

Examining the Cultural Meaning behind Clothing:

The Huipil and Repozo of Mexico and Guatemala

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| **Introduction** | |
| Clothing can provide a glimpse into the beliefs, values, and practices of a culture. In this lesson, students will examine two clothing items that have roots in the Mayan Indigenous populations of Mexico and Guatemala. The lesson involves analyzing artifacts as well as reading and listening skills. Students will explore how these items represent not only the cultural practice and history of these areas but also how these peoples have fought to preserve these practices. The extension suggestions allow for students to explore the impact commercialism has had not only on the practices of making the items but also the use of the items themselves. | |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:**    ES.3.1 – Students identify and explore current traditions, rites, and norms of an ethnic or racial group(s) and how they have or are changing over time.  S.2.1 – Define culture and identify the material and non-material components of culture.  6.1.15 - Describe the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the lives of individuals and on trade and cultural exchange between Europe and the Americas and the rest of the world.  *6.1.19 -* Analyze cause-and-effect relationships, keeping in mind multiple causations, including the importance of individuals, ideas, human interests, beliefs and chance in history. | **Compelling Question(s):**  How does clothing represent much more than just fashion?  How has modernization, imperialism, and commercialism impacted Indigenous practices?  How can cultural groups keep Indigenous practices alive? |
| **Lesson Objectives:**  Students will be able to:   * describe the cultural relevance of the huipil and rebozo in Mexico and Central America. | |
| **Materials** | |
| * Class Projection Device * Access to the following CLASC items in the Indiana University Digital Toolbox:   + Huipil (Embroidered shirt)   + Zapotec Shawl * Articles for background info   + Huipil     - [Na'atik Mexico - Huipil - a traditional Maya garment](https://naatikmexico.org/blog/huipil-a-traditional-maya-garment)     - [Mayan Copal - A brief history of the huipil](https://mayancopal.com/blogs/news/a-brief-history-of-the-huipil)       * These first two articles provide brief descriptions of the huipil: its use and design as well as touches on its history     - [Phalarope - The huipil: An everlasting, Indigenous cultural emblem](https://www.phalarope.org/magazine/2021/1/30/the-huipil-an-everlasting-indigenous-cultural-emblem)       * This article provides additional information about a variety of symbols used in huipiles and their meanings.     - [Brooklyn Museum - Woman's blouse or huipil](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/168766)       * This is another artifact example of a huipil. The description provides information about the meaning behind common – to represent the wearer’s connection to the world.   + Zapotec shawl (rebozo)     - [Smithsonian Education - Mexican rebozo](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/textiles/english/gallery/rebo_d.htm)     - [Wikipedia - Rebozo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebozo) * YouTube Videos:   + [Business Insider - Meet the women keeping a 2,000-year-old Indigenous craft alive in Guatemala](https://youtu.be/l7_U0ZBRTsw)     - This video is excellent for showing students the cultural and historical significance of the huipil, how it is made with the use of the backstrap loom, and the difficulties the weavers face to keep this practice alive and to make a living from their work.     - **NOTE**: The video briefly mentions sexual violence   + [National Geographic - See how Indigenous weaving styles are preserved in Guatemala](https://youtu.be/apLl5H1uslM)     - This is a shorter video that covers the cultural significance of the huipil and shows how it is made.   + [From Mexico to the world: The rebozo in art culture & fashion](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HnZcv1zzS18)     - Brief news clip about an upcoming art show that features the rebozo. It does provide information regarding its cultural use and how it has expanded to be used in fashion   + [Luis Rodriguez - Ikat rebozo weaving in Tenancingo, Mexico](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-mVn-GSUk0)     - Short video with only music that shows a rebozo being woven | |
| **Learning Plan** | |
| **Activities**   1. Begin by showing students the images of the huipil and Zapotec shawl. Ask students to make inferences about these items: What do they notice? What purpose do they think these items serve? From what part of the world would these items be? Who would use them? Depending on your content and classroom context, students may know these are from Mexican and Central American culture; they also more than likely will be able to infer that these are clothing items and probably worn by women. They may note the similarities in the colors—that both items are black with bright colors and flowers in the designs. 2. Next, engage students in content regarding the description and history of these items. In the Materials section are a variety of texts you can use for this purpose; some of them are lengthier and/or for higher level readers.    * You can either have the students read one or multiple of the texts, create an adapted version that includes information from all of them, or develop a presentation that covers the information. You could also develop a [Jigsaw](https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Jigsaw-Instructions.pdf) activity to have smaller groups of students engage with different texts. 3. Have students share out what they have learned about these items. As students share out, you may choose to keep a record of this on the board/document projected. Be sure to touch on: from where these items are typically found and the cultures they represent as well as the purposes of the items. 4. Next, show students at least one of the videos about the huipil and one about the rebozo. 5. Students can now be asked to note similarities and differences between the two clothing items in terms of how they are made, their historical background, as well as their cultural significance. This could be done by having students complete a Venn diagram or a [three column t-chart](https://www.education.com/worksheet/article/t-chart-with-three-columns/). For example, students may note how the items serve different purposes; the rebozo shawl is often used to carry young children in addition to being used as a clothing item. For a similarity, students may note how the dyes used for both are often made with local materials so these items have a very localized significance. Students could also note how both items have been commercialized for a broader public. | |
| **Assessment Suggestions**  In addition to completing the Venn diagram or T-chart, students could be asked to write a brief paragraph in which they answer the following question: How do these clothing items hold cultural significance for the Indigenous peoples of Mexico and Guatemala? | |
| **Extensions**  The first YouTube video discusses the impact commercialism has had on the huipil practice in Guatemala especially. Students could explore this further in terms of discussing the ways in which commercialism impacts Indigenous communities and practices. The following article can be read in addition to or in supplement of the video: [Mayamam Weavers - The Other Story of Huipiles](https://www.mayamamweavers.com/blogs/our-blog/the-other-story-of-huipiles). Students could examine websites that sell hiupiles and rebozos to see from where the products originate (note: a quick Google search of each term results in a variety of these items that are for sale from various merchants). Students could write op-ed letters about the importance of maintaining cultural practices, the danger of commercialism, etc. Students could also explore other examples of the impact of commercialism on communities around the world. | |

Huipil (Embroidered Blouse) & Zapotec Shawl Activity Possibilities

Some of the best opportunities for education are *integrative*—meaning that students are able to make connections across disciplines to reinforce the knowledge that they are developing. For example, they may be learning about Renaissance Italy in World Studies at the same time that they read Dante’s *Inferno* in English class while also studying Botticelli in Art. Feel free to combine and adapt some of the ideas across disciplines and standards to best suit your particular context. You can also collaborate with other teachers at your school or supplement the resources provided by contacting your librarian.

**Note: The following ideas are meant to give general guidance for teachers to include artifacts and other material culture in their classrooms. They are not meant to be treated as comprehensive activities or lessons that are one-size-fits-all for any classroom. They should be personalized to best fit the needs of a teacher’s individual context in accordance with prior student learning, student abilities, available resources, and any curriculum.**

**Art**

**Visual Arts – Responding:**

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| Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work  Enduring Understanding: Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed throughout engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.  Essential Question(s): How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art? | |
| VA:Re7.1.1a | *Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences.* |
| VA:Re7.1.3a | *Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.* |
| VA:Re7.1.6a | *Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.* |
| VA:Re7.1.Ia | *Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.* |
| VA:Re7.1.IIa | *Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments* |
| VA:Re7.1.IIIa | *Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life* |

**Visual Arts – Connecting:**

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| Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.  Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.  Essential Question(s): How does art help us understanding the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? How is art used to impact the videos of a society> How does art preserve aspects of life? | |
| VA:Cn11.1.1a | *Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons.* |
| VA:Cn11.1.2a | *Compare and contrast cultural uses of artwork from different times and places.* |
| VA:Cn11.1.3a | *Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made* |
| VA:Cn11.1.4a | *Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created.* |
| VA:Cn11.1.6a | *Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.* |
| VA:Cn11.1.7a | *Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses* |
| VA:Cn11.1.8a | *Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity* |
| VA:Cn11.1.IIa | *Compare uses of art in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts.* |
| VA:Cn11.1.IIIa | *Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society.* |

*In examining the clothing items, students can discuss the ways in which these items as well as the processes used to make them reflect what matters in these societies. Students are examining the processes of making the clothing items, exploring the beliefs that impact their design and the materials used in the process. Students can discuss how these items establish and reflect group identity for the Indigenous groups in these areas who feel the need to keep this tradition alive and represent themselves through these clothing items.*

**Social Studies**

**Grade Contents**

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| K.3.6 | *Identify and compare similarities and differences in families, classmates, neighbors and neighborhoods, and ethnic and cultural groups.* |
| 1.1.1 | *Identify continuity and change between past and present in community life using primary sources.* ***Examples****: Clothing, the use of technology, methods of transportation, entertainment and customs; Compare the roles of men, women, and children; ethnic and cultural groups; types of work; schools and education in the community; and recreation* |
| 1.3.8 | *Compare cultural similarities and differences of various ethnic and cultural groups found in Indiana such as family traditions and customs, and traditional clothing and food* |
| 3.3.7 | *Compare the cultural characteristics of the local community with communities in other parts of the world.* |
| 3.3.12 | *Use a variety of resources to demonstrate an understanding of regional environmental issues and examine the ways that people have tried to solve these problems.* |
| 3.3.13 | *Identify and describe how human systems and physical systems have impacted the local environment.* |
| 3.4.4 | *Define interdependence and give examples of how people in the local community depend on each other for goods and services.* |
| 4.4.4 | *Explain that prices change as a result of changes in supply and demand for specific products.* |
| 6.1.15 | *Describe the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the lives of individuals and on trade and cultural exchange between Europe and the Americas and the rest of the world.* |
| 6.1.19 | *Analyze cause-and-effect relationships, keeping in mind multiple causations, including the importance of individuals, ideas, human interests, beliefs and chance in history.* |
| 6.1.21 | *Form research questions and use a variety of information resources to obtain, evaluate and present data on people, cultures and developments in Europe and the Americas.* |
| 6.3.4 | *Describe and compare major cultural characteristics of regions in Europe and the Western Hemisphere.* |
| 6.3.10 | *Explain the ways cultural diffusion, invention, and innovation change culture.* |
| 6.3.11 | *Differentiate between the terms anthropology, archeology, and artifacts while explaining how these contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the past.* |
| 6.4.1 | *Give examples of how trade related to key developments in the history of Europe and the Americas.* |
| 6.4.2 | *Analyze how countries of Europe and the Americas have been influenced by trade in different historical periods.* |

**Economics**

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| E.1.1 | *Define and identify each of the productive resources (natural, human, capital) and explain why each is necessary for the production of goods and services.* |
| E.2.1 | *Define supply and demand and explain the causes of the Law of Supply and the Law of Demand.* |
| E.2.7 | *Describe how the earnings of workers are determined by a number of factors including the market value of the product produced, workers’ productivity, the amount of human capital held by workers, collective bargaining, and discrimination.* |
| E.3.5 | *Explain how competition in markets affects price and quantity.* |

**Global Economics**

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| GE.1.1 | *Define and identify each of the productive resources.* |
| GE.1.2 | *Define scarcity and explain how opportunity costs and tradeoffs exist.* |
| GE.1.3 | *Explain incentives and how they affect choice.* |

*Students could explore the economic factors involved in the production of these clothing items, especially if they explore how the Indigenous women are struggling to sell their garments due to third party sellers and non-traditional products being made.*

**Sociology**

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| **S.2.1** | *Define culture and identify the material and non-material components of culture.* |
| **S.2.5** | *Identify culture conflict, cultural similarity, cultural diversity.* |

**Ethnic Studies**

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| **ES.3.1** | *Students identify and explore current traditions, rites, and norms of an ethnic or racial group(s) and how they have or are changing over time* |
| **ES.4.1** | *Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group.* |

*Much of the social studies standards noted here revolve around students examining cultural customs and traditions. The activity included above could be explored at the different age levels with alterations, scaffolding, and support for students. For example, younger children can explore the design and purpose of the clothing items by looking at various examples while older students may explore the ways in which the communities are impacted by urbanization and commercialism.*

**Language Arts**

**Writing Skills:**

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| 4.W.5 | Conduct short research on a topic.   * Identify a specific question to address (e.g., What is the history of the Indy 500?). * Use organizational features of print and digital sources to efficiently locate further information. * Determine the reliability of the sources. * Summarize and organize information in their own words, giving credit to the source * Present the research information, choosing from a variety of formats. |
| 5.W.5 | Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.   * With support, formulate a research question (e.g., What were John Wooden’s greatest contributions to college basketball?). * Identify and acquire information through reliable primary and secondary sources. * Summarize and paraphrase important ideas and supporting details, and include direct quotations where appropriate, citing the source of information. * Avoid plagiarism and follow copyright guidelines for use of images, pictures, etc. * Present the research information, choosing from a variety of sources. |

*Students could conduct brief research projects on Indigenous practices and/or cultural clothing items.*