

Mural in Chapultepec Castle, Grade 9

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Lesson Plan Summary: In this lesson plan, students will view a portion of the mural “Boy Hero” by Angel Flores, which depicts the legend of a young cadet in the Mexican army, who jumped to his death while wrapped in the Mexican flag rather than allowing himself to be captured by American troops, during the Mexican-American War of 1847. Students will discuss this piece of artwork, exploring both the artistic choices and goals of the painter, as well as ideas of patriotism and bravery.

Objectives:

Students will identify and discuss the imagery found within the mural and discuss its historical relevance and cultural significance.

TEKS § 110.42. English I. (b) 19, 20, 8(D).

Introduction:

This mural, which can be viewed in the TIDES database (<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u/?/Digital,1761>), depicts the fall of Juan Escutia, one of six cadets training near Chapultepec Castle, who decided to go against orders from their commander during the battle at Chapultepec to stay and defend Chapultepec Castle rather than retreat. Juan is one of the *Niños Héroes* who represent the valor of the Mexican people against the invading forces of the United States marines during the Mexican-American War. Only when defeat was inevitable, did Juan Escutia decide to wrap himself in the Mexican flag and fall to his death from the heights of the castle. The fall of Chapultepec was the beginning of the end for General Santa Anna and the Mexican Army.

Directions:

For whole group response lesson, use the following steps:

1. Have students view the mural on TIDES as a whole class (<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u/?/Digital,1761>).
2. Students should write down anything that stands out to them – color, images, actions, etc. (Give students time to really study the mural!)
3. Call on students to share something they wrote down about the mural. Elicit the students’ ideas concerning the mural, what might be happening in the picture, what kind of mood they get from viewing the mural, etc.
4. Use the following questions to guide the discussion about the mural:
 - a) What are the dominant colors used in this mural? What do we know about the power of color in pictures and in stories?

- b) What do you think is the tone (painter's feelings for the subject) of the mural? Why?
 - c) What images stand out in the mural? Which ones are more prominent (stand out more) than others? Why do you think the artist did this?
 - d) What do you think is going on in the picture? This question can only be used if you have not shared with the students the introduction included with this lesson.
 - e) Does this mural remind you of a character you have read about? How so?
5. After discussing the mural, explain to the students the story the mural depicts. Are any of the students surprised by its connection to patriotism, bravery, and freedom?
 6. Discuss the fact that this is a brave act in response to American marines and their subsequent War with Mexico.

Extended Activities:

1. Students will write an essay on what freedom means to them.
2. Have students draw their own mural/picture that depicts an important historical event. Have them share their pictures with the class.
3. Assign students to write a series of diary entries from the viewpoint of one of the boys at Chapultepec Castle during the battle.