

Mexican Artefact Collection (GMSPAC)

A great collection of artefacts for your Mexican topic. Bring geography learning to life and use these items as discussion prompts for a range of everyday topics, including Mexican history, religion, festivals, family life and more! Create opportunities for hands-on learning experiences.



Contents: -

1. 1 x God Mask
2. 1 x Chocolate Whisk
3. 1 x Mexican Cloth
4. 1 x Replica Metate
5. 1 x Bunting
6. 1 x Mini Piñata
7. 1 x Finger Pull
8. 1 x Tortilla Basket
9. 1 x Ceramic Salsa Pot
10. 1 x Traditional Hand Drum
11. 1 x Terracotta Pot
12. 1 x Decorated Tile

This resource can be used to:

- Explore North American cultures and life with real life artefacts and high-quality replicas.
- Create cross-curricular links and cover elements of the Geography, RE, History and Art and Design curriculum.
- Introduce the resources during whole class teaching and provide time for hands-on exploration in small groups.
- Encourage questioning and research.
- Use as starting points for 'compare and contrast' activities.
- Enhance classroom displays and promote discussion by displaying the items.
- Add the resources to tabletop areas and promote independent investigation.

Please note contents and designs may vary.



Questions you could ask children about the artefacts

Initial Discussion

- What is this object?
- Does it resemble anything the children have seen?
- What do you think the item was used for and by whom?
- Does anyone know what it is called?

Collect any other questions the children might have about the artefacts and display them as you try to find the answers through your learning sessions.

Other questions to consider:

- Where does the object come from?
- Who might have made this object? And how were they made?
- Why were they made?
- **What do the objects tell us about life in Mexico?** *This last question can be returned to at the end of the investigation.* Use a world map to locate Mexico. Research Mexico and create a fact file including the flag, culture, food, history and significant landmarks. Plan a Mexican themed day.

All About the Artefacts

1. God Mask

The mask features a headdress and common ear ornamentation. This is a representation of a Mayan god, but it can be difficult to positively identify exactly which one it is. Gods and goddesses were depicted in a variety of ways throughout the different civilisations of the Central American timeline and there were some deities worshipped by more than one civilisation: particularly gods of maize, rain, light, the sky and the sun. Many gods also had many different names!

Research the gods and goddesses that are worshipped in Mexico.

2. Chocolate Whisk

Known as molinillo, these special chocolate whisks are ornately hand carved items that work brilliantly for mixing and frothing up a hot chocolate. They are held between both palms and then rolled back and forth. The two rings above the whisk section spin around to create a delicious froth.

Chocolate was discovered in Mexico, by the Mayans, over 4,000 years ago. The routine of making and drinking a chocolate drink formed an important part of everyday life for the ancient civilizations of Mexico. The drink was bitter and frothy and often mixed with Chilli!

Explore the journey from cacao bean to chocolate! Investigate Fairtrade chocolate.

3. Mexican Cloth

This Fair-Trade serape has been handmade in Mexico from acrylic and cotton. Traditionally, a serape is worn by draping it over the shoulders. There is evidence of serapes dating back to Aztec Mexico and they were highly prized items because of their weave and striking colours, commonly worn by men, and especially horse riders. Serapes are now widely used to decorate homes as rugs and throws.

Design a bright and colourful serape.

4. Replica Metate

(pronunciation – muh-tah-tee)

A metate is a grinding stone used for processing grain and seeds. They are usually made of heavy volcanic rock and vary in size. Traditionally used by women, they exist in many different designs and sizes and are still used in many parts of Mexico and Guatemala today. This is a miniature replica to show the shape; actual sizes are too heavy to move and too big for an artefact pack!

Use online resources to explore the tradition of tortilla making using a metate.

5. Bunting

Traditional Mexican paper bunting is called 'Papel picado' which translates to perforated paper or punched paper. The colours are chosen carefully because they all have different cultural meanings. It is used to decorate streets, homes and altars during celebrations and festivals.

Explore images of Mexican paper bunting. Design and create your own bunting. Use the bunting to decorate the classroom for your Mexican themed day.

6. Mini Pinata

Traditionally, a Mexican piñata was made by decorating a clay pot with papier mâché and tissue paper in the shape of a seven-pointed star, however, now they leave out the clay pot, and they come in all shapes and sizes! Usually, the piñata would have been filled with fruits, and now more commonly is filled with sweets. Each person will have a turn at hitting the piñata with a stick whilst wearing a blindfold and having been spun around a few times. The aim is to break the piñata so that the treats inside all fall out. This replica item is smaller than a regular sized piñata and unfortunately it does not contain sweets! It is designed for display purposes only, but you can buy a piñata and use it on your Mexican day.

Use online resources to explore piñata designs. Design and make a piñata.

7. Finger Pull

Very similar to Chinese finger traps, these traditional finger pulls are known in Mexico as 'atrapa-novios' or boyfriend catchers. It is hand-woven from natural dried palm leaves or straw, showcasing a weaving tradition that dates back to the Aztecs and Maya.

Learn about structural patterns and weaving.

8. Tortilla Basket

In Mexico tortillas are eaten with almost every meal. The tortilla is best eaten hot, so the special basket is used to keep them warm. The warm tortillas are wrapped inside a cloth napkin called a servilleta and placed inside the basket with the lid on to trap the steam. The basket is traditionally handwoven using natural materials and are famous for being bright and colourful to reflect Mexico's culture.

Use the tortilla basket as part of your Mexican themed day and make tortillas to enjoy together.

9. Salsa Pot

Salsa is a very popular sauce in Mexico and is a key part of Mexican cuisine.

Make a simple salsa to enjoy on your Mexican themed day. Authentic Mexican salsas are based on just a few ingredients- tomatoes, chillies, onions and garlic, but you could leave out the chillies!

10. Hand Drum

This Fair-Trade hand drum is played by vertically placing the handle between the outstretched hands so that the head is above the thumbs. By rubbing the hands together, the drum rotates causing the attached beads to quickly strike each face. How many ways can the hand drum be played?

Explore the percussion instruments used in Latin American music.

11. Terracotta Pot

Pottery is a commonly found object in Mexican homes, and they are widely used to store and present food and drink. These functional vessels come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are used regularly in daily life. Common examples include water jugs and salsa dishes.

Use on-line resources to explore Mexican pottery. Design and make your own simple clay pots.

12. Tile

Mexican decorated tiles are hand-painted ceramic tiles used to decorate walls, buildings and fountains. Traditional designs feature patterns from nature such as flowers, leaves, vines, birds, suns and stars. The lines, shapes and pictures are repeated across the tile to create a symmetrical design.

Explore the designs on Mexican tiles and design intricate patterns of your own in a similar style. You could all make a paper or card tile and then tape them altogether to create a giant classroom mosaic.

For ideas and inspiration on ways of using the artefacts see our Learning with Geography Artefacts free download.

The items in this pack have been sourced by a supplier who is a member of BAFTS (British Association for Fair Trade Shops and Suppliers).

Fair Trade

Fair Trade is a worldwide movement that aims to help producers in less economically developed countries, whether they be handicraft producers or farmers. The term Fair Trade means that producers receive a fair price for the goods they produce.

Teaching the principles of Fair Trade provides learning opportunities in many areas of learning, including PSSED/PSHE, Understanding the World and Geography.

The suppliers of the items in this pack are small family businesses employing only a few people keeping them in continuous work and enabling their businesses to grow.

Nearly everything in this pack is handmade with materials being sustainably sourced, and traditional skills being kept alive.

Explore further – What are the 10 Principles of Fair Trade? How does Fair Trade help producers? Research the many organisations around the world, including Fairtrade Foundation, the British Association for Fair Trade Shops and Suppliers (BAFTS) and World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO).