



THE Q'EQCHI'

A Companion Guide
for
High School Teachers
(Grades 9-12)
by
Dr. Edie Weinthal



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Educator Information *page 3*

Overview *page 3*

What You Will Find *page 3*

What's in Each Lesson *page 4*

How You Can Help *page 4*

Lessons

- 1. A Bird's-Eye View of Guatemala *page 5***
- 2. Central America: The Politics of Place *page 8***
- 3. Using Stories to Teach Valuable Lessons *page 12***

Front cover: top, Katherine Fogden; bottom row: left and center, © 1999 Nancy Ackerman;
right, Katherine Fogden

Page borders: pages 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14 by Katherine Fogden; pages 4, 8, 9, 10
© 1999 Nancy Ackerman

EDUCATOR INFORMATION

Overview

This curriculum/study guide has been prepared as an educational tool to accompany the Q'eqchi' Community component of the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian's Internet-based **Indigenous Geography Project**. *The Q'eqchi': A Companion Guide For High School Teachers* has been designed to help educators in grades 9-12 teach about one Native community in South America today: The Q'eqchi'.

Latin America encompasses a wide variety of landforms and presents for study a multitude of climates and ecosystems: some of the world's tallest mountains, tropical rain forests, dense vegetation, incredibly tall waterfalls, and beautiful tropical islands are all included in this region. Additionally, Latin America supplies the world with an abundance of products including coffee, cocoa, sugar, corn, and potatoes. Latin America reflects a blend of world cultures including European, Native American and even African influences. It is important for students to understand the myriad of ways that their own lives have been influenced by the heritage, foods, music, languages and cultures of Latin America.

This guide consists of three lessons appropriate for use with high school students. Lessons are meant to accompany the Mayan Q'eqchi' NMAI web pages. The lessons are designed to assist educators as they explore this website with their students. As students work through these lessons, they will become familiar with the country of Guatemala, and with the Q'eqchi' community in particular; they will come to understand how the rich histories, traditions, cultural artifacts and tribal ceremonies have endured over time and how this community has enriched the entire culture and society of Guatemala. The lessons will also bring to the forefront of class discussion the connections between the distribution of land and resources and the political climate in Central America.

What You Will Find

This Guide contains three lesson plans.

Lesson 1

A Bird's-Eye View of Guatemala encourages students' use of mapped data and the overlaying of mapped data. Working in groups, students draw conclusions of geographical regions based upon the analysis of composite data. Groups will present their data and work together to look at the ways that these maps impact others presented.

Lesson 2

Central America: The Politics of Place explores the impact of geographical and cultural diversity upon the development of the political system in Central America. Working in cooperative groups, students gather maps and conduct research to analyze the breakdown of land forms, borders, population densities and history of Central America. Students use this research to respond to real-life problems facing the Guatemalan people today.

Lesson 3

Using Stories to Teach Valuable Lessons establishes the value of oral history and the significance of passing cultural knowledge from one generation to the next using the power in language. Students develop their own appreciation of written and oral language as they retell and compare familiar stories and stories they read from the website.

What's In Each Lesson

Each lesson consists of eleven sections. **Lesson Objective** highlights what the lesson is designed to achieve. **Estimated Time** provides an average estimate of lesson length. **Materials Required** lists the materials that will be needed to carry out the lesson. **Lesson Resources** offers the educator additional sources of material to support the lesson. **Connections to the Curriculum** lists which curriculum areas the lesson touches on, for example, social sciences, geography, history, language arts, and/or language. **Connections to the National Geography Standards** lists what standards the lesson explores. **Connections to the National English Language Arts Standards** points out what standards this lesson examines. **Key Concepts** provides information that enhances understanding of the lesson topic and may be reproduced for classroom use, if needed. The **Student Assessment** activities allow students to integrate what they have learned and communicate it to others. They also provide educators with ways to evaluate students' understandings of the topic. **Extension** suggests ways students can explore a similar topic in their own community. Finally, **Sources Consulted For Content** points out what bibliographical references were used to develop the lesson content.

How You Can Help

Let us hear from you! Email your comments to NMAI-IndGeog@si.edu.

Indigenous Geography Website:

www.IndigenousGeography.si.edu



LESSON 1

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF GUATEMALA

GRADE LEVEL: 9–12

Lesson Objective

At the end of this lesson, students will have researched a wide variety of information about Guatemala and learned how to create overlay maps to reflect this data. Maps will overlay one another to simulate geographic information systems (GIS).

Time

This lesson should take approximately one 45 minute class period.

Materials Required

- An overview outline map of Guatemala
- Clear transparencies for student groups
- Markers
- Overhead projector

Connections to the Curriculum

- Art
- Geography
- Language Arts

Connections to National Geography Standards

Standard #1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

Standard #2: How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.

Standard #3: How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on earth's surface.

Standard #4: The physical and human characteristics of places.

Standard #9: The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human

population on earth's surface.

Standard #11: The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on earth's surface.

Standard #12: The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

Standard #14: How human actions modify the physical environment.

Connections to National English Language Arts Standards

Standard #1: Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, and classic contemporary works.

Standard #3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Standard #4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Standard #7: Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Procedure

1. Divide students into groups of four and provide each group with an overview outline map of Guatemala.
2. Assign each group different types of information to research with regard to the country of Guatemala: mountain ranges and bodies of water; population distribution; major roads and secondary roads; transportation lines; location of large cities and schools; location of farms and specific crops grown in each area.
3. Students must transfer group information onto the original outline map; students should color-code various information they gather.
4. When transparencies are complete, students should take turns placing overlays on the overhead projector with explanation of group information.
5. When all of the overlay maps have been presented, student groups should work together to analyze the composite data. In particular, students should be focused on the ways that one map's information may impact another's. (For example, how do the locations of major roads impact the location of cities or schools?)

Student Assessment

Students can work as a group to formulate a rubric for evaluation of map overlays.

In addition, students might respond to the following prompts by writing several paragraphs or by noting answers in their journals:

1. Describe the differences/similarities between the region you live in and the regions of Guatemala;
2. Ask students how the information on the map overlays might help them if they were to travel to Guatemala;
3. Ask students to create a geo-journal that demonstrates the connections between the physical geography and the human social, economic and cultural activities of the country.

Extending the Exercise

The following activities can be offered to students for more in-depth study of Guatemala and/or Latin America:

1. Have students research specific Latin American topics such as: the vaqueros of Latin America; the snow-covered peaks of the Andes; the rain forest, the Amazon River, the birds, animals or wildlife of Latin America; the population densities and various other statistics of different Latin American countries; the foods, cultures, religions of Latin America.
2. Have students examine photos of Mayan ruins and have them discuss what the ruins tell about the Mayan civilization.
3. Have students create a Latin American festival. They can divide up the different countries and bring in foods, music, examples of the language, and pictures of the culture of their assigned country.
4. Have students create a bar graph or other visual chart showing any of the following: languages spoken in each Latin American country; major import/major export of each country; the type of government in each country; etc.
5. Have students research and report on the natural resources that make Latin America economically important to the rest of the world.

LESSON 2

CENTRAL AMERICA: THE POLITICS OF PLACE

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

Lesson Objective

At the completion of this unit, students will be able to:

- Describe how geographical diversity as well as diverse races, cultures, and religions have created the current Central American political systems.
- Compare the connection between the landforms in Central America and the physical separations of diverse populations.
- Explain how the unequal distribution of land in Central America has led to the current political climate.
- Analyze the term *land reform* and be able to brainstorm with peers some possible solutions to land disputes in Central America.

Time

Depending on student level and ability, this unit will probably take one to one and a half weeks to complete.

Materials Required

- Internet access
- Maps of Central America
- Classroom blackboard or whiteboard
- Paper, pens or pencils

Connections to the Curriculum

- English
- Social Studies
- Geography
 - Political Science

Connections to National Geography Standards

Standard #4: The physical and human characteristics of places.

Standard #9: The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human population on earth's surface.

Standard #10: The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of earth's cultural mosaics.

Standard #12: The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

Standard #13: How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface.

Standard #14: How human actions modify the physical environment.

Standard #16: The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.

Standard #17: How to apply geography to interpret the past.

Standard #18: How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

Connections to National English Language Arts Standards

Standard #1: Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, and classic contemporary works.

Standard #4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Standard #7: Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Standard #8: Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Standard #12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

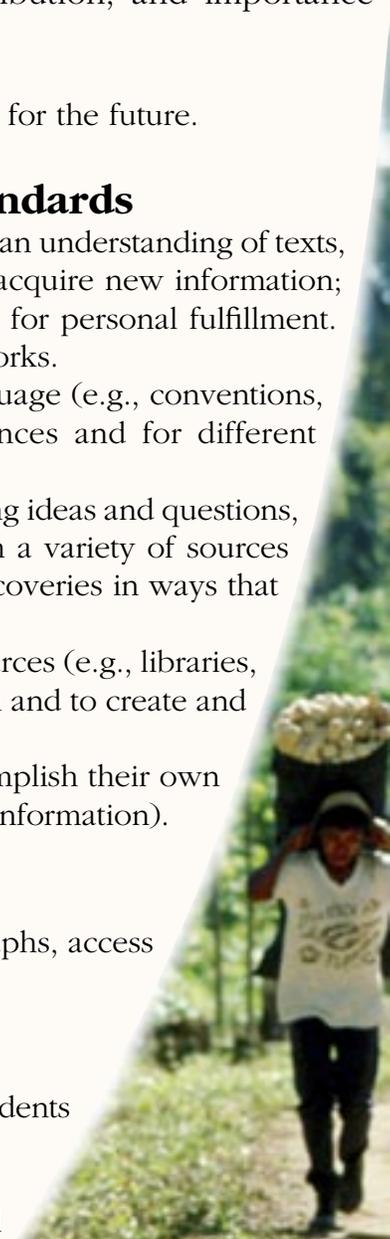
Lesson Resources

For information and archived articles, activities, and multiple maps and graphs, access www.nationalgeographic.com or any of the links you will find there.

Key Concepts

This unit assumes that the teacher has shared the following concepts with students via lecture or through class discussion:

- Central America is an isthmus with a huge diversity of physical



landscapes as well as a complexity of diverse races, cultures, and traditions.

- Students know the definition of an isthmus. Discuss the importance of the construction of the Panama Canal in 1914 and make certain the students understand the trade implications of the canal. (Students might be assigned to design a Panama Canal “timeline” indicating canal initiatives from the 1500s with the first road built across the Isthmus, to 1999 when canal ownership was transferred to Panama.)
- The economy is agrarian and the majority of people are subsistence farmers.
- Much of the political conflict in Central America has derived from the inequality of land and power; the majority of the land and much of the power are in the hands of a relatively small number of people.
- Central America is the fastest growing region in the Western Hemisphere.

Procedure

Have students work in pairs or larger cooperative groups.

1. Using a classroom map or individual downloaded maps, have students establish the location of Central America.
2. Have them write down the seven countries of Central America, noting which ones border both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. [Challenge: Have pairs of students write questions about the physical geography of Central America with which to challenge other student groups. Students can ask questions about geography, directions, borders, mountain ranges, etc.]
3. Next, divide the class in thirds and have student groups research the geography and climates of the three major land areas: the mountainous areas, the Caribbean coastal lands (lowlands- tropical wet climate), and the Pacific coastal lands (grasslands- tropical wet & dry climate). Have student groups present to the class the answer to the following essential question: How does Central America’s geography and climate limit land available for farming? Students should understand why available farmland is so valuable.
4. Next, student groups report on the ethnic diversity of Central America: Indians, Europeans, African-Americans, others. Have students design and share graphs and charts illustrating population percentages of these different groups. Ask students to discuss the following questions: How has the geography of Central America added to the separation of different ethnic groups? How have radio, television, air transportation and the Internet begun to “break down” physical and/or ethnic barriers?
5. Have students respond to the following question: Who owns the land? (Students should come to the understanding that a few wealthy Europeans own the majority of the land.)

Problem-Based Lesson: Land Reform

Divide students into groups of three. Each member of the group is assigned one of the following roles: a Central American subsistence farmer; a Central American wealthy landowner; a Central American merchant.

Give students the following situation:

A politician in Guatemala is running on a platform of “land reform.” He would like to re-divide the land in a more equitable fashion, making it possible for farmers to own the land they work and for merchants to purchase the property on which their shops are located. In your role as one of the character above, will you vote for or against this candidate?

Task:

Write a letter to the editor of the local paper either supporting or opposing this candidate’s bid for election. Make certain to explain why your character opposes or supports the candidate, and how the candidate will or will not improve the quality of your life.

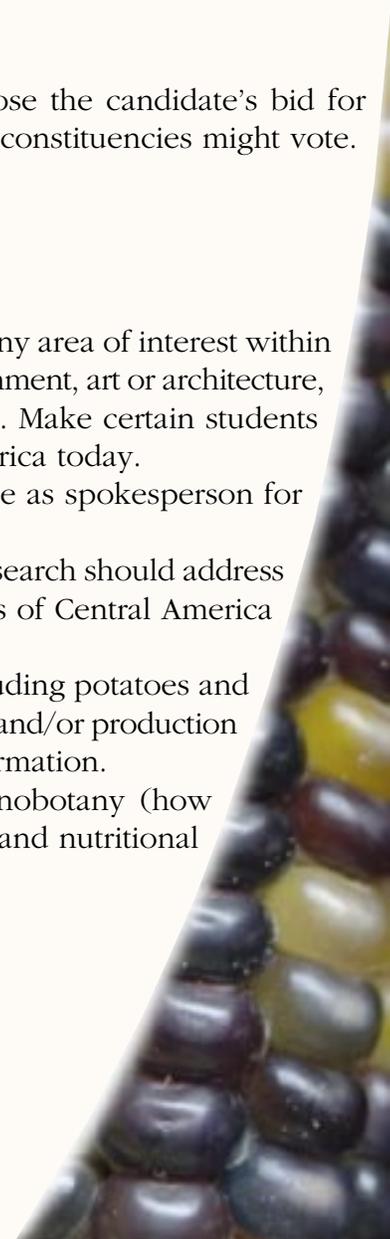
Student Assessment

Students might prepare a “speech” explaining why they support or oppose the candidate’s bid for election; class might hold a “real” election to determine how the different constituencies might vote.

Extending the Lesson

Have students research any of the following:

- A Native American “empire”—Maya, Aztec, or Inca—and report on any area of interest within the chosen culture. Students can focus on the daily life, religion, government, art or architecture, achievements of the empire, crafts, foods, or other cultural artifacts. Make certain students address the influences of these cultures which remain in Latin America today.
- Have students research Rigoberta Menchú who won the Nobel Prize as spokesperson for indigenous peoples in Latin America.
- Have students research Guatemala’s major export (coffee). Student research should address the origins of cacao, the value of this export, and the characteristics of Central America which make it ideal for growing coffee.
- Students can research other crops important to Central America including potatoes and corn. Students can create graphs to compare different exported goods and/or production over the past ten years and make predictions on future export information.
- Have students define and gather information on the field of ethnobotany (how indigenous people use plants), using medicinal, cultural, religious, and nutritional uses of native plants.



LESSON 3

USING STORIES TO TEACH VALUABLE LESSONS

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

Lesson Objective

At the completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the value and importance of storytelling as a way to transmit history, knowledge, and cultural values from one generation to another.
- Understand the power inherent in finding dynamic words to “paint pictures,” so that their own oral and/or written descriptions can be enhanced.

Time

This lesson should take approximately two class periods. It may be extended as the teacher deems necessary.

Materials Needed

- Internet access or a copy of “The Man Who Turned Into a Buzzard” (found on this website)
- Pencils or pens, paper or word processing access

Connections to the Curriculum

- Language Arts
- Art
- Speech and Drama

Connections to the National Language Arts Standards

Standard #1: Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, and classic contemporary works.

Standard #2: Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in

many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

Standard #3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Standard #4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

Standard #9: Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

Standard #12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Procedure

1. Have students read “The Man Who Turned Into a Buzzard.”
2. Have students restate the “moral” of this story in their own words. Do they know any stories from their own culture(s) that give a similar moral? Have students retell or read the story from *Aesop’s Fables*, “The Turtle and the Hare.” Ask them to compare this fable with “The Man Who Turned Into a Buzzard.”
3. Have students discuss the traits of the “man” and see if the “hare” had any of these same traits. Next, have them compare the sly buzzard’s traits with those of the fox. Can they see the similarities? Differences?
4. Students should now brainstorm a list of traits that are deemed important in their society (honesty, courage, love, etc.). Create a class list of these traits. Next, have the class create a list of *negative* traits that their cultural frowns upon (dishonesty, laziness, cowardice, greed, etc.).
5. Next, have students choose one trait from either list and create a story around that trait. Students should make certain to have their story end with a moral stressing the importance of having/not having the particular trait in our society.
6. After writing the stories, students should be asked to orally retell their story to another student; stories should not be read or memorized, but simply told by the author.
7. If students feel comfortable, they might relate their story to the entire class.
8. One student might tell his or her story while other students “act out” the story; this is particular effective if the 9-12 students create stories for younger classes.
9. A class book of these stories might be created and “published” for all to enjoy.
10. Students should concentrate on using a wide variety of adjectives and adverbs to enhance the “visual” qualities of their stories.

Student Assessment

Students can help create one rubric for story creations and one for oral interpretations of their stories. Stories can be graded based upon the effectiveness of the

story to explain the “moral” and on the descriptive techniques used by students to help listeners visualize the stories.

Extending the Lesson

1. Students can examine stories from other cultures and time periods to analyze the similarities and differences in these creations.
2. Students might also research the topic of oral histories and report on the importance of these types of testimonies to the preservation of historical accounts.
3. Students can take a current or historical event and interview someone who can give them a “first-hand” account of this event. Students should then compare this interview with a text-book account of the same event. How can we compare the two accounts? Is one more powerful than another? What purpose does each serve? How much weight should we give one or the other? Students can write up their interviews in dialog format or in the first person (“as seen through the eyes of...”).

