



The Mosaica Parent Connection

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May is the month when the snow and ice have melted and new growth is bursting forth, coloring our senses and world. It is also the month of a very rich and colorful celebration, *Cinco de Mayo*, a celebration of Mexican heritage and pride. *Cinco de Mayo* is a regional holiday in Mexico, primarily in the state of Puebla, and is not formally recognized by the Mexican government as a national holiday. It actually has taken on greater significance in the United States than in Mexico as a way to recognize, honor, and celebrate the history and contributions of Mexican-Americans. *Cinco de Mayo* is marked with colorful parades, folk dancing, mariachi music, and tasty food and drinks! In a broader sense, it is a time to contemplate, study, and celebrate the great culture of the United States—a “melting pot” of immigrants—something you will not find any other place on the globe.

Please “color” the month of May by integrating Hispanic history and the contributions of minority groups into your family discussions (you may talk with us about the Paragon Plus Unit: Hispanic Heritage for further ideas). Your student will love the inclusion of a celebration of *Cinco de Mayo*, a joyous, colorful holiday that is filled with song and dance, too!

- Your School CAO

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Our Immigrant Nation

To get your student thinking about the larger context of this month's theme, our immigrant nation, write out (on large paper or a chalk board, if possible) and read aloud the following quotation by Mexican-American actor, Edward James Olmos:

“I was raised in what I consider to be not a melting pot, but a salad bowl. The onion stayed the onion, the tomato stayed the tomato, the lettuce stayed the lettuce, with maybe a little Russian or Italian dressing. And it tasted real good. No one lost their identity, and I thought that was what life was like.”

After reading, underline both phrases “melting pot” and “salad bowl” and have your student write them down in a T-chart (just draw a large “T” on paper, creating a 2-column chart, with one column for each phrase). Discuss with your child which phrase he or she feels is best suited to describe the culture of the United States. Have your student take notes on the T-chart.

- Have we, regardless of our ancestries, "melted" together to create a whole?
- Have all groups of the many ancestries in the U.S. kept their identities, more like the ingredients of a salad?

Find out which metaphor your student thinks best reflects U.S. culture. Be sure to engage in a discussion so that s/he may explain why s/he selected one over the other. You may also wish to challenge him or her to come up with an even better metaphor for our nation! Whichever one your student chooses (and perhaps s/he'll want both or even more!), create a poster or bulletin board with the phrase(s) to be used during this month.



More Power with Paragon: *Cinco de Mayo* & Hispanic History - Home Connections

Beginning in the 1960s and into the 1970s, minority groups demanded that their voices were heard in current events, in the telling of history, and in the classroom. Among the many voices were those of women, African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans (as well as other Hispanic Americans). The Paragon curriculum strives to present and bring these voices alive so that students will understand that we are a nation of immigrants. All people, regardless of race, class, or gender have made enormous contributions to our country. We want students to recognize themselves in the Paragon curriculum and in history, and know that whatever their ancestry, they may contribute to and shape our society. It is our multifaceted and pluralistic culture that makes the United States so vibrant. We invite you to dip into this rich, colorful history this month and share in your student's learning:

Current Events. As with the histories of all minority groups in the United States, citizens of Mexican descent have had to fight for their rights. Today, these efforts have come to fruition as many Hispanics are now visible in leadership, entertainment, literature, scholarship, politics, and so on. Find newspaper and magazine articles that feature people of Mexican descent who are making remarkable contributions today. For example, Dolores Huerta continues to fight for social justice as well as feminist causes; Chicana author, Sandra Cisneros, is celebrating the 25th year of her landmark novella, *The House on Mango Street*, which is read at nearly every high school across the nation; the Governor of New Mexico, Bill Richardson, ran for President in the 2008 primaries, and so on. Read the articles together, discuss why the "voices" of all minorities are important, and then create a bulletin board or poster with information about the accomplishments of Hispanics making history today.

History. Many people have the misconception that *Cinco de Mayo* commemorates Mexican Independence, which is celebrated on September 16th and is a Mexican national holiday. *Cinco de Mayo* honors the defeat of French forces at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862, under the commanding leadership of General Ignacio Zaragoza Seguín. This battle is significant in that the Mexican army was considerably smaller and less prepared than the French, and the win rallied the spirit of all of Mexico to continue their battle for self-governance. Learn together about this historical battle by visiting and sharing the information at the following websites:

Mexonline: *Cinco de Mayo* (grades 6 - 8)

<http://www.mexonline.com/cinco-de-mayo.htm>

Cinco History (grades 4 - 5)

<http://www.vivacincodemayo.org/history.htm>

WebQuest: Cinco de Mayo (grades 2 - 3)

<http://www.zianet.com/cjcox/edutech4learning/cinco.html>

Arts and Crafts. There are many arts and crafts associated with *Cinco de Mayo* and Hispanic culture in general, including piñatas, maracas, sombreros and more! Visit the websites below and select a craft activity to do with your child:

Cinco de Mayo

<http://holidays.kaboose.com/cinco-de-mayo/>

Cinco de Mayo Activities

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/cinco-de-mayo/>

Analyzing Quotations. Quotations provide powerful learning opportunities because they express *values*. With your student, read over each of the quotations by Latinos listed below. Talk about what they mean in general and then challenge your student to identify the value that is being conveyed in the quotation. For example, in the first one by the great Benito Juarez, the main value conveyed is "respect"; in the next one, it is the value of education, and so on. With your student, write a list of the main values expressed in each.

"Among individuals, as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace."

- Benito Juarez (President of Mexico, 1858 - 1872).

"The day someone quits school he is condemning himself to a future of poverty."

- Jamie Escalante (educator)

"Personally, I believe that our American system works as long as you participate in it. You must vote and make your voice heard. Otherwise you will be left out."

- Mari-Luci Jaramillo (ambassador)

"*Familia* is the very center of Latino culture. I don't feel the media has really seen that. It is the strongest thing about us and the most universal."

- Gregory Nava (filmmaker)

"Don't believe all of the negative perceptions that are out there about youth. You, along with your families and communities can change things. You need to be part of a network of peers and adults who can work together to achieve a vision you may have ... Young people are not in a 'waiting period' ... waiting to be leaders, waiting to make a difference ... young people matter now!"

- Barbara Taveras (philanthropist)

"The first law is the one of human dignity."

- Father Luis Olivares

After making a list of values from the quotations, have your student create a "values" collage using these words and concepts. Provide him or her with a stack of magazines for cutting, scissors, glue, and cardboard or other heavier paper that s/he can glue the images onto. Encourage your student to include the actual words as well as images.

When complete, together, carefully examine the collage and discuss these questions:

- Does it reflect or depict U.S. culture?
- Since all of the quotations are by Latinos, does it reflect or depict Latino culture?
- Is it possible to isolate Latino culture from the whole of U.S. culture? Why or why not?
- Does it look more like a "melting pot" or a "salad bowl"?
- Does it show the diversity of peoples making contributions to the United States?

May this exploration into our immigrant nation and, particularly, Hispanic culture, color and enrich your month of May!

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