

SYNOPSIS

In this colorful and bilingual, one-woman show, Frida shares the stories behind some of her most famous paintings with the use of puppets. The play takes the audience through her trials, tribulations, and successes which propelled her to be one of the most important artists of the 20th century.

WHO WAS FRIDA KAHLO?

Frida Kahlo was born on July 6, 1907 in Coyoacán, Mexico City. She often told people she was born in 1910, three years after her actual birth, so that people would directly associate her with the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910. Kahlo became an embodiment of Mexican culture, especially indigenous culture. Unfortunately, she contracted polio at age 6, which left her right leg thinner than her left.



She became a painter after a near fatal accident:

In 1925, Frida and her friend Alex were riding in a bus when it crashed into a 4 street trolley car. Kahlo suffered 11 fractures in her right leg, a crushed and dislocated foot, and many other injuries. She underwent as many as 35 operations over the course of her life as a result of the accident.

Since her recuperation after the bus accident took over a year, Kahlo began painting. Her mom commissioned a special easel, so that Frida could paint while in her hospital bed. This enabled her to see herself and create self-portraits.



Diego and Frida

Frida first met Diego Rivera when she was in high school. He was already a famous muralist, and it was an honor for the school to have him there. They met again years later at a party. Diego did



not remember her, but she remembered him. Frida asked Diego if he could look at her paintings to give her his opinion. Diego did, and he was impressed by her work and talent.

They fell in love and got married in 1929. In the painting she made in 1931, called "Diego and Frida", she painted him much bigger than her, and he holds a painter's palette and brushes. This was Frida's way of showing that she admired him as an artist. Above her is a dove. Frida's father used to call them: "The Elephant and the Dove", because Diego was so big and she was so small.





The year after they were married, Diego was asked to work in the United States, so he and Frida moved there. After three years of being away, they returned to Mexico. At this point, they had been arguing a lot and growing apart. In 1937, she painted "Memory, the Heart". Her heart lies on the ground, and she appears without her hands, meaning she was helpless and felt powerless to change things between her and Diego. Painting helped her feel better about things she could not control. Frida and Diego reconciled later in her life and fell deeply in love again.

Frida, the Master of Self-Portraits

Throughout her career, Frida Kahlo created 143 paintings, of which 55 are self-portraits. Kahlo said, "I paint myself, because I am so often alone, and because I am the subject I know best." Her self-portraits

often include interpretations of physical and psychological wounds, and are among the finest ever created. Her "Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird," painted in 1940, is one of her most famous self-portraits.

Kahlo died on July 26, 1954. Her former home, La Casa Azul, is now a museum. Kahlo was only moderately successful during her lifetime. It took several years after her death for her work to become widely acclaimed. Frida Kahlo was a central figure in the Neomexicanismo Art Movement in Mexico which emerged in the 1970s. Her art has been called "folk art" due to traditional elements. Some call it Surrealist art, though Kahlo herself said, "They thought I was a Surrealist, but I wasn't. I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality." In May 2006, her self-portrait "Roots" sold for US \$5.6 million dollars—setting an auction record for a Latin American piece of art.



Famous Stories about Frida. Numerous articles, books and documentaries have been made about Kahlo's life and art, including the bestseller Frida: The Biography of Frida Kahlo (1983) by Hayden Herrera. The biopic movie "Frida, naturaleza viva" was released in 1983 and was a huge success. In 2002, another biopic called "Frida," in which Salma Hayek plays the role of Frida, grossed over \$50 million and won two Academy Awards.



Self-Portrait - A self-portrait is a painting or drawing of yourself, created by you.

Identity - being oneself or itself, not another.

Heritage/Roots - something possessed as a result of one's situation or birth.

Surrealism - Surrealism is an artistic and literary movement, dedicated to expressing the imagination as revealed in dreams, free of real ideas and control of reason and convention.

Realism - the theory or practice in art and literature to nature or to real life and an accurate representation without allowing much for imagination or free ideas.

Symbolism - the art of using symbols to represent a deeper meaning.

ACTIVITY 1

- 1. Introduce Frida Kahlo using the biography provided above. After discussing Frida Kahlo and examining her paintings, specifically her self-portraits, discuss what made her unique.
- 2. Ask your students "what does the word "identity" mean to you?" or "what is one special thing about you that makes you unique?" Each of us has our own Identity or distinct personality. Things such as where we were born, where we grew up, our families, our friends, our environment, things we like, hobbies, and interests all shape our identity. Discuss as a class. Encourage students to think about one special thing that makes them unique.
- 3. Ask them to create a simple collage with 5 or more drawings or cut-outs from magazines to show what interests or traits make them special and unique. Encourage the use of symbolism, or even the colors, for example: if they are American, they may wish to include red, white and blue in their collage, if they are from another country, or their heritage is from many countries, they may wish to include colors that are important to those countries. The things they choose to use in their collage have to represent who they are and what makes them special.

ABOUT MEXICO

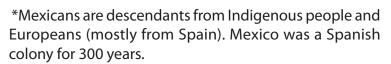
*The official name of Mexico is: United Mexican States. Mexico is the 11th most populated country in the world with around 117 million people, and it's the 14th largest country by land area.

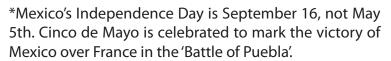
*There are 31 states in Mexico. Mexico City is the country's capital and largest city.

more than 60 native languages are spoken. The top native languages are Náhuatl and Maya. *The colors of the Mexican flag have a special meaning. Green stands for victory and hope,

while the Mexican ideals are denoted by ___ white, and the sacrifices of heroes of the nation are depicted in red. The emblem has a story based on a legend, which tells of how the Aztecs traveled and founded the city of Tenochtitlan.









*Mexican music is often played with guitars. The mariachi are strolling bands usualiy made up of 2 violins, 2 trumpets, 2 five-string guitars, and a guitarron, which is a large bass guitar.

*Many living in the homes in Mexico consist of not only the parents and children, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins or other family members. Children have two last names, their father's last name and their mother's last name.

*Mexican food is known for its range of flavors and spices. Corn is the main, or one of the most common foods used by most Mexicans, instead of eating bread, many Mexicans eat tortillas. It is common in Mexico to eat "chile," and you can find it in various types of candy or to accompany fruits and ice cream.

*The most popular sport in Mexico is football (known as soccer in the United States).

*The world's smallest dog, the Chihuahua, is originally from Mexico. It is named after the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

ACTIVITY 2 America is a big Continent! Now that you have learned more about México and where it's located, can you identify each country in North America? Bermuda Canada Greenland Mexico St. Pierre and Miquelon United States Atlantic Ocean

STYLES OF PUPPETS USED IN THE COLORS OF FRIDA

What is a puppet?

Puppets are objects that appear to be alive when manipulated by a human hand. There are many types of puppets! For our Frida show, we used the following styles:

Hand or glove puppet (Big Caimito)

These are puppets controlled by one hand, which occupies the interior of the puppet. Larger varieties of hand puppets place the puppeteer's hand in just the puppet's head, controlling the mouth and head, and the puppet's body then hangs over the entire arm. A sock puppet is a particularly simple type of hand puppet!

Rod Puppets (Small Caimito, Fridas, Diego, Cristina, Butterflies, Manin the bus and the Daisy)

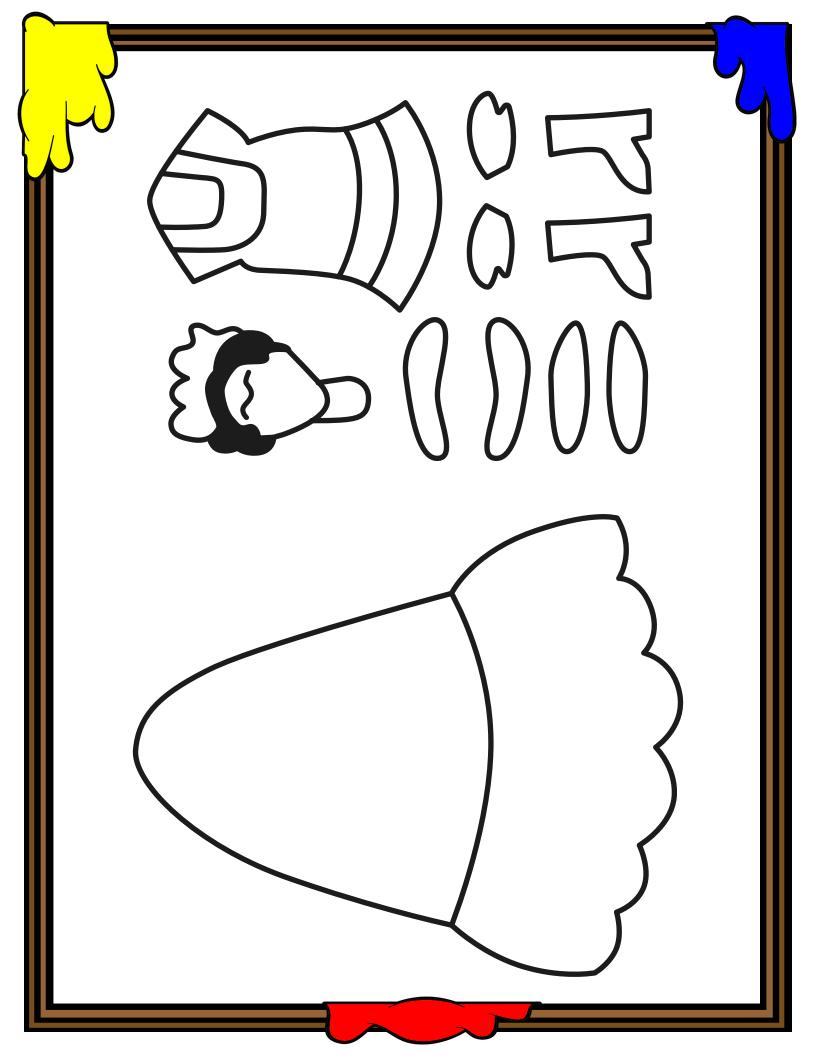
A rod puppet is a puppet constructed around a central rod secured to the head. Sticks or wire rod manipulate the puppet, in most cases, from below. Rod puppets may also be worked with rods from above, or any direction necessary for good movement and performance. In this performance, all rods were brushes to symbolize Frida's love for painting!

Object Puppet (The four paintings and the airplane)

Object puppets are often created with everyday objects, sometimes created in performance or pre-created. The object puppet will often take on character by the quality of manipulation and voice to suggest to the audience what the object has become (now that it is no longer itself).



Make your own Frida Puppet! You will need Popsicle sticks, glue, crayons and scissors. Color your Frida, then cut out the different pieces, glue them together, then glue the popsicle stick to the back.



DAY OF THE DEAD/ DÍA DE MUERTOS

This was one of Frida's favorite Holidays. Day of the Dead is a day to celebrate and honor a family member or friend who is no longer living. Instead of mourning over the loss of this person, this day of celebration serves to welcome the return of the loved one's spirit. Families spread Cempasuchitl (a Mexican marigold flower) around the graves or altars. The Cempasuchitl petals are said to serve as a path for the loved ones, through its golden color and scent. An ofrenda (or altar is created in the home, and several specifically chosen objects are placed on the altar, which serve as gifts to the deceased, such as various foods, most commonly pan de muerto (bread of the dead), chocolate, atole (a drink made from corn), fruit and any other food or drink the deceased person liked. Other objects commonly placed on an ofrenda include incense, flowers, religious objects, photos of the deceased person, and Calaveritas de azúcar (Sugar skulls).



ACTIVITY 4

8. Copal

10. Calaveras

- · Have you ever seen an ofrenda celebrating the Day of the Dead?
- · If so, where was it? At home, church or museum?
- · What objects were found on the ofrenda?
- · Have you participated in a Day of the Dead celebration in the United States?

Match the following vocabulary words to their definitions.

1. Ofrenda A. Yellow marigolds that are symbols of death

2. Pan de Muerto B. The art of Mexican paper cutting

3. Cempazuchitl C. Burning incense left at altars

4. Calaca D. Offerings to honor the dead

5. Alfeniques E. Day of the Dead

6. Cascarones F. Bread of the dead

7. Papel picado G. Festive egg shells that are filled with confetti and trimmed

in glitter

9. Día de los Muertos H. Poems and songs written about the festival

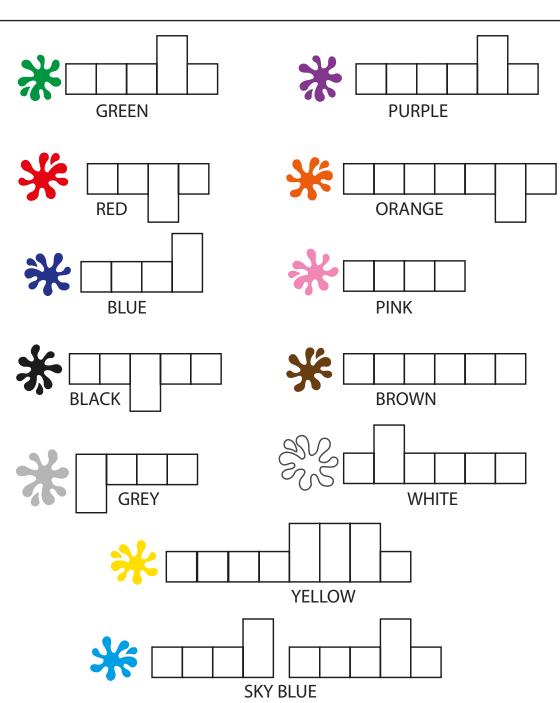
I. Whimsical skeleton figure that represents death

J. Colorful iced sugar skulls

ACTIVITY 5

Frida loved colors! Match the names of the colors in English with their names in Spanish, then color the blank painting droplets with the correct color.

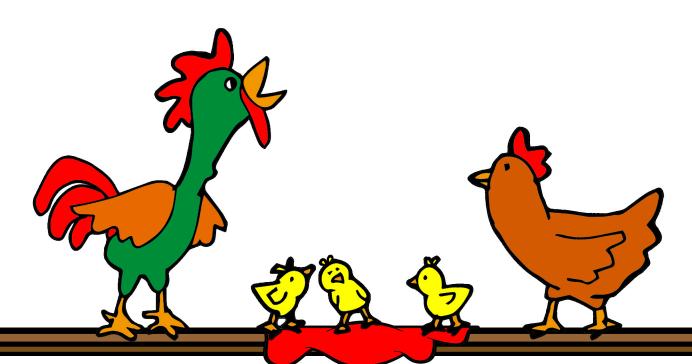
amarillo - rojo - azul - negro - azul cielo - gris naranja - marrón - morado - rosa - verde - blanco



ACTIVITY 6

Frida painted what she felt and saw, her nightmares and dreams, the people around her and the animals she loved. Now that you know colors, how about we try to express our emotions through them.

- 1. Talk about emotion. What does the word "emotion" mean? What kind of emotions do we experience on a day-to-day basis?
- 2. Talk about colors. How do certain colors make us feel? Why?
- 3. Talk about lines. What kinds of lines are there? Straight, jagged, squiggly, zig-zag, etc.
- 4. Warm up by having students draw lines (using pencil on newspaper) based upon certain feelings. For example: draw happy lines, draw angry lines, etc.
- 5. You can also encourage your students to draw lines based on the music they are hearing (For example: jazz, classical, pop etc.)
- 6. Once everyone is "warmed up" begin working with the paint. Make sure each student has access to the three primary colors (red, yellow and blue).
- 7. You can review color mixing (yellow + blue = green; red + yellow = orange; red + blue = violet)
- 8. Everyone can then decide on an emotion or feeling which they will express using various paint colors, lines, textures and shapes.
- 9. Allow your artists to take as long as they need to create the final work, encouraging them to stand back from time to time to have a really good look at what they are doing. Is it moving in the direction they want it to? Are the desired feelings starting to emerge?
- 10. Remember too, that this is a very intuitive and subjective exercise, and as such, the works should not be analyzed by the instructor, but rather by the young artists themselves.
- 11. When the paintings are complete, hang them up and see how others interpret the work. Does everyone see similar emotions in the same works? Yes? No? Why?





ACTIVITY 7

Frida used to keep a diary where she would express herself through her writings. Painting is only one way of expressing our feelings. We can also express ourselves through written word, song and dance! Have students either write, sing or dance a short story that expresses their feelings. Have them use a combination if they so choose. They can also draw a picture, then write a sentence or two describing what they are feeling. The idea is to have them express their feelings and emotions through different art forms.

Here are some quotes by Frida:

"Feet, what do I need you for when I have wings to fly?"

"Nothing is worth more than laughter. It is strength to laugh and to abandon oneself, to be light."

"I leave you my portrait so that you will have my presence all the days and nights that I am away from you." I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best."

"I am not sick. I am broken. But I am happy to be alive as long as I can paint."

"I used to think I was the strangest person in the world, but then I thought there are so many people in the world, there must be someone just like me who feels bizarre and flawed in the same ways I do. I would imagine her, and imagine that she must be out there thinking of me, too. Well, I hope that if you are out there and read this and know that, yes, it's true I'm here, and I'm just as strange as you."

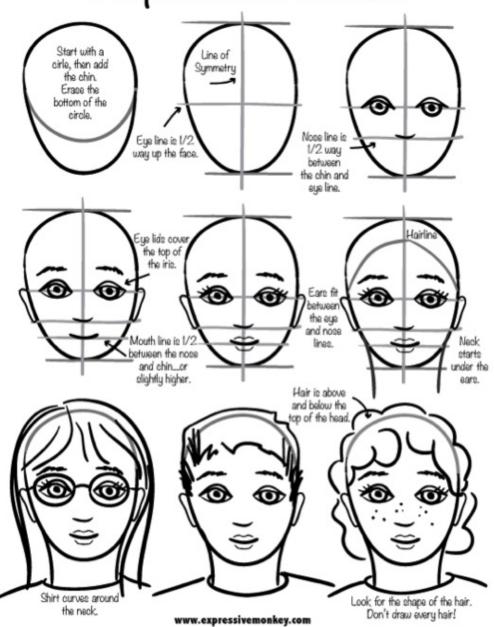
ACTIVITY 8

Now you are ready for you own self-portrait!

- 1. Distribute mirrors to students. Have them spend time looking at themselves in the mirrors.
- 2. Distribute 1 sheet of art paper, a pencil, and oval templates (for K-2) to each student. For older students, they can try to make the oval temselves.
- 3. Show them how to fill in their neck with two vertical lines with a width skinnier than that of the oval face. *If needed, show them how to draw in their body by simply drawing shoulders that come out horizontally directly from the base of the neck and slightly slope downwards as each shoulder comes to the edge of the paper.
- 4. Next, instruct them to draw two eyes level to each other that fall at half the oval.
- 5. Show students how to draw a nose. Noses are fun and all very different. You can draw a letter L, d or make an organic shape to create a nose. Yes, we all have nostrils; just a darker line can hint at a nostril.
- 6. Show students that a mouth should be drawn half-way between the nose and the bottom of the chin. A mouth is a half oval and two mountains on top. Try to get students away from drawing just half circle smiles. Our lips are a shape, not a line!
- 7. Add characteristics such as hair, ears, freckles, glasses etc. Don't forget about things like eyebrows.
- 8. Encourage kids to draw objects in the background that might also represent them.
- 9. Once students have finished their drawings, let them know they are now going to be painting just like Frida! They can use paint, crayons, or colored pencils.
- 10. Finally, paint the background with any color, pattern, or design they created according to how they choose to represent themselves.

Self-Portraits can be used to tell people about yourself and your own unique identity, like Frida Kahlo!

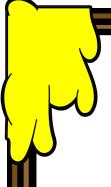
Proportions of the Face



ACTIVITY 9

Color Frida!





Sources:

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http://www.kinderart.com/painting/emotion.shtml

Skeletons Resource Guide, Sea. Inc. Who was Frida Kahlo? By Sarah Fabiny

ABOUT SEA

Founded in 1985, Society of the Educational Arts, Inc. / Sociedad Educativa de las Artes, Inc. (SEA) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the empowerment and educational advancement of children and young adults. SEA is one of the few, if not the only, Bilingual / Latin American Arts-in-Education organizations in New York City.

Through an array of effective, comprehensive, and highly powerful Arts-in-Education programs, SEA provides opportunities for children and young adults to examine, challenge and create possible solutions for current educational, social and cornmunity issues while fostering their talents, potential and self-esteem.

SEA is responsible for reviving the tradition of doing Children's Theatre in Spanish in New York City, a tradition that was abandoned for more than 18 years. For the past several years, SEA has toured professional theatres, schools, city parks and communities reviving this tradition by performing to audiences of over 75,000 per year.

SEA has also been instrumental in the introduction and education of non-Spanish speaking audiences to Latino Arts and Culture through cultural exchanges with many other ethnic groups and communities. As a result, SEA has been recognized as a leading theater company that offers a repertory of high quality works exemplifying wholesome and educational value, as well as providing a link to Latino Arts and Culture, multicultural understanding and self-esteem for all ages.

In celebration of its 25th Anniversary, SEA opened a brand new state-of-the-art performance space at the Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural and Educational Center in Manhattan's Lower East Side.



Teatro SEA

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