

## **The Rich Culture We Really Have... Indigenous Art of the Americas “Way before Columbus”**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

I have been teaching art mostly to students by and large of Latin American descent at a middle school in Houston, Texas for eight years now. It is to these students that I am dedicating my interest in this seminar. The students at Sharpstown Middle School have often caught me off guard when they consistently speak of their ancestry, their race, and what they know of as their culture. It amazes me that they are missing so much of the real knowledge and understanding of their own history and self-awareness. It is for them and for all in my classes that I feel a need to prepare this special unit – a unit that will expose my Latin American students to the world of their ancestry. To those who do not share this ancestry, they will share in what it is to be of another background and come to understand the beauty of the Mesoamerican civilization.

Not many teachers get to prepare a unit of their choice or needs. The opportunity to research Mesoamerican culture and learn how to decipher a codex, in depth, was an unusually creative learning experience, *perfect* for the particular needs of my students. The seminar entitled Latin America, Before the Spanish was offered by the Houston Teachers Institute at the University of Houston. It was facilitated and taught by Art history professor, Dr. Rex Koontz, an expert in Mesoamerican art and history. His specialty in reading and deciphering codices, especially the *Codex Nutall*, was pivotal for my unit and personal growth in the subject matter. I wish to thank Dr. Koontz for his instruction and expertise. This experience was invaluable and very memorable. I hope to spread the passion for Mesoamerican cultures for many years to come.

### **WHY MESOAMERICAN CULTURE?**

When North American students learn about their country’s beginnings, they study in their history classes about Columbus ... but not much about the people already living in North and South America. When students learn about Texas, they learn about the Americans and Mexicans fighting over the land, but not about the original people that lived there. They are told little about the early Mesoamericans and very, very little about the Indians that lived in the Caribbean. Nor are they aware that they existed, or that one of the big reasons they aren’t around is the diseases that killed them abruptly, viruses brought by the European/Spanish conquistadores.

Do students even realize that there was an America before the Spanish, French or English took over? Most of my little Texans don’t. What a great opportunity, with this seminar, to visit a culture that most of my students have a natural curiosity for ... or because they have a natural respect for their Aztec, or Maya, heritage. Just now, with this unit, they will have the moment to learn, read, discuss and spend time with their ancestors, not to mention that it will empower these students with a new skill in reading of an ancient Mesoamerican writing system!

The reading and deciphering of an ancient Mexican manuscript called a “codex” will allow students to receive feelings of achievement at different levels of self-awareness.

The codex that I will provide is called the “Codex Nuttall,” a hieroglyphic-type of historical drawings rendered by the society’s scribes. I hope to charge my students to go beyond a simple

awareness that Ancient Mexicans wrote. I wish to provoke them to critically analyze how they wrote and what that writing did for them. I hope to stir up their curiosity to observe, analyze, relate, elaborate, infer, define, point out, classify, synthesize, give opinions, consider, interpret and push them, push them to perceive!

With the combination of art in the mix, I hope to achieve this. Art is a non-verbal way to communicate. It talks with symbols, shapes and colors. It is only when students start having the experience of thinking through paintings or art work of others that their art work starts becoming meaningful and thoughtful:

For older children the art of other cultures provides a means by which a society or a people can be felt and understood, and the values of one generation can have some significance on the next. (Lowenfeld 30)

### **ABOUT THE PROGRESSION OF THIS UNIT...**

I will encourage my students to gather more experience and empowerment in knowing about their ancestors and strength in observation. We will do this through the development of critical observation of pre-Columbian hieroglyphs and art and by looking at their findings, discussing them and allowing them to make their own judgments. Art develops one's ability to observe and to process those observations in thought. Students develop their analytical abilities by using this distinction to say something that is significant, to discover, to respond to life.

This unit has the initiative to expect my students to grow in depth of subject matter, practice along with art, and writing – proposing questions about what it is to be part of the human race, how we need to express, record, and somehow feel that by doing these artful expressions, we reach some sort of immortality. I will also interject the idea that art is an integral part of any society and that we, as human beings, have an innate need to express our existence.

By learning and going through the process of researching it themselves, I will present an example of what I am striving for them to emulate, like that of learning that these artists/scribes were esteemed in these indigenous societies – they were the historians, the recorders of their times, respected for their skills, and artistic achievements. In their time, it was a high honor to be regarded as one of the original ancient artisans of the Toltec society. To be as good as a “Toltec” would be achieving the highest level of their craft.

Students will be initiated in the craft of research through a requirement to find quotes from their own research, cite them, proving that they feel and understand what they have learned, such as the influence that these artisans had on their society from one generation to the next. Perhaps, even to see that they may have influenced our times in language, architecture, food, drink, or agriculture. They'll need to find quotes that prove and affirm what they've learned and include as information in their power point presentations. This not only will make them “mini experts” in their research topic but also will give them a good practice in ‘beginning’ research papers, skills of which junior high English, history, and science classes start introducing at this stage and grade level. For example, I would show them quotes, references in different books, to the artist/scribe aspiring to become the best, a Toltec:

Among the artist, the scribe – ‘he who paints in the red and black ink’ – was most honored, as he most closely modeled the activities of the divine painter, in a sense seeking to replicate the original divine text. The scribe's wisdom preceded and defeated history: even before the building of Teotihuacan, the “Cradle of the Gods” there had been a people that had carried with them the black and red ink, the manuscripts and painted books, the wisdom. (Clendinnen 215)

And add this ancient Nahuatl poem that writes and verifies the idea of how great it is to be thought of as a Toltec or great artist:

The good painter is a Toltec, an artist; He creates with red and black ink,  
with black water... The good painter is wise,  
God is in his heart. He puts divinity into things;  
he converses with his won heart. He knows the colors,  
he applies them and shades them; he draws feet and faces,  
he puts in the shadows, he achieves perfection.  
He paints the colors of all the flowers,  
as if he were a Toltec. (Keen 23)

## **THE LESSONS**

The First lesson in this unit will begin with the students being exposed to a slide or power point presentation that will introduce aspects of the life and times of the Aztecs and Mayas. It will include preliminary history and differences such as how they believed in many Gods, what their society was like, and how they thought much differently than Western society. The presentation will include artwork as well as the introduction of their “codex” hieroglyphs. Activities in this introduction will include a fieldtrip to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. It will focus on selections from the Mesoamerican art collection that the museum owns.

In turn, the students will come back to school with a list of ideas to research. They will work in teams to create their own power-point presentation about Mesoamericans to show as a presentation to their classmates. The group’s presentation may be shown in conjunction with the second lesson in order for them to create the awareness needed to involve them in reading some of the hieroglyphs provided:

The arts also contribute, through cooperative work, a greater awareness of each individual’s contribution to a large project. This is particularly effective when the opinions of peers are sought and when the need is developed for social independence. (Lowenfeld 30)

The Internet is another possible avenue that I will include along with some of the reference books or articles that I have found useful in writing this portion of my paper. In the second lesson, samples of “Codex Nuttall” will also enhance the investigation of the student’s ability to decipher an ancient way of writing. They do this similarly in history class when trying to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphs in fifth or sixth grade. How more exciting will it become to read from their ancestry?

The most colorful, and I believe more attractive and child friendly, of the hieroglyphic writing made in the Americas is that of the Mixtecs. The Mixtecs created their own distinctive pictures and symbolism. The pictures relayed the history of their Lord/Kings, the lineage of their marriages, having sons, daughters, recording battles and anyone or anything that, in their hierarchy, bared great influence or was pertinent to the story being told. A single illumination or history book is called a codex. The codices have been found drawn on many materials. From deer skin to tree bark- type paper, the Mixtec scribes recorded their tales. Archaeologists have found other historical moments were also carved in stone.

While the Aztecs did not use alphabetic writing, they were able to capture their world through a combination of stylized, easily read images and a writing system of several hundred hieroglyphs that would record dates, personal names, place names and other important notations. The illuminated books they created have come to be known as codices (Koontz 44).

In the quest to decipher this new and mysterious language, I sense that my students will either jump at the chance to act as detectives or find that they lack the skills of observation. To hone those skills prior to the challenge, the students will review the elements of art and use of the principles of design. An appraisal of these two, I call them sorting systems, will assist tremendously in looking at the unsolved codex.

One needs to know that the elements and principles of art or design are used regularly in the art world to uncover non-verbal communication that the artist is sending to the viewer. With the specifics on how to observe, most of the time, one can decipher what the art piece is trying to relay to us with out words. The elements of art are those nuts and bolts in which one must have to create art. Without using some of the basic elements and mixing in one or some of some principles of design, we cannot create and communicate an artful piece.

An artist would have a difficult time creating art with out having a *SPACE* in which to have the artwork inhabit (like that of a painting surface, or a place to put a sculpture), using *LINE* to create an edge, shade, or just to fill in, adding *COLOR* as an integral part of expressing or enjoying the idea portrayed, making geometric or natural *SHAPES*, employing *TEXTURES* to enhance or refine, and using *FORM* to project or imply three dimensionality.

The principles of art and design, if you will, are the clues in which to understand what is being communicated. By the use of *REPETITION, UNITY, VARIETY OF SHAPE AND COLOR, BALANCE, EMPHASIS, AND CONTRAST*, we can interpret what is being expressed in non-verbal communication. That is why a review on how to use these two art core curriculum systems are used can enhance the student's ability in decoding of the very illustrated, non-verbal, Codex Nuttall.

Another part of the second lesson will involve learning about the Mesoamerican calendar, used not only by the Mixtecs, but also by the Maya and Aztec. There are many carvings that have to do with the use of this yearly chart. This calendar is built upon 260 days equaling a one-year span. Each month contained approximately 20 days and basically, each day has a different hieroglyph symbol assigned to it. 260 days is curiously, the gestation period of a human conception. This will certainly be a point of interest for my middle school scholars!

Everything about their lives revolved around the calendar; when to plant, when to harvest, even when to conceive! In fact, the calendar was the way to time any sort of decision-making and was consulted with the Gods prior to acting upon any big decision. By consulting the Gods, the wise or the dead (of which its symbols are reflected and carved on the calendar itself), the calendar became an integral tool of the Mixtec/Aztec psyche and his world:

Their year consisted of 260-days, the average length of a human pregnancy. Since the Aztecs believed birthdays could influence an individual's future, parents attempted to exert control over their child's destiny by conceiving on particularly auspicious days, hoping their child would be born on the same day one round of the calendar later.  
(Koontz 45)

When introducing the codex to my students, I find that I will not be able to leave out the ideas and knowledge of the Aztecan calendar. To read the codex, one must at least review how the people in the codex recordings got their names. The names come directly from the calendar's notation of when they were born. The scribes identified these personages in their artworks by these calendar symbols. More than this, the calendar provided the common language for all of Mesoamericans. No matter where one went the sacred rhythms of the calendar could be discussed and understood, even though there were more than 70 major languages spoken at the time of the conquest!

The Almanac Year (Tonapolhualli) of 260 days was the result of the intermeshing of 20 days (given names like Crocodile, Wind, House, Lizard, etc.) with numbers 1 to 13, expressed in their books by dots only (Coe 208). The Solar Year was made up of 18 named months of 20 days each, with an unlucky and highly dangerous period of 5 extra days before the commencement of the next year (Coe 209).

Consequently, the second lesson will also provide the opportunity for my students to find out what would their Mixtec name be by learning how to count in the calendar system. In learning how to count out the days of the Mesoamerican calendar system, they will find their Mesoamerican name. Students will be able to create their own rendition of what they would look like on a Codex of their own. This lesson will allow them to create their own history, be their own scribe, and experiment with pen and ink (similarly to the original scribe's work) creating a history of their family.

Increasingly this unit will take many slow steps towards increased knowledge and understanding. From the introduction of this unit, seeing artifacts at the art museum, discussing and deliberating a presentation through the research that my students will prepare, deciphering a codex, and creating a family codex of their own will have prepared my students well to go to the next level, that involves the empowerment. Here, in the third lesson, I plan to have the students proceed through three different steps and use critical thinking all the way!

To show the empowerment gained from all these previous lessons, the third lesson will emphasize performance of knowledge gained and the processing of it. Up to now the student will have experienced great exposure to the Mesoamerican society, its artifacts and have developed some confidence of the subject matter. Now, they can show advancement from more exciting exercises, processing and internalizing them into personal expressions.

Students will be introduced to pencil techniques, composition rubrics that include the reviewing of the art elements and principals as how it is used by famous artist that have taken their heritage and ancestry, processed their insight and used it in their own works of art. Evaluations and discussion of famous Mexican artist's paintings will provide insight towards how the students will prepare their original works.

Artists like Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Guadalupe Posada, Carlos Merida, and others have taken their heritage, utilized the symbols or icons that have impressed them and adopted ways to express the past, keeping it in their artwork. Whether to integrate it or express pride, teach or use it for political reasons, these artists took their ancestry and incorporated it into their style and identity.

Lesson three will provide fun and diversity from the previous lessons that have been more tedious and academic. It will include another group project that requires students to get their researched information from past lessons and incorporate it into a game. Perhaps they can construct a mini Aztec ball court in which the players can only advance closer to the stone basket by answering a Mesoamerican history question. Maybe they'll create a card game, much like the one that are popular today, with power points and gods that have special powers...or maybe they'll create a game much like the Olmecs...today it is known as "Sorry." In any case, this group exercise will bring new energy to the continued lesson.

Along with this game objective, the students will need to use either computers to create the images for the back of their cards, construction materials in order to create temples and such or molding materials in order to form game pieces. This will require some instruction in regards to building, gluing effectively, painting, or generating computer artwork. More research will be needed when it comes to having the right picture samples; planning out sizes, cards, and

prototypes; and practicing – activities, which will inevitably take a large part of the lesson. Time to try the games out will take the rest!

Lastly, a drawing lesson will culminate all that has been learned. Students by now will have learned or reviewed many skills: researching at the library, writing notes to create a presentation, learning to use the computer, practicing critique and discussion skills, using pen and ink, working in groups, constructing graphic cut and paste, assessing their teammates, using their knowledge to translate it into art work, and testing a game. Now, with all of what they've learned, they get to do a drawing lesson that will combine the information that they've been impressed with to translate it to a personal expression through a rendering.

My final request will be that they use this particular title in order to become a springboard and propel their creative juices, "America, the Past, the Present and the Future."

Even though the theme of this unit has been revolving around Mesoamerican history, I feel that this title will include my non-Hispanic students to think and prepare a drawing that involves what that means to them. It will also incorporate the original thought in the unit that we all are a product of the Americas. Now that we have learned more about a history that is not well known by most Americans, I expect that good, effective discussions have transpired and are ready for translating through a good drawing.

### **THE RESULTS: ABOUT ASSESSMENTS**

Hopefully by the completion of this unit, all of my students will have gained an immense appreciation for this culture, at least a better understanding of similar trials that they went through as a conquered nation. And through the reflective discussions, writings or drawings, I should have observed that my pupils, no matter what culture they're originally from, have gained a great awareness of the many ways one can compare, contrast, and find similarities in their culture to Mesoamerica.

To make sure that assessments can be obtained from all parts of these lessons, formal or informal styles, I have prepared a variety of opportunities for grading, to be issued on several levels – creating a report or presentation (writing, grammar, spelling and historical accuracy), vocabulary test opportunities at every stage of each lesson, group assessments, vocal opportunities through critiques and reflective discussion time, skills gained from learning a computer software (power-point), skills in ink applications and drawing, creating of a personal codice, daily work and effort, group participation in the creation of a quiz game, and finally a creative composite of icons, symbolism and ideas included in a drawing that can be graded for quality of composition, creativeness and knowledge of subject matter.

### **INTENTIONS**

This unit can be used by so many teachers that do not teach art. History, ESL, Bi-lingual, Language Arts, and even Spanish language teachers can enjoy using some or all of these lessons. It is important to have many resource books that can be read and used by the students. Power Point is getting to be very commonly used software that is included with Microsoft Word program. There is comparable software that can create presentations on MacIntosh computers. More and more schools are providing computers in the classroom.

Libraries work with teachers to order books and film that provide the ability for instructors to plan ahead and include successful class library resource days. Materials in these lessons can be easily found and or purchased in Art catalogs. I can only envision that any and all of the ideas can be incorporated in other classes to super-enhance the teacher's objective and personal intention.

These lessons were researched and created by me to incorporate many of the media and concepts that I would regularly use as an art teacher to teach my curriculum. The difference is that I ordinarily teach each medium as individual and in separate lessons.

In threading the Mesoamerican culture, I believe to have encompassed a larger achievement ... that is to reach students that may not feel comfortable in the arts; students that are gifted, bored, and need challenges; students that are needing to practice core curriculum, in a non-threatening way; and students that hate school and find themselves being able to forget all that, immersing themselves in curiosity. Although this is always a teacher's dream and challenge, I hope to have obtained some of these goals while having my pupils gain interest in learning about their culture.

## **LESSON I: INTRODUCTION TO MESOAMERICANS**

### **Objective**

#### ***Subject Matter***

Discover many of the beliefs that will make students see the philosophy of their Indian culture, and understand how it affects their current day society.

#### ***Technical Skill***

Through an additional manner of learning, the student will be practicing, acquiring and assimilating how to create slides on a Power Point presentation.

#### ***Procedure***

Through the introduction of the Mesoamericans, Olmecs, Mayas, Aztecs, Toltec, and/or others, the students will be assigned an area, a culture, and time line to discover.

#### ***Group Study or Self-study***

Depending on class size... Subject and questions are to be looked up by internet and/or research books used in classroom. Specific Indian culture to be studied will be chosen by the teacher.

#### ***Time Involved***

As students or student-groups gather, write, and draft their information, they can also plan how they will put this on their slide presentation. This can become a unified work of slides from all the groups or a single effort each to show as a presentation and step towards the next lesson. This lesson can take a week to a month depending on the difficulty in teaching new software.

#### ***Questions That Can Be Researched***

1. Discover the many beliefs/philosophy that these Indians had about religion, daily living and/or about the sacredness of life and death.
2. Discover many of the beliefs and rituals performed in daily life.
3. Look up what their major Gods or Goddesses were? What did they do for them?
4. Was there a language or an art that explained what they were about? How did they record their history?
5. Learning about the Scribe and his job. Learn about this historian and his shop.
6. How has this Indian culture affected our current day society? Are there any words that are used today in our language because of them? How about foods or rituals?

#### **Vocabulary/Terms to Learn:**

Eye candy	Viewer	Scroll	indigenous	text box	font
Crop	slide	Scribe	codex	grouping	effects

Student Assessment - Power Point Presentation:

Name of Student or Group:		What was presented?	
Please grade this to help your classmates correct their power point presentation. Give a good critique and suggestions below			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Grade Point Given: 1-10</b>
Are the graphics clear?			
Is the sequence in order?			
Did the information make sense?			
Was there too much eye candy?			
Was there enough time to read it all?			
Was there too much too look at?			
Was there not enough to see?			

<b>Group Participant's Assessment</b>	<b>Name of the evaluated</b>
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<b>Evaluation Criteria</b>	<b>In Evidence</b>	<b>Not in Evidence</b>
<b>A. Task Attitude</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows enthusiasm</li> <li>Cooperates with others</li> <li>Can do team work</li> </ul>		
<b>B. Motivation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can work by her/himself</li> <li>Is able to predict/understand the tasks to be done and completes them without being told</li> </ul>		
<b>C. Reliable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be trusted</li> <li>Is able to follow oral or written directions</li> <li>Is on time with tasks</li> <li>Attends class regularly</li> <li>Meets deadlines</li> </ul>		
<b>D. Flexibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is able to learn new ways of doing things easily on the computer</li> <li>Adapted to the new assignment</li> <li>Followed new directions w/o difficulty</li> </ul>		



## LESSON II: A LOOK AT AZTEC WRITING

### Objective

Students will research and study in groups to figure out the writings on the Nuttall codex. Through shapes, lines, repetition, emphasis and rhythm from a selected part of a codices, the students will pick apart the story on a selected page to decipher what was said on that page.

### Part 1 - Procedure

Copies of the Nuttall Codex, an Aztec codice book about an Aztec Lord will be presented along with an introductory discussion with these following questions;

- What can you learn about past lives?
- How does your family pass down your family's history?
- How did the Aztec pass down history?
- Did the Aztec have a language?
- What is language?
- Who were these people drawn in this codices?

### Part -2 Procedure: Learning to Read the Codices/Hieroglyphics

#### *Group Study or Self-study*

After discussing vocabulary and the concepts from the questions, *and* depending on student class size, the students will be paired with copies of the Nuttall Codex with scissors, glue and a chart. The groups are to set apart shapes, symbols, etc. to place them into categories, in order to start deciphering the codex. **They are to write notes and ideas of what they think by observation the pictures are saying.**

#### *Vocabulary:*

traditions	generation	ancestors	culture	time line
Mesoamerica	Mixtec	artifact	Olmec	Toltec
Aztecs	Maya	ruins	codices	sarcophagus
Aztec calendar	sacrifice	rituals		

Form to use to decode the hieroglyphics

Student Names:			
DATE:			
Symbol for a Calendar Date	Symbol for a person	Symbol for an occasion	Symbol for a place or house or power place

**Part -3 Procedure: Aztec Calendar**

**Objective**

From their own name, the students will use the Aztec calendar to create their own identity and create a family history on a woven sheet from homemade links to create their own family history “ala Mixtec.”

**Suggested Materials**

brown craft paper, or brown paper bags glued together, ink pens, colored ink, pencils, erasers, bleach, water, white glue


**Activity**

After planning the family caricatures, their poses, places, and story to tell, the students will draw them onto the brown paper. The paper can be bleached with bleach and water, dried prior to the drawings for effect and to visualize the preparation a Mixtec scribe would have done to prepare the skins prior to writing/drawing on them. The students will commence to draw with pencils and later to add ink onto the prepared codice.

If there is available time, it may be fun to display these and share their stories in class.

**Reading the Mixtec Calendar**

To understand how to read Mixtec calendar dates, one needs to understand that the calendar would describe the month and the day/s as known gods/icons. They would be written as an icon/symbol first to show what month plus additional circles afterwards recorded to show which specific day it was referring to. For example; Jaguar9 (9th day of the Jaguar month) would be

something like this example;  OOOOOOOOO.

Students will have the availability to research what the calendar icons look like and can either add those to the calendar chart below and /or add their own interpretations.

(Calendar –chart below has a space to have students draw in their own icon drawing)

Crocodile		1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
Wind		2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
House		3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
Lizard		4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
Snake		5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
Death		6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
Deer		7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13
Rabbit		8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1
Water		9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2
Dog		10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3
Monkey		11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4
Grass		12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5
Cane		13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6
Jaguar		1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7
Eagle		2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8
Buitre		3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9
Movement		4	11	5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10
Pederal		5	12	6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11
Rain		6	13	7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12
Flower		7	1	8	2	9	3	10	4	11	5	12	6	13

## LESSON III: PAST AND FUTURE, THE RICH CULTURE WE REALLY HAVE

### Objective

Students will choose some of the information they've gathered, using icons of gods or goddesses of the Mayan or Aztec cultures and design a composition of their own. Using perspective skill, shading techniques, geometric shapes and a variety of pencils, the student will, on the last lesson, create their own drawing by bringing the knowledge of the past and using it as inspiration and bring in more use of "critical thinking" by critique discussions as a process to produce a more conscientious way of depicting the art of "La Raza" in modern times.

### Vocabulary

Composite      predominant      iconography      vanishing point      chiaroscuro

### Part 1 - Procedure: Review and Preparation

A review of composition, perspective techniques and pencil application is imperative to get successful results of student's renderings.

Through the use of the Internet or samples of magazines such as *Low Rider*, the student will view the type of compositions that are currently popular today made by Hispanic Graphic Artists. Viewing very famous artist like Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Guadalupe Posada, Carlos Merida, and others, will also be necessary in order to see how other artists in the recent past have been inspired by their heritage and how they've incorporated their knowledge and inspiration from their past heritage.

- From samples of works gathered, have students critique and discuss these artist's works.
- From samples and previous research in other lessons prefaced, create a drawing that will include encapsulating the past, the now and perhaps future in a Hispanic Style or current popular rendering technique.

### Questions That May Be Used at the Critique

1. What are the predominant elements of art used by this artist?
2. What are the two predominant principles of design used by the artist?
3. How did the artist use his/her heritage in his/her artwork? What do you think he/she was trying to express? What thoughts do you think he/she may have thought while creating his/her art piece?

### Part 2 – Developing a “Toltec Student”

A critique will be asked of the class to discuss from the several artist that have been reviewed who they think (in their eyes) could be called a “Toltec” today and why. Discussion will include reflections from all that has been learned and experienced up to this point. Questions like:

1. What is the information discovered that has impressed them most?
2. What is a Toltec to them? What are the criteria to be a great Toltec?
3. Are there any contemporary artists or famous artists that have the qualities of a Toltec? Why?
4. What would one need to do to become a Modern Toltec?

### Part 3 – The Drawing

From preparations, create a "composite" composition depicting historical indigenous Mayans, Aztecs, their architecture, their drawing style or some other pertinent symbolic icon combining this with a newer format of popular Mexican artwork today.

## Materials

Drawing paper, 2h, 2B, 4B 6B or Ebony pencils,  
Ruler, triangle, t-square, variety of chosen art researched samples

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

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This book gives detailed information about Aztec history and culture, especially the discussion on the artist or scribe.

Coe, Michael D., and Rex Koontz. *Mexico*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003.

This book gives extensive information of the foundation of various Indian tribes, their culture and daily life rituals from the Olmecs to the Aztecs and information from the archaic period up to the Spanish conquest. It is rich in descriptive examples, drawings as well as splendid photography. I believe that middle school children can use this as a reference even if it is only the illustrations that they can observe

Keen, Benjamin. *The Aztec Image in Western Thought*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers, The State University, 1990.

Quote used is found in Keen's book from Bernardino de Sahagun, *Historia General de las cosas de Nueva Espana Mexico*, 1956.

After the conquest, what? The Indian world in slow ruin, myths, beliefs and works shatter. A progressive detail about the intellect or thought process of indigenous and primitive Aztecs, as Western civilization thought of them and an added study of them as they really were. The book reports on Western corruption and thus the decay of their world.

Koontz, Rex. "Cracking the Code". *The Royal Academy Magazine*. Winter 2002: 77+.

This article delivers a very informative, clear, rich account of the Aztec codices. It creates a picture of what the Aztec world must have been like and how their main way communicate, the codices, triumphed over the need to know each regional language. Due to basic symbols or hieroglyphs, the codices, were a way that historical accounts, intentions, religion and/or information could be exchanged throughout the kingdoms.

Lowenfeld, Viktor, and W. Lambert Brittain. *Creative and Mental Growth 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. London: Collier McMillan Ltd., 1976.

Expert Art Educator writes on his findings about how a child grows in cognitive and expressive modes throughout their school life. Teachers can benefit from the observations that this book provides about the adolescent's growth of mind, emotions, and the complexity that life brings to a growing child. Lowenfeld shows how art can really address and act as a way to process their needs to express the child's reaction towards growing up as a viable venue.

### Supplemental Resources

Abrams, Elliot M. *How the Maya Built their World*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1994.

A curious experiment, where the author, an architect and anthropologist, tries to prove that the Maya built their buildings at a much shorter time (due to their social structures). This book can be interesting to many who are interested in researching about the creation, engineering of ancient worlds.

Armentrout, David and Patricia. *Treasures from Mexico*. Vero Beach: The Rourke Book Company, Inc., 2001.

A purposeful book laid out for any elementary, middle or high school student to be able to pick up, read and use. The book is a step-by-step account of what an archeologist and historian does to uncover ancient civilizations. It speaks about the Mayan, the Aztec people and Mesoamerican past lifetimes.

Bunzl, George. *The Face of the Sun Kingdoms*. New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1969.

Is a book of photographs of the Indians of Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru and their surrounding landscapes. This book is excellent for any age child to observe and learn about these Indians.

Coe, Michael D., and Justin Kerr. *The Art of the Maya Scribe*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. 1998.

Looking at the Mayan scribe, his life and responsibilities, is an intuitive perspective about the drawings that were recorded on and about the duties of a scribe in the Mayan court. Samples of these artifacts show a fluid richness of recording and perhaps ego of the courtly artisan of Mayan society.

Drew, David. *The Lost Chronicles of the Maya Kings*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999.

Deciphering the hieroglyphs of the Mayan language is one of the chapters that the author gives explanations. But this book refers to historical works of archeologist when it refers to discovering Mayan history across Mexico and Central America.

- Forescano, Enrique. *The Myth of Quetzcoatl*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1999.  
This book traces the history, religion and myths that made the Aztec nation. A comparison of death and resurrection ideas from many ancient myths from other countries is included and explained clearly. Food-for-thought. Adult-oriented book.
- Florescano, Enrique. *The Myth of Quetzalcoatl*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984.  
This book gives the interested all you are curious to know about the all encompassing and well-known God called Quetzalcoatl. He was known to many of the cultures in Mesoamerica. A lot of myths are discussed and revealed.
- Kubler, George. *Pre-Columbian Art of Mexico and Central America*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Art Gallery, 1986.  
This book contains the chronology, color plates and illustrations of the collections of inner and outer Mesoamerican artifacts that are in the Yale University Art Gallery collection since 1986.
- Marks, Richard Lee. *Cortes*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.  
Insightful tale of what probably happened through the conquest of the New World by the Spanish through Cortes. It's historical in content. Written much like a journal.
- Merrill, Yvonne Y. *Hands-On Latin America*. Clearfield, Utah: KITS Publishing, 1997.  
Activities galore! Great array of projects that can give a non-art teacher add an activity that embellishes the learning about Mesoamerican Indians.
- Miller, Mary Ellen. *Maya Art and Architecture*. New York: Thames & Hudson Inc. 1999.  
A look at Mayan art pieces from ceramics to sculpture, with interpretations, explaining the how and why the Mayans made these.
- Miller, Mary, and Simon Martin. *Courtly Art of the Ancient May*. New York: Thames & Hudson Inc. 2004.  
Life at the Mayan court; its rituals, its practices, and pastimes. This book is opulent, rich and full of pictures that have include descriptions of the daily lives of the upper class court of these indigenous people. Students can benefit greatly from the written as well as the photograph collection of this volume. The information written encompasses so much detail describing the life of the scribes, through the painting/ writings, and all that revolved around the Maya's universe.
- Nuttall, Zelda, Ed. *Codex Nuttall*. New York: Dover Publishers, Inc., 1975.  
This picture manuscript will be used in Lesson Two.
- Pasztor, Esther. *Aztec Art*. University of Oklahoma: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1983.  
Compelling photographs showing an incredible selection of Aztec artwork. A good balanced combination of information and color pictures. Generated for adult reading, but could be used for middle and high school because of the many enlarged rich choice of sample artifacts.
- Perera, Victor and Robert D. Bruce. *The Last Lords of Palenque: The Lacandon Mayas of the Mexican Rain Forest*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982.  
This book is a firsthand account of the life of the Lacandon Indians of Naha is southern Mexico. The author lived in the community of these Indians in order to learn of a dying culture, record its beauty and understand its traditions. A sensitive collection of the world of the Lacandons, their insight and struggle to be who they are while their surroundings become more alien to survive.
- Schele, Linda and Peter Mathews. *The Code of Kings*. New York: Scribner Publishing, 1998.  
Extensive research book that has archaeology, art history and a look at Maya writing.
- Sharer, Robert J. *Daily Life in Maya Civilization*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996.  
Daily Life, before the Spanish, and daily life after, all the way to modern times. A look at the Maya culture and what is happening to them now.
- Spinden, Herbert J. *A Study of Maya Art*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1975.  
Analytical book that shows the interrelationships between art form and symbols and its functions.
- Stacy-Judd, Robert. *Maya Architecture: the Creation of a New Style*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1993.  
It is not unusual to speak about the Aztec contributions to language, material use, and food to our culture but what about architecture? This book covers another aspect of what the Mesoamerican cultures have contributed to our lives today.

## Classroom/Student Resources

- Ardaugh, Philip. *History Detectives: Aztecs*. New York: Peter Bederick, 1999.  
Appealing in several ways; colorful, interesting information appropriate for children's interest, combines pictures, drawings and cartoons, an interesting Aztec stories to read discoveries and a game of detective, spy and test scores at the end of the game.
- Armentrout, David and Patricia. *Treasures from Mexico*. Vero Beach: The Rourke Book Company, Inc., 2001.  
A purposeful book laid out for any elementary, middle or high school student to be able to pick up, read and use. The book is a step-by-step account of what an archeologist and historian does to uncover ancient civilizations. It speaks about the Mayan, the Aztec people and Mesoamerican past lifetimes.
- Cawthorne, Nigel. *The Art of the Aztecs*. New York: Laurel Glen Publishing, 1999.  
A simple overview of the arts, jewelry, codices, architecture, sculpture and more.
- Fisher, Leonard Everett. *Gods and Goddesses of the Ancient Maya*. New York: Holiday House, 1999.  
God by God, a thru z, sampled with instructions on how to pronounce and know about each Mayan deity. Book created specifically for children. Drawings are clear and colorful.
- Libura, Krystyna, Claudia Burr, and Ma.Cristina Urrutia. *De lo que contaron al fraile*. Mexico: Ediciones Tecolote.  
Great for a Spanish Middle School student! This book is of an ancient story, formatted in a children's book form and written in Spanish. The accounts were written by Bernadino de Sahagun, a friar, missionary that came to Mexico after the Spanish conquest. It's an account of the principal beliefs and lives of the indigenous prior to the Spanish conquest according to the memories of the people he interviewed.
- Putnam, James. *Eyewitness PYRAMID*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc. 1994.  
One of the many series of books created for the older elementary child, as well as any age student up through high school. The book is loaded with pictures and great information about all types of pyramids. It includes Aztec and Mayan pyramid material.
- Vecchiato, Gianni. *Guatemala Rainbow*. San Francisco: Pomegranate Art Books Publishers, 1989.  
Sensitive and colorful picture book of the Mayan Indians of Guatemala. Perfect for students to observe, think and draw.