

CULTURE BOXES

NICARAGUA



CONTENIDO

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	3
Introduction.....	6
Items.....	7
More Information	41
Contents Checklist.....	63
Evaluation.....	64

AGRADECIMIENTOS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Contributors

The Culture Box program was created by the University of New Mexico's Latin American and Iberian Institute (LAI), with support provided by the LAI's Title VI National Resource Center grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

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, María José 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.

Ken Carpenter generously contributed materials to the Culture Box of Nicaragua.

Sponsors

All program materials are readily available to educators in New Mexico courtesy of a partnership between the LAI, Instituto Cervantes of Albuquerque, National Hispanic Cultural Center, and Spanish Resource Center of Albuquerque - who, together, oversee the lending process.

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



NICARAGUA



INTRODUCCION

INTRODUCTION

Any attempt to box in a country's culture is necessarily problematic. Nicaragua is no exception. Consideration of Nicaragua thus requires moving beyond the nation's political and historical status, and towards an understanding of the many facets of Nicaraguan life, from the food to the music. The goal of this culture box is to provide resources for approaching Nicaragua in a multifaceted, multidisciplinary way. Within this box, students and educators will find the tools to explore the nation's geography, its major political conflict, the racial and ethnic dimensions, the expansive indigenous history, the impressive literary and linguistic development, as well as many other themes of Nicaraguan life. Essentially, the literal box presented here functions as a tool to promote a discussion of Nicaragua that dismantles the box the country's national identity was placed in for so many years.

OBJETOS ITEMS

Reference Items

Artifacts

Music & Instruments

Books

FLAG



DESCRIPTION

In the culture box there are two cloth versions (small and large) of the flag of Nicaragua.

Nicaragua adopted its national flag in 1908, although it was not formally and officially accepted until 1971. Its design consists of three broad horizontal stripes of blue, white, blue. In the center of the white stripe, a circular emblem reads “República de Nicaragua: América Central.” Within the curved words is a triangular depiction of five volcanoes (which together represent the five original states of Central America), a rising sun, the Cap of Liberty, and a rainbow. The blue bands are said to symbolize the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea; the white band, the land between the two bodies of water. The rising sun and rainbow are said to represent optimism regarding Nicaragua’s future. The Cap of Liberty, otherwise known as the “Phrygia cap,” is a symbol taken from ancient Rome, where it was worn by the inhabitants of a region called Phrygia and where it came to symbolize freedom and the pursuit of liberty. Today, though far removed from that original context, it retains the same significance.

All told, the central illustration represents Nicaragua’s coat of arms.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- See [La Voz del Sandinismo: “Símbolos Patrios de Nicaragua”](#) (Spanish) or [Via Nica.com: National Symbols](#) (English) for additional information on the Nicaraguan flag.

WALL MAP



DESCRIPTION

This item is a large laminated wall map of the political boundaries of Nicaragua.

Nicaragua is a Central American country. Honduras borders the country to the north; the Pacific Ocean to the west; the Caribbean Sea to the east; and Costa Rica to the south.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- A more detailed description of Nicaragua's geography can be found at [Oro Travel](#)

PHOTOGRAPHY ALBUM



DESCRIPTION

This item is a binder collection of photos taken in Nicaragua. 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.

FRAMED PHOTO: VOLCANOES



DESCRIPTION

This is a framed photo of a volcano.

Both inactive and active volcanoes are notably present across Nicaragua. There are 19 in total, eight of which are active. The twin volcanoes Concepción and Maderas are perhaps the best known, as they together create a beautiful island on Lake Nicaragua. In 2016, the country experienced an unusual degree of activity across several of its volcanoes.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

To learn more about recent eruptions, see The Wired’s article on [“**The Volcanoes of Nicaragua Sure Have Been Cranky This Year.**”](#)

BROCHURE: TURISMO EN ÁREAS PROTEGIDAS



DESCRIPTION

This item is a brochure entitled “Turismo en Áreas Protegidas.”

This brochure, produced by the Nicaraguan government, details in Spanish the protected parks of Nicaragua and their role within the tourism industry.

Although it is the second poorest country in the Americas, Nicaragua has a developing infrastructure and growing tourism industry. Many tourists travel to Nicaragua specifically for the country’s rich ecological resources. The country is characterized in many ways, both for those within as well as those visiting, as an area with vital natural resources. Protected areas include natural reserves (whether terrestrial or coastal), genetic resources (animal and plant life), nature sanctuaries (areas preserved specifically for the use of designated important, unique, rare and protected, or endangered species), private nature resources (land owned privately by owners who take an interest in preservation), national monuments (be they colonial formations, archaeological sites, or distinctive natural elements like waterfalls or volcanoes), and historical monuments (areas with unique historical, cultural, or archaeological importance).

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Eco-tourism in Nicaragua
- National Parks and Protected Areas in Nicaragua

EL MACHO RATÓN



DESCRIPTION

This item is a figurine of El Macho Ratón, a popular folk character in Nicaragua.

Macho Ratón is a character that appears in the famous Nicaraguan folkloric play *El Güegüense*, a hilarious play that was first performed during the Spanish colonial period and it is still presented every year by actors in wonderful costumes, including the main character, El Macho Ratón.

In 2005, UNESCO designated the play a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.”

“Theater in colonial Nicaragua, with its popular religious festivals, was built in part on the traditions of ritual performance of pre-Columbian times. Its most notable result was the development of a theater in Nahuatl and Spanish that flourished between the mid-16th and mid-18th centuries and left the legacy of *El Güegüense*, a comic piece in which a popular character outwits government tax officials” (Source: Historical Dictionary of Latin American Literature and Theater by Richard Young and Odile Cisneros). As others have said, it was a play that symbolized the indigenous populations’ rejection of domination. Yet rather than serve as an outright declaration of protest, the playwright conveyed the local populace’s discontent through creative and clever veiled mockery performed as street theater.

El Güegüense has been called an “ancient comedy-dance-drama” and “was composed by an

unknown author sometime, depending on which interpretation one believes, during the sixteenth, or seventeenth, or eighteenth-century...[*El Güegüense*] was rendered in at least four distinct nineteenth-century manuscripts written in the original Nahuatl-Spanish dialect, although its performance clearly dates back hundreds of years earlier” (Source: *The Grimace of Macho Ratón* by Les Field).

In short, *El Güegüense* is highly representative of Nicaraguan history and contemporary culture, in addition to being a universally funny play about a scenario common to countries around the world.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- To read more about the designation of the play as a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,” see [UNESCO](#).
- For a relatively thorough description of the history of the play, as well as its cast of characters, see [Via Nica: Nicaraguan Themes: El Güegüense](#)
- For a narrative explanation in English, accompanied by puppets, see the YouTube video [Güegüense Story](#)
- For visual representations of *El Güegüense* being performed, see the following YouTube videos:
 - [Tu Canal Amigo El Masaya Presenta El Güegüense?](#)
 - [El Güegüense? o Macho Ratón \(with narration in Spanish\).](#)

CERAMIC PLATE



DESCRIPTION

This item is a small plate illustrated with imagery of the Nicaraguan rainforest.

This small plate is from the most famous pottery-producing region in Nicaragua, San Juan de Oriente. The illustrations on the plate represent the frogs and natural plants of the rainforest. The pottery of Nicaragua represents cultural influences over the span of thousands of years, including Maya, Aztec, and Inca, as well as smaller, auxiliary cultures.

By the 1990s, Nicaragua's extensive history of ceramics began to receive international attention. The designs and methodology which had been developed over the millennia now included contemporary practices and motifs. In addition to individual artisans, artists' collectives have arisen to support producing the ceramic materials as a viable means of economic development and self sufficiency.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Devoti, Paul H. (2002). Three Generations: Potters of San Juan de Oriente, Nicaragua. *Ceramics Monthly* 50(8) 55-57.
- Chartrand, Peter. (2003). Ducuale Crande: A Nicaraguan Women's Pottery Collective. *Ceramics Monthly* 51(8) 56-59.

WALL PLATE



DESCRIPTION

This colorful type of painting on ceramic is common in tourist markets in Nicaragua.

This item is a small plate illustrated with a painting of a small house by the sea. Two volcanoes in the background likely represent the famous volcanoes, Concepción and Maderas, in Lake Nicaragua. An illustration of the Nicaraguan flag is situated in the corner of the plate. Colorful lettering across the front reads: "Nicaragua: Recuerda de tu pais amigo."

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- See [Via Nica](#) for information on the Masaya Market, where a variety of souvenirs and handicrafts are sold.

WOODEN CART



DESCRIPTION

This item is a small detailed wood carving of a cart.

Wooden carts, typical in Nicaragua, are generally pulled by either oxen or horses. Even while the country has many paved roads and standard cars, it also has an enduring network of unpaved, dirt roads and wooden carts.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Browse this article from [La Prensa](#) (Spanish) to see how wooden carts were used in a religious procession.

WOODEN CARVING OF STATUES



DESCRIPTION

This item is a set of two heavy wooden statues.

These statues represent an indigenous culture that lived in Nicaragua prior to the arrival of the Spaniards.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- See [Oro Travel](#) for information on Nicaragua's pre-Columbian period
- Information on pre-Columbian pottery can be found [here](#) (Spanish)

CLOTHING - TRADITIONAL



DESCRIPTION

This item is a “guayabara,” or boy’s shirt.

The “guayabara” is a typical short worn by men in many Latin American countries. Often associated with Cuban culture, guayaberas are a common article of clothing throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, including Nicaragua. “A traditional piece of menswear, the shirt is distinguished by its four front pockets and two vertical stripes of pleating and/or embroidery. Its widespread usage and distinctive appearance has made it the most iconic piece of clothing associated with the cultural life of Latin American and Caribbean populations worldwide” [Source: [The Guayabera](#)].

“Despite this far-reaching popularity, the circumstances concerning the guayabera’s origin and stylistic evolution are indeterminate and widely dispersed across a number of sources” (ibid).

This particular shirt was handmade by a women’s cooperative named “Paz y vida,” or “Peace and Life.”

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [“The Guayabera: A Shirt’s Story”](#): An online exhibition offering “an overview of the guayabera’s history.”

CERAMIC BIRD WHISTLE



DESCRIPTION

This item is a small, ceramic bird whistle.

Also known as an ocarina, this hand-made ceramic bird is a functional flute-whistle. Ocarinas have a history over 4,000 years old throughout Central America, where their production and use has long been intrinsic to the musical traditions of the region. Although the practice of making ocarinas declined after Spanish colonization, it has gained in popularity during the 20th century.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **Ocarinas of the Americas: Music Made in Clay** (an online exhibition of ocarinas produced by the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University)
- **Music from the Land of the Jaguar** (an interactive digital exhibit of music from the ancient Americas, including Ocarinas).

GUARDABARRANCO



DESCRIPTION

This is a CD of music by the Duo Gardabarranco.

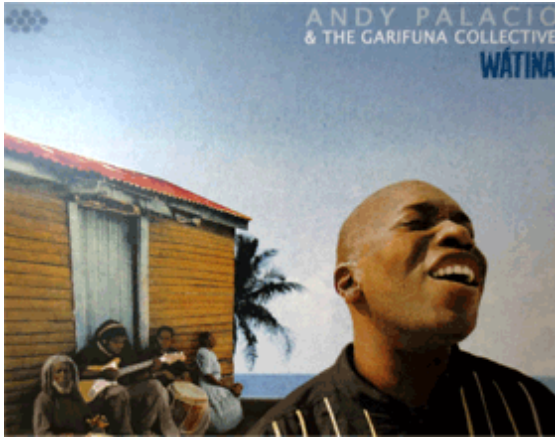
Duo Guardabarranco is a musical group consisting of brother and sister Katia Cardenal and Salvador Cardenal. They are internationally-renowned musicians who have gained wide acclaim for their music inspired by Nicaraguan- and Latin American-musical traditions. Beyond technique, their lyrics have also received recognition for being substantively focused on peace and hope.

This duo is known for their work as part of nueva trova, a pan-Latin American musical movement that took shape originally in the 1950s and continued into the 1970s. As Smithsonian Folkways writes, "...nueva canción, also known as trova and canto, began as a proactive movement that contested the political dictatorships of the times." The music became a means of political expression in many Latin American countries, from as far north as Cuba to as far south as Chile, and was used not only to express dissatisfaction with violent, authoritarian governments but also, according to the Smithsonian, to foster collective social responses against a wide range of human rights issues, from "poverty, imperialism, democracy, human rights, and religious freedom."

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Smithsonian's article on "La Nueva Canción"
- Official website for the Fundación Dúo Guardabarranco

WÁTINA



DESCRIPTION

This is a CD of music by the musician Andy Palacio and group The Garifuna Collective.

The performer Andy Palacio is himself Garífuna. With his support, he brought together young and old members from the Garífuna community to form The Garífuna Collective. Together, they produced this musical ensemble. In the opening lines of the behind-the-scenes video mentioned below, the musicians write the following by way of preface: “Living in small communities on the Caribbean coasts of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, the Garífuna are a unique culture that blends elements of African and Caribbean Aboriginal traditions.”

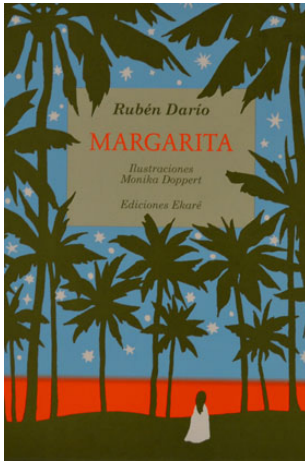
The musical production is recognized as being at once contemporary and traditional and demonstrates, as the musicians themselves write, that the “ Garifuna community of Central America unite the musical legacies of Africa and the Caribbean to create a powerful saga of exile, longing, hope and celebration.”

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Behind-the-scenes video](#) of the production of Wátina
- [Official website for the musicians](#)
- Smithsonian Folkways: [Inside the Temple-Sacred Music of the Garifuna of Belize](#)
- [Teaching resources about the Garífuna](#) from Stanford University

A MARGARITA

BY RUBÉN DARÍO / ILLUSTRATED BY MONIKA DOPPERT



DESCRIPTION

This item is a children’s book entitled *A Margarita* written by Rubén Darío and illustrated by Monika Doppert.

The author of this beautiful children’s book is the famous Nicaraguan poet, journalist, and novelist Rubén Darío (1867-1916).

From the publisher:

A courageous girl goes out to sea to make her dreams come true. This well-known poem by the great Nicaraguan poet is enhanced by beautiful black-and-white illustrations. The text is soft and musical. The book is small, but it makes an excellent read-aloud with older children.

Darío was a prolific writer throughout his life, producing works of poetry as well as pursuing longer novels and journal articles. In 1905 he published a full-length collection of his work entitled *Azul* and won recognition through Latin America, becoming a spokesman for the emerging Latin American literary movement known as modernismo. The movement emphasized the pursuit of truth and intellect through “free verse and sensual imagery and symbolism to express their highly individualistic values” (Source: “Modernism in Poetry” by ThinkQuest). He is among the best known authors of Latin America and is the preeminent writer of Nicaraguan

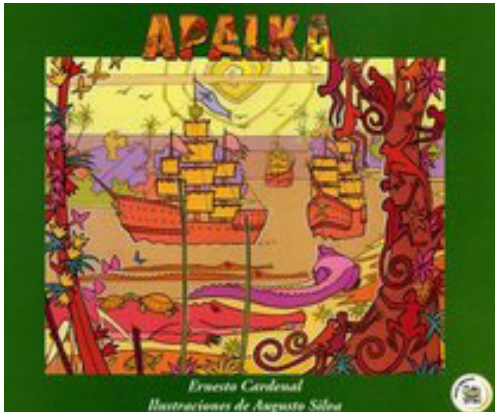
history and culture.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Postcolonial Studies: Rubén Darío
- Modernism in Poetry
- Rubén Darío, 1867-1916
- Via Nica: Nicaraguan Themes: Rubén Darío Biography
- Rubén Darío: Selected Poems
- A Margarita (in its original Spanish and with an English translation)
- See the award-winning animated short **Margarita** on Vimeo. Inspired by Rubén Darío's poem, it is "a lyrical short film where music, poetry and color fuse together to bring to life the story of a young princess who leaves behind her extraordinary life to follow her own dream. It's a journey full of hopes and dreams for all those brave people who want to shine and follow their own star." The video is told without words, accompanied only by instrumentals. It runs 13:41 minutes.

APALKA

BY ERNESTO CARDENAL / ILLUSTRATED BY AUGUSTO SILVA



DESCRIPTION

This item is a children's book titled *Apalka* written by Ernesto Cardenal and illustrated by Augusto Silva.

From the publisher:

Akalpa es una laguna que guarda secretos sobrenaturales y un tesoro. Una leyenda de piratas en la Costa Caribe de Nicaragua que nos llega en la voz del poeta Ernesto Cardenal y las coloridas ilustraciones del pintor caribeño Augusto Silva. Ernesto Cardenal, nació el 20 de enero de 1925 en Granada, Nicaragua. Escribió su primer poema con tan solo siete años. Poeta revolucionario, escultor y sacerdote católico. Comprometido políticamente con los problemas sociales de su pueblo, desde 1954 participó en las luchas contra la dictadura somocista. Cardenal es uno de los más grandes poetas contemporáneos de Hispanoamérica. Es el poeta nicaragüense más conocido después de Darío. Sus obras han sido traducidas a los principales idiomas del mundo. Augusto Silva es un pintor costeño nacido en la ciudad de Bilwi (Puerto Cabezas) Nicaragua en 1986. Estudió pintura en la Escuela Nacional de Artes Plásticas de Managua. Además de pintar cuadros e ilustrar cuentos, también crea murales y diseños que reflejan la naturaleza, las leyendas y la vida cotidiana de los grupos étnicos de toda la Costa Caribe. Su estilo dinámico y colorido es ahora bien conocido en Nicaragua. *Apalka* es su tercer libro ilustrado para niños.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- For a brief introduction to Reverend Father Ernesto Cardenal's history and a more comprehensive overview of his literary achievements, see **Poetry Foundation: Ernesto Cardenal**.
- To read this book online with your students, see a fully digitized version at the **International Children's Digital Library**
- To learn more about the political and spiritual foundations of Ernesto Cardenal, read the following article from The Washington Post: **Ernesto Cardenal, poet and Catholic priest, still causes controversy at age 86**.
- Watch a PBS interview in which the poet discusses his work: **"Poet, Activist Ernesto Cardenal Explores Cosmos, Humanity in Verse"**

CASA XELTAVA



DESCRIPTION

This item is a book explaining the nonprofit educational organization Casa Xeltava in Granada, Nicaragua.

Casa Xalteva was founded in 1995 by Dr. Ken Carpenter and Dr. Gregory Calvert with the purpose of taking kids off the streets and putting them back into the school system. Don Ken and Don Gregory, as they are referred to in Casa Xalteva, arrived in Granada in the early 90's and immediately fell in love with it. They decided to buy a house to serve as a Spanish school, with the intent of using the income generated by Spanish instruction to fund the program and house kids from the streets, including kids from abusive families, and kids with drug problems. The main focus was for these kids to become productive adults through education and a stable home environment.

Note that Dr. Carpenter is the generous source for most of the materials in this Culture Box.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Visit the [official website for Casa Xeltava](#).

LEO EN NICARAGUA

BY ANNA MANSO / ILLUSTRATED BY ORIOL VIDAL



DESCRIPTION

This item is a children's book entitled *Leo en Nicaragua* written by Anna Manso and illustrated by Oriol Vidal.

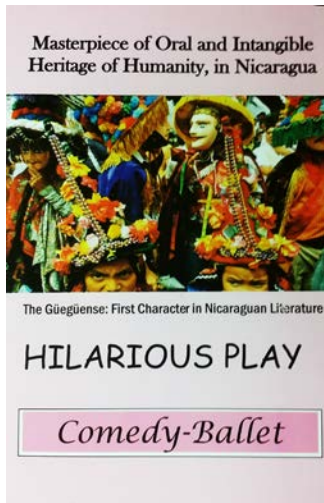
From the publisher:

In this delightful children's book, Leo and his talking dog, Ghandi, travel to Nicaragua to see the volcanoes and visit an old friend of Ghandi's. The simple story is laced with and underlaid by information about Nicaragua.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Listen to [Prensa Juvenil's interview with the author](#) (in Spanish). See minute 4:50 for information on the books she has written for Intermón Oxfam like this one.

THE GÜEGÜENSE



DESCRIPTION

This is a book entitled *The Güegüense: Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in Nicaragua*. The cover continues to read: *The Güegüense: First Character in Nicaraguan Literature: Hilarious Play: Comedy-Ballet*.

El Güegüense is a hilarious play that was first performed during the Spanish colonial period and it is still presented every year by actors in wonderful costumes, including the main character, El Macho Ratón.

In 2005, UNESCO designated the play a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.”

“Theater in colonial Nicaragua, with its popular religious festivals, was built in part on the traditions of ritual performance of pre-Columbian times. Its most notable result was the development of a theater in Nahuatl and Spanish that flourished between the mid-16th and mid-18th centuries and left the legacy of El Güegüense, a comic piece in which a popular character outwits government tax officials” (Source: Historical Dictionary of Latin American Literature and Theater by Richard Young and Odile Cisneros). As others have said, it was a play that symbolized the indigenous populations’ rejection of domination. Yet rather than serve as an outright declaration of protest, the playwright conveyed the local populace’s discontent through creative and clever veiled mockery performed as street theater.

El Güegüense has been called an “ancient comedy-dance-drama” and “was composed by an unknown author sometime, depending on which interpretation one believes, during the sixteenth, or seventeenth, or eighteenth-century...[El Güegüense] was rendered in at least four distinct nineteenth-century manuscripts written in the original Nahuatl-Spanish dialect, although its performance clearly dates back hundreds of years earlier” (Source: *The Grimace of Macho Ratón* by Les Field).

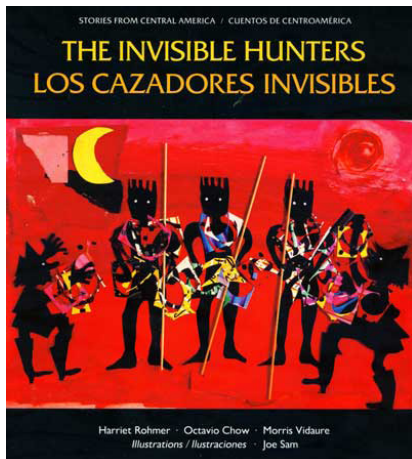
In short, El Güegüense is highly representative of Nicaraguan history and contemporary culture, in addition to being a universally funny play about a scenario common to countries around the world.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- To read more about the designation of the play as a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,” see [UNESCO](#).
- For a relatively thorough description of the history of the play, as well as its cast of characters, see [Via Nica: Nicaraguan Themes: El Güegüense](#)
- For a narrative explanation in English, accompanied by puppets, see the [YouTube video Güegüense Story](#)
- For visual representations of El Güegüense being performed, see the following YouTube videos:
- [Tu Canal Amigo El Masaya Presenta El Güegüense?](#)
- [El Güegüense? o Macho Ratón \(with narration in Spanish\).](#)

THE INVISIBLE HUNTERS

ADAPTED BY HARRIET ROHMER, OCTAVIO CHOW, AND MORRIS VIDUAIRE / ILLUSTRATED BY JOE SAM



DESCRIPTION

From the publisher:

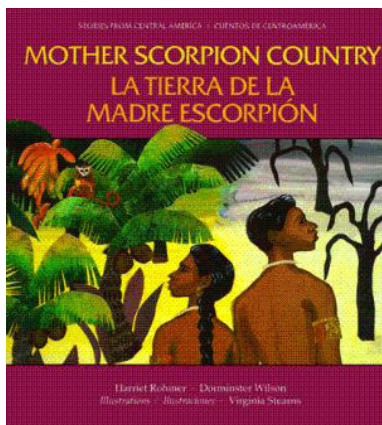
Late one Saturday afternoon, three brothers leave their village to hunt wari, the wild pig their people depend on for food. While hunting they discover a magical vine that can make them invisible—but they will only enjoy this power if they promise never to sell the meat they hunt, and never to hunt with guns, only with sticks. All is well until European traders arrive to buy the precious wari meat—and the brothers forget the promises they made so long ago. This is a Miskito version of the classic folk theme of how the very thing that gives you power can turn against you if not respected and used properly. *The Invisible Hunters* is about caring for our environment and our community, and about not losing sight of what is important.

Note there is a related item in the Culture Box: *Trisba and Sula: A Miskitu Folktale from Nicaragua*, another story about Miskitu culture.

There are also two other books written by Harriet Rohmer: *Uncle Nacho's Hat / El sombrero de tío Nacho* and *Mother Scorpion Country (Stories from Central America)*.

MOTHER SCORPION COUNTRY

BY HARRIET ROHMER, DORMINSTER NEWTON WILSON, AND VIRGINIA STEAMS



DESCRIPTION

From the publisher:

A brave, young Miskitu Indian follows his wife from the land of the living to the spirit world. Bilingual in English and Spanish.

From Independent Publisher:

This unusual, haunting legend comes from the oral tradition of Nicaragua. It is retold in a dual English/Spanish text. "A brave young Miskito Indian, Naklili, accompanies his beloved wife, Kati [who has died], to Mother Scorpion Country-land of the spirits. Mother Scorpion has compassion and allows him to remain. But Naklili belongs to the land of the living; he cannot share Kati's paradise." Kati sees trees filled with bananas and coconuts. To Naklih they are ugly skeletons. And so it is in all of Mother Scorpion Country: Reality appears as two opposing concepts. Naklili is allowed to return to his village by Mother Scorpion. At first he is welcomed, but then the villagers come to fear him; he is made an outcast. Naklili wants to return to Kati. Obeying an earlier command by Mother Scorpion, he touches a poisonous snake whose bite releases him from life. This tale is written in classic, folkloric language. A Spanish-speaking friend found the Spanish version a fine translation and as musical as the English version. Virginia Steams' striking illustrations

in deep, rich tones capture the mood of the myth. Adult readers will be fascinated by the story behind the story, an account of which appears at the end of the book. Recommended for school and library bilingual collections. For all ages.

From School Library Journal:

Grade 3-6 This beautiful bilingual (English-Spanish) retelling from native American mythology makes available to children the folklore of the Miskito tribe in Central America. When Naklili's beloved wife, Kati, dies, he cannot bear to let her go. He insists upon being buried with her and accompanying her to the land of death, Mother Scorpion country. But there, while all is beautiful to Kati and the others, Naklili cannot share in the delights because he is still of the living. When Kati receives his promise not to tell anything about Mother Scorpion country until the hour of his death, she helps him to go back to his home. But his refusal to talk about the experience mars his welcome from his family, and in his loneliness he longs to return to Mother Scorpion country. In time Naklili joins Kati again in death. The powerful illustrations in earth tones and deep colors are archetypal images of the indigenous peoples and are appropriate for this myth of life, death, and love.

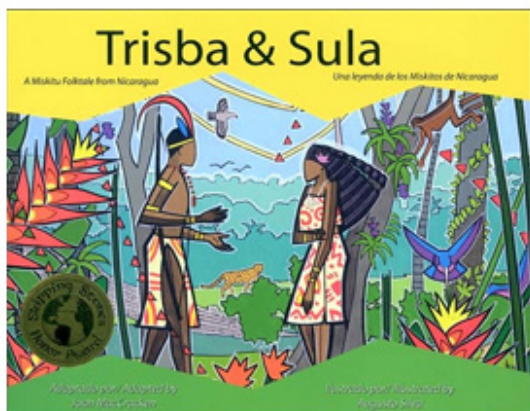
Note there are two other books written by Harriet Rohmer in the culture box: *The Invisible Hunters / Los Cazadores Invisibles* and *Uncle Nacho's Hat / El sombrero de tío Nacho*.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- A **brief history of the Miskito people** by IC Magazine, an independent publication “supporting the indigenous peoples movement.”

TRISBA AND SULA

BY JOAN MACCRACKEN / ILLUSTRATED BY AUGUSTO SILVA



DESCRIPTION

This item is a book titled *Trisba and Sula: A Miskitu Folktale from Nicaragua*, written by Joan MacCracken and illustrated by Augusto Silva.

From the publisher:

This is a delightful story from the Miskitu region on the Northeast coast of Nicaragua. It is bilingual, introducing children and adults to both Spanish and English translations on every page. The beautiful illustrations were painted by the well-known Nicaraguan artist, Augusto Silva (see augustosilva.com). His use of vibrant colours and geometric lines is outstanding. Readers will delight in seeing the animals and plants of Central America. This folktale has never before been written in English. Like most folktales, it had been passed down verbally through the generations. Dr MacCracken's adaptation has been enthusiastically received by the Miskitu people. The environmental message of limited hunting practices is timely. She is confident that those who see the book will want to own one.

“The Miskito Indians of Nicaragua live mainly on the north-east of the country, paying scant regard to the established Honduran border, on the other side of which as many as 40,000 Miskitos may live. They have played an important role in the international indigenous movements of the 1980s and have, with the advent of counterrevolutionary movements, been in conflict

with the revolutionary Sandinista government which came to power in 1979. Their chief aim is one of self determination. NO formal census of the Miskitos has ever been taken, as a result of which population figures tend to be misrepresented by both sides. There are also other smaller indigenous groups in the artea: the Suma, Rama, and Garifunos (this Culture Box has a related item, *Wátina*, which offers a brief introduction to Garifuna culture and music) (Source: World Directory of Minorities.).

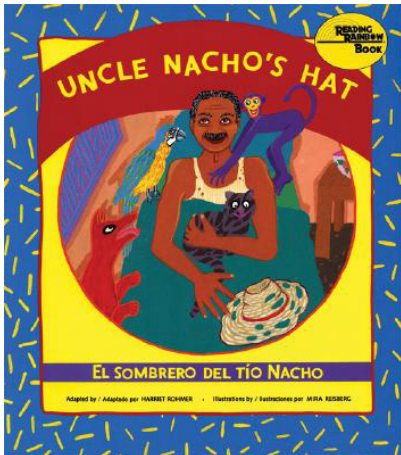
SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- For news about contemporary Miskitu and their interaction with the broader global community, see BBC News' article on "[Nicaragua's Miskitos Seek Independence.](#)"
- For more information about the history of the Miskito people, see the [World Directory of Minorities.](#)

UNCLE NACHO'S HAT

BY HARRIET ROHMER / ILLUSTRATED BY MIRA REISBERG /

TRANSLATED BY ROSALMA ZUBIZARRETA



DESCRIPTION

This item is a children's book titled *Uncle Nacho's Hat / El sombrero de tío Nacho* written by Harriet Rohmer, illustrated by Mira Reisberg, and translated by Rosalma Zubizarreta.

From the publisher:

When Ambrosia gives her Uncle Nacho a new hat, he tries to get rid of his old one, but to no avail. No matter what he does, the pesky hat keeps coming back to him. This classic folktale from the Puppet Workshop of Nicaraguan National Television, vividly illustrated by Mira Reisberg and presented in a bilingual edition, is a parable about the difficulties of making changes and shaking off old habits. The book includes an account of the origins of the story.

From Publishers Weekly:

This folktale brings "...important glimpses of other cultures to American children. The Uncle Nacho story originated in Nicaragua...[in it] Nacho is attached to his old hat, even though it is full of holes. When his niece Ambrosia gives him a new one, he's pleased but skeptical. He reluctantly puts the ragged hat in the trash, but thanks to well-meaning relatives and friends, the hat keeps returning to Nacho. Finally he realizes it's time to push himself to change his style, in a clever and involving lesson in acceptance of change.

From School Library Journal:

“Uncle Nacho . . . receives a new hat as a gift from his niece. He tries to throw away his old hat, but it keeps coming back to him as people recognize it and return it to him. He is discouraged until his niece tells him: “Stop worrying about the old hat, Uncle Nacho. Think about your new hat instead.” The story was adapted from a Nicaraguan folktale performed by the Puppet Workshop of Nicaraguan National Television. Striking colors complement earth tones in the primitive-style illustrations.”

Note there are two other books written by Harriet Rohmer in the culture box: *The Invisible Hunters / Los Cazadores Invisibles* and *Mother Scorpion Country (Stories from Central America)*.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- From Del Sol Books, listen to [young child Vienna Rose read the novel](#).

NICARAGUA TOURISM



DESCRIPTION

This book, written by the Instituto Nicaragüense de Turismo, gives descriptions of major tourist attractions in Nicaragua. It is aimed at individuals who are planning trips to Nicaragua, and is written in both Spanish and English.

Tourism is the second largest industry in Nicaragua, and has been quickly growing over the past decade. Nicaragua's beautiful landscape, colonial cities, and beaches have served as attractions for tourists from around the world. This book includes general information about Nicaragua's history, colonial cities, beaches, folklore & art, natural resources, and other useful information for tourists.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- The [Visita Nicaragua](#) page through the Instituto Nacional de Turismo provides extensive tourism information in Spanish.
- [The Guardian](#) provides information on ecotourism, a popular form of tourism in Nicaragua.

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

Although Nicaragua may not have the same reputation as other countries such as Mexico or Guatemala, the Nicaraguan people produce a wide range of handcrafted items, including pottery, leather, wood, and woven products such as hammocks and baskets. In addition to continuing long traditions of hands-on techniques, these products also support Nicaragua's growing tourist economy.

The culture box includes several items that demonstrate the diversity of artisanal production in Nicaragua.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- “Nicaragua: Recuerda tu país” Wall Plate
- Wooden Carvings of Statues
- Small Pottery Plate with Rainforest Design
- Ceramic Bird Whistle

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [ViaNica: Masaya](#)
- Video: [Historia del Mercado Nacional de Artesanías—Masaya, Nicaragua](#) (Spanish)

CELEBRATIONS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nicaragua has a variety of celebrations dedicated to religious occasions. During the week leading up to Easter, which is known as Holy Week or *Semana Santa*, many Nicaraguan communities organize events to commemorate the week before Jesus' death and resurrection, in accordance with the Roman Catholic religious tradition. One such event is the procession of the donkey, in which a donkey carries an image of Jesus or a person dressed as Jesus. This procession starts and ends at the chapel, and takes place on the Sunday before Easter, also known as Palm Sunday. Many churches also set up Stations of the Cross, in which a priest and parishioners walk through the streets with the statue of Jesus to fourteen different stations that represent Jesus' journey to his crucifixion. These processions usually take place each Friday during Lent (the forty-day period before Easter), ending on Good Friday during Holy Week.

Many cities and towns in Nicaragua celebrate their patron saint or virgin once a year. In Managua, for example, from August 1st to August 10th, residents celebrate Saint Dominic (Santo Domingo), fondly referred to by Managuans as "Minguito". The statuette of "Minguito" resides in Las Serritas Parish Church year-round, but on August 1st, the statuette is taken in a procession into central Managua to the Santo Domingo Church. This procession is known as "ascending the saint". On August 10th, the statuette is brought back to its original location in another procession, which is known as "descending the saint". Thousands of Nicaraguans participate in these processions, including bands, dancers, and people dressed in costumes. Also on the first and tenth of the month, there is a festive Horse Parade with a variety of floats.

One non-religious festival in Nicaragua is the International Poetry Festival. Since 2005, poets from around the world have gathered in Granada, Nicaragua to share and celebrate their work. The festival takes place in February and lasts one week.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Via Nica: Holy Week](#)
- [Via Nica: Fiestas Patronales de Managua](#)
- [ViaNica: Poetry Festival](#)
- [International Poetry Festival website](#)

CLOTHING

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While Nicaraguans, for the most part, wear similar clothes to North Americans, traditional clothing is still part of folkloric dance. Below is a list of dances with descriptions of the traditional dresses that accompany them:

- **Baile del Zopilote (Vulture Dance):** The vulture dresses in a black outfit with a vulture mask. The female dress is orange with black lines, and the dancer usually wears flowers in her hair. This dance originated in the Southern Pacific region of Nicaragua.
- **Las Inditas:** This dance originated in Masaya, and the female dancer wears a dress that is completely white with a large red ribbon. Her hair is braided, and she wears a basket on her head.
- **Trencilla Costume:** Inspired by traditional clothing of indigenous peoples and mestizos, this dress is white with colorful lines on the top and bottom. It is often accessorized with a black or red ribbon, earrings, and flowers. This dress is used in marimba dances, and most likely originated in the Pacific region.
- **The Mestizaje Dance:** In this dance, the woman wears a very colorful dress representing Spanish influence as well as a sombrero with feathers and a hand fan made of feathers. The man wears white shirt with a dark cape, a sombrero with a red flower, and a ribbon on his chest. He wears white stockings, short black pants, and black shoes. This dance is usually accompanied by a marimba song called “El mate amargo”.
- **Northern Countryman Costume:** In this dance, the woman wears a wrap-around white skirt with a long-sleeved white shirt. She wears a bandana around her head and a kerchief around her waist while carrying a small clay pot. The man dresses in white long pants, a long sleeved-shirt, and a northern sombrero while carrying a jícaro for water. These costumes are meant to portray a hard-working couple from the rural northern regions of the country, and the dance is often mazurka, polka, or a Nicaraguan waltz.
- **Güipil Costume:** The güipil costume consists of a simple shirt with an embroidered skirt. The shirt has four openings, which represent four cardinal points according to indigenous traditions. The man wears a simple white outfit with a sombrero made of agave. These costumes are often used in marimba dances.

A commonly-worn clothing item among men in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Latin America is the guayabera. Often associated with Cuban culture, guayaberas are a common article of clothing throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, including Nicaragua. It has four front pockets, two vertical stripes of pleating, and often features embroidery. See the “Traditional Clothing” section for more information on the guayabera.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Guayabera: A Shirt's Story](#)
- To see pictures of these costumes and others, visit Via Nica's [Traditional Costumes](#) page.

CURRENCY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nicaragua's national currency is the córdoba. U.S. dollars are accepted in many parts of the country as well. The córdoba was introduced in 1912 and was originally equivalent in value to the U.S. dollar. The currency is named after Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, a conquistador who is credited with founding the cities of Granada and León.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Biography of [Francisco Hernández de Córdoba](#)
- [ViaNica: Money](#)
- To find the current exchange rate, visit ViaNica's [Currency Converter](#).

FLAG

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nicaragua's flag consists of two blue stripes on the top and bottom, and one white stripe in the middle. The blue stripes represent the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea; the white stripe symbolizes purity and represents the land of Nicaragua that lies between these two bodies of water. In the middle of the flag, there is a coat of arms consisting of a triangular design surrounded by the words "República de Nicaragua: América Central". The triangle symbolizes equality and the rainbow symbolizes peace. Also inside the triangle is the Phrygia cap, which was originally worn in ancient Rome by the inhabitants of Phrygia. In both ancient Rome and the modern-day Nicaraguan flag, the Phrygia cap signifies liberty. Finally, the five volcanoes signify the five original countries of Central America, emphasizing their unity and fraternity.

Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Honduras gained independence on September 15, 1821 and became known as the United Provinces of Central America. By 1838, the five countries had split up. All of them, however, maintained two blue stripes in their flag with unique variations specific to each country.

Nicaragua adopted its national flag in 1908, although it was not formally and officially accepted until 1971.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Flag

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Flags from around the world](#)
- [La Voz del Sandinismo: Símbolos patrios de Nicaragua](#) (Spanish)
- [ViaNica.com: National Symbols](#)

FOOD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

One of the staple foods throughout Nicaragua's history is corn. Pre-Columbian societies attached spiritual significance to corn, and it continues to be common in present-day dishes. Beans are also a staple ingredient in many Nicaraguan dishes. Below are some examples of common dishes in Nicaragua, most of which contain corn or beans.

Nacatamal is a breakfast food that consists of dough made of corn and butter filled with pork or chicken, rice, tomatoes, onion, and sweet pepper. These ingredients are wrapped up in a plantain leaf and boiled. Another one of Nicaragua's staple breakfast dishes is gallo pinto, which is a mixture of beans, rice, onions, and peppers.

Vigorón is a dish that originated in Granada and contains boiled cassava, pork rind, salad, and chili served in a plantain leaf. Indio Viejo is a stew composed of shredded meat, onions, tomatoes and peppers fried with precooked corn meal, then thinned with orange juice and broth. A smaller dish called quesillo is a corn tortilla stuffed with cheese served with onions, cream, vinegar, and chile.

Many of Nicaragua's agricultural products are exported to other countries, including coffee, bananas, sugarcane, rice, and corn.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [ViaNica: Traditional Food](#)
- [CIA World Factbook: Agricultural Products](#)
- [Oro Travel: Food](#)
- [Nicaragua's tourism website: Food](#)

GEOGRAPHY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nicaragua shares its border to the north with Honduras and shares its southern border with Costa Rica. It borders the Caribbean Sea in the east and the Pacific Ocean in the west. Slightly smaller than the state of New York, it is the largest country in Central America. Nicaragua has a wealth of geographical diversity, and is often referred to as “the country of lakes and volcanoes”. Lake Nicaragua (also known by its indigenous name Cocibolca) is Central America’s largest freshwater lake. Active and dormant volcanoes line western Nicaragua from north to south. Nicaragua’s rich biodiversity is maintained through the government’s 76 national park reserves.

Nicaragua has a tropical climate with two seasons; the dry season lasts from January to June, and the rainy season lasts from July to December. Due to its climate and location, Nicaragua is especially vulnerable to hurricanes. One of the worst hurricanes that hit Nicaragua was Hurricane Mitch in October 1998, killing about 3,000 people.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Photo Book of Nicaragua
- Brochure of National Parks and Protected Areas

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [CIA Factbook](#)
- [ViaNica: Lake Nicaragua](#)
- [ViaNica: Volcanoes](#)
- [El Huracán Mitch en Nicaragua](#)

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For Pre-Columbian history, see the Indigenous Peoples section.

Independence

Prior to independence, Nicaragua belonged to the Captaincy General of Guatemala, which stretched from what is now Costa Rica to Chiapas, Mexico. While other regions of Latin America gained independence after fighting in wars, Central America's process of independence was achieved through negotiations with the Spanish crown. A team of leaders drafted an Act of Independence in September 1821. One prominent Nicaraguan lawyer who was involved in this process was Miguel Larreynaga, whose face is featured on the ten córdoba bills. Following independence, the Central American states decided to join the Mexican Empire, but soon separated into their individual nation-states on April 30th, 1838.

Upon gaining independence, political intellectuals split into two groups: the liberals and the conservatives. As these factions fought for power, the liberals employed the help of a man from the United States named William Walker. Walker's efforts in Latin America were inspired by "manifest destiny," a belief that the United States has a God-given mission to spread its values and power throughout the hemisphere. After a failed attempt to declare himself president of Mexico, Walker focused his efforts on Nicaragua, and he served as Nicaragua's president from 1856 when he took over Granada until 1857 when he was defeated by forces financed by U.S. investor Cornelius Vanderbilt.

20th Century

Two prominent historical figures in Nicaragua's governmental and political system are Anastasio Somoza and Augusto Sandino. Augusto Sandino is well-known for leading a rebellion against U.S. military occupation in Nicaragua between 1927 and 1933. Due to his central role in the rebellion, he was assassinated by Somoza's opposing forces in 1934. In 1936, Somoza took power with U.S. support, beginning a brutal dictatorship that lasted 43 years. The Somoza family's rule ended in 1979 when the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), named after Augusto Sandino, overthrew the Somoza regime. The new Sandinista-led government implemented a variety of social reforms, including a literacy campaign that reduced illiteracy from 53% to 12%.

In the early 1980s during the Cold War period, the Reagan administration began to pour funds into the Contra War, aimed at overthrowing the Sandinistas. The U.S. supported the Contras because they accused the Sandinistas of promoting Communist ideology. The Contra War was

marked by a famous scandal, known as the Iran-Contra Affair, in which it was revealed that the Reagan administration sold weapons to Iran for its war against Iraq and funneled the profits from their sale to the Contras. The Contra War lasted 10 years and left 60,000 dead. This part of Nicaragua's history speaks to the controversial role that the United States has played in Latin America.

Contemporary

Nicaragua's current governmental system operates under democratic principles and has four branches: legislative, executive, judicial, and electoral. Presidential and vice presidential elections are held every five years. The legislative branch is composed of the National Assembly, and the judicial branch is comprised of local judges, district judges, Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court of Justice. The electoral branch is in charge of directing and monitoring elections, plebiscites, and referendums at the national and municipal levels. The national territory is divided into 15 departments and 2 autonomous regions. Within these, there are 153 municipalities, each of which is presided over by a mayor and a Municipal Council.

In 1984, Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega was elected to the presidency with over two-thirds of the vote. His term lasted until 1990. However, in 2006, Ortega was elected again. After the Nicaraguan Supreme Court approved a controversial modification to the constitution, he was elected to a second and third term and remains in power as of 2014.

In 2004, Nicaragua signed on the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) with the United States, which is aimed at facilitating trade and investment in participating countries. However, free trade policies are criticized for forcing small farmers to compete with large-scale subsidized agriculture in the United States, loose environmental and labor rights protections, and enforcement of patent protections that significantly raise the price of fertilizers and seeds.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **Timeline: Nicaragua**
- **Historical Background** of Nicaragua
- ViaNica: **Nicaraguan Independence; Sandinista Revolution; Augusto C. Sandino**
- Understanding the **Iran-Contra Affairs**
- **Daniel Ortega: Profile of the President of Nicaragua**
- Article about **Cornelius Vanderbilt**
- Biography of **William Walker**
- **Governmental Structure in Nicaragua**

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical

While sources vary on the amount of time that indigenous peoples inhabited what is today known as Nicaragua before the arrival of the Europeans, scholars have been able to trace the movement of various indigenous groups. In the tenth century, the main indigenous groups in the region were the Chibchas, who were spread around Nicaragua, and the Matagalpas, who inhabited the central and Pacific regions of Nicaragua. However, the Matagalpas were displaced from the Pacific when the Chorotegas indigenous peoples invaded after travelling from what is today southern Mexico around 900 AD. The Chorotegas' culture differed from the existing groups and had Mayan influence. Around 1200 AD, a Nahuatl group related to the Aztecs invaded, expelling the Chorotegas from the Rivas isthmus. They began to identify themselves as Nicarao. Another group of Nahuatl, called the Subtiabas or Maribios, also settled in the central Pacific region.

Meanwhile, a variety of groups of Chibcha origin lived in the Caribbean region, including the Miskitos, the Ramas, the Sumas, and the Mayangnas. Most of these peoples were nomadic tribes that settled along rivers and near the ocean. Due to their linguistic origins, scholars believe that these peoples migrated from the regions that are today known as Venezuela and Colombia.

Contemporary

According to the CIA World Factbook, 5% of Nicaragua's population identifies as Amerindian and 9% identifies as black. The 1987 Constitution recognized Nicaragua as a multi-ethnic nation and recognized indigenous peoples' rights to identity and culture, bilingual education, and communal land ownership. The 1987 Autonomy Law created two autonomous regions in eastern Nicaragua, the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) and the South Atlantic Autonomous region (RAAS), where most indigenous communities live. This law allows regional governments to oversee and administer health, education, transportation, and other community services.

Major indigenous groups include the Miskitu (or Miskito), Mayagna, Rama, and Garifuna peoples. The Miskitu are the largest indigenous group in Nicaragua. Rural Miskitu communities are generally located near the northern border with Honduras, along the Caribbean coast, and elsewhere within the RAAN. There are also many Miskitu peoples in urban areas of the RAAN and RAAS. About 1.7% of Nicaraguans speak Miskitu.

There are approximately 8,000 individuals who identify as Mayagna in three different communities within Nicaragua located in the RAAN and the RAAS. The Rama community is smaller with a population of about 1,400. Most live on Rama Cay, which is a small island in the Bay of Bluefields. The Garifuna are a people of mixed African and indigenous descent who reside mainly in the Pearl Lagoon basin. Most Garifuna are bilingual in Garifuna and Spanish.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Wooden Carvings of Statues
- El Macho Ratón Figurine
- Book: Mother Scorpion Country / La Tierra de la madre escorpión

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Report from **Fondo Internacional de Desarrollo Agrícola** (Spanish)
- World Directory of Indigenous Peoples: **Indigenous Peoples**; **Garifuna**
- **CIA World Factbook**

LANGUAGE

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Spanish is the official language of Nicaragua. However, there are several other languages that are spoken in the country, including Miskito, Mayangna, Nicaraguan Creole English, Ulwa, Garifuna, and Rama. The communities that speak these languages are primarily located near the Caribbean coast and in along Nicaragua's northern border.

Another major language in Nicaragua is Nicaraguan Sign Language, which began to develop in the 1970s among deaf Nicaraguan youth. As special education opportunities opened up, deaf children had more opportunities to interact with one another, thereby systematizing their signs into a language.

As of 2011, there were an estimated 395,000 Nicaraguans living in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, about 62% of Nicaraguans in the US over the age of 5 speak English proficiently.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- Brochure of National Parks and Protected Areas
- Book: Leo en Nicaragua
- Book: 'Nicaragua' Tourism Book
- Book: Mother Scorpion Country / La Tierra de la madre escorpión

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Pew Research Center: [Hispanics of Nicaraguan Origin in the United States, 2011](#)
- [About Nicaraguan Sign Language](#)
- [Map of Indigenous Language Speakers](#)
- [Ethnologue: Nicaragua](#)

MIGRATION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As the second poorest country in Latin America after Haiti, many Nicaraguans are unable to support themselves economically. The 2008 National Human Development Plan attributes the main reasons for Nicaraguan migration to high rates of youth unemployment and the lack of decent work opportunities. Migration flows have also increased after natural disasters such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The most common destinations for the 12% of Nicaraguan emigrants are Costa Rica, the United States, El Salvador, Panama, Guatemala, Spain, Mexico and Canada. According to the Pew Research Center, there are about 395,000 individuals of Nicaraguan origin living in the United States.

The flow of Nicaraguan migrants to Costa Rica has been a source of tension between the two countries. Many Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica face discrimination. In an effort to curb migration flows, Costa Rica passed a law in 2006 that raised penalties for employers of undocumented immigrants, facilitated deportation, and restricted legal residency requirements. Due to its relative wealth, Costa Rica receives larger migration flows, just as the United States does. Therefore, many of Costa Rica's concerns about migration flows parallel those of the United States.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Migration Information Source: [“Central America: Crossroads of the Americas”](#)
- Pew Research Center: [Hispanic Trends](#)
- [International Organization for Migration’s](#) interactive world map of migration patterns

MUSIC

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Nicaragua's music represents the diversity of cultural influences throughout its history. Its national instrument is the marimba, which is a type of xylophone that consists of wooden keys placed over bamboo or wooden tubes called resonators. Most researchers believe that African slaves introduced the marimba to Central America. In Nicaragua, marimba music is often accompanied by guitar and guitarilla (a small guitar like a mandolin).

The Caribbean Coast is known for its music that accompanies a unique, energetic dance during the Palo de Mayo festival. Garifuna music includes a unique combination of tenor and bass drums as you can hear in the CD *Wátina*. Punta is a popular dance that accompanies Garifuna music. In Central Nicaragua, there is a significant population of Europeans, especially Germans, who have influenced music and dance, bringing Polka and Mazurka dances.

In the 1970s and 1980s, trova became a popular rhythm in music that expressed social injustice and hopes for the future during the period of the Sandinista revolution and the Contra War. Guardabarranco is part of this musical genre.

Other popular musical genres are Bachata, Merengue, Salsa, Cumbia, and Reggaeton.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [The Marimba of Mexico and Central America](#)
- [ViaNica: Culture](#)
- [Casa Xalteva: Culture](#)

NARRATIVES

LITERARY AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

A diverse selection of books and photographs are included in the Culture Box to show the wide variety of cultural production by Nicaraguan authors and about Nicaragua. The various materials in the box demonstrate that the notion of culture is actually not something that can be “boxed up”. Instead, culture is ever-changing and multidimensional.

The stories in the Culture Box include *A Margarita*, based on a poem by the famous Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío; *Apalka*, Ernesto Cardenal’s tale of pirates on Nicaragua’s Caribbean coast; *Leo en Nicaragua*, an adventure story about a child and his friends who explore Nicaragua’s volcanoes; *The Invisible Hunters*, a Miskito version of the classic folk theme of how the very thing that gives you power can turn against you if not respected and used properly; *Mother Scorpion Country*, a Miskito tale that addresses the themes of life, death, and love; *Trisba and Sula*, another Miskito folktale with an environmental message; and *Uncle Nacho’s Hat*, a story adapted from the Puppet Workshop of Nicaraguan National Television. Also included is *The Güegüense*, the comical play that was first performed during the colonial period.

The photographs included in the Culture Box are meant to spark classroom discussion. Together, the books, photographs and artifacts will encourage students to think critically about perspective and voice, leading to a nuanced exploration of Nicaragua that minimizes the pitfalls of stereotyping.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- El Macho Ratón Figurine
- Book: Leo en Nicaragua
- Book: Mother Scorpion Country / La Tierra de la Madre Escorpión
- Photography Album

RELIGION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Roman Catholicism remains the most predominant religious affiliation, with 58.8% of Nicaraguans identifying as Roman Catholic. 21.6% of the population identifies as evangelical Protestant, which includes denominations such as Assemblies of God, Pentecostals, Mennonites, and Baptists. According to the U.S. State Department website, Afro-Caribbean and indigenous communities are more likely to belong to Moravian or Episcopalian churches.

Many immigrant groups also identify as Christian. Palestinian Christians migrated to Nicaragua in two major waves in the early 1900s and the 1960s. Many Chinese and South Korean immigrants also practice Christianity; some of the South Korean communities formed their own churches.

Non-Christian religious communities are few in number, with an estimated 40-member Jewish community and 300 Muslims with a mosque in Managua.

The constitution of Nicaragua allows for freedom of religion, and there is no official state religion. During the Sandinista Revolution, the more progressive wings of the Catholic Church lent support to the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional). One of the most well-known Catholic priests who supported the revolution was Ernesto Cardenal, author of the book *Apalaka*. Cardenal was inspired by the liberation theology movement, which emphasized a preferential option for the poor and a strong commitment social justice.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- U.S. Department of State: [International Religious Freedom Report 2010](#)
- Nicaragua's [Religious History](#)
- Washington Post article on [Ernesto Cardenal](#)

SLAVERY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

During the colonial period, the conquistadors forced indigenous people to leave Nicaragua to work as slaves in mines in South America. The slave trade, epidemics of diseases such as measles and influenza, and violent repression by the European colonizers drastically reduced the indigenous population in Nicaragua. In fact, while Nicaragua's indigenous population was between 600,000 and 1 million at the time of the conquest, by 1548 the indigenous population was only about 30,000.

Apart from the slave trade, two other pillars of Nicaragua's economic system in the 16th century were the *encomienda* and *repartimiento* systems. In the *encomienda* system, the Spanish crown would give a conquistador a plot of land and all of the indigenous people on that plot of land were forced to work on it. This form of forced labor allowed the Spanish to extract Nicaragua's agricultural wealth and required indigenous laborers to pay a tribute to the Spaniards. Once the *encomienda* system was outlawed in 1543, the *repartimiento* system was implemented. This was similar in that a certain percentage of indigenous villagers were taken to work for the Spaniards. Although they were paid, they were forced into a relationship of debt peonage. Due to the collapse of the indigenous population, the Spanish began to bring African slaves to work in Nicaragua. The number of slaves in Nicaragua during that period is unknown. Some worked on plantations while others worked as servants for the Europeans.

Slavery in Nicaragua was abolished in 1824, but US-born filibuster William Walker temporarily reinstated slavery during his presidency from 1856-1857, as one of his goals was to expand the United States' southern territory in order to incorporate additional slave states.

Marooned Slaves

In addition to the slaves that came directly from Africa, there were communities of marooned slaves that settled in Nicaragua. In 1786, a group of African slaves that were being transferred to Belize escaped and settled on the Caribbean coast. They were later joined by communities of marooned slaves from Jamaica and San Andres. Today, the largest Creole communities live in Bluefields, Corn Island, and Pearl Lagoon. They speak Nicaraguan Creole English, which is also known as Miskito Coast Creole English.

The afro-indigenous Garifuna communities in Nicaragua are also descendants of marooned African slaves who escaped from two slave ships in 1635 and settled on the island of St. Vincent. They also have ancestry from the Arawak indigenous people. They were later forcibly removed from St. Vincent by the British in 1797 and settled in areas throughout Central America. They

did not arrive in Nicaragua until 1880 when they migrated from Honduras.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- El Nuevo Diario's article on "La esclavitud colonial en la Nicaragua del Pacífico" (Spanish)
- World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples: Garifuna; Creoles
- History Now article on "The Filibuster King: The Strange Career of William Walker"
- Harvesting Change: Labor and Agrarian Reform in Nicaragua, 1979-1990 – Laura J. Enríquez

SPORTS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The national sport of Nicaragua is baseball. While there are four professional baseball teams, it is also commonly played in the streets among children and teens. Before baseball became popular among Nicaraguans, the British, who occupied the Atlantic Coast, introduced cricket. However, a businessman from the U.S. named Albert Addlesburg who lived in Bluefields in the 1880s became fed up with local sports authorities and convinced two cricket teams to switch to baseball instead. The two baseball teams had their first game in 1887, and the first official games took place in Managua in 1891. Despite some difficulties funding baseball, Nicaragua has hosted five World Championships and has won two international titles in baseball. Since the 1970s, 13 Nicaraguan baseball players have joined major league teams in the United States.

Other popular sports in Nicaragua include boxing, sport fishing, hiking, biking, and sailing. Many of these sports are specifically geared towards tourists.

Nicaragua first participated in the Olympics in 1968, and has sent several teams to the Olympics since then, but none of their players has won a medal.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- Nicaragua Living: [“History of Nicaraguan Baseball 1887”](#)
- [Major League Baseball Players Born in Nicaragua](#)
- Encyclopedia Britannica: [Nicaragua](#)
- Nicaragua.com Official Website’s article on [“Keeping active with sport in Nicaragua”](#)

TOURISM

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The tourism industry in Nicaragua is growing rapidly. In 2012, Nicaragua saw an 11% increase in the number of tourists that visited the country as well as the revenue generated from tourism. In an effort to attract investment, Nicaragua has a Tourism Industry Incentives Law that gives tax breaks and other incentives to investors in the tourist industry.

With 76 environmentally-protected areas covering 20% of its landmass, Nicaragua is also a popular eco-tourism destination. In fact, 7% of the world's biodiversity can be found within Nicaragua's borders.

Another popular form of tourism is voluntourism, in which travelers experience Nicaragua while engaging in service. Organizations like Casa Xalteva allow volunteers to study Spanish and participate in volunteer work.

CORRESPONDING INVENTORY

- “Nicaragua: Recuerda tu país” Wall Plate
- Brochure of National Parks and Protected Areas
- Book: ‘Nicaragua’ Tourism Book
- Photo Book

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [ViaNica: Investment Opportunities in Nicaragua](#)
- [Casa Xalteva: Volunteer Programs](#)
- [Nicaraguan Government’s Tourism Website](#)
- [Article about Ecotourism](#)

CONTENTS CHECKLIST: NICARAGUA

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

REFERENCE ITEMS

- Flag
- Wall Map
- Photography Album
- Framed Photo: Volcanoes

ARTIFACTS

- Turismo en área protegidas (brochure)
- El Macho Ratón Figurine
- Ceramic Plate
- Wall Plate
- Wooden Cart
- Wooden Carvings of Statues

MUSIC & INSTRUMENTS

- Ceramic Bird Whistle
- Guardabarranco (CD)
- Wátina (CD)

BOOKS

- A Margarita
- Apalka
- Casa Xelteva
- Leo en Nicaragua

- The Güegüense
- The Invisible Hunters
- Mother Scorpion Country
- Trisba and Sula: A Miskitu Folktale
- Uncle Nacho's Hat
- Nicaragua Tourism

EVALUATION: NICARAGUA

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.