

CATEGORY: PERU: NOW

CONCEPTS: ART, folklore, work

ACTIVITY: CONSTRUCTION OF A "ZAFSA-CASA." This folkart item is a Peruvian house decoration used to ward off evil.

OBJECTIVES: The students will enjoy constructing a zafa-casa, understand its significance and use in Peru, and compare it with other types of "rituals" found in the United States.

MATERIALS: The following reading about the zafa-casa and:

2 coat hangers	pliers
wire cutters	toothpicks
glue	construction paper
colored yarn or ribbon	black electrical tape

PROCEDURE: Read and discuss the zafa-casa handout. Then have students make the zafa-casa in the following manner.

Open the coat hanger and cut two pieces of any desired length. The horizontal arm should be smaller than the vertical arm. Place them in a cross formation about 3" above the center. Fasten them with black electrical tape.

Decorate the zafa-casa with construction paper in any way you desire. Remember, the zafa-casa is meant to "cover the house" and bring happiness so you should make symbols of what you would want surrounding your home. Extra wire may be added at other locations (see illustration). Small birds, butterflies and flowers may be bought (at minimal cost) or made and added to the zafa-casa if so desired.

After the zafa-casa is completed it should be displayed in the room and students can explain its significance to visitors.

VOCABULARY: Zafa-casa, Cubrir la casa, Padrino, Madrina, Ahijados.

LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES

Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades.* Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985. 1989.

RELATED ACTIVITIES: Without realizing it, people in the United States carry out a series of similar rituals, i.e., activities which are repeated at specific times, follow culturally established rules (the original meaning of which is often forgotten) and which bind a group of people together. Explain "ritual" to the students and ask them to think of some practiced in their communities. Examples can run from the Christmas tree and Hanukkah lights to high school homecoming parades and school cheers or traditions at sports or other events.

Another interesting aspect of this reading is the fact that building the house is a communal effort. Students can discuss why this would be the case in rural Peru and consider any communal efforts in their own communities.

"The Peruvian "Zafa-casa"

Comparable to the Pennsylvania Dutch Hex signs that are painted on farm houses to ward off evil is the charming custom of the "zafa-casa" found in Peru. "Zafa-casas" are crosses that are placed on the roofs of new houses. In many of the smaller towns or villages the building of a new home is a community effort. The completion of the home calls for a joyous celebration.

In Jauja, this ceremony is known as the "Zafa-casa" or "Cubrir la casa" (cover the house). The cross that is placed on the roof is the "Zafa-casa" and the decorations on it are symbols of success and good fortune. A "padrino" (godfather) is responsible for having the iron cross built and the "madrina" (godmother) is the person in charge of placing the cross on the central beam of the completed house. Then the festivities begin.

Variations of the cross appear in many parts of Peru. It may be made of iron, wood, or steel. The decorations may vary according to the custom of the region. It may be adorned with flowers, ribbons, and colored yarn.

In some parts of Peru, Cuzco and Urcos, for example, it is the "ahijados" (godchildren) that bring the gift of the "zafa-casa" to the new home owners. In Urcos, especially, the "zafa-casa" also carries tiny bottles of holy water, wine, and candy. The "zafa-casa" are unique reflections of Peruvian popular art.

