



An Educator's Guide to

Frida Kahlo's (Self) Representations

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The cover image on the preceding page is adapted from a photograph of a mural of Frida Kahlo and is reprinted via CC-BY-NC-SA © from Flickr user *spanaut*.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Created by the Latin American and Iberian Institute (LAI) at The University of New Mexico, this guide was inspired by the traveling photography exhibit, *Frida Kahlo – Her Photos*, which was on view August 25-December 2, 2017, at the UNM Art Museum. Working together, the LAI and UNM Art Museum held professional development workshops in the exhibit space for teachers interested in bringing Frida Kahlo into the classroom. This guide is offered as a way to complement the exhibit and to serve as a starting point for educators everywhere who want to encourage their students to think critically about Kahlo – recognizing her as more than an international icon – and to approach her work from biographical, political, and social perspectives.

We invite teachers to pick and choose the pieces of this guide most suited to their classrooms. The first section describing Frida's life and background is meant to inform educators as well as serve as a possible handout for student use. Subsequent sections provide additional information and possible strategies for how to share her life and work with students.

As a whole, this guide is intended to help critique (self) representations of Frida Kahlo, and to invite a discussion of the commonalities and differences in Kahlo's own depictions of herself and how others portrayed her. In doing so, we draw attention to questions about an artist's ability to control his or her own representation. Poses, facial expressions, clothing, and symbols - these were but a few of the details that came to shape Kahlo's representations in photos and paintings. Moving beyond the visual arts, we can also explore Kahlo's own diary and books written about her in order to deepen our understanding of Kahlo's sense of self in comparison to the myth that has developed in the wake of her death.

The arts have often been a powerful place from which one could present, project, or display social or political criticism. Like many of her peers, Kahlo used her art as a means of social and political protest. While many researchers and writers tend to focus on the biographical nature of her art and her portrayal of her own personal pain, these themes are only part of her significance. Through her art, Kahlo represents the voices of women in a world often dominated by men. From her own photos, paintings, and writings (as well as materials produced about her), we hope to move beyond iconography and to recognize the deeper significance of who she was and how she interacted with the world.

CONTEXTUALIZING FRIDA KAHLO

Biographical Context of Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo was a product of her time. She was born on July 6, 1907 in Coyoacán, Mexico, though she would later change her birth date to 1910. Some say she did this to appear younger, others say she did it so that her birthday would converge with the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. Regardless of her reasons, the triumph of the Mexican Revolution and all that it stood for were without doubt highly influential in Kahlo's life, a life that would be anything but average and which was in truth quite exceptional. Kahlo was incredibly intelligent. Unlike many girls of her time, Kahlo was able to attend the highly respected *Escuela Nacional*, a co-educational *preparatoria* in Mexico City, where she was preparing to study medicine. However, hopes for any further studies in medicine ended on September 17, 1925, when Kahlo was seriously injured in a street car accident that irreversibly changed her life. Over the next thirty years, Kahlo would have numerous surgeries as a result of the injuries she sustained. Her talent as a painter was largely developed as a result of her time spent in bed recovering from the initial injuries and surgeries. The bodily pain she endured became a constant theme in her art.

Beyond expressing her personal pain, her art also served as her introduction into the world of the Mexican Communist Party, political activism, and of course, Diego Rivera. In August 1929, Kahlo married Rivera – who was himself a noted Mexican painter. His role in her life and her work is impossible to deny. Kahlo's relationship with him was a major impetus for a great deal of her work; the emotional influence he had on her remained a theme woven throughout her many paintings. In November 1930, Rivera was commissioned to paint a mural in San Francisco. The couple traveled there, and then spent the majority of the next three years in San Francisco, New York, and Detroit. These years spent in the U.S. were another important influence in the development of Kahlo's art. Some of her most famous paintings reflect her U.S. experience. Kahlo was critical of the U.S., and her art from this period shows that. This period in Kahlo's life was marked by her criticism of the US, but also by a traumatic miscarriage she experienced while abroad. This time of unhappiness was exacerbated further when, shortly after the couple's return to Mexico, Rivera began an affair with Kahlo's sister, Cristina Kahlo. By December 1939, Rivera and Kahlo had divorced.

Both Rivera's affair and the divorce hurt Frida almost irreparably. She would later say, "I suffered two grave accidents in my life. One in which a streetcar knocked me down. . . The other accident is Diego" (Herrera, 1983, p. 107). Despite the pain the affair and divorce caused, they brought about a major evolution in Kahlo's art. By the late 1930s, Kahlo was welcomed into the world of Surrealist artists as one of their own. In the fall of 1938, Kahlo's first solo exhibit opened in New York, and in the late winter of 1939, Kahlo opened another solo exhibit in France.

In 1940, Diego and Frida remarried, but their relationship was much different in their older, tempered age. Frida's health continued to decline, although she remained as active as she could, both in teaching art and in politics. It was only during this last part of her life that her art

began to receive the recognition that it deserved in her home country of Mexico. In 1941 and 1942 she received two different government commissions, but only one would be completed. In 1946, Frida was one of six artists to receive a government fellowship. Later that year, Kahlo received a prize of 5,000 pesos at the annual National Exhibition of the Palace of Fine Arts for her work *Moses*. In April 1953, Kahlo held her first solo exhibit in Mexico. Less than a year later, she would die on July 13, 1954. Since her death, her work has continued to grow in popularity, significantly surpassing the attention she was given during her lifetime. In 1977, the Mexican government organized a retrospective exhibition of Kahlo's work. Between 1978 and 1979, Kahlo's work was organized into an exhibition that toured various museums in the U.S. Since that time, her fame has continued to grow in the U.S.

Frida Kahlo's Political and Social Relation to the Art World

Kahlo was most definitely influenced by the political and social context in which she lived. The Mexican Revolution, and the implications of the Revolution throughout the following decades, heavily impacted her. Julio Moreno describes the ideological thoughts during the period after the Revolution:

They idealized Mexico's indigenous and folk heritage as a symbol of national identity. They also adopted a rather romanticized version of Mexico's past as a heroic and revolutionary struggle that had progressively made the country a social democratic society. Yet these expressions of Mexican 'identity' coexisted with the country's commitment to industrial development, commercial growth, and the reconstruction of modern Mexico. Mexicans defined national identity as an all-inclusive concept that elevated the indigenous heritage, peasant tradition, entrepreneurship, industrial spirit, and regional diversity of the country (Moreno, 2003, p. 9).

It was within this formative period of post-Revolutionary national identity that Kahlo became involved with the Communist party. Though she and Rivera would both leave the Communist party for a period of time, neither

would ever renounce Communism or its broadly conceived goals. During this same period of time, political repression against leftists was beginning to change. According to Hayden Herrera (1983), "the period of 1929-1934 was one of political repression. The military budget increased, and the attitude of tolerance toward leftists changed to virulent antagonism. Government support for labor unions ceased. Communists (Siqueiros, for example) were frequently jailed, deported, or murdered, or they simply disappeared." Most likely it was Rivera's connections within the government that spared him, at least for a period of time, the same fate of Siqueiros, who was another noted Mexican painter of the time.

U.S.-Mexican relations were also an important factor in this post-Revolutionary period. The 1920s through the 1930s were a relatively tense period for relations between the two countries. According to Moreno (2003), "the multifaceted relationship between the two countries was based on the establishment of cultural boundaries or a 'middle ground' that ended what up to 1940 had been a bitter and tense binational relationship" (p. 8). Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs was very important in the development of the middle ground. As a result of improving relations, the Mexican Arts Association was

created, the initial impetus for which came out of a meeting in John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s home. The Association was created, "to promote friendship between the people of Mexico and the United States by encouraging cultural relations and the interchange of fine and applied arts." (Moreno, 2003, p. 127-128).

While this middle ground may have allowed Mexicans to monitor U.S. activities in their own country, the U.S. was still influential in shaping new societal aspirations. The middle ground

also did not enable them to control how Mexico was presented in the United States. The interest of families like the Rockefellers in Mexican contemporary art "led to discourses that presented a mixed image of Mexicans and their relationship to Americans. They depicted Mexicans as backward and even 'uncivilized' while portraying a romanticized image of Mexico's past and its revolutionary and indigenous heritage" (Moreno, 2003, p. 52). These tendencies will be important in thinking about Kahlo's reception in the U.S.

Frida Kahlo on Body, Beauty, and the Role of Women

There has always been a great deal of pressure put on women to conform to certain societal expectations, in both the actions one undertakes to meet society's expectations and how one literally and metaphorically "dresses" for the part. Going against these norms is at once a means of social and political protest. There is a great deal of overlap between the social and the political, but the discussion in this section will focus on the social criticism that Kahlo expressed.

Women's roles in society, and the expectations put upon them in terms of body and beauty, were themes in the lives and works of Kahlo. While undeniably beautiful, she did not conform to the contemporary fashion of her time. She created her own persona and then put that on the canvas; thus it became part of her art. Herrera (1983) writes, "Even when she was a girl, clothes were a kind of language for Kahlo, and from the moment of her marriage, the intricate links between dress and self-image, and between personal style and painting style, form one of the subplots in her unfolding drama" (p. 109). What she chose to create in that persona is of great importance.

Kahlo's choice of Tehuana clothing is important on a number of different levels. Many historians and critics, like Herrera, attribute her Tehuana

costumes to the influence of Rivera. Herrera (1983) writes, "Frida chose to dress as a Tehuana for the same reason that she adopted Mexicanism: to please Diego. Rivera liked the Tehuana costume. . . . There was of course, a political factor as well. Wearing indigenous dress was one more way of proclaiming allegiance to la raza. Certainly Rivera did not hesitate to make political mileage out of Frida's clothes" (p. 111). Even when Herrera notes the meaning behind the costume for Kahlo, it is both in relation to Rivera, and completely apolitical. Herrera goes on to suggest, "Wearing Tehuana costumes was part of Frida's self-creation as a legendary personality and the perfect companion and foil for Diego. Delicate, flamboyant, beautiful. . . . she invented a highly individualistic personal style to dramatize the personality that was already there and that she knew Diego admired" (p. 112). These descriptions only address one level of the meaning behind the Tehuana costume, in effect ignoring the very strong political connotations.

The political message in Kahlo's use of Tehuana dress is undeniably important, and should neither be relegated to a side comment, as many authors seem to do, nor attributed solely as a Kahlo's wish to please Rivera. Margaret Lindauer (1999) alludes to the deeper significance of Kahlo's dress choices when she

explains the history behind the women of Tehuantepec and the political connotations of their style of clothing:

. . .the women of Tehuantepec maintained their traditional matriarchal social structure in which women held primary economic and political positions. In other words, according to myth, they represented a past that had escaped European rule, thereby sustaining a 'true,' uncorrupted Mexican society. . . .Thus the Tehuana dress, donned by women in urban Mexico and illustrated in post-revolutionary art, was not merely a celebration of cultural heritage but an exaltation of continuous pre-Columbian culture and defiance to cultural assimilation (p. 126).

The way that Kahlo dressed was, in short, a way of defying cultural assimilation and asserting the importance of her Mexicanidad. Even in a choice so simple as selecting her clothing, Kahlo was politically resolute and assertive.

To understand Kahlo's resistance to cultural assimilation, it's useful to understand beauty ideals as they were conceptualized in Mexico during her lifetime. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, European and North American women were presented in advertising materials as the universal concept of beauty. Their white, Anglo-Saxon skin tones and facial features were idolized. Along with advertisements, beauty

columns began giving Mexican women advice based upon North American values and practices. Often times these columns were written by women and celebrities from the US. Moreno (2003) writes of a "1943 article on how to fight against an 'enemy of beauty,' body hair, [which] gave detailed instructions on how to prepare a depilatory cream and how to use it to remove unwanted hair. . . .The article described this process as a natural method. . . . However, it was neither natural nor Mexican, since there is no indication that Mexican women were accustomed to removing their body hair prior to the 1940s" (p. 143).

Kahlo obviously did not conform to the North American ideals of feminine beauty that were shared through advertisements. She did not believe that body hair was the 'enemy of beauty.' In fact, she was famous for her light moustache and heavy eyebrows, and she included them in every self-portrait that she did. More than simply not eliminating these characteristics, she elevated their significance. In her paintings, her eyebrows came to represent different things. At times, they were wings of birds, symbolic of her desire to fly away from her bodily pain; at other points, they symbolized her ambivalence toward gender.

In similar sentiment, her Tehuana costume would not have been considered 'en vogue' in

the 1920s and 1930s, although she would make it more fashionable in the 1940s when she appeared on the cover of *Vogue* magazine.

Kahlo's self-depictions simultaneously asserted her Mexicanidad and her sense of being a woman. In the process, Kahlo brought something previously private into the public realm, liberating women from their place in the home's private spaces. Her painting, *My Birth*, for instance, which deals with childbirth, is an example of her making public what would typically have been an incredibly painful, private experience. McDaniel Tarver writes, "*My Birth* takes a theme rarely treated in Western art, that of childbirth, the privacy of which is emphasized by the intimate setting (a bedroom), and exposes it in its painful reality to the public" (p. 66). Kahlo also makes another private act, that of breastfeeding, public in her painting *My Nurse and I*.

Kahlo dealt with many experiences that women of the time (and today) silently dealt with on their own. Domestic violence and abuse were one of these experiences. It was typical during Kahlo's lifetime to expect that women would be judged harshly for infidelity, while men's infidelity was overlooked as normal or expected. Violence against adulterous (or supposedly) women was relatively commonplace in Mexico and the US.

When Kahlo read about a drunken man who stabbed his girlfriend twenty times for her supposed unfaithfulness, she responded with a painting called *A Few Small Nips*. The newspaper article claimed that, when questioned, the man replied, "But I only gave her a few small nips!" Herrera (1983) examines how Kahlo deals with the topic by observing that, "In the painting, we are presented with the immediate aftermath of the murder: the killer, holding a bloodied dagger, looms over his dead victim who lies sprawled on a bed, her naked flesh covered with bloody gashes. . . . The impact on the viewer is immediate, almost physical. We feel that someone in our actual space—perhaps our self—has committed this violence" (p. 180). In making this brutal display of domestic violence public, Frida is protesting not only the act of violence itself, but the imbalanced stereotypes surrounding men and women's sexuality and fidelity. Lindauer (1999) writes the painting is "a visual explication of repressive social norms that delineate the paradigmatic male and female, distinguished not only in terms of sexual activity but also according to active versus passive behavioral roles" (p. 33).

Kahlo also explores the question of women's hidden emotions when she explores themes of shame and pain in her work titled *Suicide of Dorothy Hale*. Hale was a beautiful woman who

frequented the fashionable circles of rich society, until her husband was killed, leaving her with little money. For a while, Hale relied on the help of friends to maintain her lifestyle, but, unable to get another husband or a job, she became wretchedly unhappy, eventually committing suicide. Kahlo depicts the three stages of Hale's suicide as she jumped out of her top-story window, ending with Hale lying stiff on the ground, in a pool of her own blood. Herrera (1983) writes, "Perhaps Dorothy Hale was the victim of a set of values that Frida Kahlo

did not share, but Frida's compassion for her fall—literal and figurative—and her identification with her dead friend's plight gives *Suicide of Dorothy Hale* a peculiar intensity" (p. 294). Kahlo offered a 'visual' history of the plight of a friend, a plight with which many women could identify. However, society's norms that both created and perpetuated the expectations that could lead a woman like Hale to suicide, were rarely, if ever, dealt with publicly. Kahlo made it public in her *recuerdo*.

The Political Message of Frida Kahlo

Kahlo was a member of the Communist party for a good part of her life, and her art often provided a means for her to communicate her political views. Interestingly, however, the political messages behind much of Kahlo's work have been all but ignored. She has effectively been de-politicized, both in her own country and in the United States. The intense biographical nature of Kahlo's paintings often supersedes the political messages that she painted. As a result, viewers and other consumers of Kahlo's work have found it easier to focus on her self-representation and biographical content.

In terms of her politics, Kahlo was highly critical of the U.S.; her feelings in this regard were evident in both paintings and personal correspondence. Her dislike was not monolithic and unilateral; there were areas that she enjoyed in her travels, such as San Francisco – a plan with which she was enamored:

The city and bay are overwhelming . . . What is especially fantastic is Chinatown. The Chinese are immensely sympathetic and never in my life have I seen such beautiful children as the Chinese ones. Yes, they are really extraordinary. . . it did make sense to come here, because it opened my eyes and I have seen an enormous number of new and beautiful things (Herrera, 1983, p. 118).

Yet even while she was drawn to the mystique of San Francisco, Kahlo was critical overall of what she saw while in other parts of the U.S., especially New York and Detroit. In one letter to a friend, Kahlo writes the following of New York:

High society turns me off and I feel a bit of a rage against all these rich guys here, since I have seen thousands of people in the most terrible misery without anything to eat and with no place to sleep, that is what has most impressed me here, it is terrifying to see the rich having parties day and night while thousands and thousands of people are dying of hunger. . . I find that Americans completely lack sensibility and good taste. They live in an enormous chicken coop that is dirty and uncomfortable. The houses look like bread ovens and all the comfort that they talk about is a myth (Herrera, 1983, p. 130-131).

Her criticism of the US was rooted largely in her mistrust and dislike of the myths of the superiority of U.S. culture and lifestyle that were being disseminated across the globe. Her paintings during this period aptly demonstrate that. Both *My Dress Hangs There* (1933) and *Self-Portrait on the Border Between Mexico and*

the United States (1932) are considered to be her more politically explicit paintings because “they critically portray the corruption, alienation, and or dehumanization of people in the United States” (Lindauer, 1999, p. 117).

In My Dress Hangs There, Kahlo has juxtaposed her empty Tehuana dress with a collage representing the cityscape of New York, making a distinction between Mexico and the U.S. While many writers and viewers choose to focus on how Kahlo's empty dress is a symbol of her loneliness and unhappiness while in the U.S., Kahlo's painting can be viewed equally as a strong demonstration of the critical eye with which she perceived the U.S. and its capitalist system. Lindauer (1999) offers the following insightful comments:

“In the upper left side of the composition, the stained glass of Trinity Church integrates a cross and a dollar sign, a highly cynical insinuation of a religious institution's unscrupulous debasement. . . .Directly above his [George Washington's] statue, in the background to the cityscape, stands the Statue of Liberty. Together they embody the founding philosophy of the United States as an immigrant nation offering individuals economic opportunity and liberation from repressive governments. Kahlo's composition intimates the

emptiness of such a promise because the citizens of New York City, represented in the foreground by newspaper photographs glued to the surface of the painting, do not live a liberated and prosperous life. They stand in bread lines, picket lines, chorus lines, and military formation. . . .They are faceless, anonymous, hordes of consumers standing in line for entertainment, justice, and fashionable goods. . . .”

But, Kahlo's criticism was not just limited to the United States. Lindauer suggests a very interesting interpretation of the symbolism of the Tehuana dress, considering it as a critique of the Mexican capitalist system:

In Kahlo's painting it [the dress] also is implicated in socioeconomic corruption. Hanging between the trophy and the toilet of capitalist society, it does not rise above. . . .exploitation of the labor force but rather generates an aspect of that oppression as the anonymous masses emanate from the skirt. . . .In the same way the telephone cord acts as semiotic thread implicating all aspects of capitalist industrial subjugation of workers (Lindauer, 1999, p. 127).

The symbol of the telephone cord and the billboard are also intriguing. It's been said that Kahlo found New York's prevalence of billboards intrusive; in her painting, the billboard is being destroyed in a fire.

Kahlo's *Self-Portrait on the Border between Mexico and the United States* is another painting that offers a critique of the U.S. and Mexico. Kahlo has painted the border, but with stark contrast between the two countries. She has situated herself in that frontier, demonstrating her relationship to both nations. Her self-portrait in that space represents what Terry Smith refers to as a "mock persona, a Mexican-American monument" (as qtd. in

Lindauer, 1999, p. 131). This monument is representative of the Indian and European heritages, the symbols of the past and present. However, these two heritages, "never fuse. . .into one whole. . .[they] will not do, politically, precisely because it produces someone like her, like this, a mock persona. . ." (Lindauer, 1999, p. 131). Her painting effectively critiques the superficiality of U.S. nationalism as represented in the apparition of the U.S. flag in the industrial smoke, a superficiality echoed in Mexico's transparent flag, next to which smoke drifts, though not as forcefully, from Kahlo's cigarette. Both sides are equally devoid of life (Lindauer, 1999, p. 128-131).

The Legacy of the Image of Frida Kahlo

Kahlo was welcomed by peoples in Mexico and the United States alike, but her art and what she stood for were not; instead, popular society and art critics in both countries de-politicized Kahlo. When, in 1977 the Mexican government honored her with a retrospective exhibit of her work in the Palace of Fine Arts, it was what Herrera (1983) called "a strange sort of homage, for it seemed to celebrate the exotic personality and story of the artist rather more than it honored her art." Most critics and art consumers ignored the elements of social and political protest in her paintings, instead focusing on the autobiographical and the exotic. The default view held that she and her art were exotic, but not political.

Kahlo was not alone in experiencing this. Art collectors like Rockefeller even tried to de-politicize Diego Rivera, at least initially. When criticized for commissioning Rivera, a known Communist, to offer a show, Rockefeller made sure that the following was included in the exhibit's catalogue, "Diego's very spinal column is painting, not politics. . ." (Herrera, 1983, p. 127-128). However; Rivera's work was largely granted its due as a political act. Kahlo's work, although equally critical and politically incisive, was never politicized and never viewed in a subversive light, particularly in the U.S. Since she was not seen as having a political

consciousness, she was not labeled as a subversive artist. It was not Kahlo who was driven out of the U.S., but Rivera.

The de-politicization of Kahlo has made the world's current *Fridamania* possible. In 1990 at Sotheby's auction house, Kahlo's painting, *Diego and I*, went for 1.43 million dollars. Jack Rummel (2000) writes, the sale "confirmed an irony. It had been Kahlo's work, more than her husband's or many of the other recognized male artists of her lifetime, that has not only endured, but has triumphed" (p. 15). Despite the increasing danger in espousing anti-American sentiment, the fame of the woman who painted *Marxism Will Heal You*, has reached an all-time high within the U.S.

In an affirmation of Kahlo's popularity, Madonna bought two Kahlo paintings in 1990, and the 2002 movie, *Frida*, not only became a blockbuster, but earned Selma Hayek an Oscar nomination. Kahlo's likeness and her paintings have appeared on everything from socks to billboards, and her well-known coiffure with a flower crown has become appropriated by women and men alike. So, Rummel is right, Kahlo did endure, but we might ask: does the image that endures reflect her reality?

ANNOTATED LESSON PLANS

Below are resources available as of winter 2017 for teaching about Frida Kahlo in the k-12 classroom. She is of incredible importance when discussing artists who have changed the ways in which we think about female identity and the role of women in society. We've made great strides in gender equality, and it's important to recognize the multitudes of women (and men) who have helped to make that happen. I particularly appreciated the discussion in the article "[Embracing the Modern Female Heroine—In All Her Forms](#)" by the Children's Book Cooperative (CBC). It's vital that we continue to highlight the ways in which we are challenging and redefining what it means to be a woman in today's society because it is certainly happening and our students need to be aware of it:

While the challenges of ethnic, racial, and sexual diversity still loom large, I found some comfort this past year in seeing an emergence of strong, complex, and challenging female characters depicted in modern entertainment. Women depicted making morally questionable choices. Women whose principal dilemmas didn't revolve around a dashing leading man. Women who took on what society often dictates as standard male personality traits (physical and emotional strength, relentless determination, and even questionable moral conduct) and redefined them as their own. Women who traveled down paths of their own making, shaped by a clear understanding of who they are as people, and holding onto that identity with all they have.

(From [Embracing the Modern Female Heroine—In All Her Forms](#))

The Tate Museum offers a description of Kahlo that demonstrates the ways in which she fits much of the description offered above:

Frida Kahlo can be seen as one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century, not just in her native Mexico, but worldwide. Repeatedly painting her own image, she built up a body of work that explored her identity as a woman, artist, Mexican, disabled person and political activist. A remarkable range of self-portraits show how she constructed an image for herself, and, with her flamboyant Mexican costumes, jewelry and exotic pets, ultimately made herself into something of an icon. Other artworks reveal how she explored the pain she suffered from a spine injury and the difficulties of her relationship with Diego Rivera, the famous Mexican muralist whom she twice married. As well as taking inspiration from her own life, Kahlo drew upon a wide range of influences including Surrealism, ancient Aztec belief, popular Mexican

folklore, eastern philosophy and medical imagery. (From the [Tate Museum: Introduction to Frida Kahlo](#))

Following the lesson plans listed below, you'll find an annotated bibliography of children's, young adult, and adult literature about Kahlo. With so many excellent books on Kahlo, it is easy to mix and match the lesson plans shared here with a literacy unit on historical fiction or biography. The complementary multimedia, audio, and visual resources could further enhance a unit focused on Kahlo.

[Frida Kahlo: Information and Activity Pack for Teachers](#) created by Tate Modern Museum

Through their unit plan students explore pairs of works that are studied and analyzed as they relate to specific themes, such as "Belief Systems and Links with Nature," "Constructing Identities," "Relationships, Politics and Constructing Identities," "National Identities," and "The Broken Body, Illness, Disability." For each theme there is an activity created for primary and secondary classes. To give you a sense of what you'll find throughout the guide, for one theme, primary students learn how to make mood masks, while secondary students look at body language and clothing through keeping a sketch book journal.

[Frida Kahlo and The Art of Self-Portraiture](#) from the Teacher's Network

This unit was created by Jessica Rivera and is based on lesson plans implemented with third grade students. While teaching about Kahlo, the unit also covers a number of technological and academic subject objectives. Students will be exposed to skills and rules for using the internet, along with practice in using other technology tools such as scanners and/or digital cameras. Students will also learn how to create a virtual museum. Reading and writing across genres is also incorporated into the unit.

[Frida Kahlo: A Portrait of a Woman in Art](#) from the Kimball Art Center

This lesson plan focuses entirely on teaching students how to draw a self-portrait within the context of teaching about Kahlo. It is a simple and straightforward unit plan that can be easily adapted for a variety of grade levels. Although no longer available directly through the Kimball Art Center, the lesson plan can be accessed as a [Word document](#) from the LAI's Vamos a Leer blog.

[The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo: Personal or Political?](#) from PBS

This lesson plan draws upon the PBS documentary of the same name, which offers an intimate biography of a woman who gracefully balanced a private life of illness and pain against a public persona that was flamboyant, irreverent, and world-renowned. Kahlo was an eyewitness to a unique pairing of revolution and renaissance that defined the times in which she lived. In this lesson plan, students will consider what makes art political, debate the relevance of the term "political art" to Frida Kahlo's work, and create their own self-portraits using the style of Frida Kahlo as inspiration.

[Frida Kahlo and Expression through Self-Portraits](#) from Scholastic

Students learn about the Mexican painter, and then create self-portraits while considering the question, "What is important to you?"

[Studying the Biographies of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera](#) from Yale National Initiative

The purpose of this unit is to introduce students to the genre of non-fiction, specifically focusing on biographies. This unit will introduce biographies by reading brief biographies of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. Students will two short biographies of Kahlo and compare how the stories vary from author to author. By the end of the unit they will be very familiar with the lives of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera. They will have read, analyzed and compared biographies by different authors. They will also be given brief biographies of various people to read and paraphrase. Finally students will create an autobiography booklet of themselves.

[Understanding Frida in Context through her *Still Life: Pitahayas*](#) by MMOCA

This short lesson plan focuses on Frida's still life painting, *Pitahayas*, as a way to delve more deeply into understanding her and her work. Each object in *Still Life: Pitahayas* tells us something about Frida Kahlo: where she lived, her interest in her native Mexican culture, her physical pain, and her attitudes toward life and death.

[Frida Kahlo and the Symbolic Self Portrait](#) by the [Albright-Knox Art Gallery](#)

Frida Kahlo was largely known for her symbolic self-portraits reflecting her life, loves, joys, and sorrows. Influenced by her Mexican culture, she uses vibrant color and meaningful imagery to

portray her self-identity to the viewer. In this lesson, students will make connections to the artist while creating a self-portrait celebrating their own self-identity.

Frida Kahlo as a Biographical Study

Suggestion: Use biographical studies as a jumping off point to explore Frida Kahlo and her art. The [Art Story](#) has created a relatively thorough yet accessible biographical summary of Frida's life, including a useful, annotated compilation of her images. As you shape this exercise, you might consider this brief introduction to "[Why Teach with Biographies?](#)" as well as this article from the NYTimes on "[Children's Books: Putting Life into Biography.](#)" This could help frame how to approach the unit. Then, use one of the following lesson plan modules as a starting point to conceptualize the best activity to fit your classroom needs: "[Introducing the Biography Genre](#)" from Scholastic; "[Writers' Workshop: The Biographical Sketch](#)" from ReadWriteThink; or "[Exploring Elements of Biography and Autobiography](#)" from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Frida and the Art of the Selfie

Suggestion: It might be an interesting exercise to connect Kahlo's practice of creating *autorretratos* with the art of digital selfies. Teacher Kristy Placido has written a unit on "[Incorporating Selfies and Self Portraits with Frida](#)" that takes students through the art of taking a selfie as inspired by Frida, using digital imagery and mixed media materials. To further deepen the connection between *autorretratos* and selfies, we suggest reading this article by the New Statesman on "[What Frida Kahlo Can Teach Us About the Art of the Selfie.](#)"

Politics and the Self: Self-Portraiture and "Where I'm From" Poetry

Suggestion: One means of encouraging students to think deeply about Kahlo's biographical and political context is to ask students to engage in a combined art and literary exercise. Begin by having students craft a "Where I'm From Poem" (lesson plan available on the LAII's [Vamos a Leer blog](#)). Then, after examining a variety of Kahlo's self-portraits, ask students to create a self-portrait that incorporates elements of their own biographical history or political values. [Art is Basic](#) has a "Mixed Media Self-Portraits" lesson plan that could be easily adapted for this.

Building Self Affirmation: Soy Yo and “Where I’m From”

Suggest: To explore Kahlo's strong sense of self and self-affirmation, you might consider combining art and music. Once again use the “Where I’m From Poem” lesson, but complement it with the song [Soy Yo by Bomba Estereo](#), a piece whose lyrics and music video both, as [NPR writes](#), “pays tribute to what’s inside of you.”

Examining Frida Kahlo through Visual Literacy Strategies

Suggestions: Apart from self-portraiture and biographical studies, another method of bringing Frida Kahlo into the classroom would focus on [visual literacy](#) strategies, or strategies that help students critically interpret and negotiate the meaning of visual content. The following resources are not specific to Kahlo's work, but offer useful frameworks for guiding classroom discussions focused on visual literacy.

[Visible Thinking Pictures of Practice](#) by Visible Thinking

This web resource offers a number of visual thinking strategies to encourage students' independent reflection and critical thinking skills. Stephanie Martin created the Thinking Keys routine with a colleague as a way to help students reflect on their own thinking. The four keys and associated questions give children the vocabulary necessary to think about and discuss their thinking. The four keys are: Form: What is it like?, Function: How does it work?, Connection: How is this like something I have seen before? and Reflection: How do you know?

[Common Core in Action: 10 Visual Literacy Strategies](#) by Edutopia

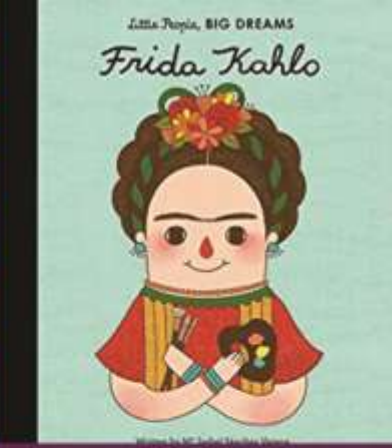
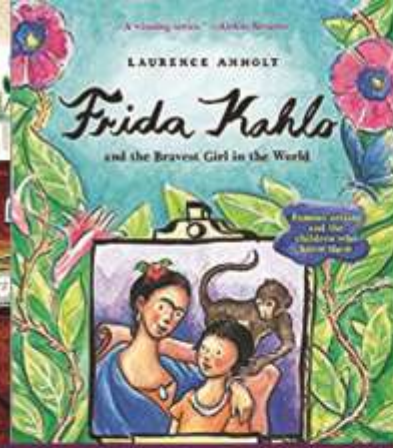
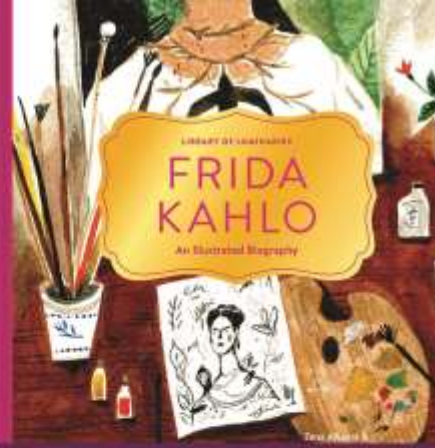
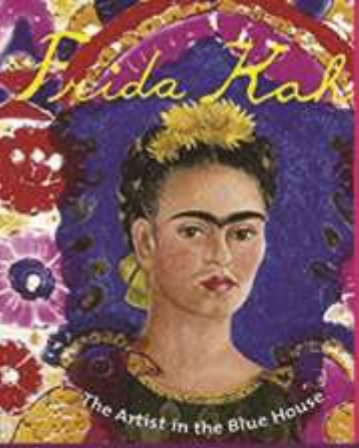
Edutopia has compiled a list of ten different approaches for building visual literacy skills and then tied them to Common Core Standards.

[Practice Looking at Art](#) from The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

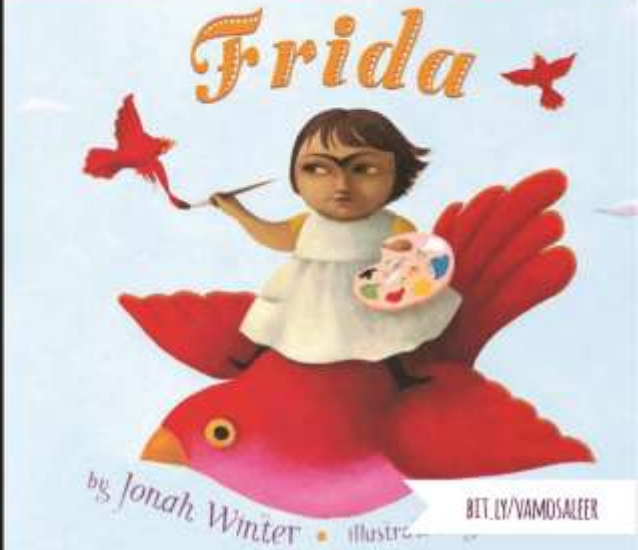
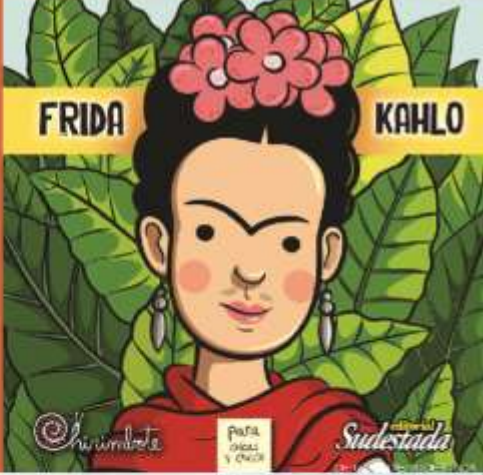
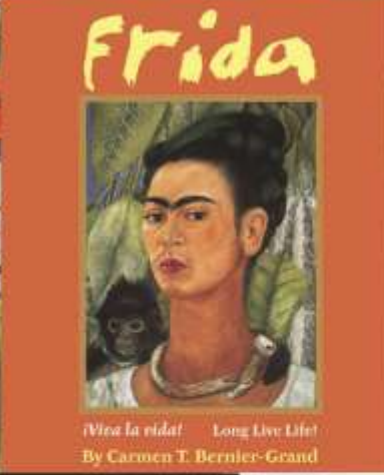
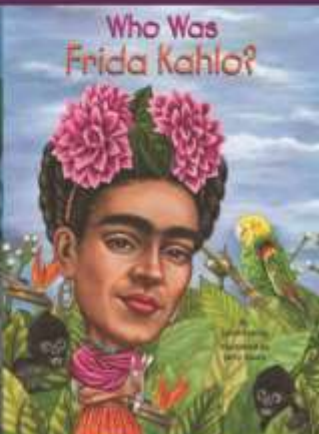
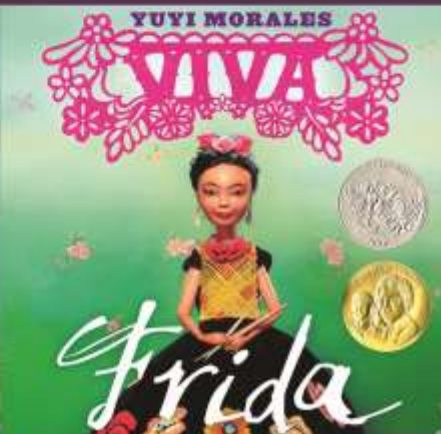
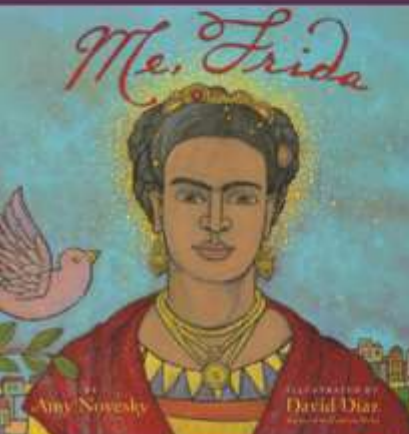
Engaging with a work of art is a meaningful and lasting experience. The following four-step process, designed by Museum staff, encourage close looking and careful thinking with any work of art that you view with your students, either in your classroom or in the Museum.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Where books have been included about Diego Rivera, it is because they also provide substantive content about Frida Kahlo. On the next page we have provided a quick visual reference for many of the books listed here, though it is not a complete representation of the bibliography that follows.



15 CHILDREN'S AND YA BOOKS ABOUT FRIDA KAHLO



Children's Literature

Counting With/Contando Con Frida (English and Spanish Edition) written by Patty Rodriguez and Ariana Stein and illustrated by Citali Reyes. Grades Preschool+

Introduce your baby to the life of one of Mexico's most iconic painters, Frida Kahlo, in English and Spanish. Lil' Libros' colorful and cultural books will inspire parents to read to their child at the earliest age. Lil' Libros baby board books uses a simple one word/one image per page format to introduce the littlest readers to first concepts such as numbers, colors, and body parts. Lil' Libros also introduces children to Latin American culture, history, and traditions!

Frida Kahlo (Little People, Big Dreams) written by Isabel Sanchez Vegara and illustrated by Gee Fan Eng. Grades Preschool +

In this new series, discover the lives of outstanding people from designers and artists to scientists. All of them went on to achieve incredible things, yet all of them began life as a little child with a dream. The second book follows Frida Kahlo, whose desire to study medicine was destroyed by a childhood accident. Frida began painting from her bedside and produced over 140 works, culminating in a solo exhibition in America. This inspiring and informative little biography comes with extra facts about Frida's life at the back.

Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos/ Frida Kahlo y sus Animalitos written by Monica Brown and illustrated by John Parra. Grades K+

Frida Kahlo and Her Animalitos, written by Monica Brown and illustrated by John Parra, is based on the life of one of the world's most influential painters, Frida Kahlo, and the animals that inspired her art and life. The fascinating Mexican artist Frida Kahlo is remembered for her self-portraits, her dramatic works featuring bold and vibrant colors. Her work brought attention to Mexican and indigenous culture and she is also renowned for her works celebrating the female form. Brown's story recounts Frida's beloved pets—two monkeys, a parrot, three dogs, two turkeys, an eagle, a black cat, and a fawn—and playfully considers how Frida embodied many wonderful characteristics of each animal.

Diego Rivera: His World and Ours written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. Grades 1+

This charming book introduces one of the most popular artists of the twentieth century, Diego Rivera, to young readers. It tells the story of Diego as a young, mischievous boy who

Educator's Guide to Frida Kahlo's (Self) Representations

demonstrated a clear passion for art and then went on to become one of the most famous painters in the world. Duncan Tonatiuh also prompts readers to think about what Diego would paint today. Just as Diego's murals depicted great historical events in Mexican culture or celebrated native peoples, if Diego were painting today, what would his artwork depict? How would his paintings reflect today's culture?

Frida written by Jonah Winter and illustrated by Ana Juan (available in English and Spanish). Grades 1+

When her mother was worn out from caring for her five sisters, her father gave her lessons in brushwork and color. When polio kept her bedridden for nine months, drawing saved her from boredom. When a bus accident left her in unimaginable agony, her paintings expressed her pain and depression - and eventually, her joys and her loves. Over and over again, Frida Kahlo turned the challenges of her life into art. Now Jonah Winter and Ana Juan have drawn on both the art and the life to create a playful, insightful tribute to one of the twentieth century's most influential artists. Viva Frida!

Frida Kahlo: Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artist written by Mike Venezia. Grades 1+

Clever illustrations and story lines, together with full-color reproductions of actual paintings, give children a light yet realistic overview of each artist's life and style in these fun and educational books.

Viva Frida written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales (bilingual edition). Grades 1+

Frida Kahlo, one of the world's most famous and unusual artists is revered around the world. Her life was filled with laughter, love, and tragedy, all of which influenced what she painted on her canvases. Distinguished author/illustrator Yuyi Morales illuminates Frida's life and work in this elegant and fascinating book.

Related Resource: An excellent resource to accompany the book is [Morales' video](#) on the process of creating it.

Frida Kahlo (Little People, Big Dreams) written by Isabel Sanchez Vegara and Gee Fan Eng. Grades 1+

In this new series, discover the lives of outstanding people from designers and artists to scientists. All of them went on to achieve incredible things, yet all of them began life as a little

Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World: Famous Artists and the Children Who Knew Them written by Laurence Anholt. Grades 3+

Children will be delighted by this newest addition to the highly-acclaimed *Anholt's Artists Books for Children* series. This time, award-winning author and illustrator Laurence Anholt tells the charming story of *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World*. When a little girl named Mariana is sent to have her portrait painted by Frida, she is scared. Well, that's okay, Frida tells her. Everyone feels scared sometimes. Now take my hand and let's go inside. Soon, Mariana meets all of Frida's pets, from a handsome parrot and funny spider monkey to a little dog, baby deer, and beautiful eagle. Frida's home is full of wonders, and her studio is brimming with strange but beautiful paintings. As Mariana sits for her portrait, she learns all about Frida's life, and begins to think of her as the bravest woman in the world. Frida thinks Mariana is very special too and she's got a wonderful surprise in store for her! Once again, Laurence Anholt inspires children with this much-loved art history series, which has sold more than one million copies around the world. The story, enhanced with Anholt's illustrations on every page, include several that are reproductions of Kahlo's famous paintings.

Frida Kahlo: The Artist in the Blue House written by Magdalena Holzhey. Grades 3+

This fascinating look into the world of the artist Frida Kahlo introduces children to the themes that infused Kahlo's vibrant paintings, while demonstrating how her life influenced her art. Parrots, trees, deer, family members, friends, flowers, the sun and the moon—Frida Kahlo's use of symbolism and color wonderfully lends itself to teaching children about the artistic process. Through illustrations of her work and photographs of Kahlo and her family, children are encouraged to learn about her life, artworks, and important relationships. An engaging text and gorgeous reproductions call attention to Kahlo's use of bold color and natural imagery, as well as her ingenious use of perspective, collage, and varying styles. Children will learn much about creative self-expression through this beautifully designed and insightful book about Kahlo's life and work.

Frida Kahlo: The Artist Who Painted Herself written by Margaret Frith and illustrated by Tomi dePaola. Grades 3+

Through original artwork by the renowned artist Tomie dePaola—a longtime aficionado of Frida Kahlo's work—as well as beautiful reproductions of Kahlo's paintings, this latest *Smart About* book explores the creative, imaginative world of Mexico's most celebrated female artist.

Who Was Frida Kahlo? Written by Sarah Fabiney and illustrated by Jerry Hoare. Grades 3+

You can always recognize a painting by Kahlo because she is in nearly all—with her black braided hair and colorful Mexican outfits. A brave woman who was an invalid most of her life, she transformed herself into a living work of art. As famous for her self-portraits and haunting imagery as she was for her marriage to another famous artist, Diego Rivera, this strong and courageous painter was inspired by the ancient culture and history of her beloved homeland, Mexico. Her paintings continue to inform and inspire popular culture around the world.

Me, Frida written by Amy Novesky and illustrated by David Diaz. Grades 3+

Like a tiny bird in a big city, Frida Kahlo feels lost and lonely when she arrives in San Francisco with her husband, the famous artist Diego Rivera. But as Frida begins to explore San Francisco on her own, she discovers the inspiration she needs to become one of the most celebrated artists of all time. *Me, Frida* is an exhilarating true story that encourages children to believe in themselves so they can make their own dreams soar.

Anti Princesas #1: Frida Kahlo Para Chicas y Chicos written by Nadia Fink and Pitu Saá. Grades 5+

The first in the Anti-Princess series explores the life of Frida Kahlo, the world-renowned Mexican artist that dedicated her life to creating beauty and expressing her most authentic self despite the many challenges she faced. Engaging nonfiction text is coupled with colorful illustrations, photographs and activity pages as readers learn about an extraordinary woman and a true superhero.

Diego Rivera: An Artist for the People written by Susan Goldman Rubin. Grades 5+

Diego Rivera offers young readers unique insight into the life and artwork of the famous Mexican painter and muralist. The book follows Rivera's career, looking at his influences and tracing the evolution of his style. His work often called attention to the culture and struggles of the Mexican working class. Believing that art should be for the people, he created public murals in both the United States and Mexico, examples of which are included. The book contains a list of museums where you can see Rivera's art, a historical note, a glossary, and a bibliography.

child with a dream. The second book follows Frida Kahlo, whose desire to study medicine was destroyed by a childhood accident. Frida began painting from her bedside and produced over 140 works, culminating in a solo exhibition in America. This inspiring and informative little biography comes with extra facts about Frida's life at the back.

Frida: Viva la vida! Long Live Life! written by Carmen Bernier-Grand. Grade 6+

"Wearing the white huipil with the lavender tassel, // hiding my amputated leg in red-leather boots, // I wheel the wheelchair to the Blue House studio that Diego so lovingly built for me. // I dip the brush in blood-red paint and, embracing life with all its light, // I print on a watermelon cut open—like I am—¡Viva la vida!— // a hymn to nature and life." Frida Kahlo, a native of Mexico, is described here in biographical poems accompanied by her own artwork. Both text and images reveal the anguish and joy of her two marriages to muralist Diego Rivera, her life-long suffering from a crippling bus accident, and her thirst for life, even as she tasted death. Her favorite motto was: ¡Viva la vida! (Long live life!). Back matter includes excerpts from Frida's diary and letters, a prose biography, a chronology of the artist's life, a glossary of Spanish words, sources, and notes.

Young Adult Literature

Frida & Diego: Art, Love, Life written by Catherine Reef. Grades 7+

Nontraditional, controversial, rebellious, and politically volatile, the Mexican artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera are remembered for their provocative paintings as well as for their deep love for each other. Their marriage was one of the most tumultuous and infamous in history—filled with passion, pain, betrayal, revolution, and, above all, art that helped define the twentieth century. Catherine Reef's inspiring and insightful dual biography features numerous archival photos and full-color reproductions of both artists' work. The book includes useful research resources such as endnotes, bibliography, and a timeline.

Frida Kahlo: Her Photos written by James Oles and Horacio Fernández. Grades 7+

When Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) died in 1954, her husband Diego Rivera asked the poet Carlos Pellicer to turn her family home, the fabled Blue House, into a museum. Pellicer selected some paintings, drawings, photographs, books and ceramics, maintaining the space just as Kahlo and Rivera had arranged it to live and work in. The rest of the objects, clothing, documents, drawings

and letters, as well as over 6,000 photographs collected by Kahlo over the course of her life, were put away in bathrooms that had been converted into storerooms. This incredible trove remained hidden for more than half a century, until, just a few years ago, these storerooms and wardrobes were opened up. Kahlo's photograph collection was a major revelation among these finds, a testimony to the tastes and interests of the famous couple, not only through the images themselves but also through the telling annotations inscribed upon them. *Frida Kahlo: Her Photos* allows us to speculate about Kahlo's and Rivera's likes and dislikes, and to document their family origins; it supplies a thrilling and hugely significant addition to our knowledge of Kahlo's life and work.

Frida's Fiestas: Recipes and Reminiscences of Life with Frida Kahlo written by Marie-Pierre Colee and Guadalupe Rivera.

Frida's Fiestas is a personal account in words and pictures of many important and happy events in the life of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, and a scrapbook, assembled by her stepdaughter, of recipes for more than 100 dishes that Frida served to family and friends with her characteristic enthusiasm for all the pleasures of life. Full-color photographs.

Kahlo written by Andrea Kettenmann. Grades 8+

The arresting pictures of Frida Kahlo (1907–54) were in many ways expressions of trauma. Through a near-fatal road accident at the age of 18, failing health, a turbulent marriage, miscarriage and childlessness, she transformed the afflictions into revolutionary art. In literal or metaphorical self-portraiture, Kahlo looks out at the viewer with an audacious glare, rejecting her destiny as a passive victim and rather intertwining expressions of her experience into a hybrid surreal-real language of living: hair, roots, veins, vines, tendrils and fallopian tubes. Many of her works also explore the Communist political ideals which Kahlo shared with Rivera. The artist described her paintings as “the most sincere and real thing that I could do in order to express what I felt inside and outside of myself.” This book introduces a rich body of Kahlo's work to explore her unremitting determination as an artist, and her significance as a painter, feminist icon, and a pioneer of Latin American culture.

Lucky Broken Girl written by Ruth Behar. Grades 5+

In this unforgettable multicultural coming-of-age narrative—based on the author's childhood in the 1960s—a young Cuban-Jewish immigrant girl is adjusting to her new life in New York City when her American dream is suddenly derailed. Ruthie's plight will intrigue readers, and her powerful story of strength and resilience, full of color, light, and poignancy, will stay with them for a long time. Ruthie Mizrahi and her family recently emigrated from Castro's Cuba to New York City. Just when she's finally beginning to gain confidence in her mastery of English—and enjoying her reign as her neighborhood's hopscotch queen—a horrific car accident leaves her in a body cast and confined her to her bed for a long recovery. As Ruthie's world shrinks because of her inability to move, her powers of observation and her heart grow larger and she comes to understand how fragile life is, how vulnerable we all are as human beings, and how friends, neighbors, and the power of the arts can sweeten even the worst of times.

Rad Women Worldwide: Artists, and Athletes, Pirates and Punks, and Other Revolutionaries Who Shaped History. Grades 6+

Rad Women Worldwide tells fresh, engaging, and amazing tales of perseverance and radical success by pairing well-researched and riveting biographies with powerful and expressive cut-paper portraits. The book features an array of diverse figures from 430 BCE to 2016, spanning 31 countries around the world, from Hatshepsut (the great female king who ruled Egypt peacefully for two decades) and Malala Yousafzi (the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize) to Poly Styrene (legendary teenage punk and lead singer of X-Ray Spex) and Liv Arnesen and Ann Bancroft (polar explorers and the first women to cross Antarctica). An additional 250 names of international rad women are also included as a reference for readers to continue their own research. This progressive and visually arresting book is a compelling addition to women's history and belongs on the shelf of every school, library, and home. Together, these stories show the immense range of what women have done and can do. May we all have the courage to be rad! For teachers, this book is appropriate for grades 6-8 and could be used in either Social Studies or English classes, or as part of a text for a multidisciplinary unit. It can also be used as a Common Core text for grades 6-8 Social Studies/History

The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait written by Frida Kahlo and Carlos Fuentes. *

Published here in its entirety, Frida Kahlo's amazing illustrated journal documents the last ten years of her turbulent life. This passionate, often surprising, intimate record, kept under lock and key for some forty years in Mexico, reveals many new dimensions in the complex persona of this remarkable Mexican artist. Covering the years 1944-45, the 170-page journal contains Frida's thoughts, poems, and dreams, and reflects her stormy relationship with her husband, Diego Rivera, Mexico's famous artist. The seventy watercolor illustrations in the journal - some lively sketches, several elegant self-portraits, others complete paintings - offer insights into her creative process, and show her frequently using the journal to work out pictorial ideas for her canvases. The text entries, written in Frida's round, full script in brightly colored inks, add an almost decorative quality, making the journal as captivating to look at as it is to read. Frida's childhood, her political sensibilities, and her obsession with Diego are all illuminated in witty phrases and haunting images. This personal document, published in a complete full-color facsimile edition, will add greatly to the understanding of her unique and powerful vision and her enormous courage in the face of more than thirty-five operations to correct injuries she had sustained in an accident at the age of eighteen. The facsimile is accompanied by an introduction by the world-renowned Mexican man of letters Carlos Fuentes and a complete translation of the diary's text. An essay on the place of the diary in Frida's work and in art history at large, as well as commentaries on the images, is provided by Sarah M. Lowe.

Library of Luminaries: Frida Kahlo: An Illustrated Biography written by Zena Alkayat and illustrated by Nina Cosford.

* Please Note: This is labeled as an adult text, but portions may be appropriate for use with young adults.

Step into the world of one of history's most celebrated artists and feminist icons: Frida Kahlo. This beautifully illustrated biography is full of colorful details that illuminate the woman behind the artwork, including excerpts from Kahlo's personal letters and diaries on her childhood dreams of becoming a doctor, the accident that changed the course of her life, and her love affairs with famous artists. Featuring handwritten text alongside lovely illustrations in a charming case with foil stamping and debossed details, *Library of Luminaries: Frida Kahlo* provides a captivating window into the vibrant life, work, and creative vision of the beloved Mexican artist.

Adult Literature

The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait written by Frida Kahlo and Carols Fuentes.

Published here in its entirety, Frida Kahlo's amazing illustrated journal documents the last ten years of her turbulent life. This passionate, often surprising, intimate record, kept under lock and key for some forty years in Mexico, reveals many new dimensions in the complex persona of this remarkable Mexican artist. Covering the years 1944-45, the 170-page journal contains Frida's thoughts, poems, and dreams, and reflects her stormy relationship with her husband, Diego Rivera, Mexico's famous artist. The seventy watercolor illustrations in the journal - some lively sketches, several elegant self-portraits, others complete paintings - offer insights into her creative process, and show her frequently using the journal to work out pictorial ideas for her canvases. The text entries, written in Frida's round, full script in brightly colored inks, add an almost decorative quality, making the journal as captivating to look at as it is to read. Frida's childhood, her political sensibilities, and her obsession with Diego are all illuminated in witty phrases and haunting images. This personal document, published in a complete full-color facsimile edition, will add greatly to the understanding of her unique and powerful vision and her enormous courage in the face of more than thirty-five operations to correct injuries she had sustained in an accident at the age of eighteen. The facsimile is accompanied by an introduction by the world-renowned Mexican man of letters Carlos Fuentes and a complete translation of the diary's text. An essay on the place of the diary in Frida's work and in art history at large, as well as commentaries on the images, is provided by Sarah M. Lowe.

Frida written by Sebastian Perez and Frida Kahlo and illustrated by Benjamin Lacombe. Grades 8+

*Please Note: Although indicated as an adult book, there are only two explicit Kahlo paintings that could prove difficult for the classroom. All text/illustrations are otherwise suited to YA readers.

A sumptuous feast of a book, *Frida* allows the reader to enter this revered artist's world, both literally and metaphorically. Through a series of consecutive die-cut pages, one is drawn in passing through aspects of her life, art and creative process while exploring the themes that inspired her most, such as love, death and maternity. Iconic and visceral, her work has always had the ability to transcend borders and resonate with its honest and graphic depiction of the human condition. Until now, there has never been a greater homage. Excerpts from Frida Kahlo's personal diaries alternate with Sébastian Perez's poetic musings to give fresh insight and

emotional depth, while Benjamin Lacombe's stunning artwork masterfully conveys the symbolism and surrealism of her art. A must for any fan or bibliophile.

Frida Kahlo. Una biografía written by María Hesse. Grades 8+

Please note: This is an illustrated biography of Kahlo's life, written for young adults.

Frida fue algo más que dolor y angustia. Se conformó con estar a la sombra de Diego Rivera y su arrolladora personalidad, y se convirtió en una artista llena de vida. Su pintura es fiesta, color, sangre y vida. Fue una luchadora que decidió ponerse el mundo por montera. Fue, también, una mujer apasionada que decidió vivir con intensidad, tanto las desgracias como las alegrías que le deparó el destino. Inspirado en las vivencias de la pintora mexicana, este libro es un paseo ilustrado por la emocionante biografía de Frida Kahlo. La ilustradora María Hesse aporta una nueva y luminosa mirada en su interpretación de la vida de un mito.

ANNOTATED MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

Below is a list of available audio and visual resources. As with all teaching materials, please be sure to preview before using with students to make sure all content is age appropriate. As much of Kahlo's art may not be appropriate for younger students, it may be necessary to only use shorter clips of the videos below.

Feature Films and Documentaries

[*The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo*](#) (2005). Documentary. Rated NR. 90 minutes.

The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo explores the 20th-century icon who became an international sensation in the worlds of modern art and radical politics. Rita Moreno – the Oscar, Emmy, Tony and Grammy Award winning actress – narrates the film. PBS has provided resources to support educators using the film.

[*Frida*](#) (2002). Feature Film. Rated R. 123 minutes.

Frida chronicles the life Frida Kahlo shared unflinchingly and openly with Diego Rivera, as the young couple took the art world by storm. From her complex and enduring relationship with her mentor and husband to her illicit and controversial affair with Leon Trotsky, to her provocative and romantic entanglements with women, Frida Kahlo lived a bold and uncompromising life as a political, artistic, and sexual revolutionary.

A Ribbon Around a Bomb (1992). Unrated.

It is hardly enough time to do justice to the passionate life and art of Frida Kahlo, the Mexican painter who seems about to jump off the canvases of her vibrant, fantastic self-portraits. Even more than her accessible art, Kahlo's explosive existence has made her something of a pop icon in recent years. That well-documented life is the subject of *Frida Kahlo: A Ribbon Around a Bomb*, a part-documentary, part-performance film.

The Life and Death of Frida Kahlo as Told to Karen and David Crommie (1966)

In 1965 Karen and David Crommie made this film featuring interviews with many people who knew and worked with Frida and are no longer with us. Frida was quite unknown when the film debuted in 1966 at the San Francisco International Film Festival and when Hayden Herrera saw it at a screening in New York later that year she was motivated to do the book.

Great Women Artists: Frida Kahlo (2000) Unrated. 45 minutes.

Frida Kahlo began to paint in 1925 while recovering from a streetcar accident that left her permanently disabled. Many of her 200 paintings directly relate to her experiences with physical pain. They also chronicle her turbulent relationship with artist Diego Rivera. Today Kahlo's work is critically and monetarily as prized as that of her male peers, sometimes more so.

Short Multimedia

[*Frida Kahlo: A Documentary*](#)

A student documentary about Frida Kahlo's influence on the art world, the Communist party, and the shaping of a Mexican identity. Meant for education and to inspire interest in history and the arts. An abridged list of sources is in the credits.

[*Frida Kahlo: Brief Biography and Paintings*](#)

A short biography of the artist appropriate for children.

[*Frida Kahlo: A Collection of 100 Paintings*](#)

Frida Kahlo's work was influenced by traumatic physical and psychological events from her childhood and early adulthood, including a crippling accident and the infidelity of her husband. In addition to personal issues, Kahlo's often brooding and introspective subject matter also deals with questions of national identity. Her mixed ancestry - Mexican and German - provided a rich source of ideas, particularly during the Second World War, when Kahlo changed the spelling of her first name to one that was less Germanic. Her works are often categorized as Surrealist because of her sometimes bizarre and disturbing themes, but unlike the Surrealists, Kahlo was not interested in dreams or the subconscious - her art was almost always starkly autobiographical. In later life, she was forced to rely on painkillers that affected the quality of her output. She has now become a cultural icon and is especially revered in her home country for her focus on her Mexican identity, or Mexicanidad.

[How Artists Explore Identity | Modern Art & Ideas](#)

From the Museum of Modern Art, a short film on how artists Frida Kahlo, Glenn Ligon, and Andy Warhol investigate and express ideas about identity in their work.

[Erik Takes You On A Tour Of Frida Kahlo's House And Wardrobe! Casa Azul, Mexico City](#)

Erik Kennon takes you on a tour of the Casa Azul.

[Digital Tour of the Casa Azul](#)

Walk through the Casa Azul on a virtual, self-guided tour.

[Yuyi Morales and the Making of Viva Frida](#)

This short video offers insight into the making of the book *Viva Frida*, with spare, polished text and luscious illustrations by award-winning author/illustrator Yuyi Morales.

[Book Trailer of Frida](#) by Jonah Winter and Ana Juan

This short video goes through the children's book page-by-page, reading aloud its brief text.

Music

Chavela Vargas: [The Legend of Mexican Music on Spotify](#)

(available online at no cost)

Lila Downs: [Frida \(Original Motion Picture Soundtrack\) on Spotify](#)

(available online at no cost)

Villalobos Brothers: [The Villalobos Brothers Match Music with Frida Kahlo on NPR](#)

(available online at no cost)

Various Artists: [Frida Kahlo: Music Inspired by the Life of Frida Kahlo on All Music](#)

Various Artists: [The Musical World of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera](#)

Digital Images

[Google Art and Culture Project: Frida Kahlo](#)

While there are many images of and by Frida Kahlo widely available on the internet, many are unlicensed and poor reprints of her work. The best credible resource we have been able to identify is from the Google Arts & Culture project, and is a [digitized archive of the Museo Frida Kahlo](#) in Mexico City. Of particular note is the accompanying, annotated collection "[Appearances Can Be Deceiving](#)," which documents and explores Frida Kahlo's wardrobe throughout the years, and a visual diary titled "[Frida Kahlo: ¡Viva la vida!](#)" which draws upon her actual writings, blending them with additional biographical information and her paintings.

[Khan Academy: Latin American Modernism](#)

This website provides a limited selection of high quality prints of Frida's paintings accompanied by a narrated video (audio and text). The materials are arranged as though studying for a test within Khan Academy, but can be used independently. Kahlo-related topics include: "Frida Kahlo, Frieda and Diego" and "Kahlo, The Two Fridas (Las dos Fridas)," though there are also resources on Diego Rivera and other Latin American artists, including Mexican painter Orozco and Cuban painter Lam.

[FridaKahlo.org](#)

This private website offers myriad information on Frida Kahlo. The section that we recommend is the convenient compilation of images of Kahlo's paintings, drawings, and photographs.