



# **The Mexican Muralist Movement and an Exploration of Public Art**

**Denver Public Schools**

**In partnership with Metropolitan State College of Denver**

**El Alma de la Raza Project**





# The Mexican Muralist Movement and an Exploration of Public Art

By Jennifer Henry

Grades 10–12

Implementation Time  
for Unit of Study: 3–4 weeks

**Denver Public Schools**  
El Alma de la Raza Curriculum  
and Teacher Training Program

Loyola A. Martinez, Project Director  
Dan Villescás, Curriculum Development Specialist





*Denver Public Schools, Denver, Colorado*

## **ABOUT THE ALMA PROJECT**

### **The Alma Curriculum and Teacher Training Project**

The Alma Curriculum and Teacher Training Project was made possible with funding from a Goals 2000 Partnerships for Educating Colorado Students grant awarded to the Denver Public Schools in July 1996. The Project is currently being funded by the Denver Public Schools.

The intent of the Project is to have teachers in the Denver Public Schools develop instructional units of study (ECE-12) on the history, contributions, and issues pertinent to Latinos and Hispanics in the southwest United States. Other experts, volunteers, and community organizations have also been directly involved in the development of content in history, literature, science, art, and music, as well as in teacher training. As instructional units are developed and field-tested, feedback from teachers is extremely valuable for making any necessary modifications in the topic development of future units of study.

Each instructional unit is based on the best scholarly information available and is tied directly to the state and district Academic Content Standards. The scope of the materials includes the history of indigenous peoples in the Americas, contacts of Spanish explorers in the New World, exploration of Mexico and areas of the present-day United States, colonization of New Mexico and southern Colorado, and contemporary history, developments, events, and issues concerning Latinos in the southwest United States. The instructional units also address areas that need to be strengthened in our curriculum with regard to the cultural and historical contributions of Latinos and other predominant ethnicities represented in the Denver Public Schools' student population.

The Project has reaped numerous benefits from partnerships with various colleges and universities. We hope to continue to secure agreements with curriculum experts from various institutions and teachers to work directly with the Project. As the Project continues, these partnerships will allow us to broaden the range of topics to be developed.

### **Basic Premise of the Project**

This curriculum innovation will serve several major purposes.

- ◆ It will provide the opportunity for every teacher in the Denver Public Schools to integrate fully developed instructional units (ECE-12) tied to state and district standards into the curriculum at every grade level in language arts, social studies, history, art, and music.
- ◆ It will broaden a teacher's ability to teach a more inclusive and accurate curriculum.
- ◆ The instructional units will facilitate the infusion of the cultural and historical contributions of Latinos and other predominant ethnicities represented in the student population.
- ◆ The Project will have a positive effect on the engagement and achievement of Latino students in the Denver Public Schools and other districts that utilize these resources or replicate the project.
- ◆ A formal link has been developed between the Denver Public Schools and various colleges and universities throughout the state of Colorado.

The instructional units were developed by teachers (ECE-12) from the Denver Public Schools beginning in March 1997. The Denver-based Mid-Continental Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) provided a standards-based framework that is used in the development of the instructional units.

Alma instructional units are currently available on the Alma Project web site.

(<http://almaproject.dpsk12.org>).

*For more information on the Alma Project, please contact:*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The undertaking of a project of this magnitude and importance would not have been possible without the Goals 2000 grant awarded to Denver Public Schools in July 1996. We are indebted to former superintendent Irv Moskowitz, the assistance and support of the Colorado Department of Education, members of the Board of Education, Department of Educational Services, and the Metropolitan State College at Denver.

Special thanks are extended to the following professors who gave freely of their time and expertise. Their great contributions were key factors in the initial and continued success of the Project.

Dr. Luis Torres, Chicano Studies Department Chair  
Metropolitan State College of Denver

Dr. Vincent C De Baca, Assistant Professor of History  
Adjunct Professor of Chicano Studies  
Metropolitan State College of Denver

Dr. Miriam Bornstein, Professor of Spanish  
Latin American and Chicano Literature  
University of Denver

Dr. Arthur Leon Campa, Associate Professor of Anthropology  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work  
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Dr. Brenda Romero, Assistant Professor of Ethnomusicology  
University of Colorado at Boulder

Dr. Priscilla Falcon, Professor of International Relations  
Department of Hispanic Studies  
University of Northern Colorado

Dr. Margarita Barcelo, Professor of Chicano/Chicana Studies and English  
Metropolitan State College of Denver

The Alma Project moved forward in the 2002-2003 school year with the combined efforts of the following people:

Dr. Diane Paynter, Mid-Continental Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)  
Virginia Castro for *Richard T. Castro Commemorative Exhibit*  
Steve Garner for *Richard T. Castro Commemorative Exhibit*  
Gil Munoz, Social Studies Coordinator, Curriculum Department, Denver Public Schools for *Richard T. Castro Commemorative Exhibit*  
Darius Smith, Curriculum Specialist, The Alma Project, Denver Public Schools  
Teresa Torres, Chief Editor, The Alma Project, Denver Public Schools



# INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Alma instructional units are *not* to be used in isolation, but rather to be infused or integrated into the adopted Scope and Sequence for ECE-8 grade levels. Units at the high school level can be integrated into the recommended courses for a more in-depth, broader based scope of the topic. All Alma units can be translated into Spanish upon request.

The framework for the instructional units was provided by Dr. Diane Paynter with the Denver-based Mid-Continental Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL).

The individual lesson components contain the following:

## ***Content Knowledge***

The standard/benchmark information students should understand within a specified content domain and the skills or processes they should be able to do within that domain.

## ***Specifics***

Identification of relevant supporting knowledge that will help students understand the information.

## ***Instructional Strategies***

Any instructional strategy to be used by the teacher based on what students already know and how students can make sense of the new information and the learning patterns and relationships.

## ***Preteaching***

Concepts or skills that may need review or introduction.

## ***Preliminary Lesson Preparation***

Concepts and/or skills that the teacher should reinforce before beginning.

## ***Student Activities***

The activities in which students will be involved and that will help them process new content knowledge. They should be purposeful activities that are a means to an end, which is that students attain an understanding of the information they are learning.

## ***Vocabulary***

Definitions and translations of specialized words and concepts in English and Spanish that may be unfamiliar to the students and even to teachers are provided in this section. This is your opportunity to focus attention on vocabulary development and on the understanding of critical concepts you want the students to learn.

## ***Resources/Materials***

Required or suggested sources such as textbooks, audio- and videotapes, guest speakers, lectures, field trips, CDs and laser discs, software sources, newspapers, magazines, brochures, encyclopedias, trade books and literature, charts, exhibits, TV programs, community resources, murals, advertisements, journals, and filmstrips to be used to provide students with information related to the identified content knowledge.

## ***Performance Task***

A rigorous task that asks students to apply the content knowledge they have been learning within a highly contextualized, real-world setting.

## ***Scoring Rubric***

A set of criteria that describes levels of expected performance or understanding that includes four levels of performance.

### ***Additional Evidence***

Pieces of any other assessments or evidence that can be used to determine the degree to which students have mastered the identified knowledge.

Each lesson contains a set of key components, which are listed below.

#### ***What will students be learning?***

- Standards
- Benchmarks
- Instructional objectives
- Specifics

#### ***What will be done to help students learn this?***

- Instructional strategies
- Preteaching (optional)
- Preliminary lesson preparation (optional)
- Activities
- Vocabulary (optional)
- Resources/materials for specific lesson
- Assessment
- Extensions

The Alma instructional units can be integrated into the regular course of study at a particular grade level according to content standards. Each unit is specific to either primary, intermediate, middle, or high school. The basic premise for the integration of the Alma instructional units is that a more accurate, more diversified perspective can be taught, given the content and resources to support a particular topic.

The instructional units are available on the Internet to teachers who wish to preview the study guides and check out materials for integration into their curriculums. Teachers in the Denver Public Schools have the opportunity to draw from a large pool of Alma materials/kits housed in the Yuma Street Center. The Center is located at 2320 West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Denver, Colorado. Contact the Alma office for checkout procedure.

Teachers who implement Alma units/materials into their curriculum are asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire for data collection purposes.

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

The following Denver Public Schools teachers are to be commended for their significant contributions to the Alma Project. Their contributions will greatly benefit all students both in Denver Public Schools and other school districts in the nation.

<b>1998-1999</b>		
Contributing Author	Topic	School
Flor Amaro	Exploring Literary Genre Through Latin American Literature	Cheltenham Elementary
	Hispanic Literature	
Leni Arnett	The Spanish Conquest and the Role of La Llorona	Denver School of the Arts
Stella Garcia Baca	Study Guide for Among the Volcanoes by Omar S. Castañeda	Lake Middle School
Sallie Baker	The Clash of Cultures: Moctezuma Hosts Cortes	Denver School of the Arts
Shanna Birkholz	Dia de Los Muertos	Gilpin Elementary
Richard Bock	Coming of Age	West High School
Virginia Coors	Essential Values Woven Through Hispanic Literature	Florence Crittendon School
Susanna DeLeon	The Importance of Music in the Life of the Aztec People	Smedley Elementary
Amanda Dibbern	Everyone Has a Tale	Lake Middle School
Gabe Garcia	Twin Hero Myths in Literature of the Americas	West High School
Steven Garner	The Impact of the Mexican Revolution on the United States	West High School
Hilary Garnsey	Heralding Our Heroes Times	Montclair Elementary
Deborah Hanley	Music of the Aldean Altiplano	Knapp Elementary
Janet Hensen	Viva Mexico! A Celebration of Diez y Seis de Septiembre, Mexican Independence Day	Montclair Elementary
Irene Hernandez	California Missions	Denver School of the Arts
	Heart of Aztlan Study Guide	
Leigh Heister	Latina Women	Knapp Elementary
Dorothea Hogue	Science of the People	Florence Crittendon School
Pat Hurrieta	El Dia de los Muertos	Cheltenham Elementary
Heidi Hursh	Latino Legacy: A Community Oral History Project	West High School
Pat Dubrava Keuning	Changing Borders and Flags	Denver School of the Arts
Jon Kuhns	The Rise of the United Farmworkers Union: A Study of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement	Florence Crittendon School
Lu Liñan	Curanderismo: Holistic Healing	West High School
Charlene Meives	Santos and Santeros	Rishel Middle School
Frances Mora	Spanish Settlement and Hispanic History of Denver and Colorado	Schenk Elementary
Julie Murgel	Mayan Mathematics and Architecture	Lake Middle School

Jerrilynn Pepper	Spanish Missions in Florida, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona	Bryant-Webster Elementary
Kristina Riley	Biographies of Famous Hispanics/Latinos/Chicanos	Cheltenham Elementary
	Piñatas!	
Sharon Robinett	Francisco Vasquez de Coronado	McGlone Elementary
Kathleen Stone	Latinos in War: The American Military Experience	West High School
Dan Villescas	Mother Culture of Mexico: The Olmecs	Lake Middle School
Joanna Vincenti	Our Stories, Our Families, Our Culture	Florence Crittendon School
Linda Weiss	Spanish Exploration of Colorado	Schenck Elementary

<b>1999-2000</b>		
<b>Contributing Author</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>School</b>
Leni Arnett	Americans Move West: The Santa Fe Trail	Denver School of the Arts
Stella Garcia Baca	Study Guide for Walking Stars	Lake Middle School
Suzi Bowman	In Memory of Sand Creek	Brown Elementary
Conchita Domenech	An Introduction to the Navajo Culture	West High School
Denise Engstrom	Exploring Northeast Native Americans: The Iroquois	Early Childhood Education Specialist
Debbie Frances	La Mariposa/The Butterfly	Kaiser Elementary
	The Desert	
	Easter/Spring Celebration	
	From Corn to Tortillas	
Jennifer Henry	The Mexican Muralist Movement and an Exploration of Public Art	Student
Ronald Ingle II	Music of the Tex-Mex Border Region	Smith Elementary
Lu Liñan	The Voice of a Latina Writer: Author Study on Sandra Cisneros	West High School
Cleo McElliot	Families.....A Celebration	Kaiser Elementary
	Plants/Las Plantas	
Sandy Miller	Pepper, Pepper, Plants!	Samuels Elementary
Maria Salazar	The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo	Lake Middle School
Jessica Schiefelbein	Diego Rivera	Doull Elementary School
Sandy Stokely	Haiky and Beyond: A Study of Japanese Literature	Ellis Elementary
Dan Villescas	The Conquest of the Aztec Civilization	Alma Project Curriculum Specialist
	The Mexican American War	

<b>2000-2001</b>		
<b>Contributing Author</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>School</b>
Denise Engstrom	Thanksgiving - An American Tradition	ECE Specialist
	Denver March Powwow	
	American Indian Storytelling: A Tradition	
Astid Parr	Cinco de Mayo - A Historical Celebration	Swansea Elementary
Sandra Miller	Mercado - Trading at the Marketplace	Samuels Elementary
Nina Daugherty	Aztec Folk Literature - Two Legends and a Folktale	Centennial Elementary
	Three Latin American Folktales	
Ron Ingle II &	Celebration of Mexicanos through Music,	Kaiser Elementary
Dan Vallescas	Dance & Art	Alma Curriculum Development Specialist
Deborah Francis	The Cowboys/Vaqueros	Grant Ranch Elementary
Barbara J. Williams	Lessons in Courage: Maritin Luther King, Rosa Parks and Ruby Bridges	Maxwell Elementary
Jessica Schiefelbein	Faith Ringgold	University Park Elementary

<b>2001-2002</b>		
<b>Contributing Author</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>School</b>
Deborah Francis	Alma Flor Ada: An Author Study	Grand Ranch Elementary
	Pat Mora: An Author Study	
	Jan Romero Stevens: 1953-2000	
	Carmen Lomas Garza: Chicana Author and Illustrator	
Sara Hensen	Good Intentions, Misunderstanding, Betrayal: A study of the first encounters between Native Americans and Pilgrims	Goldrick Elementary
Stephanie A. Herrera	Fiesta Mexicana: A Summer Latin Dance Experience	DPS Latin Dance Coordinator
Tania Hogan	Alma Flor Ada: Latina Author	Goldrick Elementary
Kathy Hoops	Beyond the Glass Slipper: Cinderella Stories from Around the World	Goldrick Elementary
Barbara Williams	Infinite Skies: Bessie Coleman, Mae Jemison, and Ellen Ochoa	Maxwell Elementary

**2002-2003**

<b>Contributing Author</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>School</b>
Melanie Bertrand	A Comparison of Holidays: Ramadan, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa	Philips Elementary
Steve Garner	Shaping the Law of the Land: Hispanics in the Colorado Legislature	Polyglot, Inc.
Lisa Simms	Poetry and the Chicano: A Semantic Study of Chicano Identity Through Poetry	Horace Mann Elementary
Darius Smith	American Indian Mascots: Hype, Insult, or Ignorance	Alma Project Curriculum Development Specialist
Arthur L. Campa, Ph.D., Ellen J. Campa, and Steve Garner	Conquerors and Victims: An Exploration of Race, Identity, and Advocacy through Latino History	Metro State College and Polyglot, Inc.

# The Mexican Muralist Movement and an Exploration of Public Art

## Unit Concepts

- History's influence on artistic and cultural movements and developments.
- Visual arts as an effective form of communication.
- The political and social issues presented in or reflected by Mexican muralism.
- Public art, including contemporary murals and graffiti, and its social and political influences.
- The ability of art to influence the public, rewrite history, make social commentary, and provide spiritual and cultural ideals.

## Standards Addressed by This Unit

### Visual Arts

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of creativity and communication. (VA1)

Students know and apply elements of art, principles of design, and sensory, expressive, and creative features of visual arts. (VA2)

Students know and apply visual arts materials, tools, techniques, and processes. (VA3)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (VA4)

Students analyze and evaluate the characteristics, merits, and meaning of works of art. (VA5)

### History

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. (H2)

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (H5)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process, and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

### Reading and Writing

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

## Introduction

Mural painting (or fresco painting) is one of the oldest and most important forms of artistic, political, and social expression in history. The Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros revived this form of painting, creating a genre of public art unmatched in significance and influence. “Los Tres Grandes” came to prominence during the cultural revival in Mexico stemming from the Mexican Revolution. The presidency of General Alvaro Obregón, who was one of the many revolutionary leaders struggling for power during and immediately after the war, helped establish a political and social environment for the muralists to emerge. This environment included many revolutionary ideals, such as land reform, civil liberties, welfare and public health, public education for all, and other liberal reforms. It was during this time that Secretary of Education José Vasconcelos commissioned these artists to paint murals in several locations throughout Mexico City and the country during Obregón’s presidency. The three later traveled to the United States, where private organizations funded some of their most acclaimed works.

The three muralists all held the view that mural painting was the only true art. These artists made this claim because their art had the purpose of educating the people, portraying what the people believed, and setting ideals for the people. It was not like the popular modern art of Europe, sometimes called “art for art’s sake,” because it served a function in society. It was the only art “for the people,” and the most “modern” art of the 20th century, thus challenging all of the innovative, but private, movements going on in Europe at the time.

The revolutionary art of Los Tres Grandes has several common themes essential to interpreting the murals and understanding their role in Mexican and American society. All three muralists used themes of rewriting history, commenting on social and political issues, and creating a common national (or pan-American) identity, even though they did not hold the same, or even similar, ideological viewpoints. Pre-Columbian society, the devastation and contributions of the conquest, contemporary political and cultural issues, and predictions and hope for the future permeate their works’ content and imagery.

By looking at the murals of these artists with these themes in mind and using such analytic tools as perspective, historical icons, and symbolic images, students will gain an understanding of the role of public art in the past and in the present, and will develop analytical skills in interpreting artwork.

## Implementation Guidelines

This unit is appropriate for an accelerated 11th or 12th grade class, but can be adapted to lower grades by excluding or adding lessons or by excluding or modifying the critical thinking essays.

## Instructional Materials and Resources

### **Books**

*The Mexican Muralists* by Desmond Rochfort (three per class)  
*Emanuel Martinez: A Retrospective* by Emanuel Martinez (three per class)  
*The Course of Mexican History* by Michael C. Meyer (one for teacher)  
*The Mexican American Heritage* by Carlos M. Jimenez (one for teacher)  
*Signs from the Heart: California Chicano Murals* by Eva Sperling Cockcroft and Holly Barnet Sanchez (class set)

### **Videos (one per class)**

*Graffiti Verite: Read the Writing on the Wall*  
*Rivera: Portrait of an Artist, The Frescoes of Diego Rivera*  
Video on Mexico or the Mexican Revolution (*The Origin of Mexican Civilization, A Glance at Mexican Pre-Hispanic Cultures, Pancho Villa: Mexican Revolutionary, or Hernan Cortez*)

### **Newspapers, Magazines and Articles**

“Mural’s Message on Gang Life Stirs Mixed Signals.” Valley Edition, *Los Angeles Times*.  
March 3, 1999.  
“Maria Alquilar: A Perspective on Public Art.” *Ceramics Monthly*, May 1996, vol. 44,  
no. 5, p. 31.

Internet access

School supplies for scrapbook

Art supplies for mural

## Lesson Summary

Lesson 1	A Brief History of Mexico and the Mexican Revolution ..... 5 This lesson covers or reviews for students the major events in Mexican history and how the Mexican Revolution helped lay the foundation for Mexican muralism.
Lesson 2	A Close Look at Public Art ..... 16 This lesson examines the concept of public art and covers the history of mural making. Students identify key themes in the murals, such as spirituality, history, and social commentary.
Lesson 3	Introduction to Mexican Muralism ..... 20 Students use the Internet to research the three major artists of the Mexican muralist movement, learning about their lives and their works, and then write short biographies of each.
Lesson 4	Interpreting the Murals of Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros ..... 22 The styles, themes, and topics of the three muralists are compared. Students work on group projects to analyze one mural per group and give oral presentations on their interpretation of the mural.
Lesson 5	Murals from Our Own Country ..... 24 Contemporary social issues that are part of public art, particularly murals, are addressed. Students take a fieldtrip to see local murals and view reproductions of murals in Los Angeles and San Francisco to learn about the themes of contemporary public art.

# LESSON 1:

## A Brief History of Mexico and the Mexican Revolution

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. (H2)

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. (H5)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use chronology to organize historical events and people.

Students use chronology to examine and explain historical relationships.

Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of historical information.

Students apply knowledge of the past to compare and contrast present-day issues and events from multiple, historically objective perspectives.

Students know how various societies have been affected by contacts and exchanges among diverse peoples.

Students know how political power has been acquired, maintained, used, and/or lost throughout history.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will identify significant historical figures, dates, and concepts relevant to the muralist movement or helpful in the interpretation of the murals.

Students will discover the relationship between historical circumstances and cultural and artistic developments by comparing the Mexican Revolution and the muralist movement to some of the historical circumstances that gave rise to various American artistic innovations.

#### SPECIFICS

Students must be familiar with Mexican history to understand one of the main themes of the murals: the writing and rewriting of history. Most important, the students must understand the complicated and unique set of political, social, and economic circumstances in Mexico in the early 20th century that directly influenced the muralist movement. Mexican history can be divided into four major periods: the pre-Columbian/Aztec period (12th century to 1519); the colonial period (1519-1810); independence and reform (1810-1910); and the revolution and its aftermath. Each of these periods is described in more detail on the next four pages. Under each period, there are notations (indicated with \*\*) referring to the murals (or portions of) which provide a perspective about that time period.

**Pre-Columbian/Aztec period:**

(Note: before the Aztec empire, many other civilizations thrived in Mexico, including the Olmec, the Toltec and the Maya.) The Aztecs became a predominant power in Mexico during the Postclassic Period (around 1000 AD), controlling most of present-day Mexico. The Aztecs spoke a language called Nahuatl. The rise of the Aztec coincided with the fall of the Toltec when their large city, Tula, was attacked and destroyed at the beginning of the 12th century. As legend has it, the Aztecs were a group of hunters and gatherers who took advantage of the good land in central Mexico from their homeland in the north, known as Atzlán. The Aztec lived near the ruins of Tula throughout the 13th century, near the remaining Toltec and other “Chichimecs,” or wanderers, like themselves. During this time, the Aztecs became more agriculturally and culturally sophisticated. Their god, Huitzilopochtli, whom they nourished with human sacrifices, allegedly told them to leave and find a new home. They did, and in 1325 beginnings of the great city Tenochtitlán, the present-day Mexico City, commenced. Tenochtitlán was a small island which the Aztecs navigated around and built their city upon. It was here that the Aztecs gained political power over the other governments in Mexico. In one century, they boasted political superpower, a large and powerful military, religious and political bureaucracies, a court system, tax collectors and even mail services. The Aztec government used the tribute system; instead of destroying other tribes, they forced them to pay tribute in the form of money or goods. This system eventually proved fatal for the Aztec when Hernan Cortez and his men arrived in Veracruz and, on the way to Tenochtitlán, gathered support from tribes vengeful towards the Aztecs.

\*\* See Diego Rivera’s *History of Mexico — The Ancient Indian World* panel (NORTH WALL).

\*\* See José Clemente Orozco’s *American Civilization — Ancient Human Sacrifice, Ancient Migration, The Arrival of Quetzalcoatl, and The Departure of Quetzalcoatl* panels.

**The Conquest and Colonial period:**

The vast Aztec empire was destroyed in a matter of a couple of years. The Spaniards had already arrived in the New World, and it was the Spanish governor of Cuba who sent Hernan Cortez to confirm accounts of riches and wealth from other explorers. Cortez landed in Mexico in 1519 and founded the city Veracruz (true cross). He broke ties with the governor of Cuba, burning his own boats, and created a town council, naming himself conqueror of Mexico in the name of King Charles I of Spain. He pushed into central Mexico with only 500 men, but fought heartily to defeat the Aztecs on August 13, 1521. When Cortez arrived, many Aztecs believed he was the return of the god they worshipped before Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl was a good and prosperous deity who left after Huitzilopochtli defeated him and demanded his exit. He promised to return in the year of the “one-reed,” the same year Cortez arrived. This legend convinced many that Cortez was Quetzalcoatl, preventing them from preparing for battle and welcoming Cortez with gifts and gold. Cortez also had firearms and horses, two military weapons unmatched in Mexico. The diseases brought by the Spanish killed off many people as well. The tribes that hated the Aztecs quickly joined the Spaniards in hopes of gaining their autonomy back. In addition, Cortez had a very special asset in his indigenous mistress-interpreter, Malinche, who helped him communicate with the Aztecs.

\*\* See Diego Rivera’s *History of Mexico* (WEST WALL, LOWER HALF, RIGHT OUTER ARCH).

\*\* See José Clemente Orozco’s *American Civilization — The Prophecy, Cortez and the Cross* panels

The Spaniards quickly gained control of other tribes in Mexico, and Spanish rule extended throughout Mexico. There was some resistance, but the superiority of weapons, combined with explorers commissioned specifically to gain knowledge on other tribes, gave the Spanish a large advantage. The Spanish set up missions and churches around the country to convert Indians to Catholicism. They took over silver mines and agricultural centers. In the meantime, a governmental unit was being set up. Throughout the 18th century France began to explore as well, and consistent fighting took place between the French, Spanish, English and native Americans.

\*\* See Diego Rivera's *History of Mexico* (WEST WALL, RIGHT OUTER AND INNER ARCH).

### ***Independence and La Reforma:***

Mexican Independence was sparked by political turmoil in Spain, the mother country. Mexican officials were receiving conflicting instructions on how to run the government. Some people revolted because they wanted self-government. One of these revolts was led by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. On September 16, 1810, in the town of Dolores, he called out for "independencia," a decree eventually known as "Grito de Dolores," which called for the end of Spanish rule, equality between races and redistribution of land. This day is now celebrated as Mexican Independence Day. Hidalgo was eventually defeated and killed, but others, like José María Morelos y Pavón, rose to his cause. In the meantime in Spain, a liberal constitution was created in 1812. For fear that this new plan would affect the status quo in Mexico, the conservative politicians who initially fought Hidalgo and his followers now wanted independence. Agustín de Iturbide and Vicente Guerrero issued the Plan de Iguala in 1821, a conservative document that declared the independence of Mexico from Spain, the national religion as Roman Catholic, and that Ferdinand VII (ruler of Spain at the time) or another Spanish (and conservative) prince would rule the country. On August 24, 1821, the Treaty of Córdoba was signed by a Spanish official and independence was secured.

\*\* See Diego Rivera's *History of Mexico* (WEST WALL, RIGHT INNER WALL, UPPER HALF).

The Mexican Empire did not last long before turning into a republic. For a short period Iturbide was emperor until military men, including General Antonio López de Santa Anna, proclaimed a Mexican Republic. A republican constitution was finally adopted in 1824. The transition to self-government was difficult and left Mexico with political turmoil, national debt, lack of education, poverty and disenfranchisement. Santa Anna was president during the war for Texas Independence in 1836 and the Mexican-American War. The first war occurred because U.S. immigrants began inhabiting the Texas area and in 1830 Santa Anna closed the border. In 1836 Texas declared itself independent and a battle ensued at the Alamo. Santa Anna was successful at this battle but lost later in April of 1836. This type of conflict between the U.S. and Mexico led to the Mexican-American War. This war resulted in Mexico's loss of the California and Texas areas to the U.S., which at the time was acting under their self-proclaimed doctrine of Manifest Destiny. The war ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The aftereffects of the war included Santa Anna resigning, then coming back into power in 1853 and declaring himself dictator. This, and the distress over losing so easily to the United States, provoked Benito Juárez, a Zapotec Indian and governor of Oaxaca, and others to try to overthrow Santa Anna and carry out what they called La Reforma. Juárez became Minister of Justice in 1855 and began working toward liberal ideals.

La Reforma included a number of changes that began with the enactment of the Juárez Law. It was to end military and ecclesiastical privileges, separate church and state, reduce economic power of the churches by forcing them to sell their land, establish legal justice and guarantee the

freedom and equality of all men. In 1857, a new constitution was drafted to implement these ideas. The religious and military communities did not accept the new laws and fought against Juarez and his government in a civil war called the War of the Reform (1858-1860). This long war fueled what was to be the next dramatic political upheaval in Mexico: France's invasion of and brief rule over Mexico. Napoleon III of France took the chaos in Mexico as opportunity to conquer Mexico, reestablish a monarchy and a national religion. The conservatives in Mexico supported this effort. Napoleon named Maximilian of the House of Habsburg emperor and ousted President Juarez. French troops were shipped in to fight the republicans backing the Reform. Maximilian lost the support of the military and the clergy and eventually lost to Juarez and his troops. He was executed in 1867. La Reforma finally triumphed after Juarez labored to install all of the freedoms and civil liberties it required.

\*\* See Diego Rivera's *History of Mexico* (WEST WALL, RIGHT INNER ARCH).

### ***The Mexican Revolution:***

After La Reforma, a new legacy moved into the presidential seat. Porfirio Díaz instituted most of the reforms set up by Juarez and started making Mexico the modern country it wanted to be. He used political allies, called científicos, to advise him in this endeavor. They stressed the need for economic development and believed that anyone who got in the way was to be punished. Liberty was sacrificed for the realization of order and progress. This policy proved financially beneficial for the country; foreign investment, the development of banking, commercial agriculture, industry, mining, railroads and the telegraph system were all brought about. Industry and investment increased and no one caused any political problems. This lasted until the end of the century. At this point, Indians were still treated as second-class citizens, the European ideal of beauty and fashion was the standard, and a celebration or understanding of Mexican history or identity did not exist. Criticism came from the younger generations and those who did not benefit from economic success. Repression against criticism grew and bloody strikes provoked many to reconsider their support of Díaz. Radical groups began to organize and distribute literature. Two political parties formed for the 1910 election under the hope that Díaz would give up his dictatorship. One was led by Francisco Madero, a rich intellectual who wanted a true democracy. When Díaz was reelected unfairly, Madero was arrested and jailed for his efforts. He escaped and fled to the U.S. where he released the Treaty of San Luís Potosí (October 7, 1910), a declaration that Díaz was elected president illegally and called for an uprising in Mexico. He planned a date for the overthrow of Díaz (November 20), but it turned into only a few guerrilla bands fighting Federalist troops. Eventually, small defeats led to the resignation of Díaz and the presidency of Madero. However the fighting continued as counterrevolutionary forces grew and revolutionary groups split. Victoriano Huerta took over office and had Madero shot. Other revolutionary leaders tried to gain power too, such as Pancho Villa from the north, Venustiano Carranza and his Constitutional Revolution movement, and Emiliano Zapata, the simple country man from the south who fought for the peasants' right to their own land. Carranza became the overall victor and in 1917 drew a new constitution enlisting some revolutionary reforms, although not as many as some would have liked. He did not succeed in implementing them fast enough, however, and in 1920 General Alvaro Obregón organized a coup and took office as president. He began to implement the ideals set forth by the constitution, giving land to the landless and offering workers more rights, and established an environment of growth, Mexican identity and love for Mexico's unique heritage. From all the fighting, many artists, intellectuals, writers and students wanted to uphold ideals of equality and freedom. They wanted to celebrate Indian heritage and repress European ideals. This huge trend and cultural revival are no better immortalized than through the murals studied in this chapter.

\*\* See Diego Rivera's *History of Mexico* (WEST WALL, CENTER ARCH, LEFT ARCHES) and *The World of Today and Tomorrow* (SOUTH WALL).

\*\* See José Clemente Orozco's *American Civilization — Latin America*.

\*\* See David Alfaro Siqueiros's *From the Dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz to the Revolution — The Martyrs, Mounted Revolutionary, The People in Arms, Porfirio Díaz, Ministers and Courtesans and The Revolutionaries*.

Use the vocabulary worksheet as a reference for specific events and characters. The names, figures and dates given on the worksheet are useful for students in conceptualizing the history of Mexico and recognizing the figures and events found in the murals. It is necessary to be familiar with the history of Mexico in order to understand one of the main concepts of the murals: the writing and rewriting of history. Most important in this lesson is understanding the historical circumstances that led directly to the Muralist Movement. Key players such as Dr. Atl, Alvaro Obregón and José Vasconcelos were essential in the process. The aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, including the hope for a unique national identity, the desire to retain revolutionary and utopian ideals and the need to shun oppressive events and people in Mexican history, all served to promote the attitude necessary to create and sponsor the murals. (Remember that many of the murals were funded using government monies.) The key concept of this unit is to show the relationship between social and political events and cultural and artistic innovations. The innovations suggested may have circumstances such as the Civil Rights Movement, poverty and violence in the inner city, a growing Chicano middle class, diversification of the music industry, and improved technology and world communication.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Note taking

Compare and contrast

Vocabulary

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Make copies of the vocabulary worksheet and “Mexican Muralists vs. Ice Cube” worksheet for the class. Instruct the students to complete the vocabulary worksheets after the lecture. Use the history of Mexico resources to add detail to the lecture if needed.

### ACTIVITIES

Read the short history of Mexico at the beginning of this lesson and show the video. Students will take notes on the lecture and video, and write down key names and dates from the Aztec times, the conquest, independence, La Reforma, and the Mexican Revolution, using the vocabulary sheet as a guide. Students will then complete the vocabulary worksheet to test their knowledge. This background is important in interpreting the murals, so tell students to keep the vocabulary worksheet when they get it back after being graded. Go over the words and concepts and their meanings with the students. Discuss the historical circumstances that contributed to the cultural revolution in Mexico that initiated the muralist movement in Mexico City. In groups, students will use the “Mexican Muralists vs. Ice Cube” worksheet to compare and contrast the circumstances that gave rise to the muralist movement to the circumstances of American society that gave rise to artistic innovations in the United States.

### VOCABULARY

Refer to the vocabulary worksheet and the Teacher’s Copy of the worksheet for vocabulary and definitions.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Video on Mexico or the Mexican Revolution (for example, *The Origin of Mexican Civilization* or *Hernan Cortez*)

### ASSESSMENT

#### **Vocabulary Worksheet — Assessment**

Check vocabulary worksheet for accuracy. Since students are using different resources in finding their information about concepts, dates, artists and historical figures, allow some latitude in checking their work.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The student has identified at least 19 of 22 vocabulary worksheet items correctly.
3 .....	The student has identified at least 17 of 22 vocabulary items correctly.
2 .....	The student has identified at least 15 of 22 vocabulary items correctly.
1 .....	The student has identified at least 13 of 22 vocabulary items correctly.
0 .....	The student has identified 12 or less vocabulary items correctly. The student must redo the assignment and complete answers for all the vocabulary items.

#### **Mexican Muralists vs. Ice Cube Worksheet — Assessment**

The Mexican Muralists vs. Ice Cube worksheet could be a bit difficult to understand. Merely check the worksheet for completeness and understanding of the concept. If the student has difficulty with the concept, the teacher may want to review the association between artistic innovations and related historical circumstances.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Vocabulary Worksheet

### Artists

Dr. Atl \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

José Clemente Orozco \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Diego Rivera \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

David Alfaro Siqueiros \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Main Historical Figures

Aztecs \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Quetzalcoatl \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cuahtemoc \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hernan Cortez \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Benito Juarez \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Porfirio Díaz \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pancho Villa \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*(continued)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Page 2 of 2

## Vocabulary Worksheet

*(continued)*

Alvaro Obregón \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Francisco Madero \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Emiliano Zapata \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

José Guadalupe Vasconcelos \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Concepts

Mexicanidad \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Científicos \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

La Reforma \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Important Dates

1521 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1821 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1861 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1910 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## TEACHER'S COPY

### Vocabulary Worksheet

#### Artists

**Dr. Atl** — (*This is his birth name in Nahuatl by which he is referred to historically.*) Professor and artist who promoted modern art, Indian art and the idea of a Mexican national art.

**José Clemente Orozco** — The only muralist who did not study art in Europe. Lost his arm when he was a child and painted with a more pessimistic viewpoint.

**Diego Rivera** — Muralist who painted the halls of the National Palace. Wife is artist Frida Kahlo.

**David Alfaro Siqueiros** — The youngest of “los tres grandes,” fought in the Mexican Revolution and is known for his fluid figures and bright color contrasts.

#### Main Historical Figures

**Aztecs** — Large civilization that governed most of Mexico before the arrival of the Spaniards. A sophisticated culture rich with art, technology and religion.

**Quetzalcoatl** — God of the Aztecs and creator of culture, civilization, and learning, until newcomer Huitzilopochtli drove him out, which was a prophesy of the downfall of their civilization.

**Cuahtemoc** (kwow-TEHM-ok) — Nephew of Moctezuma and last king of the Aztecs. Lived from 1495-1525. Was killed because Cortez thought he was plotting against the Spaniards.

**Hernan Cortez** — First Spaniard to arrive at the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan on August 13, 1521. He led the war against the Aztecs.

**Benito Juarez** — First president of Mexico with indigenous roots. He started a socially liberal government after Mexico won independence.

**Porfirio Díaz** — Long-term dictator of Mexico. Although he brought Mexico from obscurity to modernity during his presidency, his closed-door policies, social and economic conservatism, encouragement of foreign investment, and government stronghold led to the Mexican Revolution.

**Pancho Villa** — Revolutionary leader who, on horseback, rallied troops in northern Mexico.

**Alvaro Obregón** — President from 1920-1928. Made Vasconcelos Secretary of State for Public Education and implemented many reforms from the Constitution of 1917.

**Francisco Madero** — Initiator of the Mexican Revolution. He wrote the Treaty of San Luis Potosí on October 7, 1910.

**Emiliano Zapata** — Revolutionary leader who fought for the rights of the peasants (hacendados) in southern Mexico.

**José Guadalupe Vasconcelos** — Secretary of State for Public Education from 1921-1924. He helped initiate the muralist movement by financing murals in public buildings.

#### Concepts

**Mexicanidad** — An attitude of Mexican loyalty and patriotism, often relying on the celebration of Mexico's pre-Columbian past, revolutionary heroes, and artistic and cultural traditions.

**Científicos** — A group of politicians headed by Porfirio Díaz who promoted a Darwinist ideology that resulted in the economic repression of many Mexicans.

**La Reforma** — The introduction of liberal reforms in Mexico, including separation of church and state, less military and church power, and equality and liberty of all men.

#### Important Dates

**1521** — Cortez arrives in Tenochtitlan (present-day Mexico City) in August. Aztec empire falls.

**1821** — The Treaty of Córdoba was signed, signifying Mexico's independence from Spain.

**1861** — The year Benito Juarez was elected President, instituting huge governmental changes after France's rule over Mexico.

**1910** — The year the Mexican Revolution began, when Madero issued the Treaty of San Luis Potosí.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## “Mexican Muralists vs. Ice Cube”

**DIRECTIONS:** Using the Mexican muralist movement as an example, find three more artistic innovations that arose in the United States and determine what social or political factors may have contributed to the creation of this innovation. List as many factors for each new art form as possible. Some art forms you may want to use are rap music, Chicano art, African dance, and jazz, or you may choose other art innovations.

Artistic Innovation	Historical Circumstances
Mexican Muralist Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mexican Revolution</li> <li>• New art in Europe</li> <li>• Desire for new national identity</li> <li>• Celebration of pre-Columbian art</li> <li>• Revolutionary ideals</li> </ul>

## TEACHER'S COPY

### “Mexican Muralists vs. Ice Cube”

**DIRECTIONS:** Using the Mexican muralist movement as an example, find three more artistic innovations that arose in the United States and determine what social or political factors may have contributed to the creation of this innovation. List as many factors for each new art form as possible. Some art forms you may want to use are rap music, Chicano art, African dance, and jazz, or you may choose other art innovations.

Artistic Innovation	Historical Circumstances
Rap Music	<p>Music industry grows and opens to different kinds of music and a wider variety of artists.</p> <p>Social conditions worsen in the inner city.</p>
Chicano Art	<p>The Chicano Movement.</p> <p>Increased number of artists of Mexican-American heritage going to college and being educated in the arts.</p>
Jazz and the Blues	<p>Music industry begins to open for black musicians.</p> <p>Rising middle class blacks allowed for more amateur music making.</p>
African dance in the United States	<p>Back to Africa Movement.</p> <p>Introduction of multiculturalism in schools and artistic community.</p>

## LESSON 2: A Close Look at Public Art

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships. (H1)

Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. (H2)

Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. (H3)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process, and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of creativity and communication. (VA1)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (VA4)

Students analyze and evaluate the characteristics, merits, and meaning of works of art. (VA5)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students know the general chronological order of events and people in history.

Students use chronology to organize historical events and people.

Students use chronology to examine and explain historical relationships.

Students apply knowledge of the past to compare and contrast present-day issues and events from multiple, historically objective perspectives.

Students know how various societies have been affected by contacts and exchanges among diverse peoples.

Students use appropriate traditional and electronic technologies in a variety of formats to extend and enhance learning of historical facts and concepts.

Students use appropriate technologies to enable historical inquiry.

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct sentence structure in writing.

Students will select relevant material for reading, writing, and speaking purposes.

Students will use information to produce a quality product in an appropriate format.

Students will identify visual images, themes, and ideas in works of art

Students will evaluate, analyze, and interpret works of art in relation to the contexts of history, culture, and place.

Students will use specific criteria to analyze works of art.

Students will use specific criteria to evaluate works of art.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will understand the concept of public art.

Students will become familiar with the history of public art.

Students will recognize contemporary forms of public art, such as radio music, graffiti, and architecture.

Students will learn the significance and influence of public art in historical and modern contexts.

### SPECIFICS

It is difficult to define public art since the term and the artwork it attempts to identify are both open to interpretation. Therefore, in the brainstorming and discussion activities, students should develop their own definitions. One definition which may be used as a starting point is: "Public art is the artistic or creative expression of an idea by an individual or a group that is accessible and available to the public. The idea may have an ideological or cultural basis. It may be intended to influence or comment on society or it may inadvertently expose the values or realities of a society."

There are many forms of public art. From Byzantine times, public religious art has been used to remind people of their religious duties and to give a history of religious events and religious ideals. War posters were a prominent form of public art during World War II and other wars in United States history. Currently there are many forms of public art: radio music, billboards, posters, architecture (for example, the design of the Denver Public Library), graffiti, and comics are a few examples.

## **What will be done to help students learn this?**

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Independent reading

Essay writing

Group discussion

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Write the definition of public art on the chalkboard or on an overhead. Make copies of the essay instruction sheet (or write instructions on the chalkboard).

### ACTIVITIES

Have students read the articles on public art. Students may want to look up public art on the Internet to find more detailed examples and definitions. Discuss the definition of public art and its many interpretations. Discuss what art is and what public art is and have students give their own definition. Discuss all the different forms of public art. Have students take notes during discussion. Make a group decision about whether all public art is "by the public, for the public," the battle cry of the Mexican muralists.

Consider these questions in the discussion: Is public art accessible to everyone? Is it influential? Is public art always good? What may be its negative and positive consequences? Should public art represent fact or fiction? Should it have a goal? Who should pay for public art? If the government pays for it, does it make a difference?

Have students individually formulate these ideas into a 5- to 10-page essay about public art that gives their definition of public art, what they think it should include, and what goals it should try to achieve in society. They should use the questions on the essay instruction sheet as a guideline and come up with their own examples of what public art should be like. Students will use these essays later to judge public art in their area so they need to be critical and clear about their ideas.

### VOCABULARY (FOR DISCUSSION ONLY)

Public art — *(For individual interpretation; there are many ideas and concepts about public art. Definitions may vary.)* The artistic or creative expression of an idea by an individual or a group that is accessible and available to the public. The idea may have an ideological or cultural basis. It may be intended to influence or comment on society or it may inadvertently expose the values or realities of a society.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

*Graffiti Verite: Read the Writing on the Wall* video

“Mural’s Message on Gang Life Stirs Mixed Signals.” Valley Edition, *L.A. Times*, March 3, 1999

“Maria Alquilar: a perspective on public art.” *Ceramics Monthly*, May 1996

*(For teachers in Denver and the surrounding areas, if possible, bring in Emanuel Martinez to lecture on public art and his own murals. For other teachers, call your local museum to locate muralists in your area.)*

Introduction from *Signs from the Heart*

### ASSESSMENT

Monitor group discussions. Assess essays by whether or not the concept of public art and its facets are understood. Compare essays on a curve based on the best understanding of the concepts. Use the following rubric.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The student demonstrates an understanding of public art through at least three well-explained ideas. The essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion. Make sure the questions listed on the board or handout are addressed. Assess the essay for clarity, grammar, sentence structure, usage, and spelling (especially Spanish names). Essay should have fewer than five punctuation and grammatical errors and at least five pages.
3 .....	The student addresses the questions provided. The student shows some understanding of the concepts and expresses clearly at least two ideas. The essay should have fewer than 10 errors and at least five pages.
2 .....	The student fails to show any comprehension of the concept of public art, and the examples have a very unclear relation to public art. The essay is shorter than five pages and has many grammatical and punctuation errors.
1 .....	The student fails to give any example that shows comprehension or understanding of public art. The essay has excessive grammatical and punctuation errors.

## Lesson Extension

Contact Emanuel Martinez to lecture to the class about public art.

Emanuel Martinez  
17331 Highway 8  
Morrison, CO 80465  
Phone/Fax: (303) 697-0445

## Writing Assignment: What is Public Art?

**DIRECTIONS:** Write a 5- to 10-page essay about public art. Your essay should include an introduction, a body with at least three major points, and a conclusion. Pay attention to grammar, sentence structure, usage and spelling (especially Spanish names). Make sure you present your ideas clearly.

Your essay should include:

- your definition of public art,
- what you think public art should include, and
- what goals public art should try to achieve in society.

In addition, use the following questions as guidelines in writing your essay:

- Is public art accessible to everyone?
- Is it influential? To who?
- Is public art always good?
- What may be its negative and positive consequences?
- Should public art present fact or fiction?
- Should it have a goal?
- Who should pay for public art?
- If the government pays for it, does the content have to match the government's ideas?

**IMPORTANT:** You will use your essay later to judge local public art, so be critical and clear about your ideas.

## LESSON 3: Introduction to Mexican Muralism

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of creativity and communication. (VA1)

Students know and apply elements of art, principles of design, and sensory, expressive, and creative features of visual arts. (VA2)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (VA4)

Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry. (H2)

Students use appropriate technologies to obtain historical information; to study and/or model historical information and concepts; and to access, process, and communicate information related to the study of history. (H7)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

#### BENCHMARK

Students will paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Students will cite others' ideas, images, or information from primary, print, and electronic resources.

Student will identify visual images, themes, and ideas in works of art.

Students will identify elements of art and principles of design in works of art.

Students will evaluate, analyze, and interpret works of art in relation to the contexts of history, culture, and place.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about the life of each artist and the social circumstances that influenced them.

Students will become familiar with the artists' styles and magnitude of their work throughout the United States and Mexico.

Students will compile their information into scrapbooks to distinguish the artists and their works and to become familiar with their themes and styles.

#### SPECIFICS

The video on Diego Rivera provides an introduction to murals, their function in Mexican society, and their relationship to Mexican history. They also introduce the muralist movement and important aspects of Rivera's life. This video should give students a good background on what they should look for in the Internet exercise. To help students with the description of the murals, read the appropriate sections of *The Mexican Muralists* by Desmond Rochfort.

### What will be done to help students learn this?

#### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Note taking

Compare and contrast

Vocabulary

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Write instructions for the scrapbook project on the board or in a handout. If students are not familiar with the Internet, provide instructions such as what to type in the address form field, how to use forward and backward icons, and how to go to different links. Consider introducing the Internet beforehand with a librarian’s or computer monitor’s help. Gather supplies for scrapbook activity.

ACTIVITIES

Watch the video, *Rivera: Portrait of an Artist, The Frescoes of Diego Rivera*.

Students will use Internet search engines, such as Yahoo or Lycos, to find biographical and historical information about the artists, the times they worked in, and their work. Keywords such as “Mexican muralists,” “Mexican art,” and the muralists’ names will locate pertinent websites. From these websites, students will collect biographical and historical information on the muralists.

Two websites that may be useful are:

- <http://www.spin.com.mx/ilustrado/murales/>
- <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/orozco/index.html>

For each artist, students will write a short biography that includes his birthdate, education and travels, any significant events or special circumstances in the artist’s life (such as Orozco painting with only one arm), the names and dates of his murals and quotations from the artists. Combine the biographical information of each artist into a scrapbook. Aside from having the biographical information, include five examples of the artist’s work, which can be downloaded from the Internet. Write a one-paragraph summary on each piece of work.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

- Internet access
- Printer
- Supplies for the scrapbooks
- Rivera: Portrait of an Artist, The Frescoes of Diego Rivera* video

ASSESSMENT

Use the following rubric to assess the scrapbook assignment. Remember that the scrapbook must have biographical information for all three muralists — use the rubric for each artist.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>
Biography of artist (date of birth and travels) .....	50
Special circumstances or significant events .....	50
Names and dates of his murals .....	100
Five examples of artist’s work and descriptive paragraph .....	250
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>450 (per artist)</b>

<b>Total points earned from the three biographies</b>	<b>Grade</b>
1,350–1,215 .....	A
1,214–1,080 .....	B
1,079–945 .....	C
944–810 .....	D
809 or below .....	F

## LESSON 4:

# Interpreting the Murals of Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication. (VA1)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (VA4)

Students analyze and evaluate the characteristics, merits and meaning of works of art. (VA5)

Students will write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will write and speak to peers, teachers, and the community.

Students will prepare written and oral presentations using strategies.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will cite others' ideas, images, or information from primary, print, and electronic resources.

Students will use information to produce a quality product in an appropriate format.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will locate reproductions of four major murals and analyze them.

Students will use research and their creativity to determine the main themes of the works, finding evidence in the paintings to support their conclusions.

Students will learn to look closely at and analyze art using guidance tools such as important icons, symbols, historical figures, color usage, perspective, and organization.

#### SPECIFICS

Use *The Mexican Muralists* to develop a lecture that includes an overhead of Rivera's mural *History of Mexico*, which is located in the Palacio Nacional. Only select a few panels to use as examples of how to look at the works so that students know how to approach the analysis and can still use this mural for their project. This mural is important because it addresses the idea of rewriting history, with representations of many figures of Mexican history (see Lesson 1). The other murals that may be best to use for this assignment are Orozco's *Epic of American Civilization* located at Dartmouth College, Rivera's *Man at the Crossroads*, located at the Palacio de Bellas Artes (this does not detail Mexican history but has wonderful imagery and content), Rivera's *A Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Park* located in the Alameda Hotel, and Siqueiros' *From the Dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz to the Revolution*. They address Mexican and American history, issues of that specific period, and ideas or predictions about the future. They are also the easiest to understand.

## What will be done to help students learn this?

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Teacher-led lecture and discussion  
Group analysis  
Student-directed oral presentations

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Select four murals for students to analyze and make an overhead of each. If *History of Mexico* and *The Epic of American Civilization* are selected, choose only a few panels since these murals are too large to interpret entirely. For *Man at the Crossroads* students may only want to analyze half.

### VOCABULARY

**Epic** — a work of art that depicts a legend or series of legendary events. Extends beyond the ordinary; a tradition or history that is of epic importance (i.e. the winning of the West was a great American epic.)

### ACTIVITIES

Divide students into four groups, with each group choosing one mural to interpret. Using resources from past lessons, the Internet and books, students will determine what they think the mural means. Students will use this as a guide in finding key figures, important symbols, and other elements to interpret the mural. Each group will present their mural on an overhead in class, introducing the major themes and pointing out specifics to support their conclusions.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Internet access  
Articles on murals  
*The Mexican Muralists*

### ASSESSMENT

Assess oral presentations on the thoroughness (given the time allowance) of the interpretation of the mural or the panels of the mural; the extent to which students followed the given guidelines to support why they determined which themes were used; and the clarity and organization of the presentations. The presentations should have a title that suggests what overall meaning the mural or panels have for the students (this may be the title of the panel). Students should explain the meaning of the title by pointing out elements in the mural that support it. Students should identify at least three figures in the mural and what they represent. They should determine if and how the mural depicts history, what it says about the time at which it was painted, and what cultural ideals are expressed. These three points should be supported by images identified in the mural. Use the Desmond book as a guideline, but allow for creativity and new ideas. Each group is given 3–5 minutes to complete their mural presentation. Use the guide below to score the presentation.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>
Use of time (3–5 minutes allowed) .....	25
Did students present a theme that clarified their interpretation of the art piece? .....	25
Did the presentation have a title, and did it represent the panel or piece of art? .....	10
Did the students identify at least three figures in the mural? .....	250
Did the presentation address the history or time at which the mural was painted? ...	25
Did the students talk about the cultural ideals expressed in the piece of art? .....	25
Were the students creative in their presentation? .....	25

## LESSON 5: Murals from Our Own Country

### What will students be learning?

#### STANDARDS

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of creativity and communication. (VA1)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (VA4)

Students analyze and evaluate the characteristics, merits, and meaning of works of art. (VA5)

#### BENCHMARKS

Students will identify visual images, themes, and ideas in works of art.

Students will identify works of art as belonging to various cultures, times, and places

Students will evaluate, analyze, and interpret works of an art in relation to the contexts of history, culture, and place.

Students will use specific criteria to analyze works of art.

Students will use specific criteria to evaluate works of art

#### SPECIFICS

There are several mural sites in Colorado, including some at Metropolitan State College of Denver. The following list provided by Mary Motion-Meadows gives some names and addresses. These and other murals of Colorado are discussed in her forthcoming book *Murals of Colorado*. (If this book has been published by the time this material is used it should be used for this lesson.) The murals are located on the exterior of the location unless otherwise indicated:

*Pasado, Presente, Futuro*, 1975

Carlota Espinoza

Denver Public Library — Byers Branch (interior)

675 Santa Fe Drive

*The World as a Stage*, 1884

250 community people under the direction of Andy Mendoza

Denver Civic Theatre

721 Santa Fe Drive

*La Alma (The Soul)*, 1977

Emanuel Martinez, Mike Maestes, Al Sanchez, and Fred Sanchez

La Alma Recreation Center

1325 W. 11th Ave.

*I am Joaquin*, 1997

Carlota Espinoza

Escuela Tlatololco Centro de Estudios

2949 Federal Blvd.

*The Mayan American*, 1989

Carlota Espinoza

Westside Health Center (interior)

1100 Federal Blvd.

*Juntos (Together), 1992*

Tony Ortega  
Dry Gulch Park  
10th and Osceola St.

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, 1975*

Carlota Espinoza  
Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (interior)  
1209 W. 36th Ave.

*La Venta de Salud, 1996*

Neighborhood youth under the direction of Emanuel Martinez  
Clinica Tepeyac  
3617 Kalamath

*Neighborhood Epic, 1994*

Martha Keating and Luna, community children and adults  
10 panels depicting the history and culture of North Denver.  
Frontage Road between Inca St. and 20th St. Viaduct

There are websites listing and providing reproductions of murals of the Chicano Movement and other murals in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Two websites to use are:

<http://www.precitaeyes.org/missionhist.html>

<http://www.usc.edu/isd/archives/la/pubart/>

## **What will be done to help students learn this?**

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Individual reading  
Group presentations  
Compare and contrast  
Teacher-guided group analysis

### PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Call local art museums to locate murals in your area. Plan one or more field trips to at least three murals in the area. If there are no murals in your area, use the Internet to find murals in your region or in a historical place that students may be familiar with. You may also rely on the murals reprinted in *Signs of the Heart*.

### RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Transportation for field trip(s)  
Pens and pads to take notes  
Internet access  
*Signs of the Heart*

### ACTIVITIES

Have students read all of the essays in *Signs of the Heart* and take notes. They should answer the following questions: Are the California murals similar in intent and content as the Mexican murals? What, if any, are the differences? Is there a difference between male and female artists? Do any of the California murals depict the history of Mexican Americans? Why or why not? Students will use these new murals to collect more ideas about what is public art. In groups, students will present the main ideas of each essay to the class and share their ideas. Then, students will rewrite their public art papers and include any modifications they may have after learning about these new murals. The rewritten essays will also be graded on improved writing.

Before going on the field trip to see local murals or on the Internet, ask students to try to determine the themes of murals based on their location and title. What would location indicate about the mural? What might the history of the area suggest about content? Students should bring pens and pads to take notes on the murals during the field trip. As the students view the murals, have them interpret them in the context of their location and their intent and discuss their interpretations with the class. Discuss whether there are themes in common with the Mexican murals they have already seen, and if the mural influences the public, rewrites history, makes social commentary, or provides cultural ideals.

Students will write a critical analysis of one of the murals using the criteria from the essay in Lesson 2. Students will determine what the mural's goal is, if it is successful in achieving it and why, and if, it is public art (i.e. is it accessible to everyone?) and provide any suggestions they have for making the mural better for the public. Essays must have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion and be at least five pages in length, including the artist, the history of the mural if known it and its location.

### ASSESSMENT

Use the assessment from Lesson 2 to grade the rewrites. Assess the critical analysis essays based on the guidelines the students learned about in preparation for writing their essays in Lesson 2. Give feedback in comments and suggestions.

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The student compares the mural to the guidelines set forth in his or her own essay about the function of public art. Student determines the meaning of the mural and shows if and how it influences the public, rewrites history, makes social commentary and provides cultural ideals (the elements the student specifically addresses depends on the guidelines from their own essays) The essay has an introduction, body, and conclusion. Assess the essays for clarity, grammar, sentence structure, usage, and spelling (especially Spanish names). The essay should have fewer than five punctuation and grammatical errors and at least five pages.
3 .....	The student is not as successful at comparing the mural to the guidelines he or she developed previously. The student attempts to explain the meaning and the criteria for analysis. The essay should be at least five pages and should have fewer than 10 errors.
2 .....	The student fails to compare the mural with the previous essay. The meaning and other guidelines set up are not thoroughly discussed. The essay is shorter than five pages and has many errors.
1 .....	The student fails to give any example that shows comprehension or understanding of the mural. The essay has excessive grammatical and punctuation errors.

## UNIT ASSESSMENT

### How will students demonstrate proficiency?

#### PERFORMANCE TASK

The goal of the performance task is to test the understanding of the skills and concepts taught in this unit through their application. Students will demonstrate their understanding of how public art serves to influence the public, rewrite history, make social commentary, and provide cultural ideals. Creating their own mural will force students to think critically about their society and thoroughly understand the process and intent of mural making.

Based on their personal interest, divide the students into three groups: the creative group who paints the mural; the research group who researches the topic that is chosen by the class as a whole; and the organization group, who finds a site for the mural and helps the creative group design the layout of the project.

The students will come up with a mural topic based on a social issue they find important and related to their school or community in some way. They will research the topic and the history and origin of the issue in their school or community. For example, if the problem is gang violence, the students will find out how and when it began in their school or community and what social circumstances created it. This activity helps reinforce the concept of history and the rewriting of history in public art.

The mural should also make some prediction about the future and suggest an ideal for which the school or community should strive, and comment on the social problem rather than just depicting it. Remind the students that in making their mural, they should follow the guidelines they set out in their essays on public art. The mural should possess some of the characteristics seen in other pieces of muralist artwork, including symbolic features, historical figures, and color significance.

The organization team should research places the mural could be completed, whether it be in the school, at a local park, or on a series of Dumpsters, or, as a last resort, painted on paper and hung in the classroom.

Inform the students they will be given two grades for this project — an individual grade and a group grade.

This performance task may also be done in small groups, with each group making their own mural.

ASSESSMENT

**For individuals:**

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The student acts passionately about the mural and shows keen interest in making a high quality project. The student refers to past lectures and notes to think critically about the mural the class hopes to produce. The student actively participates in decision making, sharing ideas coherently and listening to others.
3 .....	The student tries to participate in group decisions, offering suggestions and advice, and willingly participates in activities.
2 .....	The student participates in the mural-making process but offers no personal input.
1 .....	The student does not participate or hinders the progress of the class.

**For groups:**

<u>Rubric Points</u>	<u>Description</u>
4 .....	The mural effectively relates the topic students intended to depict and comment on. The mural is organized in some fashion, showing both past and present or future sections or figures. There is a strategy in terms of organization that is identifiable. Historical figures, icons, color choices, and symbolic references are actively pursued in the mural, and the intent of this strategy should be recognized in many sections of the mural. The mural closely follows the guidelines the students have created and discussed for public art.
3 .....	The mural effectively relates the topic students intended to depict and comment on. The mural shows past and present or future. Historical figures, color choices and symbolic references are evident although not profuse. The mural attempts to address some of the guidelines students created on public art.
2 .....	The mural shows the topic. The mural does not show an active strategy in organization and few key features are evident.
1 .....	The mural does not effectively relate the topic. It is unattractive to the eye, lacks organization, and only slightly shows signs of key features.

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- Films**
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*Graffiti artists from Los Angeles are shown doing work and discuss the difference between tagging and making artwork. Also history and significance of graffiti.*
- Chicano Park*/produced by Mario Barrera and Marilyn Mulford; directed by Marilyn Mulford; written by Juan Felipe Herrera and Gary Weimberg. New York: Cinema Guild, 1988.  
*Creation and history of murals and the art community in Chicano Park, San Diego, CA.*
- Rivera: Portrait of an Artist, The Frescoes of Diego Rivera*/produced and directed by Michael Camerini, 1986.  
*This video provides an in-depth look at the life and works of Diego Rivera.*

## About the Author

Jennifer Henry was born and raised in Denver, Colorado. Having grown up with two public school teachers and attended public schools, she has always been dedicated to the continued achievement and improvement of the public schools. As a tutor, mentor, summer school teacher, and paraprofessional, Jennifer maintained a relationship with the Denver Public Schools throughout her undergraduate college years, and she plans to continue this relationship for many years to come.

It was at Dartmouth College that Jennifer's intellectual interests blossomed. As a Latin American and Caribbean studies major with a concentration in literature, Jennifer had the opportunity to live and study Spanish and anthropology in Puebla, Mexico. She went to Mexico City two years later to complete research for the Mellon Minority Undergraduate Fellowship. Her project, "The Self in the Paintings of Frida Kahlo and Remedios Varo," immersed her deeply in Mexican culture, art history, and issues of identity and representation. Also at Dartmouth, Jennifer interned at the Hood Museum of Art, studying the lithographs and drawings of José Clemente Orozco and designing an exhibit of the preliminary drawings from his famous mural, *Epic of American Civilization*, which is located in Dartmouth's Baker Library.

In the next few years, Jennifer will pursue her musical dreams as a violinist as a student in the master's degree program at the University of Northern Colorado. However, whether it be in music, literature, or art, in the classroom, in a museum, or on the stage, Jennifer will continue to participate and contribute to the improved education and cultural awareness of adults and students alike.