

Como se hace a un mexicano, or, How to Make a Mexican: Exploring the Construction of National Identity

Matthew Kelly

The young woman rolled her eyes in outrage. “Mister Señor Kelly,” said the young woman, a student in my Spanish I class, “you can’t call them Mexicans. You know better than that! They’re called *Latinos* or Spanish people. They hate it when you call them Mexicans.”

The “them” in question were the members of the band Mexican rock band Maná, who were in the news for making pointed comments to the media about the Mexican drug war, drug decriminalization, and the pervasiveness of corruption at all levels of Mexican society. I explained that it is only inappropriate to refer to someone as “Mexican” if he or she is not Mexican, while the members of Maná are Mexican.

Then, of course, came the follow up question, this time from a boy in the back. “So, what’s the difference, then?” Some of the more culturally and geographically adept students explained that Salvadorans came from El Salvador, Puerto Rican came from Puerto Rico, and so on. This happens every semester some time in the first week of Spanish I.

The boy in the back wasn’t satisfied, though, and restated his question. “No,” he said, “I think I get that. But what I mean is, why are some of them Mexicans and some of them Salvadorans? What’s the difference? What makes a Mexican a Mexican and not something else? Why aren’t they all the same thing?”

Everyone agreed it was a really good question. I told them the answer would be complicated and that I would have to get back to them on that. This curriculum unit is my attempt to make good on that promise.

Rationale: Exploring Extraordinary and Everyday Nationalism

Michael Billig established much of the contemporary framework for talking about nationalism and national identity with the publication of *Banal nationalism* in 1995.

¹ He divides nationalism into the “hot” variety, full of emotion and prone to violence, and the “banal” version--expressions of nationalism such as the “unwaved flags” that grace gas stations, present without being really noticed. The “hot” variety he ascribes mainly to wild and violent peoples like the Catholics of Ulster; the “banal” version is, for Billig, the

expression found among civilized peoples like the British.² While the distinction is a useful one, more than one writer has taken issue with his system of classification. Michael Skey points out that the background of real and figurative "unwaved flags" in modern democracies such as Britain is populated with a wide range of symbols and signifiers representing different national identities.³ Rhys Jones and Peter Merriman take on the politics of public signage in Wales, pointing out that phenomena as simple as road signage can take on elements of both the "hot" and the "banal," proposing instead an "everyday" nationalism combining both strands.⁴ For Justin Wolfe, "everyday" nationalism is an overtly political process rather than a cultural backdrop, a process of negotiation and distribution of privileges and responsibilities between the ruling elites and their subjects in order to create a governable consensus.⁵

All these viewpoints bring up valuable questions for looking at culture and politics in the world languages classroom. Generally speaking, official manifestations of national identity, such as national monuments and holidays, are treated separately from "culture," which is treated more ethnographically than politically. The recognition by Rhys Jones and Peter Merriman that something as simple as public signage can represent not only an expression of language and culture but also of nationalism is particularly salient. We will examine both macroexpressions of national identity, or "big" nationalism, requiring the resources of a state, and microexpressions, or "little" nationalism, manifested at the level of the local community, home, or individual.

In the course of the unit, students will study together select examples of "big" nationalism from select countries. We'll visit monuments through technology using the interactive white board in our classroom. Students record oral and written comments and reflection in the target language. Later, students will investigate different examples of "little" nationalism, and will hopefully experience some of these first hand in the forms of festivals celebrated locally, national cuisine, and national forms of dance. Students will also record their comments and reflections on these. By the end of the unit, students should be able to draw some connections between common strands in "big" and little manifestations of nationalism.

Background

I teach at the Academy for International Studies at Independence High School in Charlotte, North Carolina. The Academy for International Studies is a magnet program with about 300 students. A member of the Asia Society's International Studies Schools Network, the Academy's mission is to provide a holistic education with a firm grounding in global awareness and local community service.

Independence High School is a large urban high school and has long been one of the

largest schools in North Carolina. Current enrolment is around 2,200. For many years the student population was about sixty percent African American, roughly a quarter White, and just over ten percent Hispanic, with fewer than five percent Asian. Roughly half the students were on free and reduced lunch. The last two years have shown the results of significant student reassignment within the district. Percentages for African American and White students have reversed, and the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch has dropped dramatically. The new influx of students comes from neighborhoods that are predominantly White and middle class. Many of the new students have limited exposure to cultures and perspectives outside their own communities.

Hispanic Diversity

The very way we teach Spanish in this country reinforces the idea of "Hispanics" as a vast, undifferentiated mass. We teach "Standard International Latin American Spanish." It's free of regional lexical oddities, grammatical divergences, and dropped consonants in the spoken form. There is, certainly, an advantage in teaching a variant of the language stripped of regional markers, but advertently or inadvertently it conveys the impression of a homogeneity that does not exist.

I do not mean to suggest that there is no sense of commonality or shared identity in the Spanish speaking world. Still, if there's a single salient observation I'd hope they take with them, though, it's that people from Spanish speaking countries aren't just "Hispanic"; they have their own national and ethnic identities, and, in the case of indigenous peoples, may not even be considered "Hispanic" until they get here.

Strategies: Opportunites for Differentiation

I once asked a student, in Spanish, how his day had been. He answered in English, "I'm sorry, but I just can't think right now. I had an AP history test today. My brain feels like a goose being raised for its liver."

While very few students would express themselves that way, many would echo the sentiment, especially in the upper levels. Rigor in upper level classes frequently means responsibility for larger and larger bodies of information, but often without integration into a wider, coherent narrative.

Another problem, especially in the intermediate World Languages classroom, is that of differentiation. Unlike "core" academic subjects, there is little or no academic tracking by ability levels within World Languages: a student either moves up to the next level and takes another year, or she doesn't. Furthermore, students' individual tendencies towards

introversion or extroversion are often not taken into account at the level of instructional design.

Fortunately, the unit is designed so that each student will be required to engage with key concepts and to master background information on each country in question, but will have the opportunity to choose a mini-project for exploration that fits his or her interests, aptitudes, and level of introversion or extroversion.

"Big" and "Little" Nationalism: a Series of Case Studies

Our first two segments on national archaeological sites will deal with two clear but very different examples of state sponsored ethno-patriotic nationalist endeavors writ large. The subsequent segments may be presented as elective activities; students may be required to choose one or more to complete independently.

In the first segment of the unit students will engage a number of topics. We will look at ways in which nationalism is expressed, especially through ways not normally seen as intrinsically nationalistic.

The Templo Mayor and Tikal: the Nationalism of State Archaeology

The Templo Mayor in Mexico City was uncovered in a period of intense archaeological investigation, mostly in the period 1978-1982. In February 1978, workers digging behind the National Cathedral uncovered a massive oval stone over three meters across bearing the bas relief image of a woman, bedecked in finery, dismembered and decapitated. This was the goddess Coyolxauhqui, the sister of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec war god, slain by him on the occasion of his birth.⁶ Excavation of the stone led to the revelation of the remains of the Temple complex described in the annals of the conquistadors but long lost. The site is now one of the largest and most extensively excavated sites in the Americas, hosting a first rate museum and teaching facility. Up to the arrival of the Spanish, the immense complex was, first and foremost, a center for the elaborately staged sacrifice of human beings.

Tikal, in the northern jungle of Guatemala, was first officially explored in modern times in 1848.⁷ The site contains a massive Mayan city with a complex of towering pyramids. A dedicatory stela records the founding date of the city as December 1, 741 C.E.⁸; the city was long a relic by the time Cortés passed nearby in 1525.⁹ The city is now a major, perhaps the major, Mayan site for tourists. Cleared of the vines and trees that long obscured them from view, the pyramids now rise from neatly trimmed lawns of grass, as if they were ornaments adorning the Lost Golf Course of the Maya.

Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks discuss the way that national archaeology-- archaeology enlisted in the service of a nationalist agenda for reclaiming the heritage of the past--is an art form with its own genre for archaeological sites open to the public. These "ruins that are not in ruin"¹⁰ are amalgams of the restored and the decaying. Crumbly bits are secured, grass planted, footpaths laid out, amenities installed. Cultural centers extol the grandeur of the past civilization and connect it to the national destiny of the present inhabitants, whether Mexicans, Italians, Welsh, Greeks, or Guatemalans. Students studying these particular "ruins not in ruin" will ask and attempt to answer the question: by the way the ruins are presented, what nationalist assertions are being made? How are the sites similar? How are they different? Does the fact that the Templo Mayor is in the middle of a bustling city, where ordinary people pass by all the time, make a different sort of national statement than a site in the jungle visited mainly by tourists?

Little Nationalism, Bigger Than Life: Mexican Masked Wrestling

Students taking on Mexico's number two sport will ask the question, "What is it about this grand, garish pageant that so captures and captivates the Mexican spirit?" It could be something to do with masculinity and vulnerability, and the power a mask gives the wearer: a permanent, stoic, unflinching and impassive visage, the ideal of *machismo mexicano*. Or, maybe it's just *chido* (cool). Students may choose to study actual footage of bouts along with cinematic masked wrestlers, especially the immortal *El Santo*, who kept the world safe from aliens, vampire women and zombies for decades all without ever removing his mask.

Little Nationalism, Big Flavor: The Pupusa

The Salvadoran *pupusa* is a sort of heavy, filled corn tortilla, similar in some ways to the *empanadas* eaten elsewhere in Latin American but made with a special corn flour instead of wheat flour. Wherever you find communities of Salvadorans, you find *pupuserías* selling their tasty wares. Students taking on this topic will ask, "How do Salvadorans maintain and assert their national identity, especially when abroad, through culinary continuity? How are *pupusas* different from typical Mexican food? Most importantly, how do they taste, and where can I find the best ones in my home town?"

Music and National Identity: Our Unofficial National Anthems

Students will survey Spanish speakers in the school community about their Spanish language music and dance preferences. They will try to ascertain the extent to which regional or national music and dance serve as an instrument for maintaining national identity in the Spanish speaking Diaspora.

Nopales: Food as a Marker of Nationalist Sentiment

When a food associated with a Diasporic national or ethnic group is considered unpalatable or unappealing by the dominant culture, and even by a substantial portion of representatives of the culture of origin, it is likely that continued consumption of the food may represent a self-conscious assertion of group identity, rather than a strictly gustatory choice. Gefilte fish comes to mind.

Nopales may be the gefilte fish of Mexican Americans. The prickly pear cactus grows worldwide, but the leaf pads are seldom consumed outside Mexican and Tejano culture. The fleshy leaves of the prickly pear cactus are cheap, nutritious, and have a pleasant citrus flavor akin to sorrel. However, the crucial process of removing the spines is laborious, and the leaves once cleaned release abundant mucilaginous juice—something like okra, only much more so. Students will survey members of the community to see if *nopal* consumption correlates to a stronger self-reported sense of Mexican national identity.

Background Information for Students

Before proceeding with detailed exploration of the makeup of national identity in these varied nations, it is crucial that students have a common pool of base knowledge to anchor their explorations.

Geography

Mexican American comedian Paul Rodriguez once said, "War is God's way of teaching us geography."¹¹ For better or for worse, the United States has not invaded any Latin American nation within the lifetimes of our high school students. Students will need some help conceptualizing where these countries are and how big they are. Print a map, and let them color and label it, even if they are an advanced class. If they have glitter glue, even better—let them use it.

Historical Context

The idea that American high school students' conception of history is poor, or, worse, deteriorating with each passing year is a popular one.^{12 13} Scholar Sam Wineburg argues that U.S. history scores have held steadily low since the advent of standardized testing, and that what is needed is a context-based approach that allows students to conceptualize history as a useful narrative.¹⁴

Students are likely to come into this unit with a very poor conception of the historical and social backgrounds of these nations. I provide here accessible summaries that will give all

students a footing for starting on this journey regardless of their background knowledge.

Mexico: War, Progress and Dictatorship

In the 1200's, a people we call the Aztecs came to the Central Valley of Mexico from somewhere in the far north. They founded what is now Mexico City and dominated central Mexico, warring constantly with their neighbors.

In 1519, a group of Spanish led by Hernán Cortés came to Mexico from Cuba with a few hundred soldiers. He organized the neighbors of the Aztecs into a huge army and in 1521 they destroyed Tenochtitlán and the Aztecs. The Spanish ruled for three hundred years, though some fighting with native groups went on until 1933.¹⁵ In 1810 Mexico rebelled against Spain and won independence in 1821. The next half century was devastating. Mexico lost over half its territory to the United States and was taken over and occupied by France for six years.¹⁶

Eventually, the Mexicans threw out the French. The period from 1876 to 2000 was marked by relative stability and economic progress under dictatorship--with a 19 year time out from 1910-1929 for revolution, civil war and chaos. In 2000 an opposition candidate won the presidency, bringing an end to the most recent 71 year dictatorship.

The population in Mexico is 30% Native American and 60% *mestizo*, with the remainder overwhelmingly European.¹⁷ Mexican culture places a heavy emphasis on the native contribution to society. In Peru, you see statues of the Spanish *conquistadores*; in Mexico, they build statues of the natives who fought the Spanish.

El Salvador: Imagine the Civil War Ended in 1992

In El Salvador, the civil war *did* end in 1992. A civil war raged for twelve years, from 1980-1992. Both sides committed serious crimes. The United States supported the government forces against the communist rebels, despite evidence that the government side was killing civilians.¹⁸

After 12 years of war and 75,000 dead, both sides saw that neither was strong enough to win the war decisively. In 1992 the two sides signed peace accords. The two warring sides lay down their arms and became peaceful political parties engaging in normal elections.

Unlike Mexico, the population is 90% mixed and 9% European, with only 1% identifying themselves as indigenous.¹⁹ In 1932, facing Communist-led protests by coffee workers, the government killed 30,000 civilians, mostly indigenous people. From then on, most indigenous people abandoned indigenous language, dress and culture and identified

themselves as *mestizo*, or mixed.²⁰

Guatemala: Spanish as a Second Language

There's a Latin American expression, "*De Guatemala a Guatepeor.*" It's a play on words: from *Guate*-bad to *Guate*-worse, or, out of the frying pan, into the fire. It fits.

Of all the countries in the region, Guatemala is the most heavily indigenous. 40% of the population is Maya, a broad Native American group, and still speaks any of 23 different indigenous languages. The remaining population is over 59% mixed, called *ladino* in Guatemala. Less than 1% of the population is European.²¹

The Maya have suffered fierce repression. Guatemala endured a 36 year civil war between Communist rebels and U.S. backed government forces. 200,000 people died in the war, 83% of them Maya.²² 93% of the killings were committed by the Army.²³ In addition, government forces committed violence towards Mayan women.²⁴

The war ended with peace accords signed in 1996. However, crime has surged. The murder rate in Guatemala is 53 per 100,000, more than double that of Mexico's violent northern border states.²⁵

Student Activities

I would recommend working through the Templo Mayor and Tikal activities as a whole class if you have an interactive white board or other suitable display. The other activities would be suitable for whole class participation or may be offered as elective assignments.

Templo Mayor, Mexico City

Share with students Hernán Cortés' description of the Templo Mayor in Tenochtitlán, now Mexico City, from Cortés' second letter of relation to the Emperor Charles V:

*Y entre estas mezquitas hay una que es la prencipal que no hay lengua humana que sepa explicar la grandeza e particularidades della, porque es tan grande que dentro del circuito della, que es todo cercado de muro muy alto, se podía muy bien facer una villa de quinientos vecinos. Tiene dentro deste circuito toda a la redonda muy gentiles aposentos en que hay muy grandes salas e corredores donde se aposentán los religiosos que allí están. Hay bien cuarenta torres muy altas y bien obradas, que la mayor tiene cincuenta escalones para sobir al cuerpo de la torre. La más prencipal es más alta que la torre de la iglesia mayor de Sevilla.*²⁶

Help them work through the passage with some guiding questions: What does Cortés mean by a *mezquita* or "mosque"? (He means a temple.) What was the wall around the temple like? (The walls were very tall.) How many people could dwell within the enclosure? (Five hundred people could live there.) Who are the *religiosos* who dwell there? (The *religiosos* are the native priesthood. *Religioso* can indicate an occupation as well as being a descriptive adjective.) What are their dwellings like? (They are refined, with large rooms and corridors.) How many towers does Cortés count, and what are they like? (He counts forty, tall and well made. The largest has fifty steps going up. The main tower is taller than the tower of the cathedral of Sevilla.)

Show the students an image of the Coyolxauhqui Stone. Explain that in February 1978 electrical workers digging a trench to lay cables behind the cathedral in Mexico City uncovered the 3.25 meter disk carved with the image of a partially nude, dismembered indigenous noblewoman or priestess. This is Coyolxauhqui, the moon goddess. The Aztec myth states that when she tried to kill her mother the Earth goddess the war god Huitzilopochtli sprang fully grown and in full armor from his mother's womb and struck off Coyolxauhqui head. Huitzilopochtli threw his sister's head into the sky, where it became the moon.²⁷ Share with students images of the Coyolxauhqui Stone, readily available online.

Next, use Google Maps or Bing Maps to explore the site through overhead views and panoramic images. You will find it is in the very heart of the capital, tellingly juxtaposed with the great cathedral, the Plaza de la Constitución, and the Palacio Nacional. Ask students to use the aerial photographs to estimate the size of the excavation. (Hint: it's 5,000 to 7,000 square meters.²⁸) Have them compare that to the size of a regulation soccer field. (A regulation soccer field is between 6400 and 8250 square meters. The excavation site is roughly the size of a soccer field.) Ask students to image what a comparable location might be in the United States.

Ask students: the excavation of the site and the building of the adjacent museum not only cost millions of dollars, but also altered the texture and flow of Mexico City's historic center. A whole city block of buildings was removed, traffic patterns disrupted, water and sewer lines rerouted. Was all this done solely for the scientific value of the site?

Ask students: who is the intended audience for the Templo Mayor site--foreign tourists, Mexican tourists, ordinary Mexico City dwellers going about their business, or all of the above? What kind of statement does the exposed structure of the old temple complex right in the middle of the city make about the relationship between the Aztec civilization and the Mexican capital of today? Is it significant that the entrance fee to the park and museum is only 51 pesos (about \$3.65 USD) and that admission is free *to Mexican citizens* and residents on Sundays?²⁹

Have students journal about their reflections. Allow them the choice of selecting a journal entry to record aloud as a digital audio presentation in Spanish to submit or of participating in small group graded conversations in Spanish to share and comment on their journal entries.

Tikal, Guatemala

With the help of a major American university and the U.S. National Parks Service, the government of Guatemala developed the largest archaeological site in the Western Hemisphere as a theme park to showcase Guatemala's treasured Maya heritage at a time when it targeted its own Maya citizens for wholesale slaughter. This is complex material for your students. I recommend starting with *Star Wars*, or you may lose them.

Begin by showing students some footage of Tikal. There is a clip from *Star Wars* that casts the ancient ruin as the setting for the "Yavin Rebel Base." Many students may have memories of the film, and leading with that scene may prove a useful "hook."

Share with students some background information about Tikal. Tikal is an ancient Maya city that once housed as many as 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants at its peak, reached around 700 C.E.³⁰ Ceramics at the site date back to as early as 800 B.C.E.; the city seems to have been largely abandoned by around 1200 C.E.³¹ The site has no strategic natural resources, and seems to have been established where it was in order to control trade routes.³² Once abandoned, the site was quickly reclaimed by the jungle.

The site was known to natives but was not visited by any official expedition until 1848. Later 19th century explorers cleared away sections of jungle and took the first photographs of the site, exposing the buildings to erosion. Study of the site continued into the twentieth century. The University Museum of Pennsylvania's Tikal Project became the largest archaeological expedition in the Western hemisphere. The project began in 1955, after a military coup orchestrated by the C.I.A. ousted President Jacobo Árbenz and installed a pro-U.S. regime.³³ Árbenz was a land reformer whose push to purchase uncultivated land from American fruit companies and redistribute it to Guatemalan farmers led to chilly relations with the United States.

The government of Guatemala instituted a second program in 1979, the *Proyecto Nacional Tikal*. The government project sought to continue the archaeological work and to develop and restore the site as a tourist attraction, with the help of the U.S. National Park Service. So far less than 10 percent of the known structures have been excavated.³⁴

Using Google Maps, show the students photos and aerial photos of the Tikal Plaza Mayor. For comparison, have them look up other sites. For an unexcavated site, have

them look up the world's largest pyramid, the Mayan pyramid at El Mirador National Park, Guatemala. (They'll get a good view of treetops!) Then, have them look up the Ciudadela Laberinto, La Libertad, Perú, an excavated portion of the city of Chan Chan, another vast pre-Columbian city. (They'll see a bare grid clearly showing the outlines of an urban complex.) Then, show them the Pevensey Castle, Pevensey, and Whitby Abbey, Whitby, both in the United Kingdom. Which of the sites does Tikal most resemble?

For intermediate students: ask the students to journal on what they have seen. When Tikal was inhabited, did it look like an English castle? Is there a practical reason to plant grass at Tikal when native plants could have been used? By making modern Tikal look like restored ruins of English castles, what kind of statement are the park's designers making about Guatemala's history and people? Do you think the park's designers are really trying to draw a parallel between the products of Mayan civilization and the ruins of European history, or are they just trying to package Tikal in a European style park like setting experienced travelers will find familiar? Discuss.

The period of the Mayan ruins' restoration and the park's construction coincides with the worst violence of the Guatemalan civil war, when the present day Maya were being killed by the tens of thousands. Does this strike you as odd or not? Discuss.

Finally, what kind of statement does the tourist site at Tikal make about Guatemalan national identity and the relationship of the Mayan people to the modern nation of Guatemala? Who is the target audience--foreigners, Guatemalans, or both? If both, which Guatemalans? Does it make a difference that the entrance fee for Tikal is 150 *quetzales*, around \$20-22, while Guatemala's per capita GDP is only \$5,200?^{35 36} Discuss.

Target vocabulary you may wish to stress could include *a mi parecer*, it seems to me. Target grammatical structures could include the use of the subjunctive to express surprise, doubt, or an emotional reaction to something in general: *me sorprende que se hayan renovado las ruinas*.

Once students have shared journal entries in class, assign the following: imagine you are a Guatemalan archaeology student working on the *Proyecto Nacional Tikal*. A colleague has brought up concerns about the erosion the buildings are exposed to once stripped of vines and vegetation. Some of the team members feel that preserving more of the native jungle vegetation would both protect the site and give it a more authentically Guatemalan feel. Others feel that this would hurt tourist appeal, and would make the Maya (and present day Guatemalans) look like primitive jungle dwellers; Guatemala should have clean, modern ruins like modern countries. Students have the choice of writing a formal letter to the director of the program expressing their opinions or of recording a digital audio message expressing their opinions.

Elective Activities

Have students choose one of the following projects to complete and share with the class.

The *Pupusa*

Visit one or more local *pupuserías* and experience the *pupusa*. Document your experience through video or through a combination of digital photos and digital audio. Informally survey some Central American classmates about their *pupusa* habits. Is the *pupusa* just a tasty and familiar dish, or is eating *pupusas* in a city where Latin food means tacos to most people an important part of maintaining one's national identity? The presentation should be in Spanish. Students may record their *pupusa* informants or may simply report on their findings.

Lucha libre: Sport, Performance, and National Identity

Lucha libre or Mexican masked professional wrestling is Mexico's second most popular spectator sport. Students should research the origins of masked Mexican wrestling and prepare a digital audio report detailing their findings. Then, students should experience Mexican *lucha libre* through video or through attending a live event. Students should make an audio log of their reflections, and should address the following questions: who are *rudos*? Who are *técnicos*? Why is the drama of good guys versus bad guys so important in Mexican masked wrestling? What are some elements that set Mexican *lucha libre* apart from other forms of wrestling or mixed martial arts? Is watching *lucha libre* just entertainment for Mexicans living in the United States, or is it also a way to keep in touch with their national identity?

Students may wish to expand on this unit by exploring *lucha libre* in the arts. Even a film such as *Santo El Enmascarado de Plata vs. "La Invasión de los Marcianos"* ("Santo the Masked Man of Silver vs. "The Martian Invasion") has marked nationalistic themes.³⁷ Students may wish to view and review a film individually or may even choose to stage a group screening.

Music and National Identity Survey

Prepare a survey of your Spanish speaking classmates' taste in Spanish language music and dance. Determine where your classmates are from, what artists they listen to, what dances they know how to do, and what dances they prefer to do. To what extent do your classmates' preferences in music and dance reflect their national origin? Is musical taste a matter of personal preference or is it also a way for young people to keep in touch with and maintain their national identities? Submit a copy of your survey results along with a digital audio report of your findings.

Nopales: Green, Prickly, Slimy and Full of Tangy Mexican Goodness

Many people around the world eat the fruit of the prickly pear. However, only in Mexican and Tejano cuisine are the leaves commonly eaten. They are spiny when raw and slimy when prepared, but have a crisp, pleasant texture and slightly citrus taste. Survey classmates on whether they eat *nopales* and how often. Track respondents by country and state of origin, and ask respondents to rate how important their Mexican national identity is to them. Do any patterns appear? Obtain instructions on how to prepare and eat fresh *nopales* from a classmate or classmate's parent and follow them. Submit a copy of your survey results along with your audio commentary and a digital record of your *nopal* culinary experience. Do you think eating *nopales* in the United States is a way people maintain their sense of national identity, or are they just a tasty and nutritious food?

Teacher Resources

The J. Paul Getty Museum has a virtual exhibit, *The Aztec Pantheon and the Art of Empire*, with a wealth of information on the Aztecs. The site features explanations of Aztec mythology with accompanying rotating 3D renderings of artifacts. Screen materials before sharing them with students, as there is some discussion of Aztec use of hallucinogenic plants. The exhibit may be found at www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/aztec/.

I strongly recommend the book *Theatre/archaeology* by Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks for anyone examining the role and function of archaeology in public life.

For teachers with an interactive white board or comparable technology in the classroom, Google Maps and Bing Maps are indispensable for bringing geography alive. The combination of aerial views and panoramic street level photographs they offer provide a rich and immersive experience for students.

Student Resources

For conducting surveys with instant access to digitally compiled data, SurveyMonkey can't be beat. There is no need to pass out slips of paper to conduct a survey--create your survey online and let SurveyMonkey do the work for you. Free basic service is available at try.surveymonkey.com.

For digital audio presentations, Audacity is an outstanding free audio recording and editing program. Audacity is available as a free download at audacity.sourceforge.net.

Implementing District Standards

This unit will address the following Essential Standards and Clarifying Objectives for World Languages:

Connections to Language and Literacy

Use the language to engage in interpersonal communication: IM.CLL.1.2 Use conversation skills to join and participate in a spontaneous discussion on a variety of familiar topic

Use the language to present information to an audience: IM.CLL.3.1 Use a series of connected sentences in presentations to describe experiences, events, and opinions.

Connections to Other Disciplines

Use the language to present information to an audience: IM.COD.3.3 Use readily available technology tools and digital literacy skills to present academic information in the target language.

Communities

Use the language to present information to an audience: IM.CMT.3.1 Use a series of connected sentences to describe arts, sports, games, and media from the target culture.

Compare the students' culture and the target culture: IM.CMT.4.2 Explain how events in the target culture's history have impacted contemporary perspectives, practices, and products

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Lawrence Christon here put into print Paul Rodriguez' now famous dictum, "War is God's way of teaching us geography." The quote is almost always attributed to Ambrose Bierce. As if the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were not enough, people somehow still feel the need to take something from a Mexican and hand it over to an Anglo.

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- ⁴ Rhys Jones and Peter Merriman. "Hot, banal and everyday nationalism: bilingual road signs in Wales.." *Political Geography* 28, no. 3 (2009): 164-173.
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- ⁶ David Carrasco. *City of Sacrifice the Aztec empire and the role of violence in civilization*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999. 58.
- ⁷ Peter D. Harrison. *The lords of Tikal: rulers of an ancient Maya city*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000. 31.
- ⁸ Harrison, 24.
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¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 652.

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³¹ Ibid, 21.

³² Ibid, 14.

³³ Ibid, 35.

³⁴ Ibid., 37-39.

³⁵ Ecotourism & Adventure Specialists. "Tikal National Park." Tikal, Travel to Tikal National Park. <http://www.tikalpark.com/parkreg.htm> (accessed November 28, 2011).

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