EL ALMA DE LA FIESTA
Mexican and Mexican-American Festivals and Celebrations
EDUCATOR GUIDE
El Alma de la Fiesta

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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El Alma de la Fiesta Exhibition
Curated by:
Dolores Mercado

Guide Production and Writing Team:
Alicia Herrera
Dolores Mercado
Nancy Villafranca-Guzman

Special Thanks to:
Raquel Aguinaga-Martinez
Dolores Mercado
Jim Perry
Anita Smrdel

Cover Image:
Frank Ybarra, Backyard Pachanga (Dance Party), serigraph, 22/120

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# Table of Contents

## Introduction
- Alma de la Fiesta Exhibition Overview: Subtopics and Artwork

## Background Information
- Introduction
- Ancient Mesoamerican Origins
- Religious Festivals
  - The Posadas
  - Feast of the Three Kings
  - Traditional Festivals for the Virgin of Guadalupe
- African Presence in the Festivals
- Dances
  - Jarabe
  - Dance of the Feathers
  - Dance of the Chinelo
  - Dance of the Old Men
- Family and Personal Festivals
- Civic Festivals, Fairs and Other Festivals
- Festival Calendar

## Glossary
- Aztec/Mexica Deities

## Bibliography
- Carmen Lomas Garza
- Activity Books
- Children’s Non-Fiction
- Children’s Fiction
- Background on Mexican Festivals and Celebrations
- Websites

## Using the KWL and Cornell Notes
- Graphic Organizers for a Museum Visit
  - KWL Chart
  - Cornell Notes Graphic Organizer

## Exhibition Artwork Images
INTRODUCTION

Exhibition

The Mexican calendar of holidays lists more than 5,000 annual religious holidays. These festivals, along with civic and personal celebrations, demonstrate the central role that celebrations play in Mexican culture. The *Alma de la Fiesta* exhibition is a collection of paintings, prints, sculptures, costumes and artifacts that detail the evolution of celebrations in Mexico, Pre-Cuauhtémoc, Afro-Mexican and Mestizo origins of these festivities and the colorful elements that comprise these magnificent events. With this guide, we hope your students will not only learn about these traditions but also understand their place and purpose in Mexican culture.

Teaching and Learning Goals

In creating this guide, the National Museum Of Mexican Art (NMMA) intends to offer curricular resources for teachers and their students in order to increase their understanding and appreciation of Mexican art and culture. As teachers use aspects or sections of this guide, they will increase their students’ cultural and visual literacy while reinforcing their reading and writing skills. Students will “read” works of art to understand a cultural tradition. While students expand their fluency about Mexican culture, they will gain understanding of diverse groups and multiple perspectives.

Using the Educator Guide

The Alma de la Fiesta Educator Guide offers teachers a range of resources to choose from and integrate into their regular classroom curriculum. The Educator Guide includes resources such as a bibliography, background information, student handouts, and images from NMMA exhibitions.

NOTE: Before implementing any of the activities included in this guide, we recommend that teachers read all of the background information provided and preview all the student handouts or images in order to facilitate their usage. Also, to give students a richer and well-rounded exposure to the content, we strongly recommend that teachers integrate a field trip visit to the Alma de la Fiesta Exhibition at the NMMA.
**Exhibition Overview**

**Thesis:**
Mexico is a joyful country that delights in celebrating but celebrations must be comprehended as a community effort that are planned throughout the entire year as a means of preserving their values, beliefs, and traditions.

**Suggested Works of Art:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit Sections</th>
<th>Indigenous Origins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-Cuauhtemoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish/Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Celebrations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Exhibition Topics:**

- Pre-Cuauhtemoc Indigenous Origins
- Spanish/Catholic Celebrations
- Civic and Personal Celebrations
- Dances
- Music
- Civic and Personal Celebrations
- Mexico
- Religious Syncretism
- Changes over time
- Mexico/Aztec Deities
- Agricultural Cycles
- Mexican Church in Mexico
- Catholic Church in Mexico
- Mexican Dances
- Costume for the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe
- Processional Outfit for the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe
- “Las Posadas” by Carmen Lomas Garza, 2000
- “Backyard Pachanga” by Carmen Lomas Garza, 2003
- “Quinceanera” by Frank Ybarra, 2003
- “Welcoming the New Year” by Alejandro Garcia Nelo, 1995
- Multimedia Drum (Colima Region), 350 BCE-200 CE
- “The Three Kings’ Chiaspas” by Nicolas de Jesus
- “Festival of St. Luke” by Alejandro Garcia Nelo
- “Mask and Hat for the Old Man Dance” by Avdee Rodriguez Lopez, 2005
- “Dance of the Straw Bull” by Avdee Rodriguez Lopez, 2005
- “Poster for Fiestas del Sol” by Alejandro Romero, 201
— EL ALMA DE LA FIESTA —

EXHIBITION BACKGROUND

BY DOLORES MERCADO
NMMA ASSOCIATE CURATOR

INTRODUCTION

Fireworks illuminate a twilight sky, while the thunder of exploding rockets fade into the heavens – calling upon the divine – and are mistaken for the clamor of the crowds. The past and present fuse in a mixture of colors, sounds, aromas, and flavors. The Mexican identity is unmistakably perceived during these extraordinary days. Influenced by the intermingling of indigenous, Spanish and African cultures, the Mexican calendar of holidays lists more than 5,000 annual religious holidays. We should not fail to notice the personal celebrations that commemorate distinctive occasions in life. Likewise, are the civic celebrations and the commemoration of important national anniversaries that developed into national holidays. Mexico is a joyful country that delights in celebrating, but celebrations must be comprehended as a community’s efforts that are planned the entire year as a means of preserving their values, beliefs, and traditions. The community works together, sharing their experience and creativity, whether as a sponsor responsible for the logistics, the producer of traditional objects, as participant or simply as spectator.

Mexican people have preserved many of their ancestors’ traditions by blending the various rituals and beliefs into the wonderfully colorful festivals and holidays celebrated today. With the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century, religious Catholic feast days were integrated into the vast number of existing ancient Mesoamerican celebrations. Each Mesoamerican divine being was reassigned with one from the Catholic pantheon. The mojigangas, processions and pilgrimages arrived with the Spanish; while the drama and dance continue from Mesoamerica. Aztec dancing merged with the Moorish and the Christian. Percussive and wind instruments came together with string instruments. New ingredients from the Old World, Asia and Africa complimented Mesoamerican recipes. Words were intermixed concurrently with myth, belief, ritual, and dress. Each element in a fiesta reflects the intercultural mixing know as mestizaje.

El Alma de la Fiesta includes works from the Permanent Collection that were created by Mexican artists on both sides of the border. Each one of their works exhibits creativity, beauty, and splendor from those long anticipated feast days. We invite you to experience some of Mexico’s most celebrated and revered fiestas!
ANCIENT MESOAMERICAN ORIGINS
OF MEXICAN FIESTAS

The agricultural cycles and the observation of the stars were fundamental to the celebration of ritual ceremonies of indigenous towns. The rainy season (Spring-Summer) was anticipated but just as important was the dry season (Fall-Winter) when the harvest was gathered. Thus, their calendar was periodical since it was related to the cycles of nature. Maize was considered sacred which is why many festivals revolved around it, as well as the worship of indigenous deities: Tezcatlipoca (God of Sky and Earth), Huitzilopochtli (God of Sun and War), Tláloc (God of Rain) and Centéotl (Goddess of Maize) among others; they demonstrated the strength of their power through nature. The Aztec and Maya calendars were divided into 18 months of 20 days, plus 5 lost days, the indigenous peoples celebrated religious, military, literary and poetic festivals as well as a dedicated time to each god. Every month a major festival was celebrated plus other minor celebrations. In addition, every 52 years, the Ceremony of New Fire took place in order to try and prevent the destruction of the Quinto Sol (Fifth Sun) era in which they were living. Music and dance were used as ritual elements for the adoration of their gods. References exist of spectacular ceremonies in open spaces or holy places where thousands of beautifully dressed dancers participated for only one dance, in unison to a repetitive rhythm played on percussion instruments. Teachers taught the art of song, dance and music to youths in the Cuicacalli (houses of song). These practices were considered so important that if one student did not become proficient in the art it was considered a grave and punishable offense. Imperfection was not accepted in front of the gods for whom these ritual ceremonies were held.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

The military conquest was coupled with the religious conquest when the Spanish brought the Catholic religion to the Americas. While Hernán Cortéz and his troops combated the natives, they searched for gold and destroyed ancient icons and temples. Monks in the religious orders dedicated themselves to the evangelization of the indigenous population. It is here where religious syncretism took place. The Spanish taking notice of the indigenous populations’ reluctance to attend certain Catholic rituals, constructed churches on top of their ancient temples and sacred places. At the same time, the Spanish were surprised at the quantity of festivals celebrated by the indigenous communities. Much like the indigenous peoples who celebrated their festivals devoted to the deities, the Spanish brought their saints, virgins and Christ depictions to the Americas. The Catholic religion is also guided by a cycle - the life and death of Jesus Christ; the festivals are of darkness and penitence. The calendars are linked to the festivals. The Catholic calendar begins with the Feast Day of Our Lady of the Candelaria, continues with Carnival and Lent and concludes with Holy Week. The Church substituted the pre-Cuauhtémoc deities with Catholic saints. Santa Ana (St. Ann) replaced the Goddess Toci (Grandmother of the Gods); the Candelaria coincided with the celebration of the God Tláloc (God of Rain), his sister Chalchiuhtlicue (Goddess of Water) and Quetzalcóatl (God of Wind); the birth of Huitzilopochtli was replaced by the birth of Jesus Christ. The month of the Aztec Calendar – Huytozotli – when
the festivals for **Centéotl** and **Chicomecoatl** (dual gods of maize) are celebrated was replaced with Holy Week. Every one of these festivals had its counterpart. Each town selected a patron saint; the barrios selected secondary saints. The Spanish brought the **mojigangas** (larger than life puppets), fireworks, and religious processions, yet the indigenous dance and theatrical aspects survived. The Dance of the Tiger was united with the Dance of the Moors and Christians; percussion instruments were accompanied with string instruments; the regional products that were used to create delicacies for the festivals like maize, squash, cacao, and wheat. During the Colonial era, the Church created a political, religious structure of administrators or **mayordomos** that continues today. The **mayordomo** has a great responsibility; for a yearlong period, he is in charge of the festival’s preparations in addition to the care of the town or parish patron saint. At the sites, sanctuaries and caves of these saints, the community conducts pilgrimages and processions to request as well as to give thanks for favors received. The local economy is vitalized during the festival days. Regional goods are bought and sold, special toys are made for the celebration, recipes prepared but once a year are made, dancing and music are performed, decorations of papel picado, flowers and brilliantly colored sawdust are completed, fireworks are set off so that God and the Saints will take note of the town’s people and looked down upon them. The more exquisite the offering, the closer it is to the sublime.

**The Posadas (December 16th – 24th)**

The **Posadas** have been celebrated in Mexico for 424 years. This tradition is said to have begun in San Agustín Acolman, a small town in the State of Mexico. The **Posadas** begin every December 16th and end on the 24th, the eve of the birth of Jesus. In total, there are nine **Posadas** where Joseph and Mary are represented making their pilgrimage to Bethlehem from Nazareth in search of a place to spend the night, and concluding with the birth of Baby Jesus. In the beginning, the masses of **aguinaldo** (during the Advent Season) or **Posadas** took place in the atriums of churches. During the nine consecutive days, Christmas scenes were represented. Slowly, the tradition of the **Posadas** became a family affair and therefore more popular. The **Posadas** were not done only in churches, but slowly they were done in private residences, neighborhoods and entire towns.

With the passage of time, this tradition has changed. Presently, entire families agree to ask for **posada** (lodging) at a neighbor’s house or family members that live farther away, or entire neighborhoods participate in this celebration. On December 24th, the last posada takes place after the hosts select a person to lull the Baby Jesus to sleep. This person and the hosts will become **compadres** (co-parents) by this act. The hosts will then organize a **tamalada** (a tamale meal) in honor of the **compadres** on February 2nd the Feast Day of Our Lady of the Candelaria. It is important to take note that each region’s **Posada** tradition varies slightly.
New elements have gradually been integrated to this age-old tradition:

- The inclusion of the Holy Pilgrims (statuettes of Joseph and Mary) or children are dressed to represent them
- Hymns or carols (popular songs that are sung during the Posadas, while a piñata is broken or holiday treats are passed out)
- Candles (are lit and carried as the posada is requested in song)
- The piñata (generally, it has a star shape with seven points during Posadas, where each point represents the seven capital sins. Candies are placed inside the piñata so that the participants can pick them up after they fall to the ground. The candies represent the grace of God. The piñata is broken after the posada is requested and while it is being broken, the guests sing some verses)
- Dances (since Colonial times, this has been included in the Posadas. Music from the region is played for these dances)
- Food (which is offered for the guests requesting posada. The food varies by region but the most common are tamales, different flavored atoles - hot cornmeal drinks, buñuelos – doughnut fritters, and pozole)
- Sparklers, whistles, buscapiés (firecrackers), aquínaLDos (fruits and candies), colaciones (seeds dipped in caramel) and to decorate the house, paper lanterns are used.

**Feast of the Three Kings (January 6th)**

Beginning with January 5th at night, in many Mexican homes, children place their shoes on the window next to a letter for the Three Kings. In addition, if there is a nativity scene in the home, the figures of the Three Kings are placed so that they too are part of the Christmas scene. On the morning of January 6th, the excited children look in their shoes for gifts and toys that they requested. This day is also known for the parting of the roasca sweetbread, which is shared by family and friends. The roasca is baked only for this day and its ingredient – orange blossom water - gives it a distinctive flavor. Originally, a porcelain figure of Baby Jesus was placed in the roasca; with the passage of time, the number of baby figures or “children” increased and the material used to make the figures substituted. Whoever finds a small figure or “child” in their slice of roasca, invites the individuals sharing the roasca to a party or a tamale on the February 2nd Feast Day of Our Lady of the Candelabra. The Three Kings’ tradition revolves around the adoration of the Baby Jesus. Legend says that by following the star of Bethlehem, the Three Kings, Melchior, Gaspar and Balthasar, arrived from the east mounted on a camel, a horse and an elephant looking for the Baby Jesus to offer him gold for he was king, incense for he was God and myrrh for he was man. Unfortunately, this tradition, like many others, is disappearing as new traditions from different countries arrive.

**Traditional Festivals for the Virgin of Guadalupe**

Every year on December 12th, the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe in 1531 before Juan Diego, an indigenous man, is celebrated on the Hill of Tepeyac. Pilgrimages and
dancers from all over Mexico arrive at the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City to pay homage to the Virgin, who is considered the Queen of Mexico. In addition to this pilgrimage: “Las Mañanitas” is sung in her honor, musical groups play their instruments all day in the church’s atrium, a solemn mass is offered, fireworks are lit at dusk, groups of dancers perform traditional dances of their regions, processions from different locations arrive, worshippers say the rosary and a fair is held around the Basilica grounds where regional vendors offer their products to the parishioners. In Catholic churches throughout Mexico, traditional Guadalupana festivals are celebrated; they can last several days and each location celebrates them differently. The Guadalupana festivals previously described also consist of: traditional games (caballeros, lotteries – Mexican lottery, etc.), bullfights, rodeos, night festivals, and popular fairs. The traditional dances vary by region: as in Jalisco, where one can see dances such as “The Moors”, “The Conquest” and “The Rattles”; in Michoacán, the dances performed are “The Gourds” and “The Weavers”. The children are dressed in traditional indigenous dress, as a china poblana, or as angels. In some houses, altars are erected with the image of the Virgin on the top level and they are decorated with papel picado (cut out paper), artificial flowers and candles. Neighbors visit these altars and pray the rosary in the evenings.

The Mexica goddess Tonantzin (Our Mother) was venerated on the Hill of Tepeyac. The worship of the Virgin of Guadalupe is a syncretism that appears after the Christian spiritual conquest. Mexicans in the U.S. have embraced the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol of their cultural identity. Mexican-American artists have recreated her image and have made it theirs by applying it to different techniques and socio-political contexts. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is adored throughout the U.S. where many churches are named in her honor.

AFRICAN PRESENCE IN THE FESTIVALS

Since the beginning of the 16th Century, the Spanish brought enslaved Africans to Mexico. It is said during the three centuries of colonization, the African presence in Mexico increased to 200,000 Africans and their descendent. In Mexico, one can observe the Afro-mestizo influences especially in the regions of Costa Chica (Guerrero and Oaxaca) and the Gulf of Mexico (Veracruz and Tabasco). The enslaved Africans brought their music, customs, religion, dances, foods, and languages. The influence of what has been called the “Third Root” has enriched the festivals of everything that has been mentioned previously. With regards to the rhythm and music, Afro-mestizo influences are found in: son, huapango, fandango, and other types of Mexican music. In the 17th Century, there were periods of prohibition where Afro-Mexicans were permitted to play music and dance only on weekends or holidays. During the beginning of the same century, some songs and dances were prohibited like chuchumbé, which was recently included into the repertoire of music from Veracruz. Some of the instruments of African influence are: the marimbol or marimbulula, the donkey’s jawbone, the bote and the cajón (box). The African dances that best represent Costa Chica are: The Dance of the Devils, The Turtle, and The Matted Bull.
DANCES

Jarabe / El Jarabe

The jarabe is the most popular mestizo dance in Mexican because of its distinction. The jarabe is danced to the rhythm of son music. Different states have their own sones such as: sones guerrerenses (from the state of Guerrero), sones del valle; those with panache are from Michoacán, norteños (from Northern Mexico) and chiapanecos (from the state of Chiapas), etc. The jarabe tapatío (from Guadalajara) is the most famous inside and outside of Mexico. It is performed by the Charro (Cowboy) and China (his girlfriend). With great a skillful zapateado (a form of tap dancing), charisma and much spirit, the jarabe symbolizes the courtship between a man and a woman.

DANCE OF THE FEATHERS / Danza de la Pluma

This dance belongs to the Spanish Conquest group of dances. The Dance of the Feathers is from several areas in Oaxaca. The characters in this dance include: Moctezuma, Hernán Cortés, Doña Marina (Malinché), two Teotiles (priests), four kings, two port captains, and two Campos who wear black masks and notify Moctezuma about Cortés and his captains and soldiers’ plans. This is an energetic dance that is visually stunning due to its use of color; it lasts several hours with vigorous movements, jumps and long speeches. The accompanying music is played by a band of wind instruments interpreting mestizo music.

DANCE OF CHINELO / Danza de Chinelo

This is one of the many carnival dances that exist in Mexico. It is performed in various towns within the state of Morelos and the State of Mexico. During the colonial era, this dance appeared as part of the season of Carnival and was a way in which the indigenous people and mestizos, who were not allowed to participate in festivals, could make fun of the Spanish and Creole ostentatious attire and manners. Spanish society was mimicked wearing heavily decorated velvet costumes with precious stones, huge hats with ostrich feathers, blushing masks and bearded masks. Filled with spirit and applause from the spectators, the performers danced the Bronco (a jig).

DANCE OF THE OLD MEN / DANZA DE LOS VIEJITOS

This dance originated in the Pre-Cuauhtémoc era and is dedicated to the God Huehueteotl (Old God of Fire). The image of the viejitos (old men) is used in various dances and diverse regions, but the best known are those from the Tarasca and Purépecha indigenous communities in the state of Michoacán. Blushing and toothless masks are worn with hats decorated with multi-colored ribbons. The costume is made of manta cloth, and is typical of the farmers in the region. The lower sections of their pants are also decorated. This humorous dance involves the participants at times dancing in slow and clumsy movements, hunched over and coughing, and from there, they begin a vigorous dance full of zapateados (a form of tap dancing).
FAMILY AND PERSONAL FESTIVALS

This group includes whatever type of party or festival is celebrated by a special event in the life of an individual beginning with birth, baptism, sweet fifteenth birthday – quinceañera, weddings, birthdays, deaths and more. During these celebrations, one can observe a mestizo influence in all the revelry. In each Mexican community, on the Mexico or the U.S. side of the border, there are individual variations in the way these personal and family events are celebrated.

CIVIC FESTIVALS, FAIRS AND OTHER FESTIVALS

In Mexico, there are special days when anniversaries of important individuals or a special day from the nation’s history are commemorated, such as: The Independence of Mexico (September 16th), El Grito – The Cry for Independence (September 15th), Flag Day (February 24th), Cinco de Mayo, Benito Juárez’s birthday, etc. On these days, towns celebrate with parades; elementary and high schools participate as well in the parades. The speeches by the civil authorities are given at the beginning of the celebration. The local economy flourishes with the fairs and festivals and during these days, there are food goodies, arts and crafts, regional products, and traditional toys for children are also sold. The fireworks make the festivals delightful – Castillos (a bamboo armature for fireworks), toritos (little bull armature for fireworks) and buscapiés (ground rockets) are fired off. Carnival rides fill the plazas and the streets. Games like lotteries (Mexican bingo), target shooting, etc. attract children and adults and entertain the attendees. The adults attend rodeos, bullfight, charades, palenques (cockfights) and popular dances. During these days, the routines are disregard.
### FESTIVAL CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH/DAY</th>
<th>FESTIVAL, FAIRS, CELEBRATION</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JANUARY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Year’s</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Three Kings</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Festival of St. Anthony the Abbot</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEBRUARY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Feast Day of Our Lady of the Candelaria</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-19</td>
<td>Festival of Senior de Chama</td>
<td>Estado de México</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARCH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Festival to St. Joseph</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Commemoration of Anniversary for Benito Juárez</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APRIL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Festival of Easter and Tobacco</td>
<td>Ticul, Yucatán</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Festival and Fair of St. Mark</td>
<td>Aguascalientes and Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Popular Fair of Senior de la Misericordia</td>
<td>Tepatitlán, Jalisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Festival of the Holy Cross</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Commemoration of the Battle of Puebla</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JUNE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Festival of St. Anthony</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Festival of St. John</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JULY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Festival of Virgen del Carmen</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-27</td>
<td>Mondays of Cerro (Hill) or Guelaguetza</td>
<td>Oaxaca, Oaxaca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Festival of Senior Santiago</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Festival of Our Lady St. Ann</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUGUST</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-31</td>
<td>Cotton Fair</td>
<td>Reynosa, Tamaulipas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Festival for St. Lorenzo</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Festival and Fair of the Annunciation</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEPTEMBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>Festival of the Nativity</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-16</td>
<td>Cotton Fair</td>
<td>Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>Fiestas Patrias - Independence Day of Mexico</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCTOBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Festival of St. Francis</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Day of the Raza</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Regional Fair</td>
<td>Zacualtipán, Hidalgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Festival of All Saints Day and Day of the Dead</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Anniversary of the Mexican Revolution</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECEMBER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10</td>
<td>Festival of Senior de la Misericordia</td>
<td>Compostela, Nayarit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>Posadas and Christmas</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-30</td>
<td>Festival and Fair of Our Lady de los Remedios (Remedies)</td>
<td>Comonfort, Guanajuato</td>
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— E L A L M A D E L A F I E S T A —

GLOSSARY

**Mesoamerica** - region of southern North America that was occupied during pre-Columbian times by peoples (such as the Olmecs, Mayans, and Aztecs) with shared cultural features.

**mojiganga** – Giant puppets.

**mestizo** – Of Spanish and Indigenous origin.

**mestizaje** – The process of mixing of cultures.

**maize** – Also known as corn, it was domesticated by indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica in prehistoric times.

**Ceremony of New Fire** – Also called The Binding Up of the Years, in Aztec religion, ritual celebrated every 52 years when the 260-day ritual and 365-day civil calendars returned to the same positions relative to each other. In preparation, all sacred and domestic fires were allowed to burn out. At the climax of the ceremony, priests ignited a new sacred fire on the breast of a sacrificial victim, from which the rest of the people rekindled their hearth fires; the people then began feasting.

**Quinto Sol** (Translated as Fifth Sun in English) - According to Aztec mythology, their world was the fifth era of a cycle of creation and destruction, during which different gods first governed the earth through a dominant element, and then destroyed it. These worlds were called suns.

The Fifth Sun was the world in which the Aztecs lived. Tonatiuh, the sun god, was the ruling deity. The Aztecs considered themselves "the People of the Sun" and therefore their duty was to nourish the Sun god through blood offerings and sacrifices. Failing of doing this would have caused the end of their world and the disappearing of the sun from the sky. This world is characterized by the sign Ollin, which means movement. According to Aztec beliefs, this indicated that this world would come to an end through earthquakes.

**Cuicacalli** – a school that young Aztecs attended to learn religious songs and dances.

**religious syncretism** - the fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices

**mayordomos** - During the Colonial era, the Church created a political, religious structure of administrators or mayordomos that continues today. The mayordomo has a great responsibility; for a yearlong period, he is in charge of the festival's preparations in addition to the care of the town or parish patron saint.

**Posadas** - The Posadas have been celebrated in Mexico for 424 years. This tradition is said to have begun in San Agustín Acolman, a small town in the State of Mexico. The Posadas begin every December 16th and end on the 24th, the eve of the birth of Jesus. In total, there are nine Posadas where Joseph and Mary are represented making their pilgrimage to Bethlehem from Nazareth in search of a place to spend the night, and concluding with the birth of Baby Jesus. In the beginning, the masses of aguinaldo (during the Advent Season) or Posadas took place in the atriums of churches. During the nine consecutive days, Christmas scenes are represented.

**aguinaldo** – A gift of fruit and candy for the participants of a Posadas procession.

**posada** – Spanish for lodging.
compadres – Spanish, literally meaning “co-parents.” These are the hosts for the final night of the Posadas celebration.

tamal - meat rolled with masa, prepared corn dough, which is then wrapped in a cornhusk and steamed.

tamalada – a reunion where friends and family gather to make tamales.

atoles - hot cornmeal drinks

buahuelos – doughnut fritters extended in the form of a thin, flat tortilla.
pozole - a originally ritually significant, traditional pre-Columbian soup or stew from Mexico made with hominy that is consumed during holidays or special events.

buscapiés - firecrackers

colaciones - seeds dipped in caramel

rosca – A cake pastry traditionally eaten to celebrate Epiphany. It is traditionally eaten on January 6, during the celebration of the "Día de Reyes" (literally "Kings' Day"), which commemorates the arrival of the three Magi or Wise Men.

Virgin of Guadalupe - On December 12th, 1531, the Virgin of Guadalupe is said to have appeared to Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill, bridging two worlds, that of the Aztec who saw her as their goddess Tonantzin and that of the Catholic Spanish conquerors who now ruled his land. She has since become the patron and symbol of Mexico, a country born of this fusion of cultures.

son - The term son (which literally translates as "sound") refers to a particular type of Mexican folk music from the countryside. Son originated in Central Mexico, defined broadly, and is a fusion of Spanish, African, and indigenous music.

huapango - The Huapango is the name of a northeastern Mexican musical style developed from the fandango. It accompanies a lively dance popular around the Gulf of Mexico, or Huasteca region. It can be played by anything from a guitar duo to a full mariachi band, which may include trumpets and guitarrones. The name itself may mean 'on a wooden stand', as the huapango is danced on a platform.

fandango - Fandangos are improvised community celebrations in the son jarocho genre from Veracruz, Mexico that combine Afro-Caribbean, Spanish and indigenous traditions.

Chuchumbé – A controversial son composition of Afro-Mexican origin.

marimbol or marimba – a donkey's jawbone used as a musical instrument.

bote – A type of drum.

cajón – Literally translated as “box” in Spanish, a percussion instrument.

jarabe - The jarabe is one of the most traditional song forms of the mariachi genre. In the Spanish language, jarabe literally means syrup, which probably refers to the mixture of meters within one jarabe.

jarabe tapatio - The Jarabe Tapatio is the title of the musical piece and the dance that accompanies it, which is accorded the title of the "national dance of Mexico".
Charro – A cowboy.

China – A girl. In the jarabe tapatio, she is the charro’s girlfriend.

Zapateado - A form of tap dancing or footwork.

viejitos – Translated as “old men” in Spanish. The Danza de los Viejitos (dance of the old men) is a dance in Michoacán. It is a humorous dance where the dancers wear masks of old people along with their typical campesino clothing. The dance starts out with aching and hunched over old men, with minimal movements. These movements turn into vigorous dancing combined with trembling and coughing and falling over by the “old men”.

quinceañera - The celebration of a girl’s fifteenth birthday in parts of Latin America and elsewhere in communities of people from Latin America. This birthday is celebrated differently from any other birthday, as it marks the transition from childhood to young womanhood.

Castillos - a bamboo armature for fireworks.

toritos - little bull armature for fireworks.

palenques – cockfights.

Aztec/Mexica Deities

Tezcatlipoca (God of Sky and Earth)

Huitzilopochtli (God of Sun and War)

Tláloc (God of Rain)

Centéotl (Goddess of Maize)

Toci (Grandmother of the Gods)

Tláloc (God of Rain)

Chalchiuhtlicue (Goddess of Water)

Quetzalcoatl (God of Wind)

Chicomecoatl (God of maize)

Tonantzin (Our Mother)

Huehuetotl (Old God of Fire).
— EL ALMA DE LA FIESTA —

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CARMEN LOMAS GARZA

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *In my Family (En mi Familia).* San Francisco: Children’s Book Press, 1996.

The artist and author present several of her paintings depicting memories of her family and childhood in south Texas. She also describes the memories that inspired each painting in this book. The focus of this book, however, is on the Mexican-American traditions that she grew up with.


The introduction, written by Amalia Mesa-Bains, is a scholarly description of Lomas Garza’s work and the how her Mexican-American upbringing has helped to shape it.


The artist and author presents several of her paintings depicting memories of her family and childhood in south Texas. In this book, she describes the memory that inspired each painting.

The paintings: *Las Posadas, La Tamalada, Lala and Tudi’s Birthday Party,* and a print of *Cakewalk* are part of the *NMMA collection* and are featured in the book.

ACTIVITY BOOKS


This activity book features images that could be reproduced for the classroom. The focus of this book is on major cultural subjects in Mexico. Each image has text that explains the importance of each image. Some of the featured images involve costumes and traditions from different Mexican celebrations.

This activity book features different crafts, games and other activities related to Mexican culture and history. You can find crafts and games associated with different Mexican celebrations in the book.


Written in Spanish. Here you will find ideas for teaching about the traditions and art of three Mexican holidays: Day of the Dead, Christmas and Three Kings Day.


Copyright-free reproducible pictures that can be handed out for students and adults to color.


This activity book focuses mainly on crafts relating to Day of the Dead. The book also offers great readings about the cultural background of some of these traditions along with reproducible images.


Includes some craft ideas and recipes. More of a teacher’s informational guide rather than a read aloud.

**CHILDREN’S NON-FICTION**


Photo-essay book about Latin-American festivities including some Mexican and Mexican-American celebrations.
CHILDREN'S FICTION


Lively watercolors portray a Zapotec Indian wedding day in Oaxaca, Mexico. This is more of a concept book than a story, with young Maria asking her grandmother a series of questions about the preparations and ceremony.


Lupe and Roberto are to play Mary and Joseph in the Christmas pageant in their village outside Santa Fe, but their truck gives out in a snowstorm. A mysterious couple steps in at the last minute to take their places. DePaola’s talent for crafting folktales is honed to near-perfection, and his pages glow with the soft sun-washed hues of the Southwest. Ages 4-8.


In Mexico, the poinsettia is called *flor de la Nochebuena* or flower of the Holy Night. At Christmastime, the flower blooms and flourishes, the exquisite red stars lighting up the countryside. A Mexican legend tells how the poinsettia came to be, through a little girl’s unselfish gift to the Christ Child.

BACKGROUND ON MEXICAN FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS


This book explores how festivals were produced by the Spanish in Colonial Mexico City to promote Catholic ideals and the Spanish empire. Aspects of these festivals were merged with indigenous traditions and are the origin of some modern-day celebrations.


D. Lechuga, Ruth and Sayer, Chloe. *Mask Arts of México.* Thames and Hudson. 1994

This book features beautiful pictures and background information of many masks from Mexico.

Nájera Ramírez, Olga (Editor), Cantú, Norma E. (Editor), Romero, Brenda M. (Editor). *Dancing across Borders: Danzas y Bailes Mexicanos* [Paperback].

This is a series of essays about Mexican dance culture including information about Mexican dance history and its function in Mexican society.


Drawing on her extensive travels in Mexico and the wide-ranging collections of the British Museum, Chloë Sayer gives a contemporary context to these colorful annual celebrations and shows how these festivities are uniquely Mexican. Vivid full-color images of an array of objects, plus photos of people making and using them to celebrate a variety of local festivities, illustrated in the text.


This book features wonderful photographs and background information about Mexican costumes and dress.


Geoff Winningham began photographing the popular fiestas of Mexico in 1984. Returning to the same Mexican villages several times a year, he formed personal relationships with families who permitted him to photograph them in the intimacy of their homes, and local officials who gave him special access to all phases of the celebrations.
WEBSITES

http://www.sanmiguelguide.com/posadas-esp.html

Spanish-language explanation of the Posadas celebration.

http://www.sancta.org/basilica_s.html

Spanish-language website discussing the Basilica of Guadalupe in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

http://www.mexconnect.com/articles/3192-la-quincea%C3%B1era-a-celebration-of-budding-womanhood

Website article explains the tradition of quinceañeras. This site is also a great resource for articles about Mexico in general.


Index of articles from the same website about Mexican celebrations.


Calendar of Mexican fiestas and holidays.


A collection of activities and resource links for teachers for Hispanic Heritage Month. Some activities related to Mexican celebrations are featured.


A teacher's unit on Mexican Independence Day showing lessons on Mexican culture surrounding the holiday.
USING THE KWL AND CORNELL NOTES GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS FOR YOUR MUSEUM VISIT

KWL GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

A KWL graphic organizer helps students to connect their learning to prior knowledge. It has three sections. The “K” column represents what students already know about a topic. Students will create a list here of facts that they may already know about the topic. The “W” column represents what they would like to know about a topic. Here, students will develop questions about what knowledge they would like to pursue about their topic. Both of these sections are to be filled out before students participate in the lesson or, in our case, visit the museum. The “L” column is filled out after their museum visit. Here students will write down what they learned about their topic during their visit. As you can see, the KWL graphic organizer can also serve as an assessment tool of their museum visit.

This organizer can be used and adapted for all grades, but especially for grades 4-8.

CORNELL NOTES GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

The purpose of the Cornell Notes system of note taking is to help students organize notes and main ideas about a chosen topic. If your group is visiting the museum and you would like them to focus their visit on a specific topic related to the exhibition, they can use this organizer to do so. This sheet can serve as a form of assessment of the museum visit.

First, have students write their topic in the upper left box on the provided sheet. Have your students write their notes on the right-hand large column on the sheet. This is also a good area to write down the information about specific works of art and to create sketches. If a student runs out of room, give him or her as many new Cornell Notes templates as they need.

Next, students will develop main idea sentences and important questions and write these in the left-hand column. Once a student finishes, they can summarize what they learned or concluded from their notes and visit in the bottom square.

This organizer can be used for grades 7-12.
Name:

**TOPIC:**

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<th><strong>K</strong></th>
<th><strong>W</strong></th>
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<td>What I Want to Know</td>
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Alejandro García Nelo (b. 1963), To the Family, 1995, cartonería installation with mixed media
Museum Purchase Fund
The Three Kings (Chiapas Region) / Los Tres Reyes (Región de Chiapas)

National Museum of Mexican Art Permanent Collection, 2006.84 A1-C2

ca. 1998, polychrome wood, animal hair, gourd, cotton, copal and metal

The Three Kings (Chiapas Region) / Los Tres Reyes (Región de Chiapas)
Aydeé Rodríguez López (b. 1955), Dance of the Straw Bull, 2005, oil on canvas, National Museum of Mexican Art Permanent Collection, 2006.44.
Mask and Hat for the Old Man Dance (Purépecha Culture, Michoacán region), late 20th Century, polychrome wood, vegetable fiber, cotton bands and acetate ribbons
National Museum of Mexican Art Permanent Collection, 2008.254 A-B
Gift of Eason Eige, Albuquerque, NM
Male Costume for The Feather Dance
San Martín Tilcajete, Oaxaca, ca. 2003
National Museum of Mexican Art
Permanent Collection, 2003.54 A-H

Chinelo Costume (Morelos Region), 20th Century
National Museum of Mexican Art
Permanent Collection, 1992.36 A-H

Charro Outfit (Jalisco Region), ca. 2000-2005
National Museum of Mexican Art
Permanent Collection, 2005.138 A-G2
Frank Ybarra, Backyard Pachanga (Dance Party), serigraph, 22/120