

COMPARING TEXAS AND LATIN AMERICA

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"Comparing Texas and Latin America" is arranged as a two-week teaching unit to be worked into the framework of seventh-year Texas history classes. It involves comparing the known Texas port city, Houston, with selected Latin American port cities. Three objectives are undertaken: (1) comparing the stereotyping of both Texans and Latin Americans; (2) deriving symbols for Houston and the Latin American cities; and (3) comparing and discussing statistical information in specified areas.

In addition to the unit, there are instructions on how to develop a slide presentation on stereotyping.

This unit may be worked into the Texas history curriculum at the teacher's discretion. Suggested teaching activities for each of the three objectives are included in the unit.

PREUNIT ASSUMPTIONS

1. The students have been made aware prior to undertaking this lesson of at least three reasons why a Texan should become acquainted with Latin America. The main idea here is that Latin America and the United States (Texas in particular) are important to each other politically, economically, and culturally.
2. Students have been introduced to Latin America and its geographic locations. This can be implemented by using transparencies such as "Western Hemisphere" and "The Americas" and "Latin America—Its Regions."²
3. The meanings of the following words have been adequately defined for the students' purposes.
 - a. culture
 - b. stereotype
 - c. symbol
 - d. statistics
4. Prior correspondence has been initiated with governmental agencies such as consulates of the individual nations to receive statistical information and brochures and perhaps liaison established with schools or agencies that could help promote pen pal type relations.

Note: This effort might be coordinated with the language department.

Title

Houston, Texas, as Compared to Selected Latin American Cities. (The port cities of Porto Alegre, Brazil; Guayaquil, Ecuador; San Pedro Sula, Honduras; Veracruz, Mexico, were selected for this study.)

Rationale

An understanding of another culture may be acquired by comparing the attitudes and institutions of a known culture with an unknown culture

Grade Placement

Seven

Description

The unit is a comparative study of contemporary urban society. Generalities concerning family life with some statistical information will be required. The length of time for this unit is approximately two weeks.

Objectives

- I. The student will be able to discuss stereotyping of the Texan and the Latin American.
- II. The student will be able to determine symbols (1 or more) for the city.
- III. The student will be able to compare and discuss general and statistical information in at least 10 of the following areas:

- A. Overall population
- B. Climate
- C. Outstanding physical land features
- D. Major industries
- E. Average family income
- F. Education
- G. Family size
- H. Leisure activities
- I. Sports
- J. Housing
- K. Religion
- L. Music
- M. Popular foods
- N. Art

- I. Suggested approaches for Texan/Latin stereotyping (see instructions on p. XXX).

- A.
 1. Ask each student to draw a mental image of a "typical" Texan.
 2. Ask each student to draw a mental image of a "typical" Latin American.
 3. Collect and select a few of the drawings that are

particularly representative.

4. Ask the students of the selected drawings to explain why they portrayed the subject in that manner. (Usually the "typical" Texan drawings portray wealth, cowboy image, tallness, "redneck," etc.; the "typical" Latin American is often portrayed as rural, poor, revolutionary, etc.)

5. The class should be polled to see how many of the native Texans fit the stereotype of the "typical" Texan.

6. "Ultimately this reaches the conclusion that the 'typical' Texan is mythical."

7. "Then submit to the class that perhaps the stereotype ascribed to the Latin American is also less than accurate."³

B. Overhead transparencies depicting stereotypes of Latin Americans and North Americans can be used either as an introduction or summary to stereotyping.⁴

II. Suggested approach for symbolizing the cities

A. Each student in the class is asked to write 5 symbols of Houston down on paper and told to be prepared to defend each choice.

B. The class is then divided into 5 groups of approximately four students per group.

C. Each group is asked to reach a consensus on 3 symbols for Houston.

D. A spokesperson for each group will present the group's reasoning for each symbol before the whole class.

E. All suggested symbols will be written on the board and the class then votes on the 3 choices that they feel best symbolize Houston. (Likely answers will be: Astrodome, Port of Houston, Space City, etc.)

F. Each of the 5 groups is assigned the task of determining at least 1 symbol for their particular Latin American city based on subsequent research.

III. Suggested approaches for comparing and discussing the general and statistical information.

A. Speculation: Each of the five groups is asked to compile a list of their mental image(s) of Latin America in the following categories:

1. Climate
2. Major industries
3. Family size
4. Education
5. Average family income
6. Leisure activities
7. Popular sports
8. Type of housing
9. Religion

10. Popular foods

The list will be kept by the group to be used as a comparative instrument after research has been completed.

B. From the resource materials (see bibliography) placed in the classroom, the five groups will research their respective cities. This gathering of information may also be based in part on the direct correspondence previously initiated with pen pals or governmental agencies.

C. The groups could be asked to compile a Latin American City Chart such as the following:

LATIN AMERICAN CITY CHART

City: Population:
Country: Population:
Region:
Outstanding Physical Features:
People:
and so on down the list.

D. Particularly creative students or ones who prefer to work alone or for extra credit might create a fictional correspondence between a 7th-year student in Houston and a child of comparable age in the Latin American city. The correspondence should evolve around day-to-day events, recreation, and so on. However, the account must be based on research and readings.

E. The particularly creative student might compose a short story based on a typical day or week in the life of a student in the Latin American city.

IV. Culminating activities

A. The entire class meets.

1. The Houston group submits its norms or findings in the various categories.

2. The Latin American city groups present their findings.

3. Inquiry questioning such as:

a. How do their lives differ from or resemble your own?
b. Do the Latin American cities differ from one another? How? Why?

c. Why do these differences and similarities exist?

B. Students are asked to view their original speculation about Latin America and to compile a new list that will demonstrate the learning that has taken place.

One observation that they should discover is that most Latin American cities differ also and that single statements can seldom be made for all of the cities.

Notes

- 1 Clark C. Gill, *Contemporary Inter-American Relations Instructional Unit No. 2*, Latin American Curriculum Project (Austin: University of Texas Institute of Latin American Studies, 1968). Available from ERIC.
- 2 Clark C. Gill and William B. Conroy, *Geographic Setting and Historical Background Unit I*, Latin American Curriculum Project (Austin: University of Texas, 1967). Available from ERIC.
- 3 Cecil Robinson, *With the Ears of Strangers* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1963), pp. 31-66.
- 4 Latin American Studies Association, *It's the Image That Counts—Cartoon Masters for Latin American Study* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1976)

TEXAS/LATIN AMERICAN STEREOTYPING SLIDE PRESENTATION

Materials

1. Slides depicting scenes and/or people (children are the most effective)
2. Cassette tape of the song "Everything Is Beautiful"
3. Optional: hand out paper for students prenumbered to correlate with the slide numbers

Teacher Preparation

Locate pictures (preferably in color) of scenes and people of Latin America and/or Texas. Use these to prepare slides.

Instructions for Using

Indicate to the class that the slides depict either Texas or Latin America. Students are instructed to place a T beside the number if Texas is indicated on a particular slide and LA if Latin America is depicted. The slides are shown while the music plays in the background.

When the slide presentation is completed, give the students the answers. The slides may be an actual mixture of Texas/Latin America or perhaps better all Latin America. Typically the students will discover that it often is difficult to determine the Texas scene from the Latin American

This should lead to a discussion/debriefing session.

1. What do the results indicate about Texas?
2. What do the results indicate about Latin America?
3. What generalization can we make about the population in Texas and throughout most of Latin America?
4. How do the slides affect the traditional mental stereotypes of both Texans and Latin Americans?

Suggested General Sources for Obtaining Slide Materials

Texas—Land of Contrast, from the Texas Highway Department

Land of Enchantment Series

Time-Life Series

Jesse F. Sargent, *Kids of Colombia* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1974.) Black/white photos.

Helen Schreider and Frank Schreider, *Exploring the Amazon* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1970.)

National Geographic magazine

Travel magazine

Texas Highways magazine

Brochures from travel bureaus (however, these tend to stress the exotic)

Many other suitable illustrated books may be available in the children's section of most public libraries.

Recording

Neil Sedaka, *Sedaka Live in Australia* (RCA) "Everything Is Beautiful."

See the bibliography at the end of this handbook for more sources.

LEVEL: HIGH SCHOOL

Source: Contreras, Gloria, Latin American Cultural Studies: *Information and Materials For Teaching Latin America*, 2nd Revised Edition, Institute of Latin American Studies, The University of Texas at Austin.