

SELECTION 8 **SING SOME SONGS**

OBJECTIVE

To teach students some songs enjoyed by children in Mexico and other Spanish-speaking Latin American countries.

CONNECTING ACTIVITY

Enclosed in the activity and learning box is an audio cassette tape titled *Viva! Latin American Children's Songs*—plus photocopied sheets (or a booklet) with the Spanish words of the 35-plus songs on the tape, each with a rough English translation, as well as motions.

The songs were recorded by Abe and Kathy Weber Janzen and their daughter, Adrienne, then 8 years old, while they were living and working with Mennonite Central Committee

in Bolivia. (Most of the songs are sung throughout Latin America, including Mexico.) The Janzens made an effort to locate simple, catchy songs, especially those with motions to them.

Most of the songs on the tape are from or for Sunday school or other Christian learning settings. A few have non-religious themes.

Learn the tunes and words by following along with the cassette tape. Writing out the Spanish words to a song on a posterboard, blackboard, large piece of newsprint or overhead projector may help the children more easily follow along.

SELECTION 9 **CREATE SOME MEXICAN CRAFTS**

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to a few items from Mexico's veritable treasure-trove of crafts.

INPUT

Mexico provides a feast for craft lovers. Huge artisan markets—sometimes several city blocks in size—jammed with stalls of a huge variety of colorful decorative and useful items sell wares daily in large cities such as Mexico City and Guadalajara. But even the smallest town will have its market day during which local crafts are displayed alongside mounds of fruits and vegetables.

The indigenous cultures that thrived in Mexico prior to the Spaniards' arrival had developed intricate work in many materials—bark, wool, feathers, stone, clay, gold and silver. In fact, the Aztecs' ornate gold and silver pieces helped convince the Spanish that they were worth conquering.

After the Spanish conquest, indigenous and European tastes and themes melded to create new artistic expressions. In many parts of Mexico today, different villages specialize in specific crafts. For example, the town of Santa Clara de Cobre in the state of Michoacán is noted for its lovely copperware; children grow up learning how to work the copper in backyard foundries operated by the extended family.

Space allows us to share only a few craft ideas here. For further ideas, locate a copy of *Art from Many Hands: Multicultural Art Projects*, by Jo Miles Schuman. Although Schuman covers the world, her section on Mexico is ample and, as an elementary school art teacher, she has geared all activities to children. (Published in 1981 by Davis Publications, Worcester, Mass. ISBN: 0-87192-150-2.)

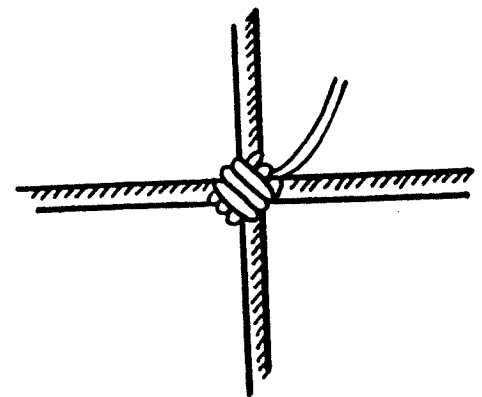
Another useful resource, geared to younger elementary grades, is Alexandra M. Terzian's *The Kids' Multicultural Art Book: Art & Craft Experiences from Around the World*. (See page 39 for more information about this fun manual.)

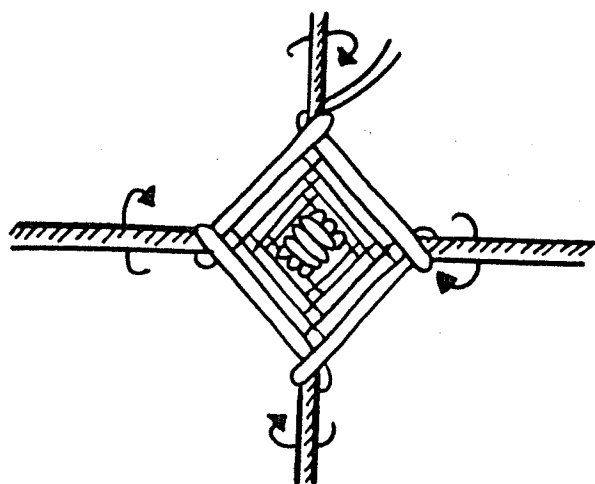
Try out one or more of the following crafts. Where color is needed, choose vivid ones, as Mexicans enjoy exuberant color.

Ojo de Dios (OH-ho day dee-OHS), God's eye

For centuries, this craft has been an important symbol and ritual for the Huichol (WEE-chol) people of Mexico, who live in Nayarit state. A family will begin to make a God's eye when a baby is born and will add to it each year until the child turns 5. This craft may represent a petition for God's protection during the delicate first years of a child's life in circumstances where infant mortality runs high.

An *Ojo de Dios* consists of two crossed sticks (as from frozen pops) of the same size—about 11 centimeters/4 1/2 inches long.





Cross one stick over the other in the center and secure the two together with yarn. To do so, lash the yarn diagonally one way and then the other until the sticks feel secure. This center is the "ojo" or "eye." (The Huichol make this part when the child is born.)

Tie a new piece of yarn—a different color—to the old. Bring it from behind and wrap it completely around one of the cross' spokes. Carry the yarn to the next spoke and wrap it completely around it. Continue in this fashion, turning the cross and proceeding from spoke to spoke, until the sticks are nearly full. Change yarn colors five times—to represent each of the first five years of life. To finish, securely knot the yarn end so it will not unravel.

Needlework Bookmarks

When Mexican women have an opportunity to sit down (without a baby in their lap!), they often pull out a needlework project—knitting, crochet, embroidery, crewel, needlepoint or some similar work.

Girls learn needlework in school, and are proud of their creations. Women often share their needlework as gifts. The editor has colorful needlework pieces—made by friends in Gómez Farías, Jalisco—serving as curtains on kitchen windows, covering the VCR and adorning several tables and shelves throughout the house.

A needlepoint bookmark, featuring ears of corn—a vital food for Mexicans historically and today—is included in the activity and learning box. Use this as a pattern to help your students create similar bookmarks. The bookmark says, "Danos hoy nuestro pan de cada día," which means "Give us this day our daily bread."

The materials needed are inexpensive and available at art and craft stores, if not also at general merchandise outlets, such as Kmart.

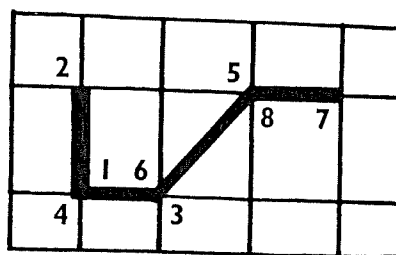
One piece of light-colored Aida 14 stitching cloth (8½ by 21½ centimeters/3½ by 8½ inches) for each student.

Size 24 tapestry needles

Embroidery thread (DMC floss), preferably green

To make:

- Fold masking tape over the edges of the Aida fabric to keep it from unravelling while working.
- Create the design with backstitches, using *two* strands of floss (embroidery thread) for the letters and *three* for the corn design.
- To backstitch, pull needle up for step 1 and down for step 2, up for 3 and down for 4, up for 5 and down for 6 and so on. (See diagram below.) Securely knot the ends of the floss on the back of the bookmark.



Tin lanterns

Mexicans create many colorful ornaments from tin, similar to those made in Haiti. (See "Fantastic Sculptures," page 28 of the Haiti Teacher's Guide in the Latin America/Caribbean learning and activity box for directions.) Mexicans often use animal motifs for their tin pieces—butterflies, roosters, chickens, horses, etc. They are painted with bright colors—turquoise, magenta, yellow, red and green.

Mexicans also create pierced tin lanterns. Using empty food cans, North American children can create their own pierced lanterns. When a votive or other candle is lit and placed inside, the light casts the lantern's patterns onto tables and walls.

To make:

- Remove the label and any glue from the empty food can. (Try to find a can with smooth sides, rather than one with ridges.)
- Fill can with water and freeze. (It may take up to two days for the water to freeze completely.)
- Have students plan their design (stars, flowers, geometric patterns, etc.) on a piece of paper, which will be taped around the outside of the can.

You may want to develop some of the following activities, along with activities provided in other sections, into learning stations, with the students rotating among them.

1. Plant some Mexican flowers/herbs. Provide seeds and cups for students to plant some native Mexican flowers, such as dahlias and marigolds, or a favorite herb—coriander, or in Spanish, *cilantro* (see-LAHN-troe). *Cilantro* is similar to parsley. Its leaves are chopped and added to salsas.
2. Murals. Murals have been excavated on the walls of ancient indigenous temples and buildings in Mexico. But murals and Mexico began their close association during the Mexican Revolution, which began in 1910.

Artists such as José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros painted huge murals of the revolution inside large public buildings, including the National Palace. The murals tell the story of the common people who aspired for a better life, documenting their customs and work, as well as the armed struggle. Many Mexicans and tourists alike visit the murals yearly.

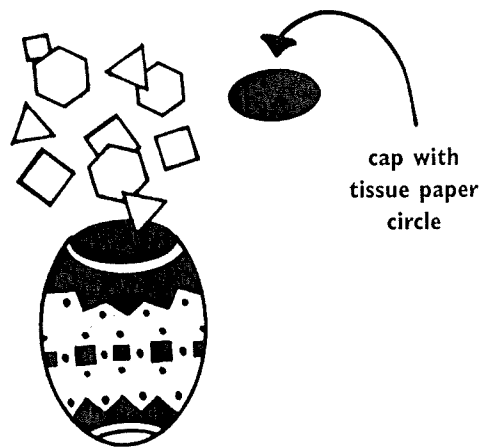
To make a mural with your students, securely fasten a long sheet of newsprint to a wall. Decide on a theme. Students will enjoy coloring or painting their part of the mural.

3. *Cascarones* (cahs-cah-ROW-nehs). *Cascarones* are surprise-filled Easter eggs! They are made in Mexico and some other Latin American countries throughout Lent, the 40-day period before Easter. People who like to have fun crack these “eggs” over other people’s heads, showering them with confetti!

To make, carefully remove the contents of raw eggs. (Save the insides for scrambled eggs!). To do so, cut an opening about the size of a quarter in one end of the egg. (Make a hole on one end of the egg with a needle and then enlarge it with scissors. Use clean utensils!)

Wash out the egg shells and let them dry. Then fill with colorful confetti. (Make your own with a paper punch or purchase some.) Cover the opening by gluing a small piece of tissue paper over it.

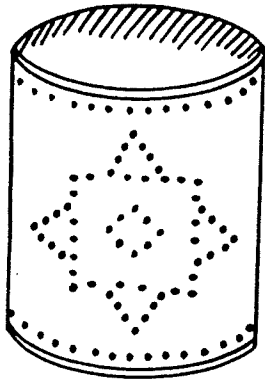
Decorate the eggs with paint or markers. Have fun showering others with confetti by cracking the *cascarones* over their heads—and be ready to be bathed in confetti yourself!



4. Piñatas. For directions on how to make a piñata, see page 19 of the El Salvador teacher’s guide in this learning and activity box.
5. Kites. In Mexico, kites are called *papalotes* (pah-pah-LOW-tehs), and they are as popular here as they are in other Latin American countries. For directions, see page 18 of the El Salvador Teacher’s Guide in the learning and activity box.
6. Poems. Three poems are provided on page 34. They are titled “It’s Proper, It’s Good” (“*Es Conveniente, Es Bueno*”); “I love the song,” (*Amo el Canto*); and “The Frog Sings (*Canta la rana*) or “Sunny Day” (*Día de sol*). Have students recite the poems and draw pictures based on them.
7. Read stories, pages 35 to 37, and have students illustrate them.
8. Word search. In the shape of a Christmas star, the word search on page 38 contains the Spanish words of important Christmas figures and items.

LEVEL: PRIMARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL

SOURCE: Latin America & Caribbean Series
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- When the water in the can is frozen and the paper pattern affixed, place the can on its side on a towel. Use a hammer and an assortment of pointed objects or tools—nails, awls, chisels, screwdrivers—to pierce the can at intervals along the design pattern.
- Let the ice melt. Place candle inside and light.

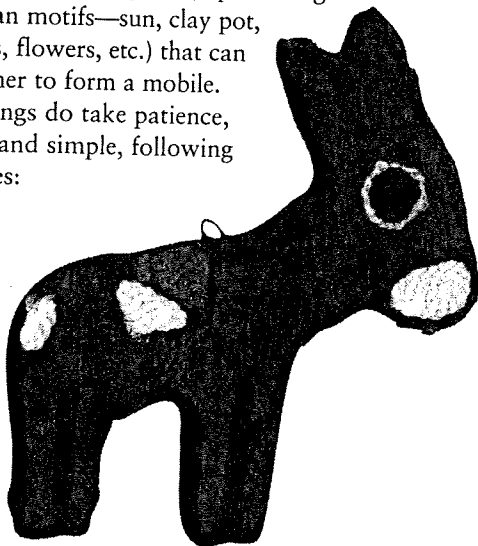
Note: Warn children of the dangers of lighting candles without adult supervision and of leaving candles unattended. Also remind them that the lantern, because it's made of metal, will get hot when the candle is lit. They should avoid touching it until it has a chance to cool.

Huichol Yarn Paintings

Another yarn craft from the Huichol (WEE-chol) people are paintings. Traditionally, Huichol men create the paintings, pressing yarn into beeswax that has been warmed in the sun and spread onto thin wooden boards. The pictures may have religious significance, or tell legends or stories.

Today the Huichol have adapted the craft to make objects attractive to tourists. Rather than entire paintings, for example, they make yarn-covered figures (representing typical Mexican motifs—sun, clay pot, donkeys, birds, flowers, etc.) that can be hung together to form a mobile.

Yarn paintings do take patience, so start small and simple, following these guidelines:



- Have students draw their figure on paper and cut it out. They should work out their yarn design and colors on the paper symbol first, using crayons or markers. Trace the symbol onto heavy cardboard and cut it out. Or use carbon paper to transfer the outlines of the entire design to the cardboard.
- With a wide brush, apply beeswax to the cardboard in an even layer, taking care that the wax reaches even the board's edges. Beeswax, available in art supply stores, is expensive, but large amounts will not be needed.* Melt the beeswax in a double-boiler or in one pan set in another pan of water on a burner. Because it is highly flammable, do not heat beeswax directly over the heat source.
- The Huichol use their thumbnails to press the yarn into the wax but students will likely find it easier to work with a frozen-pop stick or scissors tip. Outline the figures in one color (black or another dark color make good choices), then fill the figures in with bright contrasting colors.
- To apply the yarn, start from the outer edges and work inward—NOT from the center out. Apply the yarn to an area with one long continuous strand until it is filled, aligning the strands as closely together as possible.
- When one area has been filled in, cut off the yarn close to the board and tuck the end into the wax. Then begin to fill in another area. Never cross the yarn over adjacent strands to reach another area.



** If beeswax is not available, white glue may be used, but it is more difficult to work with. Paint the glue on one small area at a time and press the yarn into it, taking care to keep the top of the yarn soft and free of glue.*