

Hands-on Culture of Mexico and Central America

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WALCH
PUBLISHER

Culver City, California

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Subject Area Correlation

	SOCIAL STUDIES	ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS	FOREIGN LANGUAGE	ART	MUSIC	MATH
Clues to the Region	x					
Economy and Trade in Mexico and Central America	x			x		x
There's a Proverb That Says ...	x	x				
Central American Folktales	x	x				
The Maya Codex	x			x		x
A Conversation in ...	x	x	x			
Mexican Tin Ornaments	x			x		
Cooking of Mexico	x					
Panama: Molas	x			x		
Appellidos: Getting the Name Right	x	x				
Music in Central America	x			x	x	
Nearika: Yarn Paintings	x			x		
Tree of Life	x			x		
Day of the Dead	x			x		
Wooden Toys	x			x		
The Mexican Mural Tradition	x			x		
Shopping in Mexico: The Tianguis	x			x		x
Connect-the-Dots Geography	x			x		x

Clues to the Region

OBJECTIVES

Social Studies

- Students will be familiar with characteristics of the nations of Central America.
- Students will recognize countries by their descriptions.

MATERIALS

Clues to the Region handout

BACKGROUND

When students study a region, there is often a tendency to lump all the countries in the region together, rather than to see them as separate nations with their own distinct characteristics. In this activity, students will use clues to identify the eight countries that make up Central America and Mexico.

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute the handout. As a class, brainstorm what students know about the region as a whole and about the separate countries in the region.
2. Students proceed as directed on the handout.

ANSWERS

Belize: 9. 14. 18. 28.

Costa Rica: 3. 22.

El Salvador: 6. 19. 32.

Guatemala: 1. 4. 16. 24. 27.

Honduras: 10. 21. 29. 33.

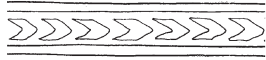
Mexico: 5. 7. 11. 15. 20. 23. 31.

Nicaragua: 12. 17. 26. 30.

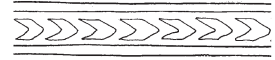
Panama: 2. 8. 13. 25.

VARIATION

The activity can be done as a matching exercise for individual students or as a game for small groups—or even for the class as a whole. To conduct the activity as a group game, divide the class into teams. You can give each team clues for one country and have them figure out which country it is, give all groups clues for all countries and have groups match all clues with countries, or present the game as a tournament where you read one clue to each team in turn and the team must identify the country.



Clues to the Region



The eight countries of Mexico and Central America connect North America and South America. They have many things in common; that’s why it makes sense to look at them together, as a region. But they have many differences also. How well do you know the things that make each country unique?



Each statement on this handout applies to only one of the eight countries of Mexico and Central America. Here are the names of the countries. Can you match each statement with the country it describes?

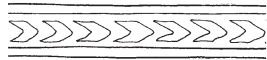
Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala
Honduras	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama

1. The quetzal, this country’s national bird, has striking red and green feathers—some up to three feet long.
2. This sliver of land connects South America to Central America.
3. The currency is the Costa Rican colon.
4. Its capital is Guatemala City.
5. During the Day of the Dead fiesta in this country, people remember friends and relatives who have died.
6. Its currency is the colon.
7. Its currency is the Mexican peso.
8. Its currency is the balboa.
9. Its capital is Belmopan.
10. The Mayan city of Copan was built here somewhere between 1000 B.C. and A.D. 800.
11. This country joined the U.S. and Canada in NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement).
12. Its currency is the cordoba.
13. Its capital is Panama City.
14. Its currency is the Belize dollar.

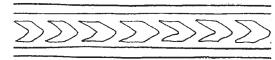
(continued)

Clues to the Region (*continued*)

15. The civilizations of the Mayas, Toltecs, and Aztecs helped shape this country's culture.
16. Central America's biggest population, largest city, and highest peak are all found here.
17. During the 1980's, Sandinistas and *contras* fought over how the country should be run.
18. English is the official language here.
19. Its capital is San Salvador.
20. Its capital is Mexico City.
21. Its capital is Tegucigalpa.
22. Its capital is San José.
23. A great river, the Rio Grande, separates this country from its neighbor to the north.
24. Its currency is the quetzal.
25. This country is the location of a famous canal.
26. This is the largest country in Central America.
27. This country is known for marimba music, played on an instrument like a xylophone.
28. This country was once a British colony.
29. Its currency is the lempira.
30. The capital of this country is Managua.
31. The national symbol shows an eagle perched on a cactus, holding a snake in one claw.
32. This is the smallest—and most densely populated—country in Central America.
33. Its name comes from the Spanish word for *depths*.



A Conversation in Spanish



When Spaniards first arrived in Central America, hundreds of distinct peoples lived in the area. Each people had its own language. The coming of the Spaniards meant that the dominant language became Spanish. Even though the original, native languages of the different peoples are still spoken in many areas, Spanish is the official language of most countries in Central America.



In the box on the next page, you'll find some everyday phrases in Spanish. Working with a partner, prepare flash cards for these phrases. Practice saying them until you can hold a simple conversation in Spanish.

Spanish Pronunciation Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most Spanish words are stressed on the second-to-last syllable: <i>gu-sto; com-pren-do; ha-bla</i>• Words that end in a consonant other than <i>n</i> or <i>s</i> are stressed on the last syllable: <i>us-ted; fa-vor</i>• The <i>h</i> is not usually pronounced in Spanish: <i>habla</i> sounds like <i>abla</i>• <i>Ll</i> is pronounced like the <i>y</i> in <i>yes</i>: <i>llamo</i> sounds like <i>yamo</i>• The letter <i>n</i> with a tilde—<i>ñ</i>—is pronounced like the <i>ni</i> in <i>onion</i>: <i>mañana</i> sounds like <i>manyana</i>.



Mexican vegetable vendors display their goods in the street.

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