting. In 1931 she painted *Frida and Diego Rivera*, which may have been a wedding pose. She depicts herself as the wife of a great painter; he has the palette and the brushes. Their contrast in size is so noticeable. She was in the circle of artist and intellectuals promoting Mexicanism. It found itself first and foremost in the mural painting. Sponsored by the state to combat illiteracy and to educate the masses about the history of their country. Nationalist ideas went beyond murals to small paintings. It was stylized; it was popular art, non-perspective method of representation. I will instruct students to look for the natural terrain, the Mexican flag, the sun, pre-Columbian jewelry, simple clothing, and the roots of Mexican culture, and the green, white, and red colors of the Mexican flag. Diego felt Frida was the only one at the time truly drawing and painting for the sake of the thing itself. At her wedding in 1929, she selected a native costume of a maid and discarded the idea of a white dress. She chose to retain her name, disregarding traditions of the times.

After they were married, Diego was off painting a tremendous project at the National Palace where his theme was the entire history of Mexico. He began a position at the school where he was once expelled, the San Carlos Academy. What was his mission? His goal was to change the curriculum. In 1930, Diego was tired of being harassed in Mexico and decided to go north to paint in the U.S.

They had many intellectuals and artists of international notoriety visit their home. Leon Trotsky and his wife, seeking asylum from persecution by Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, found refuge in Mexico with the Frida and Diego, in 1936. President Lázaro Cárdenas made this possible after the Trotsky's fled from country to country for nine years (Jones, 1993).

Frida didn't really like her adventure in America although Diego did. He was extremely popular and loved the limelight. She didn't care for the food and she preferred her old home and old neighborhood. This can be discussed while looking at her painting titled, *My Dress Hangs There* (1948). One of her Tehuana dresses hangs on a clothesline suspended between an athletic trophy and a toilet bowl. She was feeling sad, lonely, and

out of place. Even though American patrons of the arts were willing to pay sums of money for Diego's paintings, his heart was in his mural painting.

The clothing in her paintings suggests national identity. Sometimes she dressed like a boy, but around Diego, she wore a Tehuana costume. This also conveniently disguised her physical imperfections. The Tehuantepec region in southwest Mexico, one in which matriarchal traditions survive even today, women dominate. Why did many educated Mexican city women adopt this dress? There was a growing nationalism and interest in Indian culture. Frida adopted flora and fauna of Mexico. That included cacti, plants of the primeval forest, volcanic rock, parrots, deer, monkeys, and Itzcuintli dogs-animals that she kept as pets and which appear as companions of her solitude. She died in 1954 after many years of suffering from her physical injuries.

Twenty years after her death in the 1970's, feminists in both the United States and Europe, paid homage to Frida, putting her image up as an icon, featuring her journey to be recognized as an artist, her unfulfilled desire to be a mother, and her difficulties with her husband. Jones tells us that Rivera said "Frida is the only example in the history of art of an artist who tore open her chest and heart to reveal the biological truth of her feelings... a superior painter and the greatest proof of the Renaissance of the art in Mexico"(Jones, 1993, p. 94). By the 1990's, her fame grew to an international level. Her fans grew and her collectors did too. Art historians continue to analyze her work and debate her tendency toward surrealism and naturalism. The artistic impact and the emotionalism that her paintings arouse are obvious. Her biographer, Hayden Herrera, has stated, "...For all her anguish, Frida's Kahlo's final gift is the preeminence of joy" (Garza, 1994, p. 113).

Here I suggest a group activity creating paper-mâché puppets, and involve the students in a group activity to construct two large puppet heads, one of Diego and the other of Frida: Paper-Mâché Life-Size Puppets of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.

The objectives and the strategies include creating large paper-mâché heads and hands for puppets, painting them to resemble Kahlo and Rivera, designing simple fabric costumes for each, assembling them and having a parade.

Source

Puppets and Masks, Stagecraft and Storytelling, by Nan Rump, pps. 71-81.

Materials

Large balloons for armatures, newspaper, wall paper paste, bucket, brown paper towels, 6 large dowel rods (32 inches in length), 2 four foot broom handles, tempera paint, fiber for hair, light weight fabric (8x9 feet, a large sheet will do), wire, masking tape, duck tape, sharp scissors, needle and thread

Procedure

1. Plan sketches of Diego River and Frida Kahlo with attention to their facial features.
2. Lay material out, fold in half, and design a large shirt for Diego and a blouse and skirt for Frida. Cut it out.
3. Attach the front and the back with fabric glue, leaving the sleeves and the bottom open (for a simple outfit for Frida and Diego) 4. Lay the broomstick on the floor to become the body pole. Form a cross, perpendicular to the broom, with the dowel rod (approximately 5 inches from the top). Secure.
4. Blow up balloons and begin to paper mache.

5. After 4-5 layers, check for sturdiness.
6. Begin to paint developing the character for each artist
7. Add fiber for hair, jewelry, etc.
8. Begin to make hands using newspaper, paste, and brown paper. Attach and secure dowel rods.
9. Designate and train students how to operate the life-size puppets. Three students will operate each puppet.
10. Practice maneuvering the puppet in a slow motion using some exaggerated hand gestures.

It was in 1947 that Diego painted the mural at the Hotel Prado, *A Sunday in Alameda Park*. What did it focus upon? It showcased his childhood and his experiences in the park with scenes and personages associated with its history. He held memories about the park being prohibitive to poor citizens, a scene of political demonstrations, and place holding both personal memories and national memories. So what did he include?

I plan to direct students to search for Diego when he was a youngster of ten wearing a jacket. So, what do we see in his jacket pockets? I anticipate them exclaiming a snake and a frog. Next, look for the calavera. They should observe a skeleton in a woman's dress holding Diego's hand, and his renowned childhood influence, Jose Guadalupe Posada. The grown woman next to him is Frida. He painted family members, his adult daughters, and historical figures. Look for Cortes. Why do you think he has blood dripping from his hands? He even added some controversial script. He portrayed a free and liberating and fulfilled social order of the future. To put himself in the work he began to paint revolutionary words and poems.

Diego loved to collect Mexican antiquities. This was one way to preserve ancient achievement and share them in a different time period, either in a personal collection or in a museum. A museum was his goal. He knew there were archaeological excavations being conducted all around Mexico, and he felt these were just as significant as treasures in Europe and Asia. People brought these artifacts to Rivera because they knew he treasured them. Apparently one dig he preferred to visit when his schedule permitted was Tlatilco, an early site in Mexico City. There he acquired familiarity with many ancient artifacts.

Diego felt that Mexico provided a vast resource of subject matter that could appeal visually to the artist including the country's landscape, the customs, and the festivals of the people, the pre-Columbian art, and also the folk art. Scrutinizing his life in 1945, Diego expressed a wish to fulfill two dreams before he died. First, he wanted to paint Tenochtitlan, the ancient capital of Mexico, as it was before the Spaniards destroyed its beauty. A year and a half later, this dream was realized. He felt that his painted vision was definitely one of his best. His second dream was to build a museum or a special place for his anthropological collection, which he began collecting in 1910 (March, 1960). Although Frida scolded him for spending money on his treasures, he said it was worth it because whenever he was frustrated, he would look at his idols and he was renewed in spirit. This special museum was called Anahuacalli. In the Aztec language, the interpretation is "house of the valley of Mexico" (Braun, 1994, p. 38). In his plan was a studio, his treasured calaveras, his Judas figures, cartoons for some his murals, pre-Columbian art. He admired the work that the Indian artists made. One example of this is the giant puppets that were made out of paper mache. They are also referred to as Judas figures. They are brightly painted and they are used in parades and festivals. The reality was he never got to really use the studio. He died in 1957 before this dream was realized.

Diego Rivera had a one-man retrospective art show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1931. The museum's mission was to promote both friendship and cultural exchange between the United States and Mexico. It was a huge success and showcased Rivera's drawings, paintings, and frescoes. At this time, Abby Rockefeller (John D. Rockefeller Sr.' wife) developed a relationship with Frida Kahlo. She also became a strong supporter and financial backer of Diego Rivera (Oettinger, 1990). Diego maintained a relationship with

the Rockefellers and was commissioned in the early 1930's to paint a mural for the soon to open Rockefeller Center in New York City. At the time, Diego was already at work painting industrial scenes in Detroit. He was provided with the theme: "Man at the Crossroads Looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New Better Future" (Oettinger, 1990). The project developed into a major controversy. How was it powerful? On one hand, people rallied behind it. On the other side, people strongly objected to it. It became quite clear and apparent that Mexican art was an integral aspect in the daily life and the political climate in Mexico. When the key figure that Rivera referred to as "the Worker" or "the labor leader" was actually the face of Lenin. Rivera 's views collided with Rockefeller but he refused to alter his painting, consequently, it was ordered to be chipped away in 1934. Although there were efforts to have the mural exhibited at the museum of Modern Art, the logistics were unsuccessful and no compromise between the parties could be reached. Much was to be learned from this event. Diego was excited about industrialization and the assembly line and machines because he thought this would eliminate the exhaustion of the laborers. First, art took on a powerful vehicle of communication when moved out of a museum into a public spot. It could not be ignored as a catalyst for social, political reform. The end result was that a modified version of this mural originally painted in New York City, was reproduced at the National Palace in Mexico City.

Suggested Student Activity: Timeline

The objectives and strategies include selecting important dates between 1890 and 1957 to invent a chronological timeline, correctly inserting dates evolving around Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, as well as significant events in Mexico's history and being able to explain the importance of each.

Materials

Large piece of butcher paper, markers, books

Procedure

1. Attach long piece of butcher paper to the classroom wall and mark in intervals of ten years beginning with 1890 to 1970.
2. Students will take turns attaching important dates on the timeline.
3. Figure out fun facts such as how long the Mexican Revolution lasted

How many years did Rivera and Kahlo live, what significant things were occurring in the U.S. simultaneously, etc.

In conclusion, the Mexican muralist movement served as a vehicle for Mexico's art Renaissance, the birth of a new nationalism. After the Revolution, the stage was set to discard the strong European influences and invite the Mexican people to write and share their unique identity. Diego accomplished this through his public murals. His constant goal was to elevate the common man. This had a significant impact and lasting impression on the Americas.

Another suggested student activity is: Create a Collaborative Mural.

The objectives and strategies include using the information gathered about murals to sketch ideas depicting a designated theme to create a mural. They will enlarge their sketches using a grid pattern onto large butcher paper that will encompass a large classroom wall.

Materials

Paper, pencil, chalk, butcher paper, sketches, tempera paint, brushes, journals

Procedure

1. Discuss possibilities for a theme for a class mural based on history.
2. Brainstorm ideas.
3. Sketch ideas.
4. Assemble sketches, grouping according to ideas and images, and collaboratively arranging the layout of the mural.
5. Select realistic images and symbols to incorporate.
6. Emphasize method of utilizing color and shape to communicate ideas boldly.
7. Enlarge sketches onto large butcher paper using a grid method.
8. Decide upon colors to create desired effects.
9. Experiment with unusual angles to capture attention
10. Paint the mural.
11. Display for the entire school to see.
12. Have an unveiling or opening for the teachers, parents and student body with music.
13. Have students explain their work and discuss the manner in which the mural was conceptualized, developed, and completed.

In its entirety, this curriculum will provide students with knowledge of the Mexican culture and man's search for identity as they become familiar with the art and lives of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. Their art was powerful and prolific and molded the individuals that they became. Rivera was famous, important, and a controversial figure. He created a vision for nationalism and accomplished it on a large scale in murals. Attractive and exotic, Frida struggled to deal with and disguise her physical pain, and in doing so, was able to look beyond simple images and create a unique vision in her work.

General Bibliography

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Milord, Susan. Mexico. Charlotte, Vermont: Williamson Publishing, 1999. A very useful book with art activities that relate to the Day of the Dead and mural painting.

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Poniatowska, Elena. Frida Kahlo, The Camera Seduced. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992. This is a fascinating collection of black and white photographs of portraits of Frida.

Quirarte, Jacinto, Mexican American Artists, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1973. This book has a short reference to Diego Rivera's preference to pre-Columbian art motifs and his easel paintings. It is helpful in understanding the work of Mexican American artists and getting insights into cultural as well as national boundaries.

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Turner, Robyn. Frida Kahlo. Montana: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993. An excellent picture book biography in the series of *Portraits of Women Artists for Children*. Depicts Frida Kahlo's life story of how she suffered from polio and a horrible accident, began painting when she was in a lengthy recovery, meets and falls in love with Diego Rivera, and becomes a well known artist in her country. Excellent color plates of *My Grandparents, My Parents, and I, 1936, The Bus, 1929, Frida and Diego Rivera, 1931*, which was their wedding portrait, *Self-Portrait Dedicated to Leon Trotsky, 1937, The Two Fridas 1939, and Long Live Life, 1954*.

Venezia, Mike. Diego Rivera. Chicago: Children's Press, 1994. A humorous presentation with actual color reproductions as well as comic-like strips that tells interesting aspects about Diego Rivera. This book is in the series, *Getting to know the World's Greatest Artists*. It has large print and can easily be read in a very short block of time.

Venezia, Mike. Frida Kahlo. Chicago: Children's Press, 1999. A humorous presentation with actual color reproductions as well as comic-like strips revealing interesting aspects about Frida Kahlo. This book is in the series *Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists*. It has large print and can easily be read in a very short block of time.

Winter, Jonah. Diego. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

Zamora, Martha. Frida Kahlo. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990. This book is a portrait of a multifaceted Frida. This author stresses her desire to show Frida with fragility and imperfection that humans possess in real life. She emphasizes the body of work this talented woman has left to the world.

Student Reading List

Braun, Barbara. A Weekend with Diego Rivera. Rizzoli: N. Y., 1994.

Capek, Michael. Murals: Cave, Cathedral to Street. Minneapolis: Learner Publications, 1996. pp.33-41.

Goldstein, Ernest. The Journey of Diego Rivera. Minneapolis: Learner Publications Company, 1999.

Halliwell, Sarah (ed.). Who and When, The 20th Century: Pre-1945, Artists, Writers, and Composers. Austin, Texas: Raintree Steck –Vaughn Publishers, 1998. pp. 32-39.

Hargrove, Jim. Diego Rivera, Mexican Muralists. Chicago: Children's Press, 1990.

Jones, Jane Anderson. The Arts, Frida Kahlo. Vero Beach, Florida: Rourke Publications, Inc.1993.

Krull, Kathleen. Lives of the Artists: Masterpieces, Messages (and What the Neighbors Thought). San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1995, pp. 84-89.

Sills, Leslie. Inspirations, Stories About Women Artists. Niles, Illinois: Albert Whitman and Company, 1989, pp.18-27.

Turner, Robyn. Frida Kahlo. Montana: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993.

Venezia, Mike. Diego Rivera. Chicago: Children's Press, 1994.

Venezia, Mike. Frida Kahlo. Chicago: Children's Press, 1999.

Other Resources

Slides

The Art of Ancient Mexico and Peru, An Introduction for Teachers, with Slides and Materials, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990. Includes a brief history, content, and role of the artist in pre-Columbian art. Includes slides, archaeological methods, and locations of U.S. museums with pre-Columbian art.

Web Sites

<http://members.aol.com/fridanet/quotes.htm>

Quotes from Frida Kahlo

http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/travel/grandall/gfrrridamuseo.html

Frida Kahlo's Museum

<http://www.nmwa.org/legacy/bio/bkahlo.htm>

Kahlo profile and self-portraits

<http://www.diegorivera.com/bio/index.html>

Timeline and photographs

<http://www.pbs.org/nethour/bb/entertainment/july-dec99/rivera-7-15.html>

Interview

<http://www.encarta.msn.com/index/conciseindex.OE/00E2900.htm>

Pre-Columbian art examples

<http://www.artlex.com/Aetlex/p/pre-Columbian.html>

Pre-Columbian art

Appendix

This is a list of the specific Content Standards that the Pittsburgh Public School uses that I addressed in my unit.

Communications

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.

2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that is designed to persuade, inform or describe.

Arts and Humanities

1. All students describe meanings they find in various works from the visual and performing arts and literature on the basis of aesthetic understanding of the art form.
2. All students evaluate and respond critically to works from the visual and performing arts and literature of various individuals and cultures, showing that they understand important features of the works.
3. All students relate various works from visual and performing arts and literature to the historical and cultural context within which they were created.
4. All students produce, perform, or exhibit their work in the visual arts, music, dance, or theater, and describe the meaning the work has for them.