**Latin America Unit**

**Grade Level:** 9-10

**Subject:** Geography/ World History/ United States History

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**Overview and Purpose:**

Latinos have come to be part of the United States through many different avenues: immigrants seeking a better life, refugees driven by war and those who did not move at all, but who found themselves on the other side of redefined borders as the United States expanded.  After taking part in the following lessons, students will develop a better understanding of the people of Latin America.

**Educational Standards**

* **SS.G.2** Describe the physical and human characteristics of a place and explain how the lives of people are rooted in places and regions.
* **SS.G.22** Utilize various geographic information systems to gain insight into people and their place in the world.
* **SS.W.12** Apply geography skills to help investigate issues and justify possible resolutions involving people, places and environments.
* **SS.W.13** Explain how migration of people and movement of goods and ideas can enrich cultures, but also create tensions.
* **SS.W. 21** Demonstrate an understanding of the global political environment of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries.

-Analyze the causes and effects of political revolutions and determine their impact on                  the formation of governments and on the citizens of a society

* **SS.US.13** Interpret how people express attachment to places and regions (eg. by reference to essays, novels, poems, short stories, feature films and songs)
* **SS.US.15** Analyze the characteristics of cultural contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics and all immigrants to the new nation.
* **SS.US.20** Demonstrate and understanding of westward movement and the resulting regional conflicts that took place in America in the nineteenth century.

-Summarize United States relations with foreign powers (e.g. Louisiana Purchase, Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny and the Mexican War).

**Day 1**

**Focus Question: What do students know about Latin America?**

**Materials Needed:**

* Geography of Latin America pretest
* Note cards labeled with names of Latin American Countries
* File Folder booklets

Students will complete a Geography of Latin America pretest.  Once the pretest is completed, go over the answers as a class.  Next, pair up students (may need to have a group of 3) and hand out note cards that have been labeled with the names of different Latin American countries. Students will work with their partner(s) to write down any information they think they may already know about the country on their notecard (these can be facts or stereotypes...any information will work).  After students have added information to their notecards, allow some time to share aloud.  Working with the same students and the same country, students will receive a file folder with 4-6 images pasted to the inside that relate to the country on their assigned notecard (documents, portraits, maps, etc.).  Using only the images provided, students will individually write a brief story about their country (2-3 paragraphs).  If time allows, project the images and allow a few students to share some of the conclusions they came to from viewing the images.

**Day 2**

**Focus Question: Who were the different people living in Latin America before the arrival of the European forces?**

**Materials Needed:**

* Physical maps of Latin America for each student
* Document Projector to project a map showing the Indigenous People of Latin America
* Computers with internet access

Lead a class discussion on who students believe to be in the Americas before the arrival of the Europeans (students will most likely mention Native Americans, Aztecs, Incas, and Mayas).  Introduce some of the lesser-known indigenous peoples of Latin America and allow students to work in groups to conduct research about these groups.  What are the GRAPES Geography, Religion, Achievements, Politics, Economics, and Social Structure) of the civilizations that existed?  What happened to these groups?  Students will share findings with the class.

**Day 3**

**Focus Question:**What are the unintended consequences of U.S. military intervention in El Salvador?

**Materials Needed:**

* Clips from documentary *Harvest of Empire*
* Segments of readings about Central American countries

When students enter the room, the following quote will be written on the board and students will write down a few thoughts about the statement:

“We are all Americans of the New World, and our most dangerous enemies are not each other, but the great wall of ignorance between us.”  
Juan González, Harvest of Empire

Ask students to share their thoughts.

To help students get a feel for the violent conflict that raged through El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras during the mid-20th century, introduce the documentary *Harvest of Empire*.  Students will watch the sections which highlight the political turmoil and US involvement in Guatemala (13:00 - 18:37), Nicaragua (54:38-1:02:15), and El Salvador (1:10:40 - 1:16:54).  Students will take notes while watching the sections of the film and discuss as a class.  After viewing clips, students will receive a portion of a reading that comes from an article about one of the Central American countries being discussed.  After reading their segment (2-3 sentences), students will be instructed to move around the room to find their classmates that have the other sections of their reading.  Once they have pieced together their articles, as a group, they will have to create a GIST (summary of the article in thirty words or less that highlight the important facts) as a group and report out to the class.  Discuss the unintended consequences of U.S. military intervention in El Salvador.

**Extension Activity:**  For homework, students will research another time in history when the United States got involved with a foreign power and what the unintended consequences were.

\*Lesson taken from a portion of Poetry Fires the Revolution at: (<http://www.teachingcentralamerica.org/poetry-fires-the-revolution>)

**Day 4**

**Focus Question: What power, if any, does poetry have in the face of war, oppression, and injustice?**

**Materials Needed:**

* Various quotes printed from (<http://wordsdance.com/2013/07/50-powerful-quotes-about-poetry/>) about poetry posted around the walls of the classroom
* Computers with internet access
* Set of poems about poetry by Central American poets with links to biographies (<http://www.teachingcentralamerica.org/bios>)

As students enter the room, instruct them to take a piece of notebook paper, move around the classroom, and view the various quotes about poetry posted around the room.  As they view the quotes, tell them to write down what some of the quotes mean to them.  Once students have had a chance to look at some of the quotes, instruct them to take their seats and lead a class discussion by asking if words have power.  This discussion will lead in the potential for poetry to have political power.  Tell students they will be reading a number of poets from Central America who stood against repressive military regimes in the mid-20th century.

Read the biography of Otto Rene Castillo and his poem “Apolitical Intellectuals” as a class and discuss the purpose of the poem.  Why might the government perceive him as a threat?  Why might he have been willing to sacrifice his home, safety and his life?  After a class discussion on the poem, students will work individually to read a poem by one of the other poets from Central America and learn a little about the poet’s life.

After reading, answer the following questions:

1. Who is the speaker in the poem?
2. What characteristics does the speaker have?
3. What events or situations might have prompted the poet to write this poem?
4. Who is the likely audience of the poem?
5. What happens, if anything, in the poem?
6. What does the poet believe about the role of poetry?
7. Write a short biography of your poet (historical background reflecting important events from poet’s country and time period, persecution that the poet experienced or injustices that the poet addressed in his/ her work, dramatic or significant events from the poet’s life, accomplishments achieved, awards received, or goals reached).

Take the answers from the above questions, a few lines that you believe are important from the poem you chose, the biography, and create a poster that commemorates the poet’s life and beliefs in the power of poetry.

\*Lesson taken from a portion of Poetry Fires the Revolution at: (<http://www.teachingcentralamerica.org/poetry-fires-the-revolution>)

**Day 5   \*(This can be extended to a two day lesson)**

**Focus Question: What are some of the different ways that Mexican citizens came to terms with the expansion of the United States and how did they become foreigners in their own lands within a very short time?**

**Materials Needed:**

* Map of North America circa 1830
* Video clips from pbs.org (*Mexican-American War*, *Juan Seguin, Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, Apolinaria Lorenzana, and New Mexico*)
* Extranjeros and Expansion: Student Activity Sheet (pbs.org)

Show students a map of North America circa 1830.  Ask them to explain how it is different from the geography of today (Note who is in control of what territories- particularly the size of Mexico and who is absent from the map).  Discuss how the boundaries of the United States change throughout history (show *Mexican-American War* clip to spark discussion).  After discussing, explain that students will examine the story of U.S. expansion from the point of view of people in Texas, New Mexico and California.

Divide students into small research groups.  Using film clips and the Extranjeros and Expansion: Student Activity Sheet, each group will examine history from the point of view of particular characters and regions.  They will detail locations, time frames and stories of at least two regions of Texas, California and New Mexico.  Next, they will track the tactics of U.S. expansion and examine the impact on Mexican citizens’ wealth, rights and safety, contrasting formal treaty agreements with what actually happened.  Students will examine the strategies used by early Mexican Americans to respond to political, economic and social change.  After tracking this information on the activity sheet, they present their information to the entire class.

\*Lesson taken from a portion of the Extranjeros and Expansion lesson at (pbs.org)

**Extension Activity:** Put yourself in the shoes of a recently arrived immigrant from Latin America. Write a letter to a family member or a friend who still lives in Latin America describing immigration conditions and how you are adapting to life in the United States.

**Day 6**

**Focus Question: What are the important aspects of different Latin American regions or specific countries?**

**Materials Needed:**

* Geography of Latin America posttest
* GRAPES Poster Set
* Computers with internet access for research and for creation of a WordCloud at (wordart.com)

Students will complete a Geography of Latin America posttest.  After turning in tests, review the GRAPES acronym (Geography, Religion, Achievements, Politics, Economics, and Social Structure) students will begin conducting research to help with the creation of a WordCloud (an image composed of words used in a particular text or subject, in which the size of each word indicates its frequency or importance) that explains in detail a region or specific country in Latin America.  This WordCloud must highlight the GRAPES of the area chosen.