



MEXICAN PEOPLE: ARE THEY AS THEY SEEM?

Level: *grades 9-12*

Course: *Spanish*

Rationale

In order for students to understand properly the way a language is spoken, they must first understand the way the people who speak the language think and why. This unit will present a general overview of the frustrating and, more often than not, violent history of the Republic of Mexico. This presentation will enlighten students as to some of the background of Mexican people, setting the stage for further investigation and understanding of various quirks of the spoken and written language.

Many people have stereotypes of the Mexican José Soplón de la Calle. He has been seen as violent, dominant, overly romantic, one who talks very rapidly, and with a moustache (since it is thought that almost all Mexican men sport a moustache). We need to understand these stereotypes and their psyche before we can presume to claim mastery of the language or even dare to approach it seriously. These stereotypes must be understood and either explained or eliminated before a whole approach to true understanding of a language can be gained.

Lesson Overview

The overall objective of this lesson is to assist students in building a foundation for gaining the knowledge and understanding necessary for total language learning. We have always evaluated a person by the way he talks. We draw certain conclusions,



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subconsciously, at least, regarding the background of the individual, i.e. education, nationality or ethnicity, even religion. What students must realize is that language is just a verbalization of the images running around in the head, and we must get past the preconceived ideas to the quick of the matter and look first at the way people think, then determine how this is reflected in the way they talk and then adjust our speech and thinking patterns to conform.

Students will hear the lecture and will be required to do research on the major topics. These will be assigned and discussed in class with groups being assigned to research topics and present their findings and analyses for classroom discussion. Stress will be on the identification of the stereotypes, the reasons for these misguided thoughts, and the facts that explain some misconceptions. Further discussion of the historical background of Mexico will tend to explain and hopefully discount these stereotypes. Topics and characters out of history and literature will be provided for students' guidance, assisting them in finding true facts on the life and times of the Mexican people.

The unit will be divided into three sections: Section one will begin with a discussion of preconceptions about Mexican people. The teacher will then present the overview lesson of Mexican history from the arrival of the Aztecs to the revolution of the early 1900's, these being the more formative years of Mexican history. Certain characters will be highlighted for future reference. Groups will be formed for research into these items and individuals from the database connection.

The wrap-up lesson will be presented after teams have had time to extract and analyze data regarding these items at which time teams will present their findings to the group for discussion and debate. Student teams will present their findings in chronological order giving opinions as to what each topic contributes to the overall picture of the Mexican people.

Time Needed

One to two weeks

Materials

Materials will include the actual set of notes for the lecture on history and the list of "hot topics" for student research. Students will need a notebook and writing instrument, access to a computer to Internet link, and a disk to which they can save their findings. Teams of two to three, depending on the size of the class will do the seeking out of materials and the presentations on pre- and post-investigation opinions.

Procedures

1. Students will be asked what they think about Mexican people, their history, way of life, religion, country, language, and some of the prejudices held by people on both sides of the border. These topics will be put on the board in order to serve as reference points in the future. Students will be required to keep their own list of points brought up. These ideas must be moderated carefully in order that they include the "hot topics" to be researched in part three. The class will be divided into groups with each group taking a topic having to do with a "hot topic".

2. After this has run its course and all "hot topics" have been included as part of student responses or by themselves, the actual lesson on the overview of Mexican history will be given in lecture form with students taking notes and looking carefully for ideas to support the point they are investigating as groups. A question and answer session after the lecture will insure proper assimilation of the material. Assignment of topics and setting a deadline for finishing the research will be given at this time. Deadline should take into account availability of materials such as books, computers, hook-ups to the net and database availability, as well as the number of students having to use these resources to complete their work. A week would be a realistic figure for classes averaging 24 students.

3. The final part of the unit will consist of the students' presentations of findings on the topic assigned to their group. One team member will present a review of the topic assigned to their group, then the other will read the results explaining their findings. Questions and rebuttals from the audience are encouraged to keep the participants on their toes. The teacher will participate as necessary to keep things moving. Each topic will be discussed in the order it was presented on day one and members of each team will be responsible for putting "hot notes" of their own on the board. Audience members should be taking notes on each presentation for review purposes for later testing.

Assignment

Students will be required to keep a log and comprehensive set of notes on all discussions. Students will take notes on others' discussions and will maintain and submit a complete set of notes, investigation findings, and presentation of their own material. Grades will be assigned on comprehensiveness and accuracy of data submitted.

Hot topics

Preconceptions

Responses should be solicited from students, but should include the following:

- * Mexicans all wear sombreros and sandals.
- * They all lead a burro around.
- * They cook in monstrous cauldrons.
- * They all have moustaches (the men, anyway) and lounge around.
- * They are avid lovers.
- * They thrive on war.
- * They are followers, not leaders.
- * They are loud and boisterous
- * The only music they listen to is Mariachi.

Historical Characters

Hernando Cortez

Aztecs

Tenochtitlán

Dolores Hidalgo

Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla
Agustín de Iturbide
Benito Juárez, (a Zapotec Indian)
Porfirio Díaz
Francisco Madero
Gen. Venustiano Carranza
Pancho Villa
Emiliano Zapata
Gen. John Joseph Pershing
General Ignacio Zaragoza

Lecture Notes

Note these are based on materials downloaded from [Compton's Encyclopedia - AOL](#), Keyword: Encyclopedia

Spanish Conquest

An overview of Cortés and his conquest of the Aztec Empire

Mexican Revolution

A short version of events leading up to and the actual carrying out of the Mexican revolution of 1910.

Carranza

A review of the part played by Venustiano Carranza in the revolution, plus a short history of his life.

Hidalgo

Hidalgo y Castillo, Miguel (1753-1811). The Father of Mexican Independence is covered in this article from Compton's via AOL

Pershing, John J.

A summary of the life and times of the general sent into Mexico to capture Pancho Villa. The man reputedly responsible for the nickname for Americans, "Gringo"

Puebla

Puebla, Mexico. Officially Puebla de Zaragoza, is the capital of the State of Puebla in southern Mexico. This article explains the military significance of Puebla, and the reason for the celebration of Cinco de Mayo.

Pancho Villa

Tells about the life and times of Pancho Villa, known as "El Zorro del Desierto".

Zapata, Emiliano

A surprising short article regarding this hero of the Revolution, a Mexican equivalent of Robin Hood.

Porfirio Díaz

Short story of life of Porfirio Díaz.

Literary works contributing to discussion:

Pedro Páramo, Juan Rulfo

Shows fatalistic attitude and amorous adventures of fictional Mexican characters. Stereotypical of hot-blooded Latin males.

El Señor Presidente, Miguel Angel Asturias

Shows oppressive behavior of other fictional characters. Typical of some leaders of Mexico in ages past.

Los de Abajo, Mariano Azuela

Shows how a simple and honorable man can be driven to violence to protect what is his. Although about a fictitious character, it portrays well the idea of common people being driven to violence and tends to explain some of the reasons.

El Coronel no Tiene Quien Le Escriba, Gabriel García Márquez

Story about a retired colonel who clings to life as best he can while waiting for his pension from the government which never comes. Shows tenacity of Mexican people, although atypical of the impatience stereotyped to them.

La Jornada, cartoon, July 30, 1995

Cartoon on page 3 shows another stereotypical view of Mexicans being lazy drunks.

La Jornada, July 30, 1995, page 9

Picture of stereotypical footwear and of male dominance.

Anti-Bias Curriculum, Louise Derman, Chapter 7, pg. 57

Contains guidelines for anti-bias curricula for youth

Children of the Maya, Brent Ashabrenner

Tells of refugee Mayan children in Guatemala and the effects of guerrilla warfare on them

The Adventures of Connie and Diego, María García

Fairy tale story of twins born with different colors over their bodies who escape to the world of the animals. The animals convince them that they are human and must live with their own kind.

How to Tell The Difference, Beverly Slapin, Doris Seale, Rosemary Gonzales, Pg. 12, Figures 15-19

More insight into Bias and stereotypical views.

Rethinking Our Classrooms - Understanding the Myths that Bind Us, Linda Christensen

Deals with stereotypical views of various of various cultures.