

Nahuatls, Grade 6-8

Created by Ma. Eugenia Avila, September 2007

Lesson Plan Summary: In this lesson plan, students will read stories, create journal entries, and examine maps in order to learn about the Nahuatl culture, language and artwork.

Objectives:

- The students will identify the Nahuatl in America before the Spanish arrival.
- The students will examine the way of life of the Nahuatls.
- The students will research to find out in which regions of Mexico Nahuatl is still spoken.
- The students will read a story in Nahuatl, and in both the English and Spanish translations.
- The students will learn the phonics of Nahuatl.
- The students will appreciate the way the Nahuatl paint.
- The students will find some Nahuatl paintings which illustrate the story.
- The students will analyze information by identifying, comparing, summarizing and drawing conclusions.

Teaching Activities:

1. Read information about Nahuatl Culture at:
<http://www.azteca.net/aztec/nahuatl/index.shtml>
2. View the PowerPoint on Nahuatl History and read the Nahuatl history sheet
3. View the PowerPoint story “The King and the Daughter”
4. Read the Nahuatl interview

Focus Activity

1. Journal Activity: Ask the students to write a short description of the story and pictures in their journals.
2. Mapping Activity: Place the map of Mexico from the PowerPoint on the computer screen and project it so the class can view it. Have students name the places where Nahuatl is spoken.

Assessment Activity

Based on the knowledge you have gained about the Nahuatls, write an essay to a friend or family member and describe what you know about the Nahuatls, including their culture, lifestyle, beliefs and problems with the Spanish. The letter should contain historical information found on the website, and from the PowerPoints, pictures and paintings. This assignment must be in essay form. It should be approximately one page long. Your grade will be based both on both the accuracy of the content and on the use of standard English grammar. Be as neat as possible. Attach a drawing made by yourself as your essay cover.

Extension Activity

Have students watch the how-to video and make the Nahuatl headdress, called “Penacho.”



A Brief History of the Nahuatl People

Created by Maru Avila

The Nahuatls developed many disciplines including art, poetry, architecture, murals, sculptures and textiles. In their culture artists were considered particularly gifted. The Nahuatl believed that artists were destined for such pursuits, and that this destiny was determined by the position of the stars at the time of a person's birth.

Among the Nahuatl, snakes were associated with earthly matters, the night, and all things feminine. The serpent was considered the most important of sacred symbols.

Nahuatl tradition says that the world as we know it was created by Ometeotl "the Absolute" from which the four directions of the universe emerged: black, the North; white, the West; blue, the South; and red, the East.

The Mexican language comes from the Nahuatl root word meaning "a dance done with the hands." It is also known as the "turquoise smoke harmonious speech," or "that which is pleasing to the ear."

A brief dictionary of common terms:

Nahuatl	English	Spanish
Kalli	House	Casa
Tlazocamatli	Thank you	Gracias
Tonatiuh	Sun	Sol
Mezli	Moon	Luna
Azteka	From Aztekatl (meaning Aztlan)	De Aztekatl (significa de Aztlan)
Tlatoa	Speak	Hablar
Ikniuhtli	Friend	Amigo
Nehuatl	I	Yo
Tehuatl	You	Tu

Niltze	Hi	Hola
Amo	No	No
Kema	Yes	Si
Titlatoa Nahuatl?	Do you speak Nahuatl?	Tu hablas Nahuatl?
Kema, Nitlatoa Nahuatl	Yes, I speak Nahuatl.	Yo hablo Nahuatl.
Amo, Nitlato Nahuatl.	No, I don't speak Nahuatl.	No hablo Nahuatl.
Ken Motoka?	What is your name?	Cual es tu nombre?
Nehuatl Notoka...	My name is...	Mi nombre es...
Kanin Tichanti?	Where do you live?	Donde es tu vives?
Nehuatl Nichanti...	I live...	Yo vivo...
Kenin Otimo Uika?	How are you doing?	Como as estado?
Hue Kaulli.	Very good.	Muy bien.
Kualli.	Good.	Bueno.
Cihuatl.	Woman	Mujer
Tlacatl	Man	Hombre
Nantlil	Mother	Madre
Tahtll	Father	Padre
Ikniuh	Brother	Hermano
Hueltiuh	Sister	Hermana
Cuacualti	Beautiful	Bonita
Ce	One	Uno
Ome	Two	Dos
Yeyi	Three	Tres
Nahui	Four	Cuatro
Macuil	Five	Cinco
Chicuacen	Six	Seis
Chicome	Seven	Siete
Chicuei	Eight	Ocho
Chihnahui	Nine	Nueve
Matlactli	Ten	Diez

Nahuatl Interview

Created by Maru Avila

I interviewed Miss Martha. She is a teacher as well as the Nahuatl chief. She belongs to a group of people called “gente roja.” She is also the grandmother of the “Sun Dance.” They perform Nahuatl style dances for our ancestors as well as weddings and other celebrations. She also has a theater and dancing Aztec company, and is a “Zihuakatekuhtli,” ruling woman of the Aztec dance.

Martha explained that when the Spanish arrived, the Nahuatl people tried to teach them their religion. The Nahuatl adapted their beliefs and found parallels between their god and some of the Spanish saints.

She also mentioned that the pyramids are not truly pyramids. The only pyramids that exist are the ones in Egypt because of their shape. Our constructions are known as “teocallis,” or pyramidal platform. Also, the Nahuatl ancestors weren’t warriors, but were instead called “yao tecatl.” Yao means heart and tecatl means man, so the complete word translates as “protector.”

Martha explained that located in Rome are the “teomochli,” manuscripts made by the Nahuatl ancestors before the Spanish arrived. The Spanish tried to force the Indians to rewrite their manuscripts to show the Indians sacrificing humans to the gods, but this would have been a lie. The myth of human sacrifices came from the days when the Indians practiced medical procedures such as open heart surgeries using obsidian tools as medical devices. While it is true that they did open the chest in order to show the heart to the gods, this was done as a prayer for health. The medical devices still exist. Many museums exhibit them as if they were glasses for blood, but this also was not true.

She also mentioned that the only blood they shed during rituals was turkey blood, as this was believed to help them have good crops in the coming year. Another belief the Nahuatl held was that the phases of the moon could tell you when you were pregnant and if you were going to have a girl or a boy. They could also tell whether their animals would have male or female offspring.

The teacher said that the Spanish language is our dialect and that our own language is Nahuatl due to the fact that the Spanish imposed their way of speaking upon us.

At the end of the video she told us the following poem called “In la Kec’h.”

Yo soy tu, tu eres yo	You are you, you are me
Si te amo, te amo	If I love, I love you
Si me hago daño me lo hago	If I hurt you I hurt me
Si eres igual a mi	If you are like me
Y te puedo ver en los ojos	and I can see you in your eyes
¿Cómo hacerte daño?	How can I hurt you?
Si tu eres yo y yo soy tu	If you are me and I am you