

CULTURE GUATEMALA BOXES



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AGRADECIMIENTOS

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Contributors

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Contributing authors include Latin Americanist graduate students Adam Flores, Charla Henley, Jennie Grebb, Sarah Leister, Neoshia Roemer, Jacob Sandler, Kalyn Finnell, Lorraine Archibald, Amanda Hooker, Teresa Drenten, Marty Smith, Maria Jose Ramos, and Kathryn Peters. LAI project assistant Katrina Dillon created all curriculum materials. Project management, document design, and editorial support were provided by LAI staff person Keira Philipp-Schnurer.

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Sponsors

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To learn more about the sponsor organizations, see their respective websites:

- **[Latin American & Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico](#)**
- **[Instituto Cervantes of Albuquerque](#)**
- **[National Hispanic Cultural Center](#)**
- **[Spanish Resource Center of Albuquerque](#)**

NORTH/CENTRAL AMERICA



GUATEMALA



INTRODUCCION

INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to box in a country’s culture is necessarily problematic. Guatemala is no exception. Analysis can begin with the understanding that Guatemala was engaged in a “civil war”—more accurately considered “genocide” by the Commission for Historical Clarification—from 1962 until 1996, a period during which state-sanctioned death squads attempted to snuff out indigenous communities in over 600 massacres, resulting in thousands of deaths. Guatemala’s indigenous communities have survived, however, and they continue to wage collective resistance against government collusion with multinational mining and logging companies that are destroying the forests, eroding the soil, and creating deadly mudslides.

Of course, there are multiple views on conditions in present-day Guatemala, and these diverge greatly depending on the viewer. The author of this introduction, for instance, works with a native Guatemalan who argues forcefully in favor of “modernizing the economy”—a code term that is often used to describe increased dependency on foreign capital and the continued export of a nation’s valuable natural resources for the exclusive benefit of foreign corporations and the domestic elite.

But consideration of Guatemala requires moving beyond the nation’s economic and environmental status. Traditional Mayan influence continues to reflect itself in the bright colors of indigenous dress; the foods that people eat; how they worship; what they read; what music they listen to; what they buy and sell in the catalogs, markets, and stores. The goal of this culture box is to provide resources for approaching Guatemala in a multifaceted, multidisciplinary way. Within this box, students and educators will find the tools to explore the nation’s geography, its civil war, its racial and ethnic dimensions, its immigrant experience, its Mayan history, its incredible language diversity, its often untold history of indigenous and black slavery, the development of Marimba music, and many other themes of Guatemalan life. We hope that you find these tools useful.

OBJETOS ITEMS

Reference Items

Artifacts

Music & Instruments

Films

Books

FLAG



DESCRIPTION

This item is a small Guatemalan flag. There is also a large Guatemalan flag in the box.

The flag of Guatemala is marked by three equal vertical bands of light blue (hoist side), white, and light blue, with the coat of arms centered in the white band. The blue bands stand for the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea and the sea and sky; the white band denotes peace and purity. The coat of arms includes a green and red quetzal (the national bird), which represents liberty, and a scroll bearing the inscription LIBERTAD 15 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 1821 (the original date of independence from Spain). All of these are superimposed on a pair of crossed rifles signifying Guatemala's willingness to defend itself, along with and a pair of crossed swords representing honor, and finally framed by a laurel wreath symbolizing victory.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Visit the [CIA Factbook](#) to learn about the flags of other countries.

WALL MAP



DESCRIPTION

This item is a large rolled map of Guatemala.

Guatemala is located at the northern end of the Central American isthmus, bordering Mexico, the Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, El Salvador and Honduras. Guatemala is about 42,000 square miles in size, or roughly the size of Ohio. The country is geographically diverse and made up of enormous mountains, tropical plains, desert valleys, and lowland jungles and swamps. For more, see the Geography thematic guide.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- The Latin American and Iberian Institute: [**K'iche' Maya Oral History Project.**](#)
- Universidad Francisco Marroquin: [**The Popol Vu Museum \(Maya creation story \[Spanish\]\).**](#)

PHOTOGRAPHY ALBUM



DESCRIPTION

This item is a binder collection of photos taken in Guatemala. Each photograph is unlabeled, but can be identified by a number that corresponds to more information on a citation page. The photos are selected so as to encourage divergent, reflective conversations among students about the many ways to interpret a given country's natural, physical, and social resources.

BACKSTRAP WEAVING



DESCRIPTION

This item is an example of Guatemalan weaving.

Weaving was a developed craft in Guatemala long before the Spanish arrived in the 16th century. Today, weavers in Guatemala's highlands create intricate and brightly colored pieces of cloth for everyday wear. Towns have their own distinct symbols and designs (similar to emblems on flags). For instance, in Santa Catarina Nahualá, a two-headed eagle marks many textiles. In the past, different symbols were often used to signify the wearer's marital status, social class, or age.

The backstrap loop, or *kiem*, is made of sticks and a thick strap (*mecapal*) that wraps around the weaver's hips. The weaver sits or squats back into the strap to give the strings of the loom tension. The opposite end of the loom can be attached to a tree or post.

In *Angela Weaves a Dream: A Story of a Young Maya Artist*, Michèle Solá recounts a weavers' prayer:

Give me three graces
Give me three battens
Give me three heddles
So I may weave my cloth
So I may weave my sampler
So I may one day weave my own huipil.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Guatemala Guide](#)
- [Angela Weaves a Dream: The Story of a Young Maya Artist](#)
- Check out the [Endangered Threads Documentaries](#), which has footage of weavers from a variety of different communities.
- For a step-by-step guide to backstrap weaving, visit the [University of Tennessee's webpage on Backstrap Weaving in Jacaltenango](#)
- [You Tube: Demonstration of backstrap weaving method.](#)

BASKET



DESCRIPTION

This item is a basket that is used for storing small items, like tortillas.

Baskets in Guatemala are found in different shapes and sizes and are used as hampers, strainers, baby cribs, or for any number of other purposes. Armed with handle-less baskets (which can be carried atop the head), indigenous women have traditionally dominated Guatemala's thriving markets. [Source: Guatemala Guide: A Passport to Great Travel by Paul Glassman].

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [You Tube: A stroll through a Guatemalan market.](#)

BEANS

(BLACK, KIDNEY, MIXED, PILOY, RED, AND WHITE)



DESCRIPTION

This item is a plastic bag packed with Guatemalan beans.

The bean is a staple food for the Guatemalan people. There are many kinds of beans grown and eaten in Guatemala. Beans are grown in all 22 departments of Guatemala, but particularly in Peten, Jutiapa, and Chiquimula.

Beans, together with corn and squash, are collectively referred to by indigenous people as the Three Sisters of Latin America. The three crops take different nutrients from the soil and grow in compatible ways, forming a symbiotic relationship where the bean climbs the corn stalk (like a trellis), while the squash plant provides shade that protects the roots below from weeds.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **[You Tube: Black Beans from Guatemala.](#)**
- Some detailed black bean recipes are available at Foodologie: Guatemalan black beans, **[part 1](#)** and **[part 2](#)**.
- Michigan State University: **[Bean Growing Environments in Guatemala.](#)**
- **[Mother Earth News: The Three Sisters](#)**
- To see bean planting in action, check out You Tube: **[Alma Cautiva NGO, Mayan Bean Project.](#)**

BUS (MINIATURE)



DESCRIPTION

This item is a colorful, wooden toy bus.

Buses are a critical form of transportation in Guatemala. According to [Lonely Planet's website](#):

Buses go almost everywhere in Guatemala. Guatemala's buses will leave you with some of your most vivid memories of the country. Most of them are ancient school buses from the US and Canada. It is not unusual for a local family of five to squeeze into seats that were originally designed for two child-sized bottoms. Many travelers know these vehicles as chicken buses, [notice that the bus in the culture box features a chicken perched on its roof] after the live cargo accompanying many passengers.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- For some footage of the colorful, real-life buses in Guatemala, recorded by backpacking travelers, check out You Tube: [Central American Chicken Buses](#).

CLAY POTTERY (MINIATURE)



DESCRIPTION

These items are clay vessels, used for storing water, cooking, eating and drinking, and for ceremonial purposes.

Clay pottery has been used by the Guatemalan Maya for thousands of years. The craft has survived in spite of large-scale modernization trends in Guatemalan society. Some anthropologists have viewed Guatemalan pottery as an appropriate avenue for understanding technology as a cultural phenomenon. As one author describes, “Guatemala is becoming modernized, but the process is contributing to the alienation of people from nature and from each other as paved highways cover the countryside, cities develop shopping centers, and modern hotels rise above colonial buildings. Still, close to cities and in remote mountains, we find potters who, with the ancient and stable technology of their Maya ancestors, are producing ceramic vessels for themselves, for other Indians, and for rural and urban Ladinos.” [Source: *The Traditional Pottery of Guatemala*].

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Traditional Pottery of Guatemala.](#)
- To see a pottery workshop in Guatemala, check out YouTube: [San Miguel Dueñas - pottery.](#)

COFFEE (MINIATURE)



DESCRIPTION

Coffee is one of the principal crops grown in Guatemala and exported throughout the world.

This item is a sealed bag of Capeuleu Antigua coffee.

The coffee beans used in Capeuleu’s Antigua blend are said to be planted in “fertile volcanic soil at an altitude of 1,500 meters.” The manufacturers describe its flavor as one that “will transport you back in time to [an] ancient past.” Indeed the Antigua area of Guatemala is known for its prized, tasty, high-altitude coffee.

Of course, there is more to the Guatemalan coffee industry than the “intense” and “irresistible aroma” of its product. Coffee plantations were born in the wake of mass land expropriations of the mid-nineteenth century. Church land, land belonging to small-scale farmers, and communal lands of the Mayan people were taken and converted into the backbone of a fledgling coffee economy. A coffee oligarchy formed, dependent on agrarian laws that criminalized labor organizing and vagrancy laws that supplied the plantation-elite with coerced labor. By the late 1800s, coffee accounted for 90% of Guatemala’s exports and it continues to be the country’s largest export to this day.

Work on a Guatemalan coffee plantation has been historically characterized as indentured servitude—where workers are in perpetual debt to their employers. Even today, workers on

some plantations live on-site in large barracks, stick lean-tos or dirt-floored homes. Undisclosed rent is deducted from the workers' starvation wage of \$2.00 to \$3.00 per day. Despite documented safety precautions, chemical pesticides are sprayed in the fields where unprotected workers pick beans. When world coffee prices fall, wages and safeguards are further decreased and living conditions for workers become abominable.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- A valuable resource for the writing of this page is the first chapter of William Stanley's fantastic book: **The Protection Racket State.**
- To visit the manufacturer's website, check out **capeuleu.com.**
- For a concise history of Guatemala's coffee industry, visit **Equal Exchange: History of Coffee in Guatemala.**
- See also, the US Labor Education in the Americas Project: **A Day in the Life of a Coffee Worker.**
- **Human Rights Watch: Guatemala.**

CURRENCY



DESCRIPTION

This is a sampling of paper bills in Guatemalan currency.

In ancient Guatemala, as in many other countries around the world, a bartering system pre-dates the use of currency. Some modern sources suggest that the current currency system is referred to as “quetzal” because it references the ancient Maya’s practice of trading in Quetzal feathers, among other precious objects such as spices and stones.

Each unit, or quetzal, is comprised of one hundred centavos.

In many tourist destinations around the country, U.S. dollars are also accepted as currency.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- From the National Bank of Guatemala, read [The History of Guatemalan Currency](#)

CORN



DESCRIPTION

Both ancient and contemporary Mayan people have a long history of celebrating and acknowledging the importance of corn. Many rituals are timed, for instance, to connect with growing cycles of corn.

In addition to its historical significance, corn is simply prevalent in many of the dishes prepared in Guatemala - whether on its own or prepared as a tortilla.

Corn in Guatemala is also notable for its many varieties. Unlike the singular sweet corn that appears in many North American supermarkets, Guatemalans have access to a wide variety of corn, a fact alluded to by the small, colorful sample in the culture box.

The production, trade, and consumption of corn in Guatemala is so complex that it can become a means by which to examine the social, political, and economic history of the country. As an example of how corn can be used to understand political and economic actions, consider it in relation to global food production and the increasing prevalence of multinational agricultural companies (juxtaposed against the small-scale farming historically practiced in many non-industrialized countries). The current encroachment of Monsanto, for instance, has caused great concern among smaller communities given the company's practices of privatizing seeds and promoting the use of chemicals. Corn is at the forefront of the debate about Monsanto's

potential influence in Guatemala.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- From the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian, read more about the importance of Corn and Calendar Traditions among the Maya
- News articles on “In Guatemala, indigenous communities prevail against Monsanto”
- USC Digital Folklore archives: Chilaquilas [an oral history]

GOURD



DESCRIPTION

This item is a light brown, lightweight gourd vessel.

Gourds are commonly used by the Maya as kitchen utensils. Mayan gourd vessels were in use before the invention of pottery—influencing the design of the earliest clay pots. The gourd in the culture box is used for carrying liquids today, much as it would have been used 2,500 years ago.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [YouTube: How to Make a Gourd Bowl.](#)

GOURD RATTLE



DESCRIPTION

This item is a colorful rattle, with a plain stick handle.

The Guatemalan gourd rattle (or chinchin) is used by dancers when they perform traditional Maya dances. Maya dances vary by town. In Guatemala Guide, Paul Glassman describes one of the rarer dances, the “Palo Volador” (or flying pole), which is performed in Chichicastenango at fiesta time:

“A long pole is set up in front of the church and two ropes long enough to reach to the ground are attached to a frame at the top. Two men climb to the top, set themselves in the loops at the ends of the ropes, and swing out from the pole. As the ropes unwind, the performers swing farther and farther into space until they finally come down to the ground. Obviously of pre-Conquest origin, the dance is similar to one performed in Mexico which is related to the Aztec calendar and sun-worship rituals.”

Gourd rattles like the one in the culture box might be used together with marimbas, flutes, and tambour drums in any number of these regional dances.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- For instructions on making different types of gourd rattles, visit [The Mudcat Cafe: Gourd Rattlers](#)
- [YouTube: John Burkhalter’s “Maya Gourd Rattles”](#)

HANDCRAFTED DOLLS



DESCRIPTION

This item is a set of four clothed dolls.

Each Guatemalan Maya community has its own unique style of dress. These dolls display the traditional dress from one of the Kaqchikel Maya communities.

Maya textiles are often woven on backstrap looms (there is an example of backstrap weaving also in the culture box). Sometimes designs are woven on both sides of the fabric, making the garment reversible. Skirts, huipiles, and shirts are generally cut from jaspé fabric, with tie-dyed strands of cotton skillfully arranged so that undyed portions form patterns in the cloth. Hats, shirts, and trousers come in a variety of styles and patterns and long blanket skirts are sometimes worn around the pants in highland towns. Even when wearing western clothing, men may carry a woolen shoulder bag, which they often knit themselves.

The huipile, the traditional blouse of Mayan women, is generally tucked into the skirt. Many women now wear huipiles of cloth, woven on foot looms in Totonicapán. Two of the dolls in the culture box carry baskets atop their head. The baskets sit upon cushions of cloth, called a Tzute. Women traditionally go barefoot, but plastic shoes are now the norm for town wear. It is also now common to see a Maya woman on her way to the capital wearing high-heels or platform shoes with an otherwise traditional outfit. [Source: Guatemala Guide].

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [A sample of the variety of styles in women's wear](#)
- [YouTube: Tour of Guatemalan Corte Making](#)

POTTERY AND WEAVING (MINIATURE)



DESCRIPTION

This item is a mixed-media (pottery and weaving) craft depicting the “recuerda de Panajachel.”

The Maya of Guatemala are skilled potters, weavers and basket-makers. This hanging craft depicts these three aspects of life in Panajachel.

Panajachel is a municipio in the department of Sololá in the Guatemalan highlands. It is located in southwest central Guatemala near the northern shore of Lake Atitlán. The town is a tourist attraction and major market center for the surrounding area. Panajachel, according to one tourist guide, is filled with coffee plantings and vegetable patches that give the town the appearance of a great garden. [Source: Guatemala Guide].

Clay pots are attached to the top and bottom of the piece, referencing the Mayan potters who have spent over 2,000 years mastering their craft. The miniature blanket in the center reminds viewers of Maya weavers who create intricate and brightly colored textiles for everyday use. Other items on the blanket can be viewed as a tribute to the local market economy of Panajachel. There are two baskets, similar to a basket in the culture box, that represent both Guatemalan basket-makers (a craft that predates the invention of clay pottery) and Guatemala’s thriving markets.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- To catch a glimpse of a bustling market in Guatemala, visit [YouTube: Panajachel Market](#).
- Check out [Lonely Planet: Introducing Panajachel](#).
- [The Traditional Pottery of Guatemala](#).
- For a step-by-step guide to backstrap weaving, visit the [University of Tennessee's webpage on Backstrap Weaving in Jacaltenango](#).
- For a photographic tribute to the Maya of Lake Atitlan, check out Bill Muirhead's website: [Lords of Atitlan \(English and Spanish\)](#).

SAINT FIGURE (MINIATURE)



DESCRIPTION

This item is a painted, wooden saint.

Each Guatemalan community has its own patron saint. The people believe that these saints are protectors of their communities.

While the ancient Maya worshipped various gods of nature, including gods of the Sun, Moon, Rain and Corn, these beliefs were transformed by the arrival of Spanish Catholicism. Generally speaking, God does not govern the world of men directly, but operates through the saints who are representatives of each village. The most powerful saints are the Virgin Mary and Christ. The Virgin is associated with the moon and Christ with the sun. Thus, to some extent, the religion of the Maya has survived the conquest forming a Maya Catholicism. [Source: The Encyclopedia of Religion and War].

In its **K'iche' Maya Oral History Project**, the University of New Mexico's Latin American & Iberian Institute has made available several stories told by the K'iche' Maya people in the K'iche' Maya language. One of these stories, "The Dream of Juan Ekoq'ij" relates the narrator's self-described process of abandonment of his traditional Maya beliefs, in favor of Catholicism:

When Juan Ekoq'ij abandoned his traditional belief system and embraced the Orthodox Cath-

olic religion, he had several dreams that represented the conflicts he was experiencing during this change in his life. First he dreamed that he was hearing a marimba playing and a voice was inviting him to dance with the women who were there. The voice told him his new religion would not give him happiness. His old way of life, including dances with the marimba, was the true source of happiness. A month later he dreamed that he was on a very muddy road, but a lot of gold was there in the mud. A voice told him to pick up the gold and become rich. Later he saw a group of people who had picked up some of the gold. They were standing at the gate of Hell. They cried out that they were going to die. One month later he had another dream. He was climbing a ladder. When he got to the top rung he fell off the ladder into a stinking pile of garbage. There he found some devils. He began praying, and finally escaped the devils. He interpreted the ladder to be the path of a virtuous life, and his fall represented his past sins.

For other Maya, there is no contradiction in maintaining belief in Catholicism while still retaining traditional beliefs. In 1995, for example, Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú had her son baptized at the Maya shrine of Chaitzak. [Source: The Ancient Spirituality of the Modern Maya].

As is certainly evident, the effect of the European conquest of the Americas on Maya spirituality retains significance today, and is far too complex to be adequately addressed in the space of this page. The materials in the culture box may be helpful for understanding.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [You Tube: Celebration to Patron Saint in Antigua.](#)

SHAWL



DESCRIPTION

This item is a brightly-colored Maya shawl.

Shawls like this are used by Maya women to carry their babies on their backs. One important aspect of culture is the consideration of how children are raised. Naturally, a Guatemalan Maya baby is not treated the same as a baby living in the United States. For instance, Maya mothers have expressed shock that babies in the U.S. often sleep away from their parents in a different room ([Morelli 1998](#)).

One observer has given an account of a Maya mother playfully putting her child to sleep in a shawl like the one in the culture box:

Juana laid Angela (16 months) in the sling and positioned it on her head with Angela at her back and began to sway back and forth in a rocking manner. Angela began to babble “mama, mama” over and over. Juanita said “papa, papa.” There was a long pause, then Angela said “papa, papa.” Everyone in the family laughed ([Bazyk 2003](#)).

The shawl in the culture box represents a window into the raising of Maya children and the early connection between mother and child in Maya culture.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- To learn more about textiles and see an example of current weaving practices in Guatemala, visit the [Trama Textiles Women's Weaving Cooperative](#)
- Museum of Anthropology at the University of Missouri: [Mayan Costumes of Guatemala](#)

SLING SHOT



DESCRIPTION

This item is a dark, quetzal-shaped, fully operational slingshot.

Slingshots have been used for centuries by the Guatemalan Maya for hunting birds and small animals. Today, a Guatemalan man in the countryside will often keep a slingshot in his back pocket, in case a bird or squirrel comes into range. This slingshot is carved in the shape of the quetzal bird. High in Guatemala's cloud forests, the quetzal is instantly recognizable for its elegant green plumage and red breast. According to a popular story, the red breast first appeared on the quetzal after it landed on the wounds of the K'iche' prince, Tecun Uman, who was killed during the Spanish conquest. The quetzal has become an important symbol in Guatemala. It is Guatemala's national bird. A quetzal proudly perches upon the coat-of-arms on Guatemala's flag. The ancient Maya used the bird's tail-feathers as precious currency. Today, the standard Guatemalan currency is called a quetzal.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [YouTube: Refugio del Quetzal](#)

WOODEN MASK



DESCRIPTION

This item is a small wooden mask shaped as a jaguar.

Wooden masks, like this jaguar mask, are used in many traditional Maya dances. For instance, the Maya “deer dance,” which has pre-conquest roots, features dancers wearing colorful costumes and shawls and masks shaped like deer, panthers, dogs, and jaguars. Today, the dance sometimes incorporates elements of the European conquest and the Catholic Church.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Check out, the History Channel’s page [the Rise and Fall of the Maya Empire](#).
- Students can also watch the History Channel’s short video: [The Mayans](#).

WORLD MUSIC: GUATEMALA 2: MÚSICA TRADICIONAL



DESCRIPTION

This item is an audio CD featuring Marimba music from Guatemala.

Guatemalan music is often associated with Guatemala's national instrument, the Marimba. The Marimba is a percussion (xylophone-type) instrument consisting of wooden keys and resonators (typically gourds or wooden boxes), played with a mallet. For more information, see the Music thematic guide.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [YouTube: Guatemala World Music Channel](#)
- Revista Latin de Musica American Latino Music American Review: [The Marimba of Mexico and Central America](#)

COLIBRÍ



DESCRIPTION

This item is a young adult novel by Ann Cameron. This edition also includes a reading group discussion guide at the end.

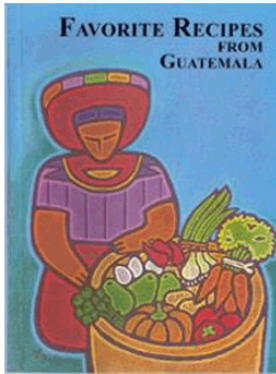
From the publisher: When Tzunún was little, her mother nicknamed her Colibrí, Spanish for “hummingbird.” At age four, Colibrí is kidnapped from her parents in Guatemala City and ever since she’s traveled with Uncle, the ex-soldier and wandering beggar, who renamed her Rosa. Uncle told Rosa that he looked for her parents, but never found them. Rosa hasn’t forgotten and still longs for her true family.

Long ago, fortune-tellers predicted that Rosa would bring Uncle luck—a large treasure to last all his life. Uncle won’t let Rosa go, and the years slip by as they beg and cheat their way through the towns of Guatemala. Danger mounts as Uncle grows desperate in seeking his fortune—and as Colibrí grows daring in seeking her freedom.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Vamos a Leer as created a detailed [Educator’s Guide](#) on the book.
- A brief reader’s guide is available at Random House: [Colibri by Ann Cameron](#).
- To read about the author, visit Macmillan: [Ann Cameron](#).

FAVORITE RECIPES FROM GUATEMALA



DESCRIPTION

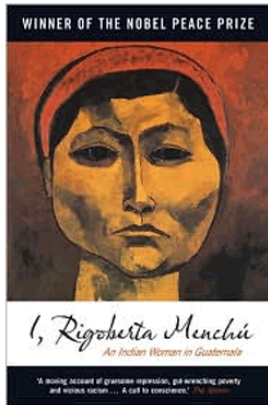
This item is a collection of recipes entitled *Favorite Recipes of Guatemala*, written by Laura Lynn Woodward and illustrated by Angelika Bauer.

From the publisher: This collection includes recipes that can be prepared for daily meals or for festive occasions. It has a strong emphasis on indigenous foods with corn, tomato, and chiles. Separate chapters provide recipes for tortillas, sauces, snacks, & salads; vegetables and side dishes; soups & stews; other main dishes; desserts; and beverages. Some recipes are variations of dishes enjoyed in much of Latin America. It includes an introductory essay by Vincent Stanzione, "People of Corn: You Are what You Eat," and illustrations by Angelika Bauer. Many foods, including tortillas, beans, tamales, and paches are still made in the ancient way using clay cooking implements over a wood fire

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Cocina Guatemalteca \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Cocina Regional Guatemalteca \(Spanish\)](#)
- [YouTube: Black Beans from Guatemala](#)
- [Mother Earth News: The Three Sisters](#)

I, RIGOBERTA MENCHU



DESCRIPTION

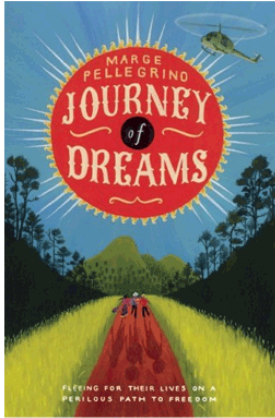
This item is an autobiographical account of Nobel Peace Prize winner, and human rights activist, Rigoberta Menchú.

From the Publisher: Rigoberta Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her efforts to end the oppression of indigenous peoples in Guatemala. Her story reflects the experiences common to many Indian communities in Latin America today. Rigoberta suffered gross injustice and hardship in her early life: her brother, father and mother were murdered by the Guatemalan military. She learned Spanish and turned to catechist work as an expression of political revolt as well as religious commitment. The anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, herself a Latin American woman, conducted a series of interviews with Rigoberta Menchú. The result is a book unique in contemporary literature which records the detail of everyday Indian life. Rigoberta's gift for striking expression vividly conveys both the religious and superstitious beliefs of her community and her personal response to feminist and socialist ideas. Above all, these pages are illuminated by the enduring courage and passionate sense of justice of an extraordinary woman.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Gifts of Speech: [Menchú Tum's Nobel Lecture](#)
- Iowa State University – Archive of Women's Political Communication: [Rigoberta Menchú](#)
- [UNHCR: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)

JOURNEY OF DREAMS



DESCRIPTION

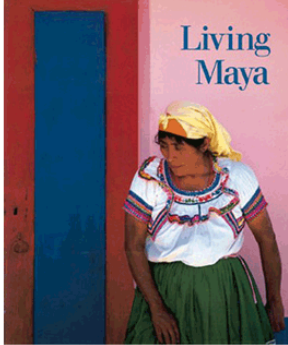
This item is a young adult novel by Marge Pellegrino.

From the publisher: For the peaceful highlanders of Guatemala, life has become a nightmare. Helicopters slash like machetes through the once-quiet air. Soldiers patrol the streets, hunting down suspected guerrillas. Villagers mysteriously disappear and children are recruited as soldiers. Tomasa’s family is growing increasingly desperate, especially after Mama goes into hiding with Tomasa’s oldest brother. Finally, after their house is razed to the ground and the villagers massacred, Tomasa, Manuelito, and baby Maria set off with Papa on a perilous journey to find Mama and Carlos, only to discover that where one journey ends, another begins. This gripping novel tells the story of how Tomasa’s family survives the Guatemalan army’s brutal regime and how, in the midst of tragedy, their love and loyalty—and Papa’s storytelling—keeps them going on their harrowing journey as refugees to the United States. Mirrored in the tapestries of Tomasa’s dreams, the dramatic events of the Guatemalan army’s “scorched earth” campaign of the 1980s are tempered with hope and the generosity of the human spirit.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- For more information, visit Marge Pellegrino’s [official website](#).
- For more on the Guatemalan “scorched-earth campaign,” check out the UN truth commission’s report on Guatemala: [“Guatemala, Memory of Silence.”](#)

LIVING MAYA



DESCRIPTION

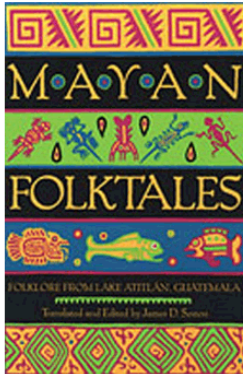
This item is a thick book documenting contemporary Maya culture. Large, beautiful photographs accompany accessible but detailed text. *Living Maya* is written by Walter F. Morris, Jr., and illustrated by Jeffrey J. Foxx.

From the publisher: This is the first book to document the life of the Maya of today, a remarkable people who are the direct heirs to the magnificent Maya culture of Pre-Columbian times. *Living Maya* captures the spirit of an extraordinary people and includes 125 full-color photographs and 25 line drawings.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics](#)
- [UNHCR: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)

MAYAN FOLKTALES: FOLKLORE FROM LAKE ATITLÁN, GUATEMALA



DESCRIPTION

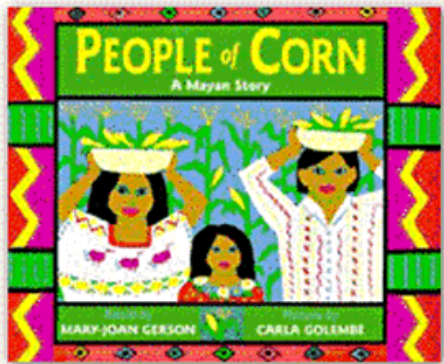
This item is a collection of Mayan folktales titled *Folklore from Lake Atitlán, Guatemala*. It is edited by James Sexton.

From the publisher: This collection of folklore offers a rich and lively panorama of Mayan mythic heritage. Here are everyday tales of village life; legends of witches, shamans, spiritualists, tricksters, and devils; fables of naguales, or persons who can change into animal forms; ribald stories of love and life; cautionary tales of strange and menacing neighbors and of the danger lurking within the human heart. These legends narrate origin and creation stories, explain the natural world, and reinforce cultural beliefs and values such as honesty, industriousness, sharing, fairness, and cleverness. Whether tragic or comic, fantastic or earthy, whimsical or profound, these tales capture the mystery, fragility, and power of the Mayan world.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Cultural Survival: [Book Review of Mayan Folktales](#)
- The Latin American and Iberian Institute: [K'iche' Maya Oral History Project](#)
- Universidad Francisco Marroquin: [The Popol Vuj Museum \(Maya creation story\)](#)

PEOPLE OF CORN: A MAYAN STORY



DESCRIPTION

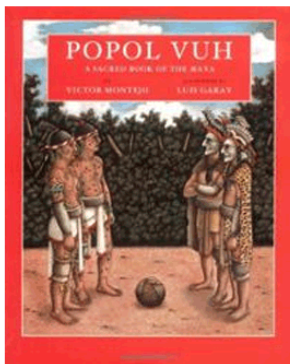
This is a children's book titled *People of Corn: A Mayan Story*, written by Mary-Joan Gerson and illustrated by Carla Golembe.

From the publisher: After several unsuccessful attempts to create grateful creatures, the Mayan gods use sacred corn to fashion a people who will thank and praise their creators.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- History Channel: [The Mayans](#)
- Religious Studies: [A Global View](#)
- The Latin American and Iberian Institute: [K'iche' Maya Oral History Project](#)
- Universidad Francisco Marroquin: [The Popol Vuj Museum \(Maya creation story\)](#)
- Living Maya Time: [Creation Story of Maya](#)

POPOL VUH: A SACRED BOOK OF THE MAYA



DESCRIPTION

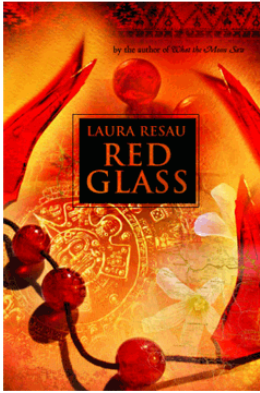
This item is a unique young adult book entitled *Popol Vuj: A Sacred Book of the Mayas*, written by Victor Montejo and illustrated by Luis Garay.

From the publisher: The fundamental book on Mayan cosmology and history, in a version written for young readers by Guatemalan anthropologist Victor Montejo. The K'iche' myths of origin are illustrated by Nicaraguan artist Luis Garay.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- History Channel: [The Mayans](#)
- Religious Studies: [A Global View](#)
- The Latin American and Iberian Institute: [K'iche' Maya Oral History Project](#)
- Universidad Francisco Marroquin: [The Popol Vuh Museum \(Maya creation story\)](#)
- Living Maya Time: [Creation Story of Maya](#)

RED GLASS



DESCRIPTION

This item is an award-winning young adult novel by Laura Resau.

While this book is not specifically about Guatemala, it is an immigration story that is representative of the journey taken by many Guatemalans across the southern border of the United States.

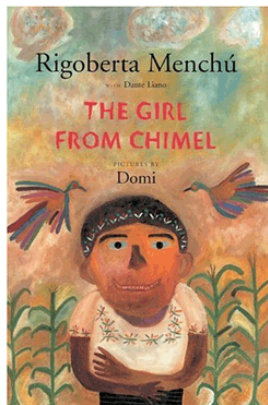
From the publisher: One night Sophie and her parents are called to a hospital where Pablo, a six-year-old Mexican boy, is recovering from dehydration. Crossing the border into Arizona with a group of Mexicans and a coyote, or guide, Pablo and his parents faced such harsh conditions that the boy is the only survivor. Pablo comes to live with Sophie, her parents, and Sophie's Aunt Dika, a refugee of the war in Bosnia. Sophie loves Pablo—her Principito, or Little Prince—but after a year, Sophie's parents are able to contact Pablo's extended family in Mexico, and Sophie, Dika, and Dika's new boyfriend and his son must travel with Pablo to his hometown so that he can make a heart-wrenching decision.

Sophie has always been afraid of everything: car wrecks, cancer, becoming an orphan herself. But traveling with Dika, Pablo, Mr. Lorenzo, and Ángel—people who have suffered losses beyond Sophie's imagining—changes her perception of danger. Sophie feels a strong connection to Ángel, but she fears losing him almost as much as she enjoys their time together.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Check out Laura Resau's [official website](#).
- For more information on immigration, visit [UNICEF: Going North](#).

THE GIRL FROM CHIMEL



DESCRIPTION

This item is a children's book entitled *The Girl from Chimel*. It is written by Rigoberta Menchú, illustrated by Domi, and translated by David Unger.

From the publisher: Nobel Peace Prize winner and Mayan activist Rigoberta Menchú brings the world of her earliest childhood vividly to life in this colorful book. Before the war in Guatemala and despite the hardships that the Mayan people endured, life in the Mayan villages of the highlands had a beauty and integrity. This was forever changed by the conflict and brutal genocide that was to come. Menchú's stories of her grandparents and parents, of the natural world that surrounded her, and her retelling of the stories that she was told present a rich, humorous, and engaging portrait of that lost world. Domi draws on the Mayan landscape and rich craftwork to create the stunning illustrations that complement this engaging story.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics](#)
- [UNHCR: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)
- Smithsonian: [Beguiling Tikal – Mysteries of the Ancient Maya](#)
- Center for International Environmental Law: [Mining Conflicts and Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala](#)

THE GUATEMALA READER:

HISTORY, CULTURE, POLITICS



DESCRIPTION

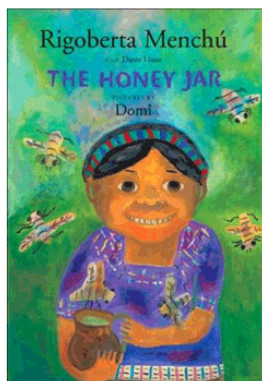
This item is a broad introduction to Guatemala’s history, culture, and politics.

The Guatemala Reader brings together more than 200 texts and images in a broad introduction to Guatemala’s history, culture, and politics. In choosing the selections, the editors sought to avoid representing the country only in terms of its long experience of conflict, racism, and violence. And so, while offering many perspectives on that violence, this anthology portrays Guatemala as a real place where people experience joys and sorrows that cannot be reduced to the contretemps of resistance and repression. It includes not only the opinions of politicians, activists, and scholars, but also poems, songs, plays, jokes, novels, short stories, recipes, art, and photographs that capture the diversity of everyday life in Guatemala. The editors introduce all of the selections, from the first piece, an excerpt of the Popol vuh, a mid-sixteenth-century text believed to be the single most important source documenting pre-Hispanic Maya culture, through the final selections, which explore contemporary Guatemala in relation to neoliberalism, multiculturalism, and the dynamics of migration to the United States and of immigrant life. Many pieces were originally published in Spanish, and most of those appear in English for the first time.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Visit the [**publisher’s website**](#).

THE HONEY JAR



DESCRIPTION

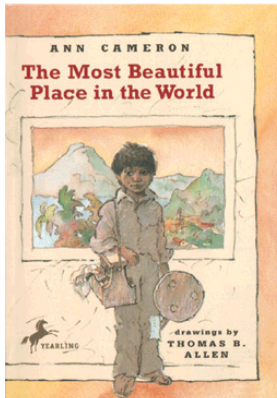
This item is a children's book entitled *The Honey Jar*. It is written by Rigoberta Menchú, illustrated by Domi, and translated by David Unger.

From the publisher: The Honey Jar retells the ancient stories Rigoberta Menchú's grandparents told her when she was a little girl, and we can imagine her listening to them by the fire at night. These Mayan tales include natural phenomena narratives and animal stories. The underworld, the sky, the sun and moon, plants, people, animals, gods, and demigods are all players in these vibrant stories. Enchanting images by Domi draw on the Mayan landscape and the rich visual vocabulary that can be found in the weavings and crafts for which the Maya are renowned.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics](#)
- [UNHCR: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Smithsonian: Beguiling Tikal – Mysteries of the Ancient Maya](#)
- Center for International Environmental Law: [Mining Conflicts and Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala](#)

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD



DESCRIPTION

This item is a children's book entitled *The Most Beautiful Place in the World*, written by Ann Cameron.

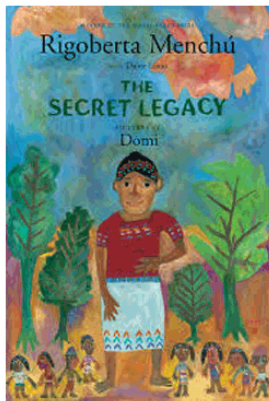
From the publisher: Seven-year-old Juan lives in Guatemala, a place of stunning beauty and grim economic reality. Abandoned by his mother, Juan lives with his grandmother and shines shoes. He passionately wants to attend school, but fears Grandmother will say no. Finally gathering his courage, he is surprised when she not only agrees to send him to school but also chides him about the importance of standing up for himself. Juan tells this bittersweet story, which reads smoothly and powerfully on several levels, with warmth and dignity.

Note that the Culture Box also contains a young adult book written by Ann Cameron, *Colibrí*.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Vamos A Leer: [Mira, Look: Anne Cameron](#)

THE SECRET LEGACY



DESCRIPTION

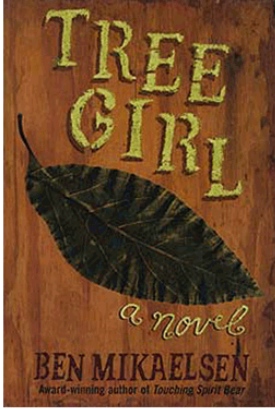
This item is a children’s book entitled *The Secret Legacy*. It is written by Rigoberta Menchú, illustrated by Domi, and translated by David Unger.

From the publisher: Rigoberta Menchú returns to the world of childhood in this, her third book. The novel’s seven-year-old heroine, Ixkem, is chosen to tend to the prized cornfields once her grandfather has passed away. But Ixkem isn’t sure she can accept this great responsibility. Out in the fields, she discovers a legion of tiny people, no bigger than bananas. They are b’e’n, nahuales — secret animal spirits — and when they take Ixkem into the underworld where they live, she regales them with tales of the surface. What they offer in return helps Ixkem to accept both her grandfather’s wishes for her and the fact that she must soon wish him goodbye. This moving story is rich with emotion and Mayan folklore, perfect to captivate any young reader.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics](#)
- [UNHCR: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Smithsonian: Beguiling Tikal – Mysteries of the Ancient Maya](#)
- Center for International Environmental Law: [Mining Conflicts and Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala](#)

TREE GIRL



DESCRIPTION

This item is a young adult novel entitled *Tree Girl*, written by Ben Mikaelson.

From the publisher: Laj Ali Re Jayub in her native language of Quiché. Gabi climbs trees to be within reach of the eagles and watch the sun rise into an empty sky. She is at home among the outstretched branches of the Guatemalan forests.

Then one day from the safety of a tree, Gabi witnesses the sights and sounds of an unspeakable massacre. She sees rape and murder -- the ravages of guerrilla warfare. She vows to be Tree Girl no more.

Earthbound, she joins the hordes of refugees struggling to reach the Mexican border. She has lost her whole family; her entire village has been wiped out. Yet she clings to the hope that she will be reunited with her youngest sister, Alicia. Over dangerous miles and months of hunger, thirst, and the threat of more violence from soldiers, Gabriela's search for Alicia and for a safe haven becomes a search for self. Having turned her back on her own identity, can she hope to claim a new life?

This novel is based on a true story told to the author one night by the real Tree Girl in a secure safe house in Guatemala.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics**
- **Political Database of the Americas**
- Human Rights Watch: **Guatemala**
- Commission Report: **“Guatemala, Memory of Silence”**
- National Security Archives: **Guatemala Documentation Project**
- Harper’s Magazine: **Death Squad Diary**
- Shattered Hope: **The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States**
- The CIA in Guatemala: **The Foreign Policy of Intervention**
- **Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala**
- **UNHCR: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples**

TRICYCLE



DESCRIPTION

This item is the children’s book titled *Tricycle*, written by Elise Amado and illustrated by Alfonso Ruano.

From the publisher: Margarita lives in a mansion. When she climbs her favorite tree, she can look down into the beautiful garden below. She can also see the small house next door where her friend Rosario and her family live. One day she sees Rosario and her brother dragging her tricycle into their yard and hiding it under a pile of boxes. Margarita decides to lie and protect her friends — but is she really helping them? This sensitive story illustrated in magic realist style powerfully presents complex issues of friendship, maturity, and social standing.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics](#)

MAS INFORMACION

MORE INFORMATION

ARTESANÍA

LANGUAGE

CELEBRATIONS

MUSIC

CLOTHING

NARRATIVES

CURRENCY

RELIGION

FLAG

SLAVERY

FOOD

TOURISM

GEOGRAPHY

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

IMMIGRATION

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

ARTESANÍA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While modern craft often incorporates European technique, Guatemalan artesanía is a genuine expression of indigenous culture and has formed a valuable market to support indigenous communities in Guatemala today. Some of the examples of Guatemalan artesanía in the culture box include: basketry, woodwork, backstrap weaving, pottery and gourd utensils. More information is available on each of these items is available in this guide.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Pottery and weaving
- Backstrap weaving
- Clay vessels
- Gourd rattle
- Gourd utensil
- Basket
- Wooden mask

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Guatemala Guide](#)

CELEBRATIONS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemala is well-known for annual fiesta celebrations and ceremonies. For instance, during the Holy Week—in March and April—colorful processions take place in Guatemala City and in Antigua. These celebrations tend to blend Mayan and Christian traditions and feature processions through the streets on rugs made of dyed sawdust (see photo #16 in the photo book). In late July, the Cobán Folkloric Festival showcases indigenous music and dance that has existed for thousands of years. On October 20, thousands take to the streets of Guatemala City in a festival of music, dance, and fireworks in commemoration of the October Revolution that overthrew President Jorge Ubico. In a late December tribute to Santo Tomás, a celebration in Chichicastenango features dancers swinging from a rope wrapped ‘round a central pole, known as Palo Volador.

A fantastic book, [The Ancient Spirituality of the Modern Maya](#) describes:

Mayan ceremonies fall into two basic categories. The first are those—usually public—that take place according to the dictates of the sacred calendar: the celebration of New Year’s, or Mayan Women’s Day, for example. The second are those that are “private,” requested by a family or an individual as a response to a particular problem. Often, the person goes to a priest or priestess for a “consultation,” a divination with the red beans used by the priest as a kind of oracle. During the consultation, the priest will outline to his visitor the reason for the problem he or she is experiencing, whether it be illness, bad dreams, domestic problems, or whatever; often, a ceremony, or series of ceremonies, will be recommended, on appropriate days, in order to set the problem to rights.

Some villages also feature local celebrations to patron saints (like the wooden saint in the culture box).

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Patron Saint
- Wooden mask

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Guatemala Guide](#)
- [The Latin American Collection](#)
- [The Ancient Spirituality of the Modern Maya](#)
- [YouTube: Celebration to Patron Saint in Antigua](#)
- [YouTube: Sincretismo en Chichicastenango - Palo Volador](#)

CLOTHING

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As is the case worldwide, there is plenty of diversity in Guatemalan dress. There are distinct styles among communities that self-identify as indigenous, Ladino, and Afro-Guatemalan—and there is significant variation within each identity. According to Laura Matthew’s (writing on the meanings of Ladino in Guatemala), “In Guatemala today, ‘indigenous’ and ‘ladino’ are typically understood as mutually exclusive categories. Being indigenous means belonging to an ethnic group with roots in the precolumbian past, such as the Maya or Xinca. Being ladino is, in the modern usage, an identity of negation: that is, not indigenous, whether one arrives at that identity through full or partial descent from Europeans and/or (often less admitted) from Africans, or through abandonment of indigenous culture and language. ‘Indigenous’ is associated with conquest and internal colonialism, while ‘ladino’ is associated with full citizenship in and affiliation with the Guatemalan nation-state. The bifurcation of contemporary Guatemalan society into these opposing camps is often belied in people’s daily lives. Nevertheless, it reflects and feeds into undeniable ethnic tensions that were exacerbated during the country’s recent civil war.”

Samples in the culture box represent predominantly traditional indigenous dress like the clothing worn by the Kaqchikel Maya dolls. These traditional styles remain popular and culturally important today. Mayan textiles, for instance, are carefully woven by hand, often on a backstrap loom. Women wear a traditional blouse, or a huipil, which may be embroidered with an intricate design like a sun or a moon. A rebozo, or shawl (like the one included in the culture box), is brightly colored and typically used by mothers to carry babies on their backs. A Tzute (cushion of cloth) may be worn atop the head underneath a handmade basket which can be used to carry fruits or other items to the market.

Traditional clothing varies regionally, and each town has its own distinct design patterns. In some towns, huipiles are worn long and un-tucked, while in others it would be unfashionable to wear to a huipil without tucking it in. Indigenous men tend to wear white shirts with brilliantly colored pants and jackets, though many Guatemalans, both men and women, are now less visibly local by their appearance. Indigenous men who live or work in the cities commonly dress in generic clothing as might be worn anywhere, from recycled t-shirts to Nike apparel.

Afro-indigenous (Garifuna) and Afro-Caribbean communities are often forgotten in resources that address Guatemalan culture. Traditional dress among these communities is distinct from both Ladino and Mayan style. For instance, Garifuna women often wear headscarves and bright dresses trimmed with shells, while men might wear traditional straw hats. Of course, as

is the case for others in Guatemala, Afro-Guatemalans now often choose a generic, more global appearance.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Kaqchikel dolls
- Shawl
- Backstrap weaving
- Pottery and weaving

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- International Outreach Culture Guide: **Guatemala**
- Artemaya: **Maya Textiles of Lake Atitlan**
- **YouTube: The Garifuna of Guatemala**

CURRENCY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemala's relatively stable currency, the quetzal, trades at a rate of about 7.5 per American dollar and can be divided into 100 centavos. The quetzal is named after Guatemala's national bird. The ancient Maya used the bird's valuable tail-feathers as currency. A colorful quetzal bird appears on the official currency today. This bird is said to be an incarnation of the legendary K'iche'-Maya warrior king, Tecún Umán, who transformed himself into the quetzal while defending his people against the Spanish conqueror Pedro de Alvarado. For many, Tecún Umán symbolizes resistance; for others, he represents a fractured Guatemala that "exalts historically remote Maya figures while marginalizing the living Maya." [Source: The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics].

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Currency
- The Guatemala Reader

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [CIA Factbook](#)
- [Coinmill: Currency Converter](#)

FLAG

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The inclusion of the Quetzal on the flag is significant. The quetzal is an important Guatemalan symbol. The bird is an important character in the legend of the local hero Tecún Umán, prince and warrior of the Quiché (K'iche') Maya during the later period of the Spanish conquest of Guatemala. It is believed that the quetzal was Tecún Umán's nahual (spirit guide). The Quiché succeeded in repelling several attacks from the Spanish army, even though outmatched in weaponry. Legend says that when the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado finally defeated Tecún Umán, the quetzal flew down, landed on Tecún Umán and dipped its chest in the warrior's blood. This is why the quetzal has a red chest.

Whether or not these events occurred is up for debate, but the legends demonstrate the importance of the Quetzal symbol as it represents the Maya fight for their land and freedom, and continues to represent freedom or liberty for the entire country. One Mayan legend claims that the quetzal used to sing beautifully before the Spanish conquest, but has been silent ever since; it will sing once again only when the land is truly free.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Flag of Guatemala

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Legend of the Quetzal](#) by Robert Garcia

FOOD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mayan and Hispanic influence have formed a distinct Guatemalan culinary tradition.

Beans, together with corn and squash, are collectively referred to by indigenous people as the three sisters of Latin America. The three crops take different nutrients from the soil and grow in compatible ways, forming a symbiotic relationship where the bean climbs the corn stalk (like a trellis), while the squash plant provides shade that protects the roots below from weeds. [Source: Foods of the Americas: Native Recipes and Traditions].

Corn tortillas and black beans (like those in the culture box) are routinely included in everyday meals. Black beans may be refried, mashed, or eaten whole. Chicken, turkey and beef are sometimes accompanied by beans, served in stews, or cooked in chili sauces. Also widely popular are grilled beef, porridges, tamales, churrasco (grilled steak), and chile rellenos (chile stuffed with meat and veggies). Guatemalans eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, such as yucca, carrots, plantains, cucumbers, onions, tomatoes and radishes. As in the United States, meals vary regionally. For instance, meat and vegetable stews are most common in the town of Antigua, while seafood prepped with spices form the diet along the Guatemalan coasts. Many delicious recipes are available online at foodbycountry.com.

Guatemalan coffee, like the sample in the culture box, is world-renowned and often exported to coffee drinkers around the world. Cacao (chocolate) has a rich history in Guatemala and Latin American in general and an interesting history of the evolution of chocolate, with links to curriculum units, is available at the Latin American & Iberian Institute's [Vamos a Leer](#) blog.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Capeuleu
- Black beans
- Mixed beans
- Piloy beans
- Kidney beans
- Small red beans
- White beans

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **You Tube: Black Beans from Guatemala.**
- Some detailed black bean recipes are available at Foodologie: Guatemalan black beans, **part 1** and **part 2**.
- Michigan State University: **Bean Growing Environments in Guatemala.**
- **Mother Earth News: The Three Sisters**
- To see bean planting in action, check out You Tube: **Alma Cautiva NGO, Mayan Bean Project.**
- **You Tube: Latin Kitchen, Red Kidney Bean Stew.**

GEOGRAPHY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemala is located at the northern end of the Central American isthmus, bordering Mexico, the Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, El Salvador and Honduras. Guatemala is about 42,000 square miles in size, or roughly the size of Ohio. The country is geographically diverse and made up of enormous mountains, tropical plains, desert valleys, and lowland jungles and swamps.

As Guatemala Guide describes:

The backbone of Guatemala is a branch of the Sierra Madre, entering from Mexico and breaking up into a series of smaller ranges spread through the southern half of the country. A chain of volcanoes runs parallel to the Pacific and on into El Salvador (see the Photo Book in the culture box), forming the southern rim of the highlands, where most of the population lives. Guatemala means “the land of many trees,” and the name of the country was first applied to this area of pine and oak and spruce. Over the years, much of the forest cover has been cleared off and the land planted to corn. . . . [M]ostly, what is grown in Guatemala is corn—on mountain slopes, in plots hacked out of the jungle, and in the hot coastal lowlands. Corn is seen everywhere, often with vines of black beans climbing the stalks. In terms of its monetary value the returns on a corn harvest are low. But corn is what most Guatemalans eat—mainly in the form of tortillas—and what their ancestors ate centuries ago.

More recently, large areas of Guatemalan countryside have been deforested by loggers. 17% of Guatemala’s forest had recently been cut down in a fifteen year period. Numerous species face extinction in the wake of such widespread loss of forest habitat. The situation is made worse by farming that erodes the soil, creating a risk of mudslides. For instance, one mudslide in 2005 wiped out the refugee town of Tzancha, Guatemala, turning it into a mass grave. Another in Panabaj, near Lake Atitlan, killed over 650 people, burying around 250 alive. “The landslide came down from one place then spread because there were no big trees to hold it back,” explained a community worker in Panabaj. [Source: The Guardian: “Deforestation in Guatemala.”]

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Stock Photos

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [CIA Factbook](#)
- [Guatemala Guide](#)
- [The Guardian: “Deforestation in Guatemala.”](#)
- [“Notes from a rare planet: Guatemala’s rapid deforestation leads world.”](#)

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemala is a country where virtually everything grows. Thus, a good starting point for understanding the recent history of Guatemalan government and politics is the enormously important agricultural enterprises of coffee and fruit production.

Coffee

Until the late nineteenth century, much of Guatemala's farmlands were in the hands of small-scale farmers, indigenous communities, or the Catholic Church. In an attempt to promote export products for the world market, Guatemala's liberal governments expropriated these lands, effectively transferring large, coffee-suitable plantations to a fledgling class of entrepreneurs who would gradually form an agrarian oligarchy.

This landowning class supported the rise of military strongmen who infiltrated Guatemala's government—in turn co-opting the powers of the State to provide coerced labor back to the oligarchy. Variations of this symbiotic relationship between military rulers and the coffee-growing elite are common across Central America and have been described in gory detail in William Stanley's book on El Salvador: **The Protection Racket State**.

When Jorge Ubico took power in 1931, he crushed the urban labor movement and decreed that labor organizing would be punishable by death. He even had his name stamped on each of the military's bullets. Vagrancy laws required the indigenous Maya to work 150 days per year, earning a purchasing power of less than \$1.00 per year. Meanwhile, Guatemala's viability was dependent on world coffee prices, which were notoriously volatile.

Fruit

While coffee economies are highly unstable, banana economies are even worse. By the time Ubico took power, Guatemala had already effectively certified a monopoly on fruit production to the Boston-based United Fruit Company. "La Pulpa," as the Company was called, also owned rights to build and manage Guatemala's post-offices, railways, ports and docks—which it used strategically to prevent competing fruit companies from transporting their products.

By 1930, the United Fruit Company was the largest employer in Central America, profiting twice the revenue of the Guatemalan government while operating virtually untaxed. It was the shining symbol of Yankee imperialism and its control over the historical development of Guatemala has been well documented in Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer's controversial book: **Bitter Fruit**. Suffice to say that the United Fruit Company, like the coffee-oligarchy, used

its enormous wealth and influence to play at least some role in obstructing reform and laying the foundation for the coming decades of military rule and State terror.

Civil War, Genocide and Transition

The conditions listed above led to political protest which was met with fierce repression to maintain social control. This “vicious circle” spiraled into the Guatemalan Civil War in 1962. The term “civil war” is somewhat misleading. In 1996, the Commission for Historical Clarification (the truth commission, established in part by the Oslo Peace Accords), determined that the State was responsible for 93% of the murders committed during the “civil war.” The conflict is thus more appropriately understood as a series of State-sponsored massacres of civilian, particularly Mayan, communities. Many of the alleged human rights violators were military officers trained in counterinsurgency in the United States during the Cold War.

For over three decades, military forces and death squads treated Mayan communities as enemies of the State. As the Commission describes, “Massacres and the so-called scorched earth operations, as planned by the State, resulted in the complete extermination of many Mayan communities, along with their homes, cattle, crops and other elements essential to survival.” The Commission has thus far uncovered over 600 such massacres, resulting in thousands of deaths and indicating that the State of Guatemala committed acts of genocide as defined by Article II of the UN’s Genocide Convention.

Today, Guatemala is in the process of rebuilding and reforming in accordance with the 1996 peace accords. While the accords stopped the genocide, street violence has increased drastically in the face of Guatemala’s post-war institutional weakness. Illicit criminal networks engage in arms and human trafficking, money laundering, kidnapping and extortion. Guatemala’s indigenous communities continue to wage collective resistance to government collusion with multinational mining and logging companies. Human rights abuses, including forced displacement are frequently alleged.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- The Guatemala Reader
- I, Rigoberta Menchú

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [CIA Factbook](#)
- [Political Database of the Americas](#)
- Human Rights Watch: [Guatemala](#)
- Commission Report: [“Guatemala, Memory of Silence”](#)

- National Security Archives: [Guatemala Documentation Project](#)
- [Harper's Magazine: Death Squad Diary](#)
- [Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States](#)
- [The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention](#)
- [Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala](#)
- [The Protection Racket State: Elite Politics, Military Extortion, and Civil War in El Salvador](#)

IMMIGRATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2010, according to **UNICEF**, over 11% of Guatemala’s population lived abroad—primarily in the United States. The **International Organization for Migration** has estimated that 120,000 people make the journey from Guatemala, through Mexico and into the US each year, most doing so despite the high costs and risks associated with immigration, in search of opportunities to escape poverty and send money back to loved ones who remain in Guatemala. Others have fled the political turmoil and violence caused by the Guatemalan civil war, which lasted from 1962 until 1996. During this period, large numbers of indigenous people left the country after being targeted by “counter-insurgency” campaigns in the country’s western highlands.

There are well over half a million Guatemalan immigrants residing in cities with large Latino populations in the US. Los Angeles, for instance, is known for Guatemalan immigrants from the highlands of Huehuetenango who call themselves “Miguelitos” after their hometown of San Miguel Acatán. To avoid deportation, many have attempted to pass as Mexican Americans. For instance, women in this community no longer wear traditional huipiles outside the home and no longer carry their babies in woven shawls (like the rebozo in the culture box). Guatemalan Americans also often learn to speak Mexican Spanish in order to evade immigration authorities. As one Guatemalan aid worker has put it: these more established Latino groups [i.e., Mexican Americans] have “provided us with the tools to get along in an environment that doesn’t accept us.”

Guatemalan immigrants in the US face the same stereotypes that have historically plagued immigrant groups. Guatemalan Americans are often scapegoated and devalued by nativists who have long forgotten the immigrant histories of their own families.

After establishing their lives in the US, some Guatemalans eventually return to Guatemala to reunite their families, while others try to bring the rest of their families into the US, legally or illegally.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Red Glass
- Journey of Dreams

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [UNICEF: Going North](#)
- Alamosa Valley Courier: [“Guatemalan Immigrant Shares Story”](#)
- [Everyculture.com: Guatemalan Americans](#)
- [International Organization for Migration: World Migration](#)

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Most of the indigenous people in Guatemala are of Mayan descent. Mayan history transcends national borders, spanning the countries of modern Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, El Salvador and the Mexican states of Yucatán, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Campeche and Chiapas. The Maya are likely linked to the ancient Olmec civilization of modern-day Veracruz, Mexico.

The ancient Maya created dense cities, established extensive trade networks, and developed writing, mathematics, agriculture, architecture, engineering and astronomy. The Maya discovered the value of zero—an elusive concept in the West—and wrote the Codex of Dresden, which predicted sixty-nine solar eclipses on a thirty-three year cycle. As Rigoberta Menchú asked in her Nobel lecture: “Who can predict what other great scientific conquests and developments these people could have achieved, if they had not been conquered by blood and fire, and subjected to an ethnocide that affected nearly fifty million people in the course of five hundred years?”

The pre-Hispanic Mayan capital was called Chichen Itza. It controlled trade routes into Mexico and South America. Mayan traders used these channels to export jade, obsidian and quetzal feathers to the Yucatan in exchange for honey, salt, rubber, jaguar skins, vanilla, cotton and vegetable dyes. To the south, the great city of Tikal was home to over 60,000 Maya at the peak of its glory. Today, its dizzying pyramids have become a popular destination for tourists. When the Spaniards arrived, the Maya experienced massive depopulation due to disease, violence, dispossession of lands, and forced labor on coffee and indigo plantations. According to the UN Human Rights Commission, Mayan leaders today refer to three “holocausts”: the initial Spanish conquest and its aftermath, the land dispossession of the Liberal revolution of the nineteenth century, and the mass extermination of Mayan villages at the hands of the Guatemalan military during the civil war that lasted from 1962 until 1996.

Today, large, self-identified Mayan populations occupy varying social classes in all of Guatemala’s cities. Guatemala’s rewritten constitution celebrates the existence of indigenous groups, requiring the State to respect indigenous languages, dress, customs and forms of social organization. The Peace Accords that officially ended the civil war have defined Guatemala as a “multi-ethnic, pluricultural and multilingual” society.

Despite these legal reforms, discrimination continues to exclude indigenous communities from participating in legal, political, economic and social institutions in Guatemala. Indigenous peoples’ voting rights are constrained by social practices—like exclusionary voter registration

requirements and election schedules that are linked to harvest season. The disproportionate concentration of land and resources has created an indigenous migrating labor force that works for low wages under difficult conditions. A new indigenous movement has risen to these challenges, advocating for adequate redistribution of land, fair wages, improved working conditions, the safeguarding of Guatemala's natural resources, and access to airwaves to disseminate programs teaching Mayan culture and language.

Many of the materials in the culture box are linked to Guatemala's rich Mayan culture and can provide further insight.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Black Beans
- Mixed Beans
- Pioly Beans
- Kidney Beans
- Small Red Beans
- White Beans
- Kaqchikel Dolls
- Shawl
- Pottery and Weaving
- Backstrap Weaving
- Clay Vessels
- Gourd Rattle
- Gourd Utensil
- Basket
- Wooden Mask

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics**
- **UNHCR: World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples**
- **Smithsonian: Beguiling Tikal – Mysteries of the Ancient Maya**
- Center for International Environmental Law: **Mining Conflicts and Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala**

LANGUAGE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While Guatemala's official language is listed as Spanish, the country is home to dozens of indigenous languages including K'iche', Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca. The K'iche'-Mayan language is enormously important in Guatemala's history and culture. Many communities in Central Guatemala continue to teach and speak primarily K'iche' and the most well-known work of the Mayan people, the Popol Vuh (a Mayan creation story), was written in colonial times in the K'iche'-Mayan language.

Guatemala has recently become a world leader in establishing legal norms that seek to protect indigenous languages. Guatemala's Constitution expressly recognizes the importance of diversity of language and culture. The recently amended Constitution states:

Guatemala is made up of various ethnic groups among which are native groups of Mayan descent. The State recognizes, respects, and promotes their form of life, customs, traditions, forms of social organization, the wearing of Indian dress by men and women, their languages, and dialects.

National law elaborates on the importance of language diversity in the acquisition, preservation and transmission of indigenous worldviews, values and customs. Regarding language in the schools, for instance, Decree 19-2003 provides:

The national education system in both public and private must operate in all processes, procedures and standards, to accord respect, promotion, development and use of Mayan, Garifuna and Xinca languages, according to the particularities of the language communities.

While these top-down norms may not entirely reflect realities on the ground, bilingualism dominates in communities like Pachaj and Choquiac, where K'iche' is the primary language in greetings, social interactions, and local politics. Perhaps countries like the United States can learn from Guatemala's recent de-emphasis on monolingual assimilation in order to preserve indigenous knowledge and heritage.

The University of New Mexico's Latin American & Iberian Institute houses **a collection of oral histories**, told in K'iche' and translated into Spanish. These materials include audio files and PDF transcripts of the original stories if students want to hear and see what the language looks like. Students can also see how Spanish supplements K'iche' in common speech, and how code-switchers navigate back and forth between languages.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Library of Congress: Constitution of Guatemala](#)
- [Altert.net.org: Decree 19-2003](#)
- [LAI: K'iche'-Maya Oral History Project](#)
- [El Mundo Maya: K'iche' vs. Español: Bilingual Schools and Linguistic Domains in a Rural Guatemalan Community](#)

MUSIC

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemalan music is often associated with Guatemala’s national instrument, the Marimba. The Marimba is a percussion (xylophone-type) instrument consisting of wooden keys and resonators (typically gourds or wooden boxes), played with a mallet. The origin of the instrument is apparently highly controversial and this guide will not attempt to resolve the debate. One position is that the Marimba originated in Asia or Africa (there is a Bantu word for Marimba) and was recreated and modified in Central and South America by sixteenth century slaves. Others believe that the suggestion that the Marimba is not an ancient indigenous instrument is “patently absurd.” Adherents to the latter view cite references to the Marimba as an indigenous instrument in the eighteenth century Guatemalan text, the Popol Vuh.

Whatever the case may be, the instrument is uniquely important in Guatemala. The wood for construction of its keys is harvested from the native hormigo tree. The Guatemalans have decreed by law that the Marimba is a national symbol for its historic and cultural value. Guatemala City is home to a National Institute and School of Marimba. The Marimba is the principal instrument in Guatemalan folk music, with the typical ensemble consisting of three or four players, a drum kit, and a string bass.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Gourd Rattle
- World Music: Guatemala

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- YouTube: Library of Congress – [Marimba Linda Xelaju](#)
- Revista Latin de Musica American Latino Music American Review: [The Marimba of Mexico and Central America](#)

NARRATIVES

LITERARY AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Various books are included in the Culture Box in order to give students access to narratives from different perspectives. The hope is that the range of voices expressed in the books will supplement the artifacts in the Culture Box to help students understand that “culture” is an elusive and multidimensional concept.

The Guatemala Reader is an excellent starting point. Its inclusion of various poems, songs, plays, jokes, novels, short stories, recipes, art, and photographs ensures that Guatemala is not characterized solely in a one-dimensional framework of violence and civil war. Other stories in the culture box include Ann Cameron’s novel, *Colibrí*, a story about young Rosa’s adventures traveling with her Uncle through the cities of Guatemala; *Red Glass*, Laura Resau’s excellent novel about immigration across the United States’ southern border; and *Journey of Dreams*, Marge Pellegrino’s novel about love and loyalty in the face of the Guatemalan army’s “scorched earth campaign” of the 1980s. Also included is *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, the autobiographical account of Guatemala’s then twenty-three year old Nobel Peace Prize winning human rights activist.

In addition to these stories, photographs of Guatemala have been included to drive discussion and help students recognize their own pre-conceptions about the country and its people. Together, the books, photographs and artifacts will encourage students to think critically about perspective and voice, leading to a nuanced exploration of Guatemala that is free of the pitfalls of stereotyping.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Book: *The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics*
- Book: *Red Glass*
- Book: *Colibrí*
- Book: *I, Rigoberta Menchú*
- Photobook

RELIGION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It is unfair to attempt to summarize the complex spirituality of the ancient Maya. Imagine, for example, trying to write a short paragraph describing Christianity. The description, starved for context, would be indecipherable to an outsider who has not internalized Christian norms and motifs in language, art, theater, music, and virtually every other facet of daily life since childhood. Notice also that a synthetic attempt to define “Christianity” as a blanket term would conceal multiple and diverse ways of practicing a religion that, in truth, has varied across space and time. Such an approach would risk “teaching” the reader that numerous beliefs and practices never existed. Thus, any casual description of a belief system that is sacred to its practitioners and their ancestors should be read critically.

A handbook accompanying an exhibit on the Maya at the Albuquerque Museum in 1986 and 1987 described the ancient Mayan belief system as follows:

Think universe: earth, sun, moon, stars. Think nature: water, fire, wind, living things. Think occupations: poet, bee keeper, lawyer, priest. Add your own categories and multiply by 4. The Maya pantheon had 4 gods for every ingredient in their lives.

Anthropologist Thomas Hart describes the Mayan God concept as follows:

Those who practice Mayan Spirituality have a concept of God that is a good deal less formalized than the Christian view. God is part of all living things, even apparently inanimate creatures like trees and stones; equally, all living things are part of God. A Mayan Priest once told me that “God sleeps in stone; God grows in plants; God walks in animals; and God thinks in Man.”

This latter understanding makes for a difficult task in categorizing items in the culture box. Virtually every item in the culture box has spiritual value. Corn and beans have spiritual value to indigenous peoples across the Americas. The intricate textiles of the backstrap loom are spiritual to the Maya. Gourd rattles and masks like the jaguar mask are used in traditional dances that are performed according to the dictates of the spiritual Mayan calendar. Similarly, clay vessels, like those in the culture box, might be used in traditional ceremonies. Today, the patron saint (in the culture box) represents the post-conquest syncretism of Mayan Catholicism—where the two belief systems have become largely inseparable. Thus, it is particularly important to keep Thomas Hart’s description in mind when exploring the culture box. Everything can be considered spiritual.

As alluded to above, Catholicism and traditional Mayan spirituality both occupy the same space in Guatemala. In its **K'iche' Maya Oral History Project**, the University of New Mexico's Latin American & Iberian Institute has made available several stories told by the K'iche' Maya people in the K'iche' Mayan language. One of these stories, "The Dream of Juan Ekoq'ij" relates the narrator's self-described process of abandonment of his traditional Mayan beliefs, in favor of Catholicism. The account is summarized as follows:

When Juan Ekoq'ij abandoned his traditional belief system and embraced the Orthodox Catholic religion, he had several dreams that represented the conflicts he was experiencing during this change in his life. First he dreamed that he was hearing a marimba playing and a voice was inviting him to dance with the women who were there. The voice told him his new religion would not give him happiness. His old way of life, including dances with the marimba, was the true source of happiness. A month later he dreamed that he was on a very muddy road, but a lot of gold was there in the mud. A voice told him to pick up the gold and become rich. Later he saw a group of people who had picked up some of the gold. They were standing at the gate of Hell. They cried out that they were going to die. One month later he had another dream. He was climbing a ladder. When he got to the top rung he fell off the ladder into a stinking pile of garbage. There he found some devils. He began praying, and finally escaped the devils. He interpreted the ladder to be the path of a virtuous life, and his fall represented his past sins.

For other Mayans, there is no contradiction in maintaining belief in Catholicism while still retaining traditional beliefs. In 1995, for example, Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú had her son baptized at the Mayan shrine of Chaitzak.

The most important thing to know is that elements of both Mayan and Catholic spirituality remain intensely sacred to practitioners in Guatemala. This topic must be treated carefully and respectfully in the classroom.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Black beans
- Wooden mask
- Gourd rattle
- Clay vessels
- Patron saint
- Backstrap weaving

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- History Channel: [Rise and Fall of the Maya Empire](#)
- History Channel: [The Mayans](#)
- Religious Studies: [A Global View](#)
- The Latin American and Iberian Institute: [K'iche' Maya Oral History Project](#)
- Universidad Francisco Marroquin: [The Popol Vu Museum \(Maya creation story \[Spanish\]\)](#)

SLAVERY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemala has a history of slavery that has thrived on both indigenous and black labor. In colonial times, indigenous slaves—who were branded across their faces with the seal of the king—generally provided unskilled labor in the mines and coffee fields, and were assigned as labor grants from the crown, or traded at low cost on the open market. This system was eventually replaced by debt peonage—where indigenous peoples lived as indentured servants in perpetual debt to their employers. To this day, thousands are forced by poverty to migrate seasonally to coffee estates and pick beans which will be crushed and packaged as Guatemalan coffee. Rigoberta Menchu has described the hardships of life for indigenous women on the coffee finca:

Mothers are very tired and just can't do [the picking]. This is where you see the situation of women in Guatemala very clearly. Most of the women who work picking cotton and coffee, or sometimes cane, have nine or ten children with them. Of these, three or four will be more or less healthy, and can survive, but most of them have bellies swollen from malnutrition and the mother knows that four or five of her children could die. We'd been on the finca for fifteen days when one of my brothers died from malnutrition. My mother had to miss some days' work to bury him. Two of my brothers died in the finca. The first, he was the eldest, was called Felipe. I never knew him. He died when my mother started working. They'd sprayed the coffee with pesticide by plane while we were working, as they usually did, and my brother couldn't stand the fumes and died of poisoning.

Black slavery is also a historically important institution in Guatemala. International and local archives contain hundreds of records, including land sales, freighting contracts, testaments, and criminal and civil cases, related to blacks—both slave and free—in sixteenth-century Santiago de Guatemala. Yet Guatemala is often treated as a Central American country without black history. This “historical amnesia” hides the cultural contributions of blacks and minimizes the historical institution of African slavery in Guatemala.

While the number of blacks was certainly small when compared to European and indigenous populations, black slavery influenced the cultural and economic growth of Guatemala's cities nonetheless. As historian Robinson Herrera explains, “black slaves, and later free blacks, filled nearly every imaginable role in [Santiago de Guatemala], working as semi-skilled domestics, highly trained (and valued) artisans, and supervisors of profitable agricultural lands such as cacao groves.” As in other Latin American countries, blacks often spoke Spanish, performed urban skilled labor, and supervised (as slaves or salaried employees) native slaves. Women

oversaw wheat fields, worked as household managers, bakers and cooks, and often sold items in the local markets. The scarcity and skill level of the black population in early Santiago made black slaves an expensive commodity and a status symbol for their owners. In some accounts, the wealthiest elites paraded around the city with a contingent of slaves.

Unlike North American slavery, blacks in Guatemala (both slave and free) generally maintained family structures and occasionally owned real estate. For instance, Juan de Dueñas and Maria de Dueñas owned at least three distinct plots of land in Santiago and operated a small bakery.

With the seventeenth-century decline in slave importation, much of this original black population was assimilated into the Afro-indigenous population of colonial Guatemala, maintaining a true history that influences Guatemalan culture to this day.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Capeuleu

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Guatemala Overview](#)
- [“Por Qué no Sabemos Firmar: Black Slaves in Early Guatemala”](#)
- [Slavery in Guatemala](#)
- [Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Sixteenth-Century Santiago de Guatemala](#)

TOURISM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Guatemala takes advantage of its beautiful countryside to promote sustainable, eco, and community-based tourism. Photo #9 in the Photo Book depicts the beautiful turquoise pools of Semuc Champey, one of Guatemala's most popular tourist attractions. Photo #20 captures a group on tour of the Maya temple in Tikal.

Lonely Planet describes:

Guatemala's Maya heritage is everywhere. El Petén's remote archeological sites are unmissable; the fascinating town of Chichicastenango [Photo #1 in the Photo Book] adheres to pre-Hispanic beliefs and rituals even now. Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa, on the other hand, provides a glimpse into the mysterious Pipil culture, with some interesting carved stone heads and relief scenes to be found in fields and fincas (plantations) around town.

Tourism, as a source of international currency, is important in the Guatemalan economy. Nearly 15% of the eligible workforce is engaged in the industry, though this percentage has likely decreased due to the recent recession in the United States.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Photo Book
- Bus

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Guatemala Times: [Sustainable Tourism in Guatemala](#)
- Lonely Planet: [Places in Guatemala](#)
- Huffington Post: [An Inside Glimpse Into the Guatemalan Tourism Industry](#)

CONTENTS CHECKLIST: GUATEMALA

Please carefully repackage the culture box and check off each item before returning the box.

REFERENCE ITEMS

- Flag
- Wall Map
- Photography Album

ARTIFACTS

- Backstrap Weaving
- Basket
- Beans
- Bus (miniature)
- Clay Pottery (miniature)
- Coffee (miniature)
- Corn
- Currency
- Gourd
- Gourd Rattle
- Handcrafted Dolls
- Pottery and Weaving (miniature)
- Saint Figure (miniature)
- Shawl
- Sling Shot
- Wooden Mask

MUSIC & INSTRUMENTS

- World Music: Guatemala 2 (CD)

BOOKS

- Colibrí
- Favorite Recipes from Guatemala
- I, Rigoberta Menchu
- Journey of Dreams
- Living Maya
- Mayan Folktales
- People of Corn
- Popol Vuj
- Red Glass
- The Girl from Chimel
- The Guatemala Reader
- The Honey Jar
- The Most Beautiful Place in the World
- The Secret Legacy
- Tree Girl
- Tricycle

EVALUATION: GUATEMALA

Name: _____

Institution: _____

City: _____

Email: _____

Grade Level: _____

Subject Area: _____

Date Borrowed: _____

How did you hear about the program?

Please describe your institution and the students with whom you work.

Please tell us about how you incorporated these materials into your classroom and the topics on which you focused.

What other materials would you suggest we add to the program?

None

More information about the region

Teaching strategies

Opportunities for classroom speakers

Grade-specific lesson plans

Subject-specific lesson plans

Library/Media resources

Funding for field trips

Please circle the statement that most closely represents your opinion of the following statements:

1. The program presented me with new information about Latin America and the Caribbean.

Strongly Disagree *Somewhat disagree* *Slightly agree* *Strongly Agree*

2. The program content helped me serve my students' needs.

Strongly Disagree *Somewhat disagree* *Slightly agree* *Strongly Agree*

3. I plan to integrate content from this program into my curriculum/career.

Strongly Disagree *Somewhat disagree* *Slightly agree* *Strongly Agree*

5. The reservation and check-out process was straightforward and easy to complete.

Strongly Disagree *Somewhat disagree* *Slightly agree* *Strongly Agree*

Would you be willing to share a testimonial that we might publish anonymously?

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Thank you for your time! We appreciate your feedback and will use it to improve the program.