

# The Heritage Continues

## Lesson #17: CINCO DE MAYO (The Fifth of May)

### TIME

60 minutes

### MATERIALS FROM THE TRUNK

Worksheet #26 - The Mexican Flag

Graphics #25-30

Objects - sombrero, serape, blouse, and flag

### OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED

Books dealing with Mexico that show street scenes and a typical Mexican "village" or regional clothing.

A long wide piece of brown paper or craft paper for the base of the mural, paper (construction, tissue, etc.), paint and brushes, crayons, markers, glue, scissors, and miscellaneous items such as glitter, ribbon, or other materials that can be used for decorating the figures on the mural.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

Make several copies of worksheet #26, the Mexican flag, to be used in the mural. You may want to reduce the size of the image depending on the dimensions of your mural. For more information about fiestas read the historical background section in the "Fiesta" lesson.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- 1) define celebration
- 2) compare a Mexican or Mexican American with an individual that is typically American
- 3) express their concept of a Mexican fiesta through creative means

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The celebration of Cinco de Mayo takes place in many American cities today. This date signifies the defeat of the French troops in the city of Puebla, Mexico, and more importantly it symbolizes the courage and ethnic pride of the Mexican people. Cinco de Mayo has become a day for Mexican Americans to share their traditions with friends of various heritages. The celebration of Cinco de Mayo often includes music, food, dancing, vendors selling Mexican crafts, and more. Many Kansas communities have Cinco de Mayo celebrations.

Cinco de Mayo commemorates Benito Juarez's defeat of French forces at the city of Puebla in 1862. At this time Benito Juarez was president of Mexico. Mexico was having problems

with foreign debts, instability among the people, and inability to receive help from the United States. Mexico needed time to regroup and in 1855 President Juarez issued a decree stating that Mexico would not have to pay on its foreign debts for two years. Juarez felt that this would be enough time for Mexico to "get on its feet," but Spain, England, and France would not wait. Spain wanted Mexico back as a colony, England wanted its money, and France wanted Mexico to become part of the French Empire.

Juarez appealed to these three European nations. Spain and England agreed to send their troops back to Europe. Napoleon III of France still wanted to make Mexico part of the French Empire, so he sent ships with more troops to Mexico. France also established Maximilian on the throne of Mexico.

French armies advanced through Mexico, and when they reached the city of Puebla it was a fortress. Puebla was a small, farming town south of Mexico City. The villagers had formed an army with very few guns and bullets. However, four thousand troops defended Mexico and held off French troops for more than a month. On May 5, 1862, the French troops were surprised by the entire population of Puebla descending upon them with fifty-year-old muskets, machetes, and stones. "Hasta con piedras!" ("even with stones") became the battle cry at Puebla. Defeating the French was a great accomplishment for Mexico; they had defeated the most powerful army in the world.

## VOCABULARY

- **Celebration** = Ceremonies and other activities that observe or honor a special day or event.
- **Culture** = The arts, beliefs, and customs that form a way of life for a group of people at a certain time.
- **Independence** = Freedom from the control of others.
- **Cinco de Mayo** = The fifth of May. Marks the defeat of French troops by untrained Mexican forces in 1862.

## ACTIVITY

- 1) Ask the class what the word celebration means to them and what types of celebrations are part of their lives.

*Celebrations are ceremonies and other activities that observe or honor a special day or event. Students may be familiar with birthdays, weddings, anniversaries; athletic parties such as those held for the Superbowl; holiday festivities such as Fourth of July events; etc.*

Explain that all cultures have celebrations. These may be different from ones we are familiar with, but they may also have similarities. Discuss the importance of Cinco de Mayo.

*Cinco de Mayo (the fifth of May) marks the defeat of French troops by untrained Mexican forces in 1862. It may be compared with the battle of Lexington and Concord during the United States Revolutionary War. The Mexican people celebrate this day as a symbol of their desire to be an independent country. It is different from most celebrations in the United States because of the event it*

*honors. It is similar because it marks an event important in securing the independence of one people from another.*

Ask the class if they can think of any celebrations they have experienced that commemorate independence.

***Fourth of July***

- 2) Since Cinco de Mayo is a Mexican celebration have the class discuss how this day might be celebrated by Mexican Americans.

***A fiesta is a very Mexican way of celebrating.***

Many towns and cities in Kansas hold fiestas. Ask the class if any of them have participated in or attended a fiesta. Use this as an opening to discuss what a fiesta is and why fiestas are held. Show the class graphics #26-30 of a fiesta.

***A fiesta is a happy joyful celebration involving special food, clothing, music, dances, entertainment, and more.***

Explain that a fiesta is a Mexican tradition that has been continued in the United States by Mexican Americans. Sometimes murals of Mexican street scenes are created to add atmosphere to the fiesta grounds or parade route.

Show the class graphic #25 of the cloth mural in Topeka's Oakland area.

- 3) Each student can make a person in the parade and a house or some other building using paper, paint, ribbon, glitter, etc. If desired, Mexican flags may be made using worksheet #26 and placed in the mural. Fireworks may be added to the mural using shredded and crushed tissue paper or something shiny or that sparkles like glitter. The sombrero, serape, blouse, and flag in the trunk may be used as examples of color and clothing. Books from the library also will help in portraying traditional types of Mexican clothing.

Remember to consider the variety of groups that might participate in the parade. These could include riders on horses, children in traditional Mexican clothing, and cars containing dignitaries and other important people. Books from the library dealing with Mexico may help the class decide what they would like to create.

- 4) Hang the Cinco de Mayo mural in your classroom or share it with others in the school by placing it in a hallway, lunchroom, or another appropriate location. If it is shared with the rest of the school have the class write a label explaining what Cinco de Mayo is, the fiesta tradition, and how this part of the Mexican culture is still alive in Mexican American communities in Kansas today. Place this label next to the mural.

### **EXTENDED ACTIVITIES**

- 1) See the complementary lessons in this manual: all the lessons in the "The Heritage Continues" section.
- 2) Using a timeline, students can make a comparison chart of the historical events taking place in the United States at the same time as the Cinco de Mayo Battle of 1862.
- 3) Have the students share a similar experience (invasion of privacy) and how they dealt with it.
- 4) Use the book *!Viva Mexico!: The Story of Benito Juarez and Cinco de Mayo* by Ruiz (Chatham, N.J.: Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 1993) to further explore the story of Benito Juarez, a Zapotec Indian who became president of Mexico.
- 5) Have the students create and "perform" a holiday. Presentations might include a diary account of the holiday, a newspaper article, a skit, or a short story. Have them consider such things as the reason for the celebration (historical, religious, related to agriculture such as a harvest celebration), how the holiday is celebrated (parades, small family gathering, sports events), who participates in the celebration, special clothing or foods associated with it.
- 6) Have the class view and discuss the Cinco de Mayo portion of the *Hispanic Face of Kansas* video (counter #108).