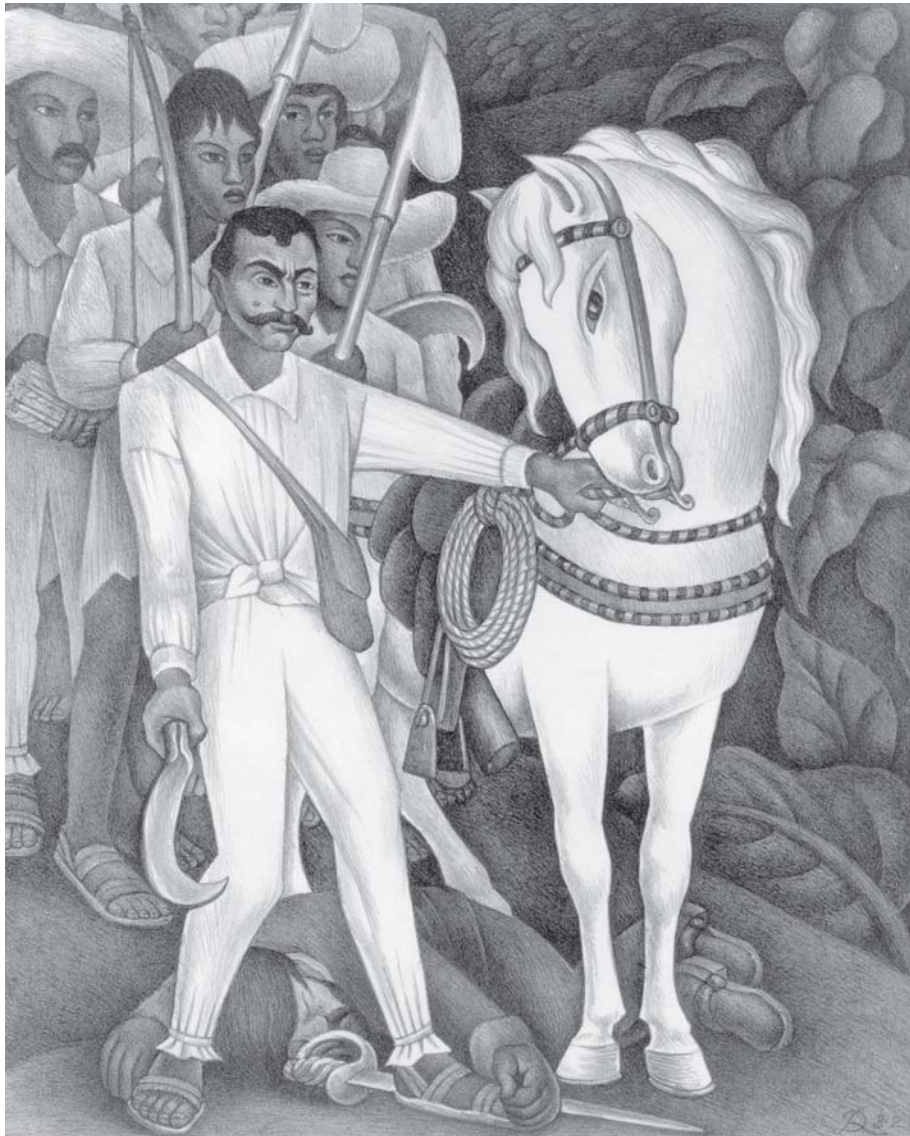


Art
ToGo

The Cleveland
Museum of Art

Diego Rivera:
A Mexican Hero
and His Culture

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Contents

- 3 **At a Glance**
A summary of major objectives
- 7 **Questions and Answers**
Additional background and some useful definitions
- 9 **List of Objects**

Special thanks to Sue Kaesgen for her research on the *Ch'ullu*.

Resources

- 10 **Lesson Plan**
Formatted especially for teachers
- 11 **Vocabulary**
- 11 **Notable People Discussed in the Presentation**
- 12 **Suggestions for Follow-up Activities**
- 12 **What You Need to Know**
Logistics of the Art To Go visit and suggestions on how to configure your classroom
- 13 **“Webbing” Diego Rivera**
How to connect Art To Go lesson concepts to other disciplines
- 14 **Suggestions for Further Reading**
Books for students and teachers
- 15 **Website**
How to reach the Cleveland Museum of Art over the internet and the address for objects

Also in Your Folder

- a. **Presentation Evaluation**
Please fill out and return to the museum after the presentation. Thank You!
- b. **Fax Sheet**
Use this form for shorter questions or concerns relating to the Art To Go visit.

Cover: *Emiliano Zapata, The Agrarian Leader*.
Diego Rivera, 1932.
Lithograph. Gift of the Print Club of Cleveland

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Introduction

The purpose of this Teacher Packet is to prepare you for a visit from the Art To Go team. The contents will acquaint you with the Art To Go program and with the topic of the presentation you have requested, *Diego Rivera, A Mexican Hero and His Culture*. You may reproduce the materials in this packet for educational purposes.

At a Glance

In the 20th century the name of Diego Rivera was recognized by more people in Latin America than that of any other artist, and he has been called the most famous Mexican artist in the world. He was familiar with the artistic traditions of the past as well as new developments in the art of his own time. After an important tour of the United States in the 1930s his influence was felt in American art. This suitcase will introduce your students to the work of Diego Rivera and some of its broader themes. The objectives of the lesson are to prepare students to identify Rivera's artistic style and to discuss the cultural and political themes in his work.

Diego Rivera was best known for his murals, most of which were executed *in situ*. He made prints

now and then throughout his career, and frequently in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The suitcase features a lithograph from this era, an image of Emiliano Zapata. Like other controversial figures depicted by Rivera, Zapata was admired by the artist, and was considered a political and military leader in the fight of the Mexican people for freedom from oppression. This was a theme to which the artist would return over the years.

Diego Rivera was known for his political involvement and often depicted leaders of Mexican uprisings. Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla is one such important figure in Mexican history who is depicted in the votive tempera painting from 1876 included in the suitcase. On September 16th, 1810, Father Miguel called the Native Mexican population to arms to throw off the yoke of Spanish rule. In Diego Rivera's day this event was thought to represent the triumph of Mexican culture over foreign domination.

Despite Rivera's international fame and European artistic education he was deeply rooted in his Mexican cultural heritage, and this suitcase places his work within a broad national context. Diego Rivera's murals for the public buildings in Mexico City in particular reveal his interest in Mexico's earliest cultures. He also collected Pre-Columbian art, with such enthusiasm that he would sometimes buy it rather than food.

The suitcase features work from some of the major Pre-Columbian civilizations: the Olmec, the Colima, and Teotihuacan. The Olmec culture, sometimes called Mesoamerica's mother culture, is dated from

1200 to 300 BCE. Several important Mesoamerican characteristics first appeared among the Olmecs, such as the construction of pyramids and ceremonial ballcourts, the fabrication of large-scale stone sculpture, and the earliest development of Mesoamerican religious beliefs. An Olmec head from a small clay figure is included in the suitcase.

The Colima of ancient West Mexico are not as well documented as the Olmec and Teotihuacan civilizations. Much of what is known about them has been deduced from objects found in their graves. The Colima built shaft tombs, several meters into the ground, and placed several burials within these complexes. Like many ancient cultures they wanted to propitiate the dead with grave gifts, which were placed in the tombs. They specialized in hollow, molded vessels in the form of people, plants and animals. The suitcase includes a Colima vessel in the shape of a dog. This particular species of dog was often represented in Diego Rivera's murals.

Teotihuacan was one of the largest cities in the world at its height in the seventh century CE. The city, which was laid out on a grid, was dominated by the large stepped pyramid temples of the Sun and Moon. The powerful geometry of these monuments is reflected in small-scale Teotihuacan works. A figure from Teotihuacan that bears these geometric characteristics is included in the suitcase. Unlike some portraits created by the Olmecs, works from Teotihuacan seem not to represent specific individuals.

In an oil painting designed as a cover for the works of author Pablo Neruda's *Canto General*, Diego

Rivera once again glorified the Pre-Hispanic cultures of Latin America. The painting, which represents the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru, depicts the Incas wearing brightly colored knit caps called *ch'ullu*. The *ch'ullu* is still worn by the inhabitants of Peru today. Although the designs featured on the caps are personal to the wearer, they also identify him or her as an inhabitant of a particular village. A genuine *ch'ullu* cap is included in the suitcase.

Conquering new lands in the name of Christianity was frequently cited as the impetus for European expansion. However, these voyages were more immediately concerned with new routes for the spice trade. Hernan Cortez, the Spanish conquistador, came to the Americas to send new products back to Spain. Chocolate, a major export, quickly became a favorite drink among Europeans. The chocolate beater in the suitcase was rotated between the palms to mix and froth the milk.

The rowel spur with silver inlay, an object used by a *charros* or cowboy about one hundred years ago, conjures up images of the Wild West that have sometimes been associated with Mexico. Although the skills developed by the *charros*—lariat tricks and jumping on the backs of wild horses—were originally skills associated with ranching, these feats soon evolved into popular entertainments in the United States. Remarkably, the horse had been brought to the Americas by Europeans. Today, raising and showing horses in Mexico has become a strong cultural tradition.

As with any Art To Go presentation, our teachers will present the lesson in a style appropriate to any grade level. The intent of the presentation is to allow students to recognize the personal artistic style of Diego Rivera, to recognize his ties to political developments in Mexico in the first half of the century, and to understand his glorification of Mexico's Pre-Hispanic past.

What are some of the characteristics of Diego Rivera's artistic style?

Diego Rivera was an artist who was capable of working in many different artistic styles. Although he studied the major period of fresco production, the Italian Renaissance, he was also aware of new trends in European art. In the years 1909–1921 he lived most of the time in Paris, where familiar styles included cubism and other forms of abstraction, as well as impressionism. Yet for most of his career he worked in a figurative style, with clearly delineated forms. His favored medium was fresco, although he also created many oil paintings and a series of prints. He frequently depicted a triumph of the underprivileged, disenfranchised masses, with the underlying theme of the triumph of communism over other political systems. He glorified Mexican revolutionary leaders and depicted the days of Mexico's Pre-Hispanic culture as a golden age. He collected Pre-Columbian art throughout his life and Pre-Columbian objects sometimes appear in his paintings.

What is the printmaking process used for *Emiliano Zapata*?

The print featured in the suitcase, *Emiliano Zapata*, is a lithograph, which loosely translates from the Greek to “writing on stone.” In this process the artist draws or paints an image on a stone or metal plate using an oil-based ink. Next the plate is covered with a mixture of gum arabic and nitric acid, a mixture that is receptive to water. When ready to be inked for printing, the surface is flushed with water as the oil-

based ink is rolled onto the plate, allowing only the area that was originally painted to be receptive to the ink.

This process is much like drawing, so the artist can create his image with much freedom, whereas engraving or woodcutting requires cutting into the surface of the plate. Many prints of an image can be printed in the lithographic process, as opposed to etching, in which pressure wears down the plate.

Rivera's work was just gaining recognition in the United States at the time when this series was made. A print gallery in New York encouraged the artist's agent to urge him to produce prints as a quick and easy way to make money. Lack of money was a concern for Rivera throughout his career.

What do the terms Pre-Columbian and Pre-Hispanic mean and how do they relate to Diego Rivera's work?

The term Pre-Columbian is frequently used in art to refer to the indigenous art of Latin America in general, produced before Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Diego Rivera loved Pre-Columbian art and collected it long before its current popularity. Pre-Columbian objects often appear in his work. Pre-Hispanic refers specifically to the indigenous cultures of the New World before the Spanish conquest. Pre-Hispanic people and culture are frequently depicted in Diego Rivera's work, especially the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru. The Pre-Hispanic Aztec people are particularly significant in the history of Mexico. For instance, the Spanish built modern Mexico City on the remains of the old

Aztec city of Tenochtitlan. Rivera glorified Pre-Hispanic cultures in his work, and frequently depicted the Spanish as oppressive exploiters of the native population.

List of Objects

- *Emiliano Zapata*. Lithograph on paper. Diego Rivera, Mexican 1886–1957
- Votive Painting. Tempera on wood. Mexico, 1876
- Rowel Spur. Steel with silver inlay. Mexico, last half 19th century
- Chocolate Beater. Wood with bone inlay. Mexico, c. 1942
- *Ch'ullu* (Knitted Cap). Sheep and alpaca wool. Peru, c. 1945
- Olmec Head of a Man. Fired clay. Mexico, Olmec culture, Tlapacoya, c. 1200–900 BCE
- Teotihuacan Figure of a Man. Serpentine. Mexico, Teotihuacan, c. 300–650 CE
- Colima Dog Vessel. Earthenware. Mexico, 100 BCE–300 CE

Lesson Plan

Focus

To explore the work of Diego Rivera through a discussion of his style, beliefs, and political philosophy.

Purpose

To identify Rivera's artistic style and develop an understanding of Mexican culture.

Motivation

A direct approach to learning through handling and examining works of art, and discussing it within a cultural context.

Objectives

- Recognize Diego Rivera's individual style
- Recognize some of the recurring themes in his work
- Identify some revolutionary figures depicted by Diego Rivera including Emiliano Zapata and Father Miguel y Hidalgo, and discuss their role in Mexican history.
- Identify some of the major Mexican Pre-Columbian civilizations including the Olmec, the Colima, and Teotihuacan and the characteristics of the art produced by these cultures.
- Discuss the impact of the New World on European culture and vice versa.
- Discuss how some of these themes relate to Diego Rivera's work.

Participation

Students will be asked questions as the lesson is taught.

Comprehension Check

The teacher may follow up the lesson with ideas from this packet, including the use of vocabulary, independent research projects about historical persons of note, webbing with other disciplines, or an art project.

Closure

Teachers are encouraged to follow the Art To Go lesson with a visit to the Cleveland Museum of Art. Although no works by Diego Rivera are on permanent display, tours are available on *The Arts of the Americas* and *Speak to the Arts-Tours for Spanish Language Classes*.

Vocabulary

Abstract

Art that departs from literal representation. Objects may be simplified, sometimes to geometric elements.

Aztec

A powerful warlike people who controlled much of Mesoamerica until the Spanish conquest around 1520. The capital of the Aztec empire was located at Tenochtitlan, the site of modern-day Mexico City.

Chaps

A colloquial term for *chaparajos*, the leather trousers worn over ordinary trousers by cowboys to protect their legs.

Cocoa

A powder made from cacao seeds that have been roasted and ground.

Colima

One of the ancient western coastal states of Mesoamerica.

Communism

A political system originally intended to distribute wealth equally throughout society.

Cubism

A style of representing objects with geometric shapes. Pablo Picasso and Georges Braques are credited with the invention of this style in the first decade of the 20th century.

Figurative

A style of representing objects as they look in nature.

Fresco

The application of paint on a freshly plastered wall, so that the pigment is absorbed into the wall as the plaster dries. Especially prevalent during the Italian Renaissance.

Maize

A variety of corn grown in Mesoamerica.

Mexica

The Aztec name for the indigenous population of Mesoamerica. The word Mexico is derived from this Aztec word.

Mesoamerica

The area that roughly encompasses the modern countries of Mexico and Central America. The ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica were loosely linked through trade, culture, and religion.

Mixtec

A culture in the northern Mexican state of Oaxaca that flourished between 1200 and 1500 CE.

Mural

Any painting made directly on a wall.

Olmec

One of the earliest cultures to show cultural traits in common with later Mesoamerican civilizations like the Aztecs, the Olmec were located on the Gulf Coast of Mexico in modern Mexico and Central America.

Pre-Columbian

Before the arrival of Columbus in the Americas.

Pre-Hispanic

Before the Spanish conquest of Latin America.

Rowel

A small wheel with sharp projecting points forming the end of a spur.

Sickle

A tool with a crescent-shaped blade and a short handle, for agriculture.

Tempera

A painting medium of pigment suspended in a water-based emulsion, often egg yolk.

Notable People Discussed in the Presentation

Hernan Cortes

Father Miguel
Hidalgo y Costilla

Diego Rivera

Emiliano Zapata

Suggestions for Follow-up Activities

To gather more information about a Mexican topic, teachers will encourage students to complete simple research projects related to their personal interests. Examples might include Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera or Rufino Tamayo, different types of cacti, measuring time with Aztec solar calendars, etc.

- Teachers will help students build model adobe houses or step pyramids.
- Students will make or borrow Mexican articles of clothing such as sombreros, shawls, and decorated muslin ponchos.
- Students will investigate videos and books on Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Rufino Tamayo, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Jose Clemente Orozco.
- Students may listen to recordings of Mexican Songs such as *La Cucaracha* or *La Rielera*.

- Students may design a class mural on the history of your town or school, as Mexican muralists portrayed the history of Mexico in large public murals.

- Plan a dress-up day. Consult books on Mexico to find examples of simple costumes such as muslin ponchos, shawls, sombreros, etc., that students can make or borrow.
- Make or buy a class *piñata*.
- Set up a Mexican market (*tianguis*) with various peppers, tomatoes, tropical fruits, marigolds, and gladiolas (consult travel books for pictures).
- Arrange to serve Mexican food in the cafeteria or make some dishes such as salsa or tacos in class.

These suggestions are based on a curriculum developed by Irma Pianca, instructor, Spanish language, Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio.

What You Need to Know

General Information

The Art To Go presentation will take approximately 40 minutes.

- Anyone who wishes to handle the objects must wear gloves, which will be provided by the Art To Go staff.
- We respectfully request that a homeroom teacher or events coordinator be present and attentive during the presentation.

Classroom Set-Up

- Please have a small table or desk available at the front of the room.
- If possible, arrange the students in a semi-circle facing the presentation. This allows the Art To Go staff to pass works of art among the students.
- Please provide student identification so that the Art To Go teachers may call on students by name.

Webbing

Diego Rivera

Suggestions for making art the center of student learning.

Math

Discuss the sophisticated aspects of the Pre-Hispanic culture of the Maya, including their science of astronomy and their recognition of the concept of the number zero.

Writing/ Language Arts

What are the codices that have survived in European collections and why are they important to our modern understanding of Pre-Hispanic cultures?

Introduce glyphs, the ancient form of Aztec writing.

Diego Rivera

Science

Identify the species of cocoa tree growing in Mexico (*Theobroma Cacao*) that produces chocolate flavoring found in cocoa and in candy. Where are the world's largest producers of cocoa today?

Art

Discuss different printmaking techniques, including lithography. Experiment with printmaking in the classroom, such as linoleum-cut prints. Discuss the difference between the types of line possible in lithography and linocut.

Discuss the medium of fresco. Compare the work of Diego Rivera to the murals of the Italian Renaissance, another major period of mural production.

Discuss tempera paints and how they produce a matte effect in comparison with oil paint.

Discuss the difference between a linear and a painterly style of painting.

Social Studies

Research the lives of persons of note relating to the Diego Rivera lesson: Emiliano Zapata, Hernan Cortes, and Father Miguel y Hidalgo.

Why does the emblem of an eagle sitting on a cactus appear on the Mexican flag? Mexico City is built on the remains of what Aztec city?

Why was Diego Rivera in favor of Communism? How is this interest associated with political developments in Mexico in the early 20th century?

Suggestions for Further Reading

For information on Diego Rivera, consult the following publications:

Diego Rivera, 1886–1957: A Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art. Andrea Kettenmen. Taschen: Köln, 1997. This inexpensive paperback with many color illustrations offers a basic overview of the artist's career.

Diego Rivera: Art and Revolution. A catalogue of the exhibition at the Cleveland Museum of Art, February 14–May 2, 1999. Mexico City: INBA/ Landucci Editores, 1999.

Diego Rivera, A Retrospective. Detroit Institute of Art. New York: W. W. Norton, 1986. A well-written discussion of the artist's work presented in museum catalogue format.

Mexican Prints: from the Collection of Reba and Dave Williams. Reba and Dave Williams. New York: 1998. A small paperback published by the collectors. May be difficult to find.

20th-Century Mexican Art Slide Packet. Dale Hilton. Cleveland: CMA, 1999.

For information on Pre-Columbian art:

Ancient Mexico in the British Museum. Colin McEwan. London: British Museum Press, 1994. A brief overview of the major Pre-Columbian civilizations.

The Art of Mesoamerica from Olmec to Aztec. Mary Ellen Miller. London: Thames and Hudson, revised 1996. This work is the standard art historical text on Pre-Columbian art, not an introduction to the subject.

Especially for Students

Diego, in English and Spanish. Jeannette Winter. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991. A book for beginning readers.

Exploring Cultures of the World: Mexico Rich in Spirit and Tradition. Deborah Kent. New York: Benchmark Books, 1996.

Eyewitness Books: Aztec, Inca & Maya. Elizabeth Baquedano. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. The eyewitness series explores the differences among these Native American peoples.

Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists: Diego Rivera. Mike Venezia. Chicago: Children's Press: 1994. One of a series of books on individual artists.

The Mexican Revolution, 1910–1920. R. Conrad Stein. Toronto: New Discovery Books, Maxwell, Macmillan, 1994. This book clarifies political events in Mexico in the first decades of the 20th century.

Technology in the Time of the Aztecs. Nina Morgan. Austin: Raintree Steck Vaughn Publishers, 1998.

World History Series: The Conquest of Mexico. Stephen R. Lilly. San Diego: Lucent Books, 1997.

Website

www.clemusart.com

We encourage teachers and students alike to visit the Cleveland Museum of Art in person. We also encourage teachers and students to visit the museum's website, where information about the museum's permanent collection and educational programs can be found.

An introduction to the 1999 exhibition *Diego Rivera: Art and Revolution* is located at <http://www.clemusart.com/exhibit/rivera/curator.htm>

Diego Rivera A Mexican Hero and His Culture

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Diego Rivera: A Mexican Hero and His Culture



Votive Painting
Mexico, 1876
Tempera on wood
1942.184



Rowel Spur
Mexico, late 19th century
Steel with silver inlay
TR12442/3



Emiliano Zapata
Diego Rivera (Mexican 1886-
1957)
Lithographic print
1964.544



Ch'ullu (Knitted Cap)
Peru, c 1945
Sheep and alpaca wool
1945.147



Flat Stone Figure
Mexico, Mezcala or
Teotihuacan, c 300-650 CE
Serpentine
1990.1085



Male Head
Mexico, Olmec, c 1200-900 BC
Fired clay
1990.1145



Chocolate Beater
Mexico, 20th century
Wood, bone inlay
TR7066/18