Culture Box

MEXICO

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INTRODUCTION: Mexico is the large country that shares a common border with the United States about 2,000 miles long. Ancient ruins such as Teotihuacan (Aztec) and Chichen Itza (Mayan) are scattered throughout the country. This culture box aims to provide resources for approaching Mexico in a multidisciplinary way, featuring items that tell stories of Mexico’s past and present.

WHAT THIS BOX INCLUDES:

1. Copper Plate
2. Mexican Peso, Woven Coin Purse
3. Miniature Tamale
4. Miniature Indigenous Women
5. Game - Loteria (2)
6. Muñeca Maria
7. Spanish Vocabulary Cards
8. La Virgen de Guadalupe frame
9. Oaxacan Crafted Turtle
10. Clay Pendants
11. Aztec Calendar
12. Images from Mexico
13. Tablitas Mágicas
MEXICAN PESO, COIN PURSE

DESCRIPTION

The Mexican Peso is one of the oldest currencies in North America. It is a direct descendant of the original currency that the Spanish government issued while in Mexico. Mexico continued the same pattern for their currency after gaining independence in 1810. In this culture box, the Mexican pesos are held in a woven coin purse.
MINIATURE TAMAL

DESCRIPTION

This is a miniature non-perishable version of the popular food item, tamales. A dried corn husk is used to pack a soft corn dough with a savory or sweet filling in the middle. Tamales come with a variety of fillings, such as beans, chicken, beef or pork.
AZTEC CALENDAR

DESCRIPTION

The Aztec calendar is the system that was used by Pre-Columbian people of Central Mexico, and is still used by Nahuatl speaking people today. There are two types of Aztec calendars: the sacred calendar with 260 days (tonalpohualli in Nahuatl); and the agricultural calendar with 365 days (xiuhpohualli in Nahuatl).

The tonalpohualli is regarded as the sacred calendar because it divides the days and rituals between the Aztec gods. According to the Aztecs, the universe is very delicate and equilibrium is in constant danger of being disrupted, and the calendar tells how time is divided between the gods.
COPPER PLATE

DESCRIPTION

This copper plate features the Aztec calendar. This sort of plate is sold in gift shops and can be used as decoration.
“MARIA”
MUÑECA DE TRAPO

DESCRIPTION

“Marias” are rag dolls (muñecas de trapo) made from old clothing and fabrics. These dolls are typically handmade to help bolster income for indigenous communities. “Marias” have evolved into a national icon and can be found in many tourist shops and airports, although they can be modeled after mothers, grandmothers, or friends. This “Maria” wears ribbons in her hair the colors of the Mexican Flag and a shirt that says Mexico.
SPANISH VOCABULARY CARDS

DESCRIPTION

These vocabulary cards, which were made in Mexico, feature basic Spanish to English translations with accompanying pictures.
OAXACAN CRAFTED TURTLE

DESCRIPTION

In the Mexican state of Oaxaca, wood carvings are common folk art and commonly traded commodity. The carvings were originally created by Manuel Jimenez, a native of a small village in the Oaxaca Valley. In the last sixty years these became very popular within his town and eventually spread throughout Oaxaca. Many people began to carve to supplement the farming income in order to support their families.

The carvings are made from wood from a copal tree. Although some are sold directly to tourists, more are bought by gift shops in the United States and Mexico.
CLAY PENDANTS

DESCRIPTION

These are small artisanal pendants of Mexican folk art. These pendants are modeled after archeological findings in Mexico. Anthropomorphic masks similar to these would represent gods, spiritual forces, or ancient leaders to the indigenous observer. Ancient cultures represented in the archaeological record of such artifacts include the Olmec, the Maya, and the Aztec with many other cultural sites like Teotihuacan contributing independently to that record with a distinct relation to those major civilizations.
The Virgin of Guadalupe is the patron saint of Mexico. Known as “Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe,” or our Lady of Guadalupe, is a national icon. The Virgin is associated with the image enshrined within the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The basilica is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world.
TABLITAS MÁGICAS

DESCRIPTION

This a typical toy in Mexico. It is a series of wooden blocks that are woven together with ribbon in a special way. When this toy is held vertically, the colors change as the wooden blocks fall. This game can be found in any typical market in Mexico.