



LATIN AMERICAN PALS: AN INTRODUCTION TO LATIN AMERICA

Level: middle school / 6th grade
Course: Spanish, language arts

Rationale

“Latin America” needs to be defined and explained to many American students. Many U.S. students know about Mexico because it is a near neighbor but not about other Latin American countries. Mexico is the country our sixth graders traditionally study. To stretch them, I want to introduce them to the rest of the Latin American world.

Lesson Overview

Students as pairs will choose a Latin American country to become friends with and knowledgeable about. During the first month of school, the teacher will introduce students to this on-going unit, using Mexico as a model. Then the students will research their country in a variety of methods (Internet and Web connections and key pals, encyclopedias, books, interviews, CD's) and then will have the opportunity to share for a maximum of 7 minutes every other week during “Charla,” a time set aside to talk about their country. This Latin American Pals project will go on all year, culminating in a Hyperstudio stack on each country or home page about our project and a Latin American travel fair exhibiting their findings.

by
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Objectives

- * Students will learn about Latin America.
- * Students will learn about one particular Latin American country.
- * Students will use a variety of methods of research.
- * Students will share orally their information every week in Charla.
- * Students will learn Hyperstudio or HTML.

Time Needed

This project will need 1-2 weeks for the introduction, then a class period a week for the rest of the year for the Charla. Also plan on 2 weeks at the end of each quarter to compile data gathered so the end project won't be so overwhelming.

Materials

- * Computer, modem, CD-ROM player, printer
- * Research materials: CD's of encyclopedias and other sources, books, magazines
- * A folder for each country
- * A box for each country
- * Maps of Latin America
- * Hand-outs: Names of the Latin American countries/section for parents to sign and comment, Explanation of Charla and student requirements, List of required areas to be researched

Procedures

Day 1—Introduction of Latin America

- 1) Anticipatory set: Ask students to picture in their minds where Latin America is. Let them think about that for a minute or so. Then write in their journal where they think it is.
- 2) Ask one student to go to the map and point out Latin America. Give student plenty of time to look around. Let another student help him/her. Let them look—Remember—wait time!!! Play this up allowing the students to make mistakes—don't correct them yet.
- 3) Share the following with the students: "How many of you would like to go to the place that specializes in growing the plants we get chocolate from? Who would like to go to a country that has beautiful beaches? Who would like to stand in the middle of a rain forest and listen to the animals in the jungle? Who would like to see awesome Mayan ruins? Who would like to see a toucan, a macaw, a jaguar, howler monkeys wild in the jungle?"

- 4) Explain the term "Latin America" and that all these places can be visited in Latin America. Countries that have roots back to Spain as conqueror; therefore Spanish became the major language, except in Brazil, where Portuguese is the major language because they were colonized by Portugal.
 - 5) Hand out a map showing the countries and a hand-out with the names of the countries.
 - 6) Say the names of the countries, first for the students to hear pronunciation and spelling, then have them join in saying them. Have prepared a short 1-2 line anecdotal description of each country. See Handouts at end of this lesson.
 - 7) Explain the idea of "Charla" and the students' requirements.
- * In pairs, students will select a Latin America country to become friends with for the year.
 - * Each week there will be a class period on Friday that will be dedicated to a sharing time. The period will be divided into 7 minute slots that the pair of students will sign up for the week before. During that 7 minutes the students will do a presentation about their country. There will be a list of required topics students will have to address throughout the year. This first one will be to cover 5 facts: capitol, identify continent, names of major cities, money, anthem and flag. (*World Atlas* software is a great resource for finding the different country's anthem and other information.) This material can presented in a variety of ways: reading facts, visuals, puppets, skits, charts, artwork, drawing and oral explanation, discussions, debates, etc. Prior to the Charla every week, there will be ample time allowed in class for research on the computer or in the library. Students will be encouraged to seek resources in the community. They can book a guest speaker for their time during Charla or for a longer time period for extra credit.
 - * The students will need to identify their sources of information: Web or Internet, CD's—ex. Grolier's Encyclopedia, books, encyclopedias, people interviewed, key pals (all students will have a key pal from their country if that country is online. An alternative to this activity might be having 3-5 students research one country because of the limited access to students for keypals in Latin American countries.) Each pair of students will have scheduled time on the Internet. (A prerequisite to this project will be a training time on the Internet, specializing in Gopher, listserves, LADB and the Web. This training is very time consuming and will take the first 9 weeks, making it not feasible to start this project until the second 9 weeks.)
 - * Students will be graded on each presentation and will be expected to do a Charla 3-4 times a grading period (9 weeks). Each presentation will then be put into a folder or box to keep for the culminating activity at the end of the nine weeks and the final project at the end of year. Each presentation will have to have a Spanish language component.
- 8) Closure—In their journal, students will draw or write a summary of what they learned today answering these questions: What is Latin America? Where is it? Why should they study it?
 - 9) Homework—Students will discuss with their parents their choice of Latin American countries and list 3 countries they would like to learn more about. Parent/s will sign this sheet of paper and the description hand-out of this project.

Day 2—Introduction to Country/Model Charla

In order to model what is expected during a Charla, the teacher will present information about Mexico (could be on any country. I chose Mexico because that is the country my students are supposed to cover this year.) in a seven minute presentation, using a variety of methods. Also, the teacher will check homework and selected Latin Keypal country.

Teacher will have students sign up for a rotation on the computer to do telecommunication. Students have previously been trained on telecommunication.

Day 3—More on Country

Teacher will do another 7 minute presentation on Mexico, using souvenirs brought from Mexico. Put students together in pairs, trying to let students have their first choice, but make sure each pair of students selected a second and third choice to fall back on in making the final selection. (I allowed students to pick their partners and this narrowed their selections, because they had to make their 3 choices as a research group.) Then students will go to the library to research their country. The students will learn how to correctly site their sources. Teacher will stress that encyclopedias and books are not the only way to research—that encyclopedias on CD are available and other resources. (I encouraged my students to use the computer and the CD atlas, *World Atlas*.)

Day 4—Guest Speaker

Teacher will have a guest speaker talk about Mexico—one of the older ESL students who grew up in Mexico. Students will have time on the Internet.

Day 5—Modeling Continued/Library Time

Teacher will do another presentation, using puppets to tell her information. This whole week has been one of modeling of the teacher for the students. Students will have time on the Internet and will go to the library. Teacher will remind the students that next week each group must present a 7 minute presentation on Latin America on the required areas. It can be done however they want, but they must have a written record of information to put in their folder and they must site their sources.

If need be, the teacher could continue the next week to model possibilities for Charla presentation.

Day 6—Embassy Letters

Students will write letters to their embassies to get all the promotional information available.

Follow-Up Activities

- 1) Students will prepare a Passport for the travel fair at the end of the year and will use it each time they present a Charla. They will fashion one after a real Passport.

2) The major components covered this year will be:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| * geography | * education | * government |
| * teen life | * agriculture | * transportation |
| * economy | * religion | * social/community life |
| * tourism | * people | * communication |
| * music | * art | * the indigenous population |
| * health | * crime | * agricultural products |
| * industrial products | | * archaeological sites |
| * students' choices | | |

3) Students will use the Internet (WWW, listserves, key pals, LADB) for retrieving new data and at the same time will look at how quickly information printed becomes dated.

4) Parents will be involved in homework assignments.

5) Students will be encouraged to go out to their community for resources—speakers, interviews.

6) Preparation for the final project will be broken up into 4 parts, corresponding to the grading periods.

Two weeks at the end of the grading period will be dedicated to assembling information on the computer, saving files as ASCII files so the data could be used later either in Hyperstudio stacks or on a web page. At this point, students will type data and scan in pictures on the computer. At the end of each grading period, students will decide what information will stay, what will go and where they need to add more, if need be. They will be graded at this time solely on their organization of their project. (They will duplicate important information and let the teacher keep it in an archival file in case anything gets misplaced.)

The final project will be either a Hyperstudio stack for each country tied together as a project or a homepage displaying the project. The students will start on final production the last six weeks and finish it 2-3 weeks before the end of the year so they can enjoy looking at each other's projects or surf the Internet and let other students at our school view their page. Parents will be invited in for a reception where each group will present their country. The computer projects will be available for parents to see.

Interdisciplinary Approach

1) Social studies teacher study Latin America also, highlighting the specific areas already chosen in this unit, especially looking at the role of how history has been one-sided and give a variety of world views to events like Columbus' place in world history.

2) Literature teacher read a variety of Latin American literature with students, like the writing that has come out of the revolutions and the indigenous mythology.

3) Art teacher do folk art crafts from various Latin American countries, comparing and contrasting individual country's styles.

- 4) Physical Education teacher demonstrate some of the Latin American dances and music and teach some of the dances, comparing and contrasting individual country's styles.
- 5) Home economics teacher cook some Latin American dishes with students, comparing and contrasting individual country's styles. Students could put together a Latin American cookbook.
- 6) Industrial Arts teacher make folk art crafts from Latin America, comparing and contrasting individual country's styles.
- 7) Math teacher share the advances that ancient Indian cultures like the Mayan had in math, like the concept of zero. A look at the pyramids and their designs also could be discussed.
- 8) Science teacher show the advances that ancient Indian cultures like the Mayan had in astronomy.

Handout

Overview of Latin American Countries

(from Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc., 1995)

Argentina—the second largest country in Latin America and occupies most of the southern portion of the South American continent.

Belize—Known as British Honduras until 1973, the former British colony achieved self-government in 1964. On Sept. 21, 1981, Belize was granted independence as a member of the Commonwealth, ending more than 300 years of colonial presence on the American mainland.

Bolivia—named for Simon BOLIVAR, the liberator of South America.

Brazil—the largest country in South America, stretches almost 4,350 km (2,700 mi), from the Andes Mountains eastward to the Atlantic Ocean, and borders on every country of the continent except and Ecuador.

Chile—Manufacturing and mining make Chile one of the most important industrial nations in Latin America. Fertile soils in the Central Valley produce wheat, sugar beets, potatoes, and fruit.

Colombia—A country of contrasts, Colombia has both snowcapped peaks and tropical regions.

Costa Rica—notable among Latin American countries for its long-standing democratic form of government.

Cuba—Positioned between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, Cuba was discovered by Christopher Columbus on Oct. 27, 1492, during his first trip to the New World. It remained a Spanish colony until 1898.

Dominican Republic—Independent since 1844, the Dominican Republic has been dependent upon U.S. economic interests for much of its history.

Ecuador—Today it is the South American nation where traditional society remains most nearly intact.

El Salvador—El Salvador's economic well-being depends on its coffee production—it is one of Central America's largest producers—and fluctuates with the world market.

Guatemala—Once part of the great MAYA civilization and later a Spanish colony, Guatemala has been governed by military officers allied with a few wealthy landowners for most of its postindependence history. It is thought to have the most unequal land ownership and income distribution in Latin America.

Haiti—Although much of the land has been deforested for cultivation, some stands of mahogany, cedar, and naturally occurring coconut palms, avocado, orange, and mango trees remain.

Honduras—Honduras's rugged terrain has limited the transportation network and kept the population, which is predominantly rural, relatively isolated. The economy of Honduras is based on agriculture and is one of the least advanced in Central America.

Mexico—the largest Spanish-speaking country and the second-largest Roman Catholic nation in the world.

Nicaragua—From 1979, when a revolution brought the SANDINISTA National Liberation Front (FSLN) to power, until the holding of democratic elections as part of a regional peace plan in 1990, Nicaragua was a focus of conflict in the region and tensions with the United States.

Panama—The Republic of Panama occupies the Isthmus of Panama, the 725-km-long (450-mi) neck of land that joins North America to South America.

Paraguay—Paraguay means “a place with a great river” in the Guaraní Indian language, and most of its boundaries are marked by rivers.

Peru—The ANDES Mountains extend across the country from northwest to southeast and divide Peru into three distinct regions: a coastal lowland to the west; the Andean highlands, or Sierra; and the upper Amazon basin, the Montana, to the east of the Andes.

Uruguay—Uruguay's boundaries are almost totally demarcated by water. The excellent river system gives the country abundant hydroelectric power.

Venezuela—Lightly populated and mineral rich, Venezuela has enjoyed a free, populist democracy since 1958.

Letter to Parents

*****Parents, please read, sign, and send back to school tomorrow with your child. Your child needs to put this letter in his/her Spanish section of his organizational notebook.*****

Dear Parents,

Your child must select his/her three top choices for his Latin Pal project in Spanish class. He/she will team up with another student to study a country in depth in this year. Help him/her select 3 possible choices—do have a favorite that you can help out with? Pick 3 choices and from that I hope everyone will get one of their choices.

If you have any questions, please call me at 764-2000.

Sincerely,
Ms. Horner
Spanish teacher

Parent's signature

Latin American countries:

Argentina	Belize	Bolivia	Brazil	Chile
Colombia	Costa Rica	Cuba	Dominican Republic	Ecuador
El Salvador	Guatemala	Haiti	Honduras	Mexico
Nicaragua	Panama	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay
Venezuela				

What is Charla?

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Student Requirements

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What areas should we research about our Latin Pal?

Write the date you have researched a certain area on the line. Also under the area, note any specific areas researched for later use.

- _____a) geography
- _____b) education
- _____c) government
- _____d) teen life
- _____e) agriculture
- _____f) religion
- _____g) social/community life
- _____h) economy
- _____i) tourism
- _____j) people
- _____k) art
- _____l) music
- _____m) the indigenous population

- _____n) health
- _____o) crime
- _____p) agricultural products
- _____q) industrial products
- _____r) transportation
- _____s) communication
- _____t) archaeological sites (Optional)
- _____u) students' choices

Latin American Embassy Addresses and Phone Numbers

(Source: *World Almanac*, 1995.)

(All embassy addresses are Washington, D.C. and the area code is 202.)

Argentina—1600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, 20009; 939-6400
Belize—2535 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 20008; 332-9636
Bolivia—3014 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 20008; 483-4410
Brazil—3006 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 20008; 745-2700
Chile—1732 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 20036; 785-1746
Colombia—2118 Leroy Pl. NW, 20008; 387-8338
Costa Rica—1825 Connecticut Ave. NW, 20009; 234-2945
Cuba—
Dominican Republic—1715 22nd St. NW, 20008; 332-6280
Ecuador—2535 15th St. NW, 20009; 234-7200
El Salvador—2308 California St. NW, 20008; 265-9671
Guatemala—2220 R St. NW, 20008; 745-4952
Haiti—2311 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 20008; 332-4090
Honduras—3007 Tilden St. NW, 20008; 966-7700
Mexico—1911 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, 20006; 728-1600
Nicaragua—1627 New Hampshire Ave. NW, 20009; 939-6570
Panama—2862 McGill Terrace NW, 20008; 483-1407
Paraguay—2400 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 20008; 483-6960
Peru—1700 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 20036; 833-9860
Uruguay—1918 F St. NW, 20006; 331-1313
Venezuela—1099 30th St. NW, 20007; 342-2214

Sample Letter to an Embassy

Mexican Embassy
1911 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D. C. 20006

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a student at Washington Middle school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and we are studying Latin America. I am specifically studying Mexico.

I need different kinds of information about Mexico. Would you please send me any information—booklets, posters, maps, etc. that I could use to present Mexico to my classmates?

Thank you.

Sincerely,

You Name

Bibliography

ALAS home page. URL: <http://cec.wustl.edu/~jgm5/>

This WWW site has many useful resources about individual Latin American countries.

Burgos, Elizabeth. Me Llamo Rigoberta Mench'u y as'i me naci'o la conciencia. Mexico: silgo veinte editores, 1985.

A young Guatemalan girl's story of the pain and injustices experienced by many Indians today. It received the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize.

Burgos, Elizabeth. Translated by Ann Wright. I, Rigoberta Mench'u: An I Indian Woman in Guatemala. New York: Verso, 1994.

The English translation of a young Guatemalan girl's story of the pain and injustices experienced by many Indians today. It received the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize.

Galeano, Eduardo. Translated by Cedric Belfrage. Memory of Fire 1. Genesis. NY: Pantheon Books, 1985.

This book is Part One of a Trilogy that starts with a variety of Latin American and Indian creation stories and goes up to the year 1700, with a different slant on history.

Gomez, Aurelia. Crafts of Many Cultures. New York: Scholastic, 1992.

This book has crafts from several Latin American countries.

Goudvis, Patricia. *If the Mango Tree Could Speak*. 66 Winter St. Watertown, MA 02172.

A 58 minute video tape of interviews with individual children and their experiences in today's Latin America upheaval. This would be a good background source.

Harrison, John P. History of Latin America. *New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, Release 6. 1993.

This interactive CD provides an overview of Latin America and then information about the individual countries.

Latin America Data Base URL: <http://ladb.unm.edu>

This is a database site that requires a subscription. It publishes weekly commentaries compiled from international sources on Latin American political and economical news.

Lambert, Jacques. Translated by Helen Katel. Latin America. Berkeley/LA: University of California Press, 1971.

This book offers an overview of social structures and political institution that could be compared with recent information off the Internet and new books released.

Latin American/Spanish Speaking Countries Page.

URL: <http://edb518ea.edb.utexas.edu/html/LatinAmerica.html>

This site provides a home page for each Latin American country posted, providing a large amount of information.

Moody, John. "El Salvador, Two Cheers for Peace." *Time* 27 January 1992.

This interactive CD provides various recent articles about Latin America.

Novas, Himilice. Everything You Need to Know about Latino History. NY: Plume/Penguin, 1994.

This book has a generous overview of Latin history and how it has effected the world we know today. It is written in a question and answer format that is easily read.

Ready, Timothy. Latino Immigrant Youth: Passages from Adolescence to Adulthood. NY: Garland, 1991.

This book has many statistics about Latino immigration to Washington, D.C.

"School of Assassins." Maryknoll World Productions. P. O. Box 308 Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308.

An 18 minute video tape that shows the School of the Americas, where many Latin American leaders have been trained in guerilla warfare.

SPICE—Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education. Mapping Latin America. Stanford: Leland Stanford Junior University Board of Trustees, 1992.

This is a curriculum that has a strong influence in mapping skills and geography.

The Amazon Trail. Minnesota: MECC, 1995.

Interactive software program that goes on a voyage down the Amazon River looking for a specific herb that will cure an illness. It promotes strong geography and critical thinking skills.

UT-LANIC. University of Texas. Latin American Network Information Center. Latin America General and Topical Information. URL: <http://lanic.utexas.edu/la/region/>

This WWW home page sites many useful resources for Latin America, like "Guide to Internet Resources for Latin American Studies."

We Are Guatemalans. Maryknoll World Productions. P. O. Box 308 Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308, 1995.

A 28 minute video tape of the experience of one village, Pueblo Cuarto in Guatemala that fled to Mexico and lived in refugee camps there for 12 years and their triumphant return home.