

Bringing Hispanic Heritage Month into the Classroom

Don your sombreros and ready yourself for some spicy salsa rhythm; National Hispanic Heritage Month is just around the corner! Celebrated from September 15 to October 15, Hispanic Heritage Month is an annual commemoration of Hispanic culture and its influence in America. This month is the perfect opportunity to familiarize your students with the lifestyle and culture of the Hispanic people in fun and engaging ways! Here are some fun and educational activities you can implement in your classroom in just a few easy steps.

Biography Bonanza

History is decorated with famous Hispanic individuals who have made an impact on the world. Expose your students to the contributions of Hispanic people with a fun, in-class Get-To-Know-You project on a famous Hispanic person.



What to do:

Organize your students into small groups and invite each group to choose one famous Hispanic individual from the list below (feel free to add your own, too). Provide books and/or packets of information on each individual for students to study. Each group should assign one student to be a “secretary” and write a short summary of their subject's life and a description of why he/she is famous, along with two facts and one “lie” about their chosen subject. Group members present their findings to the class. Each group will present their summary to the rest of the class along with their two truths and a lie. Students in the class will receive points for guessing the “lie” in each group’s presentation. The winning group (with the most points for identifying the “lies”) will be awarded a small prize. If you prefer to play it straight, you can instruct your students to stick to the facts and present just three fun facts about their individual.

- Pablo Picasso, Painter
- Miguel Cervantes, Writer
- Simon Bolivar, Statesman
- Martin Sheen, Actor
- Jaime Escalante, Teacher
- Julio Iglesias, Singer
- Julia Alvarez, Writer
- Bill Richardson, Politician
- Vasco Balboa, Explorer
- Diego Rivera, Painter
- Emiliano Zapata, Soldier
- Frida Kahlo, Painter

Make Your Own Piñata!

Making a piñata is a great way to introduce students to Hispanic culture in a fun, arts-and-craft way. The best part, of course, is that everyone gets goodies in the end! Here is a list of steps on constructing your very own piñata for you and your students to enjoy at an in-class fiesta!

Note: You will need the following materials for this activity:

- Three cups of flour
 - Four cups of water
 - A large balloon
 - An old newspaper
 - A piece of string
 - Finger paint, crayons, colored markers, streamers, and anything else you want to decorate your piñata with
 - Candy, streamers, and other goodies to stuff the piñata with
1. Mix two cups of flour and three cups of water together in a large bowl to create a smooth, sticky paste.
 2. Inflate the large balloon.
 3. Cut out long, 1-inch wide strips from the old newspaper and dip them in the flour-water paste mixture. Layer the inflated balloon with them, leaving a small hole in the layering process on the top of the balloon. Leave it to dry; this may take about a day, building anticipation and excitement amongst your students for the final product.
 4. Once the first layer is dry, repeat the process with a second layer of newspaper strippings, leaving the small hole on the top of the balloon without layering. Leave the new layer to dry overnight.
 5. Once the second layer is dry, repeat the process with a third layer of newspaper strippings, leaving the small hole on the top of the balloon without layering. Leave the new layer to dry overnight.
 6. Once the third layer is dry, you can pop the inflated balloon on the inside with a sharp object and remove the balloon from the interior.
 7. Fasten a string to the two sides of the hole you left behind, creating a handle for your new piñata.
 8. Decorate your piñata with finger paint, and color it with crayons to personalize your new piñata! Have your students write names, or the Spanish versions of their names, on the piñata; get creative! This is the chance for your students to express themselves artistically.
 9. Fill the piñata with candy, streamers, and anything else your student may enjoy through the hole you left at the top of the piñata. Be sure to get a class picture with the piñata before it's gone.
 10. The time has finally come! Hold a fiesta at the end of class on the last day of the week where the students can finally break open their piñata. Allow the best-behaved student of the week to take a swing; and, bueno! You have a fun, climactic end to a Hispanic-culture-filled week.

Don Quixote Story Hour

Don Quixote, written by the famous Spanish author, Miguel Cervantes, is a timeless classic in satire. Introduce your students to what is widely considered to be one of the greatest works of fiction ever published. Have your students gather around while you read to them an age-appropriate version of the famous novel, Don Quixote (check with your school librarian for help). There are many child-friendly versions of the book available to read, describing the hilarious antics of the chivalrous, Don Quixote. Here is a link to recommended children's version of the book.

Go On a Virtual Trip to Latin America!

Go on a virtual tour of Latin America, and take the entire class with you! The world is a wide and wonderful place, and National Hispanic Heritage Month is your chance to introduce your students to the Hispanic areas of the world. Point out each of your travel destinations on a map of the Americas to

give your students a sense of the geography of the Hispanic world. Then, embark on your 'virtual tour'; print out pictures of famous locations and landmarks in the given region, or display them on a visual projector or overhead. Show students the cuisine and cultural icons from specific regions; for instance, take a stop off in El Salvador and visually introduce your students to the delicious Pupusa. Afterward, continue your journey south to Peru and show your students photos of Machu Picchu, the legendary "Lost City of the Incas." Come up with your own ideas and cultural icons to take your students on a virtual adventure through Latin America.