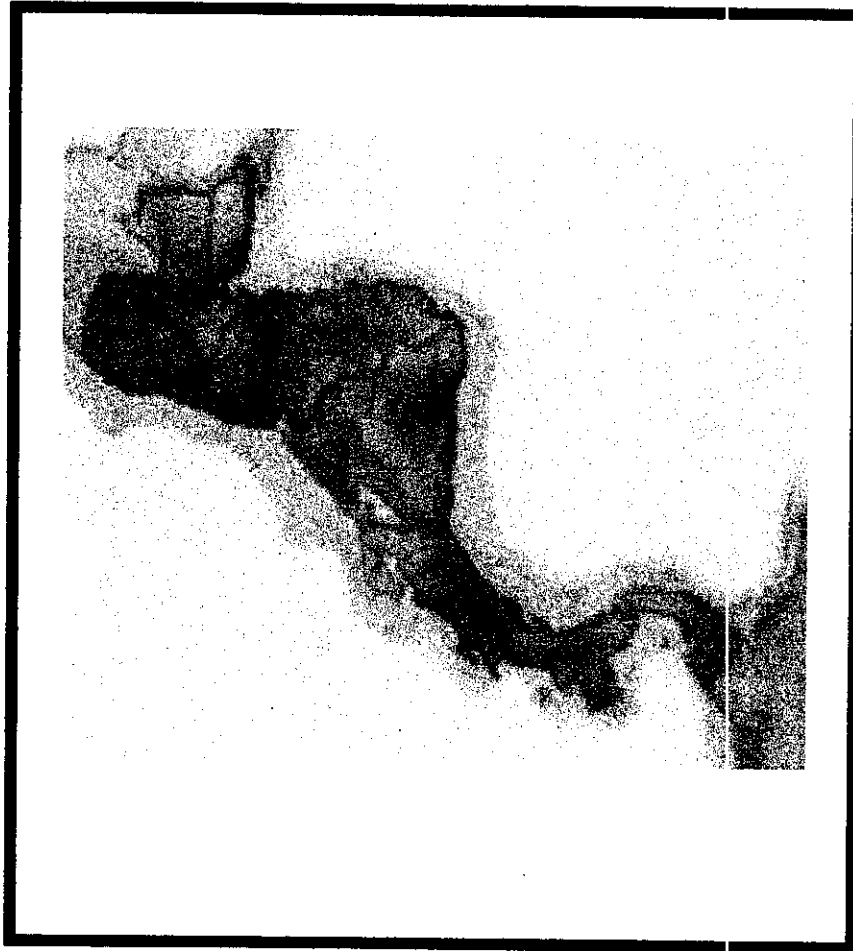


University of Arizona
Center for Latin American Studies

CENTRAL AMERICA



Saturday Workshops for Educators
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
Spring 2003

The Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Arizona offered its second round of workshops for K-12 teachers during the spring semester of 2003. Educators interested in Latin America met to explore specific topics related to the Latin world. They engaged in presentations from university faculty and community experts at an academic level to satisfy their personal interest and knowledge. They also discussed ways to incorporate such information into the K-12 curriculum. The lessons found in this collection were derived from these dialogue sessions. The titles of the spring 2003 workshops were: Carnaval, Tango and Central America.

We have created three lessons for each of the these workshops, a primary lesson, intermediate lesson and secondary lesson. However, each is adaptable to a variety of teaching levels. Please modify information, ideas and the activities to fit your appropriate level, and feel free to share your ideas with the outreach department. A variety of teachers participated in the workshops, not just social studies or Spanish teachers. Such a mixture of expertise and personal interest enriched the discussion and lessons created, as well as reminded us all of the power behind interdisciplinary learning. Hopefully the lessons found in this collection will inspire you to include information and details from Latin America into your own teaching.

Kristel Foster
workshop coordinator

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Participating Educators:

Maria Balaguer	Elizabeth Barrett	Barbara Beamer	Renee Bennett
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Patricia Dow	Stephen Gomez	Obdulia Gonzalez	Jenny Graber
Elliot Lax	Betty Liverman	Karen Lowery	Norma Martinez
Pat McElroy	Sam Mendivil	Amy Mol	Margie Mora
Guillermo Navarro	Julie Rigoli	Nancy Smith	Raynelda Saba
Norberta Sousa	Edel Camero	Marco Bravo	Tobias Canto
Gerson Gonzalez	Juan Guerrero	Roland Herman	Jenny Mia

CENTRAL AMERICA: A geographical look

Central America is a land of dense forests and vast export-crop plantations. This region bears many social and ecological scars of recent civil wars and natural disasters. Many indigenous people live in Central America, including 3 million Maya in Guatemala, 150,000 Miskito in Nicaragua and the 40,000 Kuna of Panama. The Caribbean coast has extensive mangrove swamps and flat lands that were converted to plantations during the colonial period. The Pacific coast is drier because it lies in the rain shadow of the easterly trade winds but has some fertile soils associated with volcanic activity. The mountain spine of Central America has natural vegetation that includes cloud forests (obtaining their moisture from mist and clouds) and vivid birds and mammals, such as the quetzal and jaguar.

Economic History

The economy of Central America was founded on the collection of cacao (chocolate) and indigo (a blue dye) for export to Europe during the colonial period. Agriculture then expanded during the nineteenth century into coffee production in the highlands, and banana and sugar plantations on the coasts. In Costa Rica, coffee was produced on small European and mestizo owned farms, but in El Salvador and Guatemala, coffee was consolidated into large operations controlled by a few families (known as oligarchies). In Guatemala and Honduras, U.S.-owned companies such as Standard Fruit Co. and United Fruit Co. took over large areas of land for production of tropical fruits, especially bananas, for export. As mentioned earlier, the influence of the fruit companies on the economy and politics was so great that these countries were sometimes called banana republics, and government force was used to drive peasants from livelihoods inland to provide cheap or indebted labor on the plantations. After the Second World War, cotton and sugar production expanded, and a boom in livestock herds began to provide meat for urban domestic and export refrigerated beef markets.

Oppression and Uprisings

Repressive military regimes in many Central American countries provoked unrest in the countryside. In 1976, an unequal distribution of land and wealth was quite evident, as 8% of the population controlled 70% of the land. Thousands of peasants had to live on small plots of land or move to find work on plantations or on the coast. Revolution erupted in Nicaragua in 1979 and guerilla movements spread in El Salvador and Guatemala in the 1980's. With violence permeating the countryside, over a million peasants were displaced, fleeing into neighboring Mexico or farther northward, or retreating into remote mountains where the military, which did not differentiate between ordinary people and guerrillas, often annihilated whole communities. Powerful oligarchies attempting to retain power were associated with thousands of massacres and murders. In 1979, The Sandinistas took power and initiated socialist reforms in Nicaragua. The United States was concerned that this revolutionary uprisings was supported by the communist Soviet Union, and funded covert efforts to overthrow the government, including training volunteer revolutionary forces, or

"contras," who crossed into Nicaragua from neighboring Honduras. Several decades of unrest in these countries slowed the development of agriculture and the economy, and it was not until political reforms and peace accords in the 1990s that funds and political will were generally available for economic and social development. Unfortunately, many countries in Central America are still suffering from the consequences of these difficult years.

Costa Rica has not experienced this degree of social unrest and is noted for a long tradition of democracy since 1889. This country supports no standing army, and has maintained a higher standard of living than many other Latin American countries.

Present Scenario

New economic activities in Central America include the development of shellfish production, especially shrimp aquaculture, which is of high economic value but has been shown to damage coastal mangroves and fish breeding sites in Honduras. The attempt to find higher value exports than the traditional crops of sugar, cotton, and bananas have focused on new nontraditional agricultural exports, especially fresh vegetables and flowers. Rather than grow these and other crops on large company landholdings, the current strategy is contract farming, in which farmers are guaranteed a market if they produce crops to the exacting quality standards of multinational corporations, such as Del Monte.

Low wages in Central America have also attracted labor-intensive manufacturing, such as garment industries, to urban areas in El Salvador and Honduras. Costa Rica, with a better-educated workforce and more stable economy, has lured high-technology companies such as Microsoft, General Electric, and Intel to build factories near San Jose.

Central America has also seen a boom in tourism, often geared to ancient ruins and natural attractions of the coasts and rain forests. Environmentally oriented tourism, or ecotourism, is designed to provide employment opportunities for local people while protecting ecosystems. This industry has brought mixed results, as the benefits are not shared equally among residents, and some regions are becoming so crowded that environmental degradation is occurring.

The ecological diversity of Central America also supports biological prospecting, for new medicines and products with commercial uses. For example, Costa Rica has signed agreements with multinational pharmaceutical companies, such as Merck, that give the companies rights to prospect and develop in return for turning over a share of profits to the national government and to local people. Geographers are working with indigenous groups in Central America to map their resources. This allows groups such as the Miskito of Honduras to gain more control over their land and plan its use.

source:

Marston, Sallie A., Knox, Paul and Liverman, Diana M., *World Regions in Global Context: People, Places and Environments*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2002 pp. 413, 418-420.

Central American Federation (1852-1838)

The Central American Federation formed in 1825, including five of the seven republics of Central America—Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Salvador. After gaining independence from Spain in 1821, these countries were briefly annexed to Mexico. In 1825, the nations became a loose federal state and appointed Manuel José Arce as the first president. He was succeeded by the liberal leader Francisco Morazán in 1830. Political and personal rivalries between liberals and conservatives, poor communication, and fearing that one state would have more control than others, led to the end of the Federation in 1838. The Congress of the Federation was dissolved and Morazán's military forces were defeated by Rafael Carrera, the conservative Guatemalan leader. In 1842, Morazán made an attempt to reestablish the Federation from a new location in Costa Rica. Politicians in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador continued to fight for unification. At the Central American conference of 1922–23, the U.S. recommended that the Central American countries form a Union. However, this idea was not favorably received, partly because of earlier U.S. policies in Panama and Nicaragua with which many Central American politicians disagreed. Nevertheless, geography, history, and practicality are factors that repeatedly encouraged unionization. No official nation ever became of these small individual Central American countries. In 1951, the Organization of Central American States was formed to help solve their common problems and in 1960 the five nations established the Central American Common Market, to address their similar economic needs.

Sources: T. L. Kames, *The Failure of Union: Central America, 1824–1960* (1961);
N. Maritano, *A Latin American Economic Community* (1970).

CENTRAL AMERICA BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY

Adams, Faith, *Nicaragua: Struggling With Change (Discovering Our Heritage)*, Dillon Press, 1987.

Discusses the history and culture of the Nicaraguan people and contemporary life in this country torn apart by conflicting forces in the twentieth century.

Adams, Faith, *El Salvador: Beauty Among the Ashes (Discovering Our Heritage)*, Dillon Press, 1986.

Describes the people, history, folklore, social life, and customs of the Central American country and examines the plight of those Salvadorans who have fled their war-torn land to take refuge in the United States.

Cameron, Ann, Allen, Thomas B., *The Most Beautiful Place in the World*, Random House, 1993.

Guatemala is a place of stunning beauty and grim economic reality. Abandoned by his mother, Juan lives with his grandmother and shines shoes. He passionately wants to attend school, but fears Grandmother will say no. Finally gathering his courage, he is surprised when she not only agrees to send him to school but also chides him about the importance of standing up for himself.

**Henshaw, Dorothy, *Quetzal: Sacred Bird of the Cloud Forest*, Morrow Junior Books, 1996.

The Quetzal's sacred relationship to the people of Central America is explored, as well as species facts and current environmental issues that effect this rare bird.

Maloney Markun, Patricia *It's Panama's Canal!*, Linnet Books, 1999.

Information about the construction, current usage, and future of this important waterway, focusing on present-day Panama and how the return of the canal will impact the citizens, economy, and future of this country.

Rohmer, Harriet, Wilson, Dorminster, Stearns, Virginia, *Mother Scorpion Country (Stories from Central America.)*, Children's Book Press, 1987.

This beautiful bilingual (English-Spanish) retelling from Native American mythology makes available to children the folklore of the Miskito tribe in Central America.

Shields, Charles J., Henderson, James D., *Let's Discover Central America*, Mason Crest Publishers, 2002.

(set of 8 books 1. Central America: Facts and Figures, 2 Belize, 3. Costa Rica, 4. El Salvador, 5. Guatemala, 6. Honduras, 7. Nicaragua, 8. Panama)

Simons, Suzanne, Isias, Diego, *Trouble Dolls: A Guatemalan Legend*, Apple Publishing, 2000.

Discover the legend of the magical trouble dolls, traditional Guatemalan good luck charms. Learn about the fascinating games, foods, crafts, and folktales of the Mayan civilization in Guatemala. Then, with your own set of six tiny trouble dolls, wish for good luck and happiness!

**Solá, Michele, *Angela Weaves a Dream: The Story of a Young Maya Artist*, Hyperion Books, 1997.

A portrait of weaving through the eyes and the hands of a young Maya girl.

SECONDARY

Dolan, Edward F. *Panama and the United States: Their Canal, Their Stormy Years*, Franklin Watts, March 1990.

The geography, history, and politics of Panama, beginning with the attempt by France to construct a canal in the 1880s, the reality of construction of the canal in 1914, and concluding with the last decade of American ownership of the canal in the 1990s.

Cheney, Glenn Alan, *Revolution in Central America (An Impact Book)*, Franklin Watts, March 1984.

Explores the causes of conflict in Central America, examining the social-political-historical elements of each country individually in its struggle for change.

** = Copies available from the Center for Latin American Studies,
University of Arizona.

CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES: Central America Videos*

*The videos listed here represent only a small portion of what is available at CLAS.
The collection consists of more than 50 videos specific to Central America.

(CA 14) Giving Up the Canal (PBS) Chronicles the history of the Panama Canal. To protect this strategic investment, the U.S. negotiated proprietary treaties with Panama that guaranteed the creation of a "Canal Zone," a 10-mile strip on both sides of the waterway. President Jimmy Carter signed 1977 treaty that began a gradual process of relinquishing the canal to Panama, with the stipulation that the U.S. would maintain the right to defend the canal area. Outlines the consequences of the Carter treaty and subsequent Reagan policies. 58 minutes. US/1990.

(CA 19-English version) If the Mango Tree Could Speak (New Day Films) This documentary intimately portrays the lives of ten boys and girls-ages 12 to 15-growing up amidst war in Guatemala and El Salvador. They talk about war and peace, justice, ethnic identity, friendship and marriage, and share their dreams and hopes as well as their pain and loss. The children's stories are disturbing, but show their resilience despite their harsh reality. **Ages 12 & Over.** Study Guide. Guatemala: 26 minutes; El Salvador: 32 minutes. US, 1993.

(CA 21) Introducing Central America (Educational Filmstrips) -- Especially for younger viewers. Survey of Mesoamerica, from Guatemala to Panama, with information about geography, agriculture, industry and more. Study pamphlet has interesting facts about each country in Central America, showing the diversity of this region. 12 minutes. US,1988. **2 copies.**

(CA 31) Panama: Crossroads of the World (Educational Filmstrips & Video). Documentary overview of Panama, from the explorers of the sixteenth century to issues regarding the future of the Panama Canal. Elementary and middle school level. 18 minutes. US.

(CA 42) Zoned for Slavery: The Child Behind the Label (Crowing Rooster Arts) This documentary looks at the grim reality of maquiladora plants in Honduras. While U.S. workers lose jobs to low-paid Third World workers, the Third World workers themselves - often teenage girls - lose the opportunity to finish their education while earning hardly enough to help support their families. 24 minutes. 1995

(CA 43) Central America Close-Up (Maryknoll World Productions) Guatemala: Natividad, a 14-year-old Maya girl, faces important decisions about her future, influenced by changing conditions in her remote mountain village. El Salvador: Marvin, age, 15 tells why his parents fled their native country in the 1980s, only to return years later to rebuild their lives at a jungle cooperative settlement. 2 parts - 28 min. total. 1998

CENTRAL AMERICA : Video Boxes

PRIMARY LESSON

Arizona State Standards:

- **Reading:** R-F3 (apply reading strategies) R-F4 (identify facts and main ideas, author's purpose) R-F5 (analyze non-fiction) R-F8 (recognize historical and cultural perspective:)
- **Writing:** W-F1 (writing process) W-F4 (gather & report information) W-F5 (locate sources)
- **Listening and Speaking:** LS-FS5 (shares, presents) LS-FS6 (listens & responds) LS-FS7 (participates in activities)
- **History:** 1SS-F2 (knowledge of past & present) 1SS-E1 (research tools)
- **Civics and Government:** 2SS-F1 (multiculturalism)
- **Geography:** 3SS-R1 (concept of location) 3SS-F1 (map skills)
- **Arts:** 1AV-R1/F2 (use of art materials) 1AV-R2/E1/3AV-R2 (communicate through art)

Goals &

Objectives: (1) Students become familiar with Central America. (2) Students research in books and the internet about a certain Central American country. (3) Students share new learnings and draw similarities and differences of the region from information shared.

Length of lesson: 6 one-hour periods

Materials &

Preparation:

a globe (or a world map)
map of Central America
research materials (library, internet)
poster board

old boxes
empty paper towel rolls
art materials

LESSON:

First Period:

- Using a globe or a world map, show students where North and South America are. Ask questions, leading students to locate the United States, Mexico and Canada in North America and find the countries of Brazil and Argentina in South America. (If you have any students from Mexico and/or South American countries, locate their countries on the map.) Draw attention to the names of North America and South America, discussing the meanings of the words north and south.
- Ask students where they think Central America would be, if they just located North and South America. Using paper, string or some sort of an identifier, mark this region so it will be easy for students to find later.
- Read the names of the 5 countries that make up Central America. (Again, if you have any students from Central America, bring attention to their country of origin.)
- Show a bigger map of Central America, explaining that this is a bigger picture of the part of the globe they have labeled. Make sure to review the names of the countries again, showing where Nicaragua is on the globe and where it is on the map. (If students are still confused, show a map of the United States, and draw their attention to the shape of the US, compared to the shape of the US on the globe, then outline the region of Central America on the globe and compare the shape to the map of Central America.)

- Explain that they will be working in groups to create a "video box" about a Central American country. Instead of assigning each student to a group, ask them to choose which country they would like to research and why. Much discussion will be generated by students' own reasons for choosing a country, such as, "My grandmother is from El Salvador," or "I saw a show about butterflies from Costa Rica on the Discovery Channel," etc. As each student shares which country they would like to research and why, have them write their name on a prepared chart identifying which group they will be working with. Negotiation may have to take place as students get organized, however, again, discussing why each would like to be a part of which group may lead to sharing of experiences and facts, as well as cooperative skill development.

Second Period:

- Explain that each group will be making a video box that will show information for a country in Central America.
- Show an example video box and explain how you made it.
- Using an old box, cut out the bottom so it has an open space for a screen. Cut out two large holes on each side, big enough for an old paper towel roll to fit through. Insert two paper towel rolls, one at the top of the screen, one at the bottom. Decorate the box so it looks like a television.
- Make different "frames" for your video from a group of papers taped together, end to end, in the order you want the "frames" to appear.
- Attach the first frame with tape to the top paper towel roll and roll the pages around the roll until you can attach the last page to the bottom paper towel roll.
- Rewind the paper so that the pages are all wrapped around the bottom roll, and the first page is showing through the "screen" and the "video" is ready to be played, by turning the two rolls at the same time, wrapping the pages around the top roll.
- Brainstorm different information each group could be looking for about their country. Generate a list of geographical and cultural categories that will assist students as they investigate. Such categories could be: animals, plants, mountains, rivers, lakes, cities, weather, foods, celebrations, clothing, population, ethnicities, languages, etc. Make the categories general or complicated according to the level of your students. You may want to assign a category to each student in the group (having one student work on animals, another on cities, another on foods, etc.) Or, have the group organize a way to collect information for each category.
- Depending on the ability level of your students, determine how they will know when they have found a fact. For some levels, a fact will simply be a picture or a photograph, for others maybe the facts will need to be in found in text. You may even require more advanced students to collect source information for the facts they find, by creating a bibliography to include in the "credits" portion of their "video" that displays the resources, authors and page numbers that they referred to.

Third-Fourth-Fifth Periods:

- Students work on gathering geographical/cultural facts and creating their video boxes.

Sixth Period:

- Before each group presents their video boxes, explain to the students that, after listening to each group, the class will be displaying their boxes (in the library, or other public display area) and will have to make a poster introducing the video boxes and explaining the region of Central America, showing what all of these countries have in common. While they watch the video box presentations, they can be thinking about how the countries are the same, and what information they might include on an introductory poster.
- Have each group present their video box to the class.
- After all have presented, begin a list of geographical and cultural similarities of Central America. Examples: Spanish language, tropical forests, volcanoes, maize, etc.
- Choose a small group of students to create the introductory poster for the region of Central America, including the similar characteristics of the region the class discussed.

Closure:

- Display video boxes. Ask students what they have learned about the Americas, guiding them to review where Central America is and important facts they have learned.

Evaluation: Assign different students to give introductions to the video box display to different audiences. Or have students write a paragraph about Central America (or, depending on their ability level, write 3- 5 sentences.)

Extensions:

#1 Organize a world regions fair, with different classes presenting on different regions o the globe. Incorporate food, music, maps, crafts, etc. with the video box displays.

#2 Invite a guest speaker from each country in Central America (especially if related to members of your class!) to participate in the video box presentations, and have them comment and talk about their country. Encourage guests to bring artifacts, music, clothing, etc from their homeland.

#3 After presenting the video boxes, show real videos about different countries in Central America, to reinforce that what they had learned from their research was accurate, and also to build new information upon what they have just learned. Travel videos work well at this level.

CENTRAL AMERICA: Panama Canal

INTERMEDIATE LESSON

Arizona State Standards:

- **Reading:** R-E2 (identify main ideas, author's purpose) R-E3 (analyze non-fiction) R-E6 (Compare and contrast historical and cultural perspectives)
- **Writing:** W-E3 (summarize info) W-E4 (expository writing) W-E5 (report writing) W-E8 (research skills)
- **Listening and Speaking:** LS-FS5 (shares, presents) LS-FS6 (listens & responds) LS-FS7 (participates in activities)
- **History:** 1SS-E8 (research tools) 1SS-E15 (age of exploration)
- **Geography:** 3SS-E4 (using geographic tools) 3SS-E5 (regions) 3SS-E6 (social interaction, migration) 3SS-E7 (natural resources) 3SS-E8 (applying skills)

Goals &

Objectives: (1) Students become familiar with the globe and its geography, especially Central American. (2) Students investigate a way to sail a boat all the way around the world without touching land. (3) Students learn about the historical development of the Panama Canal. (4) Students become familiar with socio-political relationships between Central America, Europe and the United States.

Length of lesson: 3 one-hour periods

Materials &

Preparation:

globes (1 for every 2-3 students)
resource materials and/or internet

string & tape

LESSON:

First Period:

- Begin lesson by talking about Christopher Columbus. Ask students what they remember about this explorer, until someone mentions that he was trying to find India and instead he found the Americas.
- Show the different routes used to get from Spain to India. Show the route he took across the ocean, from Spain to the Caribbean islands.
- Explain that the activity they are about to do is similar to that of Columbus. Working in groups of 2-3 students, challenge them to find a way to sail a boat all the way around the world, starting from Spain.
- Have students mark the route they find with string. (Do not cut the string, but rather use one piece to mark the whole route.) Use tape to attach the string to the globes.
- Have each group share the route they found, making sure that each group did not cross a piece of land.
- Untape each route, and compare the lengths of the string, identifying the shortest route that they could find.
- Write the route the group followed on the board, giving names and directions to different oceans and seas.
- Explain that next time, each group will see if they can find a shorter route still.

Second Period:

- Show the piece of string and the route that was used during the last period to mark the shortest route around the world in a boat.
- Tell students that in 1914 a canal was completed. This canal divided a piece of land in order to connect two bodies of water.
- Challenge students to locate that piece of land. Where do you think this shortcut was dug? Allow students to try and locate an area before giving more information.
- As students are searching on the globe, ask questions (such as, if you were to dig a piece of land between two oceans, what kind of land would you look for) guiding them to look for narrow strips of land connecting to bodies of water.
- Have students share the locations they found, paying attention to the names and places of the geographical locations they identify.
- If a group has identified the country of Panama, share that they found the area that was dug to create what we call a canal. If they did not locate Panama, give them clues, such as look in Central America, find an isthmus, between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. See if anyone can locate the label *Panama Canal* on the globe. If other areas are located, challenge students to research this area, is there a canal in this location?

Third Period:

- Show a video about the history and the making of the canal, or read the book, *It's Panama's Canal!* by Patricia Maloney Markun (Linnet Books, 1999) or even better, in a computer lab, have students explore the following websites about the canal. (Such websites also have readings that could be used in the lesson as well.)
 - <http://www.canalmuseum.com>
 - <http://www.pancanal.com> (live footage of the canal)
 - <http://www.czbrats.com>
- Discuss the political and social issues that students call attention to, such as who did the work? Who was in charge? Who earned the money from the ships passing? (Did the ships have to pay?) What happened in 1999?
- Who began to build the canal?

Closure:

- Return to the globes and see if there is a different location that would have been better for a canal, or a location where a new one should be built. Discuss reasons behind such a decision. Decide as a group if Central America was the best location for a canal and explain why.

Evaluation: Have students write about the Panama Canal. Have them answer who, what, where, when, why and how. (Who created the canal, What is a canal? Where is the Panama Canal? When was it constructed? Why was it constructed? And how was it constructed?)

Extensions:

#1 Pretend that a group of business leaders wants to build another canal. Working in groups, find other isthmuses on the globe where other canals could be constructed. Have two groups work on each new isthmus that is located. Have one group work on a campaign to convince the government and people of this nation to construct the new canal. Have the other group prepare a campaign to stop this construction. Use historical information from the making and management of the Panama Canal to predict positive and negative outcomes of such a project.

#2 Divide students into two groups and have them plan and hold a debate between Panama and the United States concerning the use and ownership of the Panama Canal.

#3 Using reference materials, hypothesize what kinds of goods and resources travel through the canal. Locate where they come from and where they could be going.

#4 Do a comparative study of the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal, historically, politically and geographically.

CENTRAL AMERICA:
United States of Central America? (A Debate)

SECONDARY LESSON

Arizona State Standards:

- **Reading:** R-P1 (apply reading strategies) R-P2 (analyze non-fiction)
- **Writing:** W-P4 (research document) W-P5 (writing for a definite audience)
- **Listening and Speaking:** LS-FS5 (shares, presents) LS-FS6 (listens & responds) LS-FS7 (participates in activities)
- **History:** 1SS-P1 (chronological & spatial skills) 1SS-P2 (research methods) 1SS-P3 (interpretation) 1SS-D1 (historical sources) 1SS-D2 (historical thinking)
- **Geography:** 3SS-P1 (using geographic tools) 3SS-P2 (regions) 3SS-P3 (social interaction, migration) 3SS-P4 (natural resources) 3SS-P5 (applying skills)

Goals &

Objectives: (1) Students become familiar with the region and individual countries of Central America. (2) Students identify the differences between the political division of provinces & nations and are able to discuss advantages and disadvantages of each. (3) Students research in order to support a particular perspective. (4) Students participate in a debate.

Length of lesson: 6 one-hour lessons

Materials & Preparation: world map resource materials
map of Central America art materials
Central American Federation reading (see attached materials)

LESSON:

First Period:

- Show students a world map or pass out individual maps and focus their attention on the Continent of the Americas. Ask specific location questions, incorporating names of different cities, states and countries, such as "Where is Chicago? Where is Chihuahua? Where is Nicaragua?", etc.
- Ask students what the difference is between these labels: state, country and city. More than likely, the answer of size will be given, Countries are bigger than states, which are bigger than cities. Have students research the square mileage for the following locations: The United States of America, Guatemala, Belize, California, New York, Tennessee, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Texas, Yucatán, Chiapas, Mexico City, Tegucigalpa, Managua, etc. (You could choose one location for each student to research. This may be a good homework activity to do before this activity begins. You may also want to add Canadian and South American locations as well.)
- Organize their findings by size. Then label each as a country, city or state.
- Refer back to the original question, what is the difference between a country, state and city? Have official definitions available for students to refer to.
- Discuss nation (country) vs. state (provinces) with your students. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a state versus being a nation? Do these divisions affect the individual citizen? The economy? Other nations?

- Call attention to the fact that the states (or provinces) of Canada are organized into a nation, the states of the US are organized into a nation, and so are the states of Mexico. However, the 7 little regions under Mexico and above Colombia are independent countries, even though they are smaller than many of the states that make up our nation. Why is Tennessee a state and Guatemala a country? Does Guatemala have states, even though it is the same size as Tennessee? Have students research and return to the next class with some answers. Have them research the Central American Federation for homework as well.

Second Period:

- Using information students bring from their research, briefly discuss the history behind the Central American Federation (see attached materials). Conclude the discussion with why this Federation dissolved.
- Ask students if they think the countries of Central America should come together and form a nation? Listen and validate all perspectives and opinions.
- Divide students into 2 groups. One group will support the notion of creating a Central American nation and the other group will be against this idea.
- Identify individuals or partners from each side as "experts," in agriculture, economy, human rights, energy, industry, military, etc.
- Have each person research and find facts to support their position, and be able to debate this position.

Third-Fifth Period

- Students research information to inform their perspective to prepare for the class debate.
- Encourage students to prepare posters, overheads, or even powerpoint presentations to enhance their debate.
- During these preparation periods, you may want to discuss appropriate debate behavior and standards, and even watch one on a news channel between political analysts. Create a set of debate standards that everyone will follow.
- Consider inviting school personal or community members (especially those with a connection to Central America) to observe the debate.

Sixth Period

- Organize the physical setting of the classroom to support a constructive debate, including appropriate areas for students to display their prepared materials.
- Explain that after the debate, each student will write an essay expressing which perspective won the debate, as well as express their own personal perspective concerning the question.
- Facilitate the class debate.

Conclusion & Evaluation:

- Have students individually write a reflection, stating which perspective won this debate, as well as expressing their own opinion on the topic.
- Assess students' writing for new understanding of Central American economy, politics, history, culture, etc.
- After collecting and reading students' responses, share your opinion with the whole group, which side successfully argued their perspective and then share with them your own personal feelings on the hypothetical creation of a Central American Union.

Extensions:

#1 If dividing individual research into economic, political, cultural, etc. categories is too advanced for your learners, subdivide the two large groups into country groups. So one group might argue for why, for example, El Salvador would want a Central American Union and why another (or even El Salvador) would not want this arrangement.

#2 Compare the Central American Common Market to the European Union.

#3 Add the option of joining a Union that is already established (such as Mexico, the United States or the European Union) to the debate. Divide the group into four and have representatives from the established Union either support or not support Central America joining this nation. Make sure to address notions of nationality and identity to this discussion. Address distance if necessary as well, as Alaska and Hawaii are not attached to the other 48 states of the United States.

#4 Bring members of the community that are from Central America to either participate in the debate, to help with the research, or to make concluding remarks. Many times, political decisions are made without addressing the concerns of the individuals that will be effected by such decisions. Discuss if hearing personal opinions influenced the policy discussion. Should policy makers consider personal perspectives?

#5 Compare the historical collapse of the Central American Federation to US History, the conflict between the northern states and the southern states during the Civil War, or the struggle for Texas to become its own nation in 1836. Could the United States have dissolved just as the Central American Federation did? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the United States that didn't allow this separation to occur?