

Corrido  
Curriculum  
Packet



## LESSONS: LESSON PLAN

This Lesson at a Glance:

Grade Band: 9-12

Integrated Subjects:

- Music
- Language Arts
- Social Studies

Materials:

For the teacher:

- [Assessment Rubric](#)

For the student:

- [Breaking News](#)
- [What is a Corrido?](#)
- ["Tiempos Amargos" \(Bitter Times\)](#)
- ["Corrido Historia Y Muerte del Gral. Francisco Villa"](#)
- ["El Cuartelazo" \(The Coup d'Etat\) \(Part I\)](#)
- ["Sonocal"](#)

Related Lessons:

- 9-12 [Five Artists of the Mexican Revolution](#)

Related WebLinks:

[MexOnline.com: Mexican Revolution of 1910](#)

[Smithsonian Institution: Corridos sin Fronteras](#) 😊

[PBS: Interactive Timeline on The Border](#) 😊

[Smithsonian Institution: Migrations in History](#)

Related How-To's:

[Turning Students into Songwriters: Tips on Writing Corrido Lyrics](#)

[There's a Song In Everyone: Tips on Composing a Simple Corrido](#)

Related Look-Listen-Learn:

[Corridos](#) 🎵

Targeted Standards:

# Corridos About the Mexican Revolution

Part of the Unit: [The Music & Meaning of Mexican Corridos](#)

Lesson Overview:

In this lesson, students will be introduced to causes of the Mexican Revolution and key revolutionary figures. They will gain an understanding of a particular Mexican song form, the *corrido*, and its role as a vehicle for communicating the news and other important events. Students will be introduced to the causes and outcomes of the Mexican Revolution by learning about key figures, including then-president Porfirio Diaz and revolutionaries Francisco Madero, Francisco Villa, and Emiliano Zapata. The lesson will culminate in the students' creation of original *corridos* based on a current event.

Length of Lesson:

Two 45-minute class periods

Notes:

This lesson is suitable with adaptation for grades 11-12. This lesson is particularly suited as an introduction to a unit on the Mexican Revolution.

Instructional Objectives:

Students will:

- discuss the Porfirio Diaz regime in Mexico and Diaz's ties to the United States.
- read a *corrido* about life under the Diaz regime in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of a dictatorship on individuals.
- analyze *corridos* that provide a greater understanding of tensions among revolutionary leaders who sought the presidency.
- write original *corridos* based on the traditional form.
- research a current event as the basis for subject matter for their *corridos*.

Supplies:

For the Student:

- Pen and journal

For the Teacher:

- Internet or print resources about the Mexican Revolution (see Sources section for more information)
- Computer with Internet access or CD player to play music (optional)

**The National Standards For Arts Education:****Music (9-12)**

Standard 6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

**Music (9-12)**

Standard 8: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

**Music (9-12)**

Standard 9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

**Other National Standards:****Language Arts I (K-2)**

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

**Language Arts I (K-2)**

Standard 2: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

**Language Arts I (K-2)**

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

**Language Arts I (K-2)**

Standard 6: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

**World History IV (9-12)**

Standard 35: Understands patterns of nationalism, state-building, and social reform in Europe and the Americas from 1830 to 1914









**World History IV (9-12)**

Standard 38: Understands reform, revolution, and social change in the world economy of the early 20th century

**World History IV (9-12)**

Standard 40: Understands the search for peace and stability throughout the world in the 1920s and 1930s

**ICON LEGEND:**

-  = part of the current spotlight
-  = opens in a new window
-  = kid-friendly
-  = printable
-  = interactive
-  = audio
-  = video
-  = images

**Instructional Plan:****Teacher Preparation**

Prior to teaching this lesson plan, assign students a reading assignment on the Mexican Revolution, such as Chapter 12 in Benjamin Keen's *Latin American History* (see Print Sources) or selected sources available on the Internet such as the [History of the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920](#) on the University of San Diego's Border Revolution Web site and War and Revolution on Worldbook.com's History of Mexico section.

**Warm Up: Spread the News**

Divide students into groups of five, and number the students in each group 1 through 5. Tell students who are assigned number 1 that they will be given some very important news that must be delivered to student number 5 in their group. But before student 5 can hear the news, the news must first travel from student 1 to student 2 to student 3, and so on individually, but without writing anything down—just like the game "Telephone."

Give students the following instructions: Each group will spread out across the length of the classroom in order as if lining up for a relay race. All the 1s will receive the breaking news on a folded piece of paper, but they cannot unfold the paper until you give the word. They will be given two minutes to read the news and do their best to memorize as many details as they can. When the two minutes are up, they must crumple up the piece of paper and return it to the teacher. Each student must "spread the news" to the next person in their group until the news spreads to the 5s. When all 5s have heard the news, each 5 will be given a piece of paper. On the count of three, the 5s in each group will write down the news as best as they can. Warn your class that the news will contain important specific details, so they'll need to pay careful attention when listening to and spreading the news. The group that has written down the most accurate news wins.

When the class has understood the instructions, give all the 1s a copy of the [Breaking News](#) info sheet folded in half and begin the activity.

After the activity is completed, remind students that important news was spread by word of mouth before newspapers were widely printed and distributed. Explain that one way individuals could help remember the details of a particular event was to write a song that told the story in its lyrics. Point out that we could each sing along to a number of different songs without looking at the lyrics, but would have a hard time reciting the same amount of stories by memory. Tell students that the corrido, a particular type of song developed in Mexico in the 1800s and still popular today, was often used to transmit information about current events.

**Introduction to Corridos about the Mexican Revolution**

Pass out the [What is a Corrido?](#) info sheet and discuss the characteristics of the *corrido* form. Tell students that they will be looking at *corridos* that provide information about the dictatorship of Mexican president Porfirio Diaz and other key figures during the Mexican Revolution. Pass out lyrics to the *corrido* "[Tiempos Amargos](#)" ([Bitter Times](#)). (You may wish to play an excerpt of the *corrido* for your class. See the ArtsEdge Look-Listen-Learn resource, [Corridos](#).)

Ask students what they learned about Porfirio Diaz from their reading assignment. Tell students that "[Tiempos Amargos](#)" reveals just how awful people were treated under Diaz's regime. Review the reasons why most of the population was living in poverty while only a few in powerful positions were wealthy (i.e., Diaz's ties to U.S. corporations). Ask students for examples of feelings of injustice apparent from the *corrido* lyrics. Ask students what the symbol of "pants" signifies in the lyrics. Discuss how the act of buttoning someone else's pants reflects how oppressed the people were under the Diaz regime.

Discuss what students can learn from a song that they might not be able to learn from a history textbook (i.e., personal narratives that might include

emotional responses to then-current events) and why this may provide a greater understanding for the effects of significant historical events such as war.

#### Leading Revolutionaries

Pass out the lyrics to "Corrido Historia Y Muerte del Gral. Francisco Villa," a *corrido* about the legendary Mexican revolutionary leader Francisco Villa who attempted to overthrow Porfirio Diaz. Play an excerpt of the recording (available on the ARTSEEDGE Look-Listen-Learn resource, Corridos) and note the less-than-perfect sound quality of the recording. Tell students that the recording was made on August 31, 1923, just sixty days after Francisco Villa's assassination-certainly a *corrido* about a then-current event.

Ask students whether they learned more about Francisco Villa from the *corrido* than from their previous readings. What did they learn? Discuss how Villa is represented as an infallible hero in this *corrido*, but remind students that Villa was the leader of one of several factions who were fighting for presidential control (another was led by Emiliano Zapata). Many *corridos* have commemorated a particular leader (such as former U.S. President John F. Kennedy) with just as much praise as the *corrido* about Villa. Ask students if they can point out instances in the *corrido* that reveal one-sided opinions.

Pass out "El Cuartelazo" (The Coup d'Etat) (Part I), a *corrido* about revolutionary leader Francisco Madero who successfully defeated Diaz in 1911 and was elected president. Ask students whether they can detect any bias in the *corrido*. (Focus on the 8th and 9th stanzas of the poem if they need assistance.) Note that after Madero became president, he was challenged by both Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata. Zapata controlled the state of Morelos, where he took matters into his own hands and divided land among the peasants, thereby ousting the estate owners. Both Zapata and Madero were assassinated, in 1917 and 1913, respectively. Political instability continued after Victoriana Huerta's coup d'etat against Huerta in 1913 and through Venustiano Carranza's presidency, which began when he overthrew Huerta in 1913. (You may wish to play an excerpt of this *corrido* for your class. See the ARTSEEDGE Look-Listen-Learn resource, Corridos.)

Discuss how personal bias affects the re-telling of history, and how there are at least two sides to every war and to every story.

#### From Student to Corridista

Tell students that they will now become *corridistas* (composers of *corridos*). Have students research the topic of their choice for homework, and challenge students to write their own *corridos* about a pertinent current event. See the ArtsEdge How-to Turning Students into Songwriters: Tips on Writing Corrido Lyrics for helpful guidelines. (You may instead wish to ask students to write a *corrido* based on a topic dealing with the Mexican Revolution to reinforce what they have learned.) Inspire students by sharing *corridos* written by fellow high school students. Recent winners of the annual Bilingual Corrido Contest in Arizona, a program conducted by the University of Arizona Poetry Center, wrote about current political and personal events. The winning 2001 *corrido*, "San Salinas" by Adolfo Salazar, critiques Vicente Fox, the elected Mexican president from 2000-2006. The winning 2002 *corrido*, "Sonocal" by Eleuterio Cortez, tells the story of a young man who was tragically killed by people he considered his friends. (Both student *corridos* and additional examples of *corridos* are available on the ARTSEEDGE Look-Listen-Learn resource, Corridos.)

#### Assessment:

Assess the students based on the following criteria:

- evidence of understanding of major figures in the Mexican Revolution through insightful and frequent participation in class discussions

- evidence of understanding of the *corrido* form
- wrote an original *corrido* in the traditional form that reflects the student's understanding of a current event.

You may also use the Assessment Rubric.

#### Extensions:

Organize a *corrido* concert, asking students to read the lyrics of their songs aloud—or better yet, to sing or perform them if a student in your class plays an appropriate instrument (i.e., guitar, accordion). See the ArtsEdge How-to: There's a Song in Everyone: Tips on Composing a Simple Corrido for useful guidelines on helping students to compose music.

Examine how events and figures of the Mexican Revolution influenced visual art, including murals by Diego Rivera and paintings by Jose Clemente Orozco through the ArtsEdge lesson plan Five Artists of the Mexican Revolution.

#### Sources:

##### Print:

- Keen, Benjamin. *A History of Latin America*. 7th Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.
- Paredes, Américo. *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.
- Paredes, Américo. *With his Pistol in his Hand*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.

##### Media:

- Various artists. *Heroes & Horses: Corridos from the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands*. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. CD 40475.
- Various artists. *The Mexican Revolution: Corridos*. Arhoolie Productions. CD 7041-7044.

##### Web:

- South Texas Border, 1900-1920: Photographs from the Robert Runyon Collection  
<http://runyon.lib.utexas.edu/>
- The Handbook of Texas Online: Cortez, Lira Gregorio  
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/CC/fco94.html>

#### Authors:

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#### Collaborating Organizations:

- The University of Arizona Poetry Center  
Tucson, AZ

The University of Arizona Poetry Center, an area of emphasis within the College of Humanities, is a nationally renowned special collections library and archive, academic and community resource, and

sponsor of numerous outreach programs, including a distinguished poetry reading series.

<http://www.poetrycenter.arizona.edu>

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Assessment Rubric

# Corridos About the Mexican Revolution

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student is able to:	Consistently Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Evident	Comments
discuss the Porfirio Diaz regime in Mexico and Diaz's ties to the United States.					
read a <i>corrido</i> about life under the Diaz regime in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of a dictatorship on individuals.					
analyze <i>corridos</i> that provide a greater understanding of tensions among revolutionary leaders who sought the presidency.					
write an original <i>corrido</i> based on the traditional form.					
research a current event as the basis for subject matter for their <i>corridos</i> .					

Lesson Connection: Corridos About the Mexican Revolution  
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Info Sheet

## Breaking News

Extra! Extra! This just in! Porfirio Diaz has done it again! He sold another oil field to an American corporation in collusion with the Mexican elite. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. Ninety percent of the people are living in poverty. Meanwhile, the textile workers who were on strike were met by the brute force of Diaz's men. Reports reveal massive bloodshed. We'll report more on the Rio Blanco textile strike as we find out more information.





## What is a Corrido?

The *corrido* is a musical form developed in Mexico during the 1800s and originally sung throughout the country. Although still popular in Mexico, over time it became known as "musica de la frontera" (border music) because it was especially popular along both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. This musical-poetic form continues to be popular wherever Mexicans and Mexican Americans live.

### Language

The following elements characterize the language in *corridos*:

- *Corridos* are stories told in poetic form and sung to simple, basic music, much like English ballads.
- *Corridos* use common, everyday language.
- Although traditional *corridos* were always in Spanish, in recent years some have appeared in English as well, or have mixed the two languages.
- The audience, if addressed is always addressed politely.
- The tone can vary from sincere to satirical.

### Structure

The stories that *corridos* tell, either fictional or historical, must be sung in the vernacular language of the people in order to be remembered (whether in English, Spanish or a mixture.) There is some variation in the poetic form, but most *corridos* have the following structure:

- 36 lines (6 stanzas of 6 lines each or 9 stanzas of 4 lines each)
- 7 to 10 syllables per line (sometimes the lines are repeated)
- Rhyme scheme that varies but most commonly uses an ABCBDB form in a six-line stanza or ABCB in a four-line stanza. (Sometimes couplets are used: AABB.)
- By tradition, the first stanza provides a setting for the story by either giving a specific date or naming a place.

### Content

The traditional historical *corrido* told about actual events, especially the exploits of famous heroes or the tragic deaths of individuals fighting unjust authorities. When *corridos* became more commercially exploitable, some became mostly fictional. Today, a *corrido* can be about almost anything. These are some of the popular subjects:

- animals (such as racehorses or roosters)
- tragic love affairs
- criminal dealings, especially with contraband and smuggling
- migration and migrant labor
- social and political events
- the struggles of everyday life along the border
- assassinations or other violent deaths
- humorous occurrences or relationships
- catastrophes
- hometowns and regions
- miraculous events
- wars and revolutions
- local or national heroes



## "Tiempos Amargos" (Bitter Times)

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¡Ay, qué contentos hemos llegado  
a estos tiempos que ahora se ven!  
Nosotros somos los agraristas,  
varios amigos que ni lo creen.

Ya no es el tiempo del porfirista,  
que antes lloraban por el patrón,  
que lo encontraban, le dan la mano,  
y le abrochaban el pantalón.

Y si algún día el mayordomo  
se disgustaba con algún peón  
era porque otro andaba mas cerca  
a los remaches del pantalón.

Y el que tenía hijas bonitas  
ahí se la daban de velador,  
o se granjeaban muy buena chamba  
o cuando menos de rayador.

El que tenía mujer bonita  
no lo dejaban ni descansar,  
los levantaban muy de mañana  
como a los bueyes a trabajar.

Ya me despido de mis amigos  
ahí me dispensan la indiscreción,  
tiempos amargos del porfirista  
que aquí les canto en mi canción.

Oh, how pleasant it is to live  
during these times of today.  
We are the *agraristas*,  
though some people still doubt it.

These are no longer the times of Porfirio (Díaz),  
when they cried for the master  
when they'd meet him, they'd shake his hand,  
and button his pants.

If one day the steward  
became angry with a worker  
it was because there was another one  
closer to the snaps of his pants.

If someone had pretty daughters  
he'd get a job as a night watchman,  
or else he'd land a good job,  
at least as a payroll clerk.

If someone had a pretty wife  
they didn't let him rest,  
they'd get them up very early  
to work just like the oxen.

I bid you farewell, friends,  
you'll forgive my frankness.  
I've sung about the bitter times  
under the Porfiristas.

### Source:

Lyrics of "Tiempos Amargos" by an unknown composer. Reprinted from the CD *The Mexican Revolution: Corridos about the Heroes and Events 1910-1920 and Beyond!* (CD 7041-7044) courtesy of Arhoolie Records (<http://www.arhoolie.com>).



## "Corrido Historia Y Muerte del Gral. Francisco Villa"

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### Part I

En una hacienda en la sierra,  
de México maravilla,  
de un labrador de mi tierra  
nació el gran general Villa.

In a hacienda in my country,  
marvelous México,  
from a worker of the land  
the great General Villa was born.

Trabajó por mantener  
a su madre y a su hermana  
y luchó por obtener  
de trabajador la fama.

He worked to support  
his mother and sister,  
and aspired to be known  
as a good worker.

Pero el hijo del patrón,  
con su dinero y poder,  
burló a la hermana del peón  
que al fin era una mujer.

But the son of the boss,  
with money and power,  
seduced the peon's sister,  
who, as a woman, was helpless.

Pero Pancho era muy hombre,  
y en prueba de su valor,  
lavó con sangre su nombre  
malhiriendo al burlador.

But Pancho was truly a man  
and, proving his courage,  
cleared his name with blood,  
badly wounding the seducer.

A las fuertes de Madero  
entró con brazo potente  
y aquel humilde ranchero  
fue un indomable insurgente.

He joined Madero's forces  
with a strong hand,  
and the once lowly farmworker  
became an undefeated rebel.

Por su valor sobrehumano,  
y fiereza sin igual,  
don Pancho le dió en Rellano  
el grado de general.

Due to his extraordinary bravery  
and unsurpassed fierceness,  
at Rellano Don Pancho (Madero)  
promoted him to the rank of general.

Mas sus más valientes soldados  
fueron su escolta y su corte:  
los indomables dorados  
de la División del Norte.

His most courageous soldiers  
were his elite guard:  
the indefectible dorados  
of the Northern Division.

Mas por una imprevisión,  
o tración de algún canalla,  
perdió la brillante acción  
del combate de Celaya.

Yet an unforeseen incident,  
or the treachery of a scoundrel,  
caused him to lose his brilliant campaign  
in the battle of Celaya.

*Continued on the next page*

## Part II

Fue temerario y valiente  
y noble de corazón  
y admitió a toda su gente  
al Presidente Obregón.

He was fearless and courageous  
and of noble heart,  
and accepted into his ranks  
President Obregón's men.

Como pago a sus proezas  
le dieron el Canutillo,  
la hacienda que manejaba  
con su secretario Trillo.

In payment for his deeds  
they gave him "El Canutillo,"  
the hacienda he administered  
with his aide, Trillo.

Pero la envidia y traición,  
que se arrastraba escondida,  
esperaba la ocasión  
para arrancarle la vida.

But envy and treachery  
lurked nearby  
waiting for the opportunity  
to take his life.

Y muy cerca del Parral,  
sin descubrir aún el móvil,  
mataron al General  
que iba guiando su automóvil.

Near Parral,  
the motive has yet to be discovered,  
they killed the General  
as he was driving his automobile.

Mas no tuvieron valor  
para enfrentarse al caudillo,  
y disparando a traición  
también mataron a Trillo.

But they did not have the courage  
to face the leader,  
they fired treacherously  
and also killed Trillo.

Le lloraron sus soldados  
pues él era su esperanza  
y los valientes dorados  
juraron tomar venganza.

His soldiers grieved for him  
because he was their hope,  
and the brave Dorados  
swore to avenge his death.

Solo así podían vencer  
a ese valiente caudillo  
que con temor le llamaban  
el señor de Canutillo.

That is how they defeated  
such a fearless leader  
who was respectfully known  
as the gentleman of "El Canutillo."

Duerme en paz porque tu nombre  
cual astro en la historia brilla:  
será inmortal el renombre  
del general Pancho Villa.

May you rest in peace, because your name  
shines like a star in history:  
immortal will be the fame  
of General Pancho Villa.

### Source:

Lyrics of "Corrido Historia Y Muerte del Gral. Francisco Villa" by Vivo. Reprinted from the CD *The Mexican Revolution: Corridos about the Heroes and Events 1910-1920 and Beyond!* (CD 7041-7044) courtesy of Arhoolie Records (<http://www.arhoolie.com>).



## "El Cuartelazo" (The Coup d'Etat) (Part I)

Mil novecientos once,  
veintidós de febrero,  
en la capital de México  
mataron a Madero.

A las cinco de la mañana  
fue el primer cañonazo,  
ésa fue la contraseña  
para dar el cuartelazo.

Daba el reloj ese día  
las siete de la mañana  
cuando a México llegó,  
Mondragón con fuerza armada.

Llegó don Félix Díaz  
con orden militar:  
—Renuncias de la silla  
o te mando asesinar.—

Le respondió Madero  
en su silla presidencial:  
—Primero me asesinas,  
que tú me hagas renunciar.—

Madero, estando en palacio,  
dijo: ¡—Qué ingrata es mi suerte!  
¡Doy la vida por el pueblo,  
yo no le temo a la muerte!—

Madero les contestó:  
—No presento mi retiro;  
yo no me hice presidente,  
fue por el pueblo elegido.—

Señores, les contraré  
lo que en México pasó:  
que una bola de asesinos  
a Madero asesinó.

Madero ya murió,  
y está debajo la tierra,  
ya nomás quedó Carranza  
de Administrador de Guerra.

Nineteen hundred and eleven,  
twenty second of February,  
in Mexico's capital  
they killed Madero.

At five in the morning  
was the first cannon blast,  
that was the signal  
for the *coup d'etat*.

As the clock struck  
seven that morning  
into México City arrived  
Mondragon and his armed troops.

Félix Díaz arrived  
with a military order:  
"Either you resign  
or I'll have you killed."

Madero answered  
from his presidential chair:  
"You'll have to kill me first  
before you make me resign."

Madero in the presidential palace  
said: "How unfortunate is my fate!  
I give my life for the people,  
I do not fear death!"

Madero answered then:  
"I will not resign!  
I'm not a self-appointed president,  
I was chosen by the people."

Gentleman, let me tell you  
what happened in México:  
a bunch of murderers  
killed Madero.

Madero is dead now  
and buried down below,  
only Carranza is left  
as Minister of War.

*Continued on the next page*

Llegó la artillería,  
conducida por un tren,  
porque iban a bombardear  
la cárcel de Belén.

The artillery arrived  
transported by train,  
they were going to attack  
the jail of Belen.

Tocaban los clarines,  
sonaban los tambores,  
y andaba el cañon niño  
por los alrededores.

The bugles were calling  
and the drums were playing and the  
canon *niño*  
was placed nearby.

**Source:**

Lyrics of "El Cuartelazo" by an unknown composer. Reprinted from the CD *The Mexican Revolution: Corridos about the Heroes and Events 1910-1920 and Beyond!* (CD 7041-7044) courtesy of Arhoolie Records (<http://www.arhoolie.com>).



## "Sonocal" by Eleuterio Cortez

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Este es el nuevo corrido  
Que yo les vengo a cantar  
Lo que sucedió en Sonora  
En la planta Sonocal.

Sonocal una empresa  
Donde él laboraba  
No pensó que sus dos amigos  
Su vida pensaban truncarla.

Martín era muy querido  
Del pueblo, muy respetado,  
Nunca pensó que en el cielo  
La gloria se había ganado.

La ambición es muy canija  
No se le puede negar  
Por culpa de unos billetes  
Una vida fueron a segar.

A los que hicieron el robo  
Nunca se les olvida  
Que él mismo les consiguió trabajo  
Y les dio mucha comida.

Tres fueron los culpables  
De este humillante suceso  
Dos andan huyendo  
Y uno se encuentra preso.

El que compuso estos versos  
Nunca se desvaloriza  
Sólo le pide al Creador  
Que se la haga justicia.

Toda le gente admiraba  
De lo que había sucedido,  
Porque el joven era bueno  
Por todo el pueblo querido.

This is the new corrido  
That I sing to no one and all  
About what happened in Sonora  
In a place called Sonocal.

Sonocal was the factory  
Where he worked every day  
He never thought that his two friends  
Would take his life away.

Everyone in the pueblo  
Loved and respected Martín  
No one imagined that soon  
In heaven he would be.

Ambition is corrupt  
And that we can't deny  
Because of a few dollar bills  
This young man had to die.

As for the men who robbed him  
Never forget the truth  
He was the one who found them work  
and shared with them his food.

Three men were guilty  
On that tragic day  
Two are wandering fugitives  
And one is locked away.

He who composed these verses  
Knows what he is worth  
He only asks his Creator  
For justice here on earth.

The whole town was shocked  
By this brutal tragedy  
Because he was a fine young man  
And kind to those in need.

*Continued on the next page*

Un día su fue al trabajo  
Pero él no se suponía  
Que hasta en su propia casa  
El mismo Diablo tenía.

Decían que eran karatekas  
Los que lo asesinaron  
Después de darle muerte  
Luego lo encajuelaron.

Su padre se lo decía  
"Mijo no hagas confianza  
Mira que el demonio  
Dondequiera mete la pata".

Cortez era su apellido  
El "ELE" su apelativo  
Toda la gente decía  
"No debía morir por ese motivo".

Ya me voy, ya me despido  
Me voy por el carrizal  
Esto le pasó a un joven bueno  
Por culpa de Sonocal.

**Source:**  
Translated by Wendy Burk  
Reprinted with permission from author.

One day he went to work  
But did not understand  
That the Devil himself  
Held his life within his hands.

They say the men who murdered him  
Were experts in karate  
And that the trunk of an old car  
Was where they hid his body.

His father always told him,  
"Don't give your trust away  
For the Devil walks among us  
Dragging his ball and chain"

His last name was Cortez  
And his initial "L"  
His tragic death was senseless  
We remember him so well.

My time with you is over  
But I say to one and all  
This happened to a fine young man  
Because of Sonocal.





## LESSONS: LESSON PLAN

This Lesson at a Glance:

Grade Band: 9-12

Integrated Subjects:

[Visual Arts](#)  
[Foreign Language](#)  
[Social Studies](#)

Materials:

For the teacher:  
 [Assessment Rubric](#)

For the student:  
 [Vocabulary](#)  
 [Research Questions Worksheet](#)

Related Weblinks:

[Le Urono Art Gallery](#)  
[MexOnline.com: Mexican Revolution of 1910](#)

Targeted Standards:

The National Standards For Arts Education:

[Visual Arts \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

[Visual Arts \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

[Visual Arts \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

[Visual Arts \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 6: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

Other National Standards:

[Foreign Language IV \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 2: Understands and interprets written and spoken language on diverse topics from diverse media

[Foreign Language IV \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 3: Presents information, concepts, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics

[Foreign Language IV \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 4: Understands traditional ideas and perspectives, institutions, professions, literary and artistic expressions, and other components of the target culture

[Historical Understanding IV \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 1: Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns

[Historical Understanding IV \(9-12\)](#)  
 Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

ICON LEGEND:

- = part of the current spotlight
- = opens in a new window
- = kid-friendly
- = printable
- = interactive
- = audio
- = video
- = images

## Five Artists of the Mexican Revolution

Lesson Overview:

Much of Mexican art at the beginning of the 20th century was influenced by or created in response to historical events. In this lesson, students will research the major events and personalities of the Mexican War of Independence and the Mexican Revolution, and explore how these people and events influenced the art that was created in early 20th century Mexico. Using the guided directives, students will learn about the relationship between art and history. Students may complete this lesson in English or in Spanish, depending on the level of the students' fluency.

Length of Lesson:

Eight 45-minute class periods

Notes:

This lesson is particularly suitable for grades 9-10.

Instructional Objectives:

Students will:

- learn to identify an artist by his or her style.
- be able to identify specific paintings.
- define the vocabulary of the paintings.
- draw their own mural using contemporary events and the style of one of the artists studied.
- learn about the Mexican War of Independence and the Mexican Revolution.
- research five famous Mexican artists associated with the Mexican Revolution.
- research prominent revolutionary figures from Mexico's history.

Supplies:

A notebook in which students can assemble their various research pieces (one per student).

Instructional Plan:

Note: Before exposing students to the Mexican artists who depicted the struggles of the Mexican people, be sure to discuss the history of Mexico, including the Mexican War of Independence (1810) and the Mexican Revolution (1910). Introduce the related [Vocabulary](#) handout as appropriate.

First Classroom Session

Students must understand the history of political struggles in Mexico and the main figures and personalities involved. Discussion should center not only around Mexicans' desire for independence, but also the injustices to which they were subjected on a daily basis by the Spaniards, and later by the oppressive dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. Show and discuss Diego Rivera's "Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in Alameda Park" and Orozco's "Father Hidalgo", David Posada's "Calrina Calavera," and Siqueiros's "Echo of a Screen". Explain that these works of art were each inspired directly by the revolution. Ask students what they see in these paintings.

Second Classroom Session

The first official revolt against the Spanish took place approximately in 1810. Have students research this occurrence and take notes on the important events. They may use the following Web sites for research.

[The Father of Mexico](#)  
[http://www.cahallivo.com/n\\_hidalgo.htm](http://www.cahallivo.com/n_hidalgo.htm)

[Miguel Hidalgo: The Father Who Fathered A Country](#)  
[http://www.mexconnect.com/mex\\_history/fuck/hidalgo.html](http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_history/fuck/hidalgo.html)

Bring the students back together and have them discuss what they discovered about the early history of Mexico's revolution. Have someone list the main topics on the board as they are being discussed. Ask for volunteers to read the short biographies of the revolutionaries they researched. Have a chart at the front of the classroom where the main points can be recorded as the biography is being read. Ask students if anyone discovered additional information that is not yet listed.

Third and Fourth Classroom Sessions

As a warm up, have students write or list the main events that they remember from the previous day's lesson on the history of early Mexico during the Spanish rule. Lead them in a discussion about the reasons that the Mexican people wanted to participate in the War of Independence.

Now, have students begin their research on the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and its leaders. Research will be done primarily through the Internet. Have the students research the following men that had major roles in the Mexican Revolution.

Porfirio Diaz, Francisco Madero, Pancho Villa, and Emiliano Zapata	<a href="#">The Mexican Revolution</a> <a href="http://www.inside-mexico.com/revolucion.htm">http://www.inside-mexico.com/revolucion.htm</a>
	<a href="#">Map of Mexico</a> <a href="http://www.inside-mexico.com/mapamexico.htm">http://www.inside-mexico.com/mapamexico.htm</a>
Venustiano Carranza	<a href="#">Mexico Online: The Mexican Revolution of 1910</a> <a href="http://www.mexonline.com/revolution.htm">http://www.mexonline.com/revolution.htm</a>

Jose Guadalupe Posada	<u>Posada's Life and Times</u> <a href="http://mueritos.palomar.edu/posada/posadafife2.html">http://mueritos.palomar.edu/posada/posadafife2.html</a>
Diego Rivera	<u>PBS: American Masters: Diego Rivera</u> <a href="http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/rivera_d.html">http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/rivera_d.html</a>  <u>The Virtual Diego Rivera Web Museum</u> <a href="http://www.diegorivera.com/index.php">http://www.diegorivera.com/index.php</a>
Frida Kahlo	<u>National Museum of Women in the Arts: Frida Kahlo</u> <a href="http://www.nmwa.org/collection/profile.asp?LinkID=471">http://www.nmwa.org/collection/profile.asp?LinkID=471</a>
David Alfaro Siqueiros	<u>Lallorona Gallery: David Alfaro Siqueiros</u> <a href="http://www.lalloronagallery.com/artists/david_alfaro_siqueiros.htm">http://www.lalloronagallery.com/artists/david_alfaro_siqueiros.htm</a>
Jose Clemente Orozco	<u>The History of Mexico: Tragedy and Triumph: The Drama of Jose Clemente Orozco</u> <a href="http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_history/juckj/orozco.html">http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_history/juckj/orozco.html</a>

Have students type and print out answers in the form of a short narrative biography on one of the Mexican revolutionaries.

#### Fifth Classroom Session

Share results of the previous day's research. Discuss the revolutionaries and their roles. List events associated with each and have a student record them on the board as they are being discussed. Explain to the students that they will be creating a notebook on the Mexican Revolution and the influence that it had on artists from Mexico.

#### Sixth and Seventh Classroom Sessions

Write the following names on the chalkboard:

Jose Guadalupe Posada  
Diego Rivera  
Frida Kahlo  
David Alfaro Siqueiros  
Jose Clemente Orozco

Instruct the students to complete the Research Questions Worksheet handout choosing one of the following artists. (If students finish quickly, instruct them to choose another artist to research.) The students should type and print out answers to the research questions on each artist. They should also copy and print two pictures by each artist and include them with the answers to the research questions.

#### Eighth Classroom Session

After students have researched the artists and answered the questions pertaining to each, initiate a discussion on each artist. Select a student to record the pertinent information on a chart in the front of the class. In addition to discussing the information that the students discovered, look at several of the works that they collected and discuss their relevance to the Mexican Revolution or to Mexicans' heritage. When all artists have been discussed, students should complete a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the similarities and differences found among the artists.

Give the students the following homework assignment:

Select the Mexican artist that had the greatest influence on you. Then, choose a contemporary news event that that is catastrophic or disastrous. Create a small mural on a 18" x 24" inch paper that represents that event (or events) and incorporate certain techniques of the artist that you have selected. Write a paragraph explaining how you incorporated some of the artist's techniques.

#### Closure: Classroom Presentations

Allow students to present and discuss their murals with the class. Have the class try to identify the event shown and the artist whose style most influenced each mural. Have students create a cover sheet for a notebook, and assemble the various assignments in the notebook.

#### Assessment:

Assess the students' works using the Assessment Rubric.

#### Sources:

#### Media:

Diego Rivera. VHS/DVD recording. Available through Applause Learning Resources (item number KIF1863)

Frida Kahlo. VHS/DVD recording. Available through Applause Learning Resources (item number KIF2168)

Siqueiros: Artist and Warrior. VHS/DVD recording. Available through Applause Learning Resources (item number HVSJQ010)

Mexico: A Story of Courage and Conquest. VHS/DVD recording (four installments). Available through Applause Learning Resources (item number AAE42310)

*Note: Some of these video recordings contain sensitive material and may not be suitable for classroom viewing. A prepatory review of suitable content may be preferred by the educator.*

#### Authors:

Carolyn Callaghan, Head of Spanish Department  
Indian Creek School  
Crownsville, MD



## LESSONS: LESSON PLAN

### This Lesson at a Glance:

Grade Band: 9-12

### Integrated Subjects:

- Music
- Language Arts
- Social Studies

### Materials:

For the teacher:

- [Assessment Rubric](#)

For the student:

- [What is a Corrido?](#)
- ["El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez"](#)
- ["Story of Gregorio Cortez"](#)
- ["El Moro de Cumpas"](#)

### Related Lessons:

9-12 [Five Artists of the Mexican Revolution](#)

### Related WebLinks:

[MexOnline.com: Mexican Revolution of 1910](#)

[Smithsonian Institution: Corridos sin Fronteras](#) ☺

[PBS: Interactive Timeline on The Border](#) ☺

[Smithsonian Institution: Migrations in History](#)

### Related How-To's:

[Turning Students into Songwriters: Tips on Writing Corrido Lyrics](#)

[There's a Song in Everyone: Tips on Composing a Simple Corrido](#)

### Related Look-Listen-Learn:

[Corridos](#)

### Targeted Standards:

The National Standards For Arts Education:

Music (9-12)

Standard 6: Listening to, analyzing,

# Form and Theme in the Traditional Mexican Corrido

Part of the Unit: [The Music & Meaning of Mexican Corridos](#)

### Lesson Overview:

Students will learn about the traditional Mexican musical form of *corridos*, which dates back to the 1800s and continues to be very popular. They will analyze the themes and literary devices used in *corridos* such as "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez" and "El Moro de Cumpas". The lesson will culminate in students writing their own *corridos* based on the traditional form.

### Length of Lesson:

Two 45-minute class periods

### Notes:

This lesson is particularly suitable for grades 11-12.

### Instructional Objectives:

Students will:

- analyze *corridos* to gain a sense of the traditional form
- analyze theme and literary devices in *corridos*
- write original *corridos* based on the traditional form

### Supplies:

For the Student:

- Pen and journal

For the Teacher:

- Computer with Internet access or CD player to play music (optional)

### Instructional Plan:

#### Warm Up

Begin with a freewriting exercise (or if using class journals, ask students to write in their journals). Ask students to describe what their everyday life is like. Then ask them to write about a time when their everyday life was disrupted in some way—anything from a humorous anecdote to a significant event.

Ask students how the language they used in their freewriting exercise may differ from essays they turn in as homework assignments or from business letters. Explain that many forms of literature are written in everyday, ordinary language (i.e., poems by Langston Hughes, contemporary slam poets, etc.); the Mexican *corrido* is one example of a literary tradition written in everyday language.

and describing music

#### Music (9-12)

Standard 8: Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts

#### Music (9-12)

Standard 9: Understanding music in relation to history and culture

#### Other National Standards:

##### Language Arts IV (9-12)

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

##### Language Arts IV (9-12)

Standard 2: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

##### Language Arts IV (9-12)

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process









##### Language Arts IV (9-12)

Standard 6: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

##### United States History IV (9-12)

Standard 17: Understands massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity

#### ICON LEGEND:

-  = part of the current spotlight
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-  = images

#### Introduction to the Corrido

Pass out the [What is the Corrido?](#) info sheet and discuss the characteristics of *corridos*. Explain that the *corrido* is a type of ballad or short narrative, a story usually based in real life. Ballads have been written in cultures all over the world, and the form dates back to the 14th and 15th centuries. The ballad has roots in the oral tradition, and thus the form is simple and direct, and uses ordinary, everyday speech and dialogue. The subjects in ballads tend to be about lost love and recent events. Some traditional *corridos*, in particular, tended to focus on events due to the clashing of cultures—that of the United States and Mexico. However, almost any subject can be the focus of a *corrido*.

#### When Daily Life is Disrupted

Although many traditional *corridos* were written about historical events (wars and revolutions) and heroes (John F. Kennedy and Fernando Valenzuela), and major catastrophes (earthquakes and train wrecks), many *corridos* were written about the common aspects of everyday life, and the ways that everyday life is disrupted. Subjects of such *corridos* have included the struggles and joys in relationships and employment, the characteristics of a hometown or region, and stories of individuals who defend themselves from outside forces.

*Corridos* sung along the U.S.-Mexico border in the 19th and early 20th centuries, for instance, often dealt with conflict between the U.S. and Mexico that affected their daily lives. Pass out the lyrics to the famous *corrido*, "[El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez](#)" and the "[Story of Gregorio Cortez](#)" info sheets.

Provide students with some historical context surrounding Cortez's story. Cortez epitomized the border hero for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans because he represented a man who stood on principles and defended his rights against the rinches, the name given to Texas Rangers (a "law enforcement" group of that was founded in 1823 to fight Native Americans). The Texas Rangers had achieved worldwide fame as a fighting force during the Mexican-American War, but when the war ended, the Rangers no longer had an official function since it was up to the U.S. military to defend Texas. The Texas Rangers continued to participate in fights with Mexican nationals. In 1916, Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico and intensified tensions between Anglos and Hispanics. The Rangers, along with hundreds of special Rangers appointed by Texas governors, killed approximately 5,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans between 1914-1919. Stories of brutality and injustice among the Rangers were common.

Discuss how Gregorio Cortez is depicted as a border hero in the *corrido*. Ask students whether they think he would be such a hero if he were not a farm hand and vaquero, but an outlaw prior to his encounter with the sheriff. Albeit Cortez's story is a more extreme example of conflict between cultures, the Mexican and Mexican-American people could relate to Cortez's struggle, because it mirrored their own everyday struggles living in under poor employment and economic conditions and their own conflicts with the rinches. Discuss how the theme of "his pistol in his hand" is linked to the oppression of Mexicans by the United States.

Examine how the lyricist glorifies Cortez through simile (comparison of two unlike objects with the word "like" or "as") and hyperbole (exaggeration for emphasis) in "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez." Ask students for examples ("leaped out of the corral", "His voice was like a bell", "trying to catch Cortez/ Was like following a star.") Remind students that the characteristics of heroes in many literary traditions (i.e., tall tales) are often depicted in hyperboles (obvious exaggeration for effect).

#### Analyzing Symbolism & Theme in Corrido Lyrics

Inform students that *corridos* were usually written in a timely fashion in response to current events. Pass out the lyrics to the *corrido* "[El Moro de Cumpas](#)" by Leonardo Yañez, which tells the story of a very famous horse race that took place in 1957 in the town of Agua Prieta, Mexico, which borders Douglas, Arizona. Composer Leonardo Yañez (nicknamed "El Nano"), a member of the Mariachi Copacabana, wrote this *corrido* after watching the

race from the finish line. "El Moro de Cumpas" is one of the best known *corridos*; almost every singer of this tradition knows it. This *corrido* also served as the inspiration for a feature-length commercial film about the horse race it documents.

Tell students that the horse is an important symbol in Mexican culture. First of all, horses are essential to the cattle industry, a widespread source of employment in many parts of Mexico, including the northern border states. Secondly, without horses, the Spanish conquistadors would not have been able to defeat the native peoples and occupy their land. Point out that a horse is also important in "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez" since without the horse, he would not have been able to outrun the rinchos. Also, in rural Mexico, the horse used to be an important means of transportation. Horseracing became a popular form of entertainment for Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and remains so today. In Mexican horse races, usually only two horses are raced against each other.

In *corridos* about horse races, the horses are often given human characteristics that describe them as brave, respected men. And although there is one winner in the competition, both participants are honored. Read the lyrics of "El Moro de Cumpas" aloud. You may also wish to play an excerpt of the *corrido* for your students (see the ArtsEdge Look-Listen-Learn resource [Corridos](#).) Ask students to point out instances in the lyrics in which the horses were given human characteristics (i.e., El Moro is described as handsome, both horses are "two seekers after triumph").

Discuss the themes of the *corrido*. One theme involves the way people are prone to make judgments based on appearances. Point out the lines "Everyone kept saying / that that horse came / especially to win." Ask students why everyone thought El Moro was going to win (they were charmed by his good looks). Note that Relámpago surprised many of the betters (note that "relámpago" translates to "lightning").

Discuss the theme of gambling in the poem. Note how many people from Agua Prieta and neighboring towns voted on the match. Discuss what the allure of gambling is, in general, including at American horse and dog tracks as well as the lottery and casinos. Ask students if they think economic conditions in the border town of Agua Prieta may have influenced more people to gamble. Tell students that many who bet on Moro lost not only money but also vehicles and ranches. Discuss how the descriptions of the horses and the horserace reveal a general respect for horses. Gambling is not criticized in the lyrics, for example. The horses are lauded for their beauty and speed. Ask students how the description of the horses reflects the important position of the horse in Mexican culture.

Ask students how Yañez builds suspense in this *corrido* (by waiting until the last two stanzas to state the winner of the race). Discuss how writers are able to create "page turners" through suspense.

#### Student Corridistas

Challenge students to write their own *corridos*. You may wish to encourage them to write on whatever they would like, or provide some options (see the [What is a Corrido?](#) handout for potential themes). The main criterion is that the *corrido* should be centered on an event, character, or story that is happening in the present time. Tell students that they must follow the form of traditional *corridos* and use colloquial language. You may also wish to ask students to make their *corridos* suspenseful.

See the ArtsEdge How-to: [Turning Students into Songwriters: Tips on Writing Corrido Lyrics](#) for helpful guidelines on writing lyrics. Inspire students by sharing *corridos* written by fellow high school students. Winners of the annual Bilingual Corrido Contest in Arizona, a program conducted by the University of Arizona Poetry Center, have written some excellent *corridos*. See the 2003 winner, "El rancho de los pinos" by Julianna Echerivel Prieto, a *corrido* about a family that gathers on Sundays to spend time together, and "El corrido de caballo con hambre y sed" by Adriana Aguilar, a *corrido* about a child who is tasked with feeding a hungry, thirsty horse. Both student *corridos* and

additional examples of *corridos* are available on the ARTSEEDGE Look-Listen-Learn resource, [Corridos](#).

**Assessment:**

Assess the students based on the following criteria:

- evidence of understanding through insightful and frequent participation in class discussions
- evidence of understanding of the corrido form
- wrote an original corrido in the traditional form that reflects the student's understanding of the corrido tradition

You may also use the [Assessment Rubric](#).

**Extensions:**

Organize a *corrido* concert, asking students to read the lyrics of their songs aloud-or better yet, sing them or even perform them if a student in your class plays an appropriate instrument (i.e., guitar, accordion). See the ArtsEdge How-to: [There's a Song in Everyone: Tips on Composing a Simple Corrido](#) for useful guidelines on helping students to compose music.

**Sources:**

Print:

- Keen, Benjamin. *A History of Latin America*. 7th Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003.
- Paredes, Américo. *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976.
- Paredes, Américo. *With his Pistol in his Hand*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.

Media:

- Various artists. *Heroes & Horses: Corridos from the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands*. [Smithsonian Folkways Recordings](#). CD 40475.
- Various artists. *The Mexican Revolution: Corridos*. [Arhoolie Productions](#). CD 7041-7044.

Web:

- [South Texas Border, 1900-1920: Photographs from the Robert Runyon Collection](#)  
<http://runyon.lib.utexas.edu/>
- [The Handbook of Texas Online: Cortez, Lira Gregorio](#)  
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/CC/fco94.html>

**Authors:**

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**Collaborating Organizations:**

- The University of Arizona Poetry Center  
Tucson, AZ



Assessment Rubric

# Form and Theme in the Traditional Mexican Corrido

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student is able to:	Consistently Evident	Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Evident	Comments
analyze Mexican <i>corridos</i> to gain a sense of the traditional form.					
analyze theme and literary devices in <i>corridos</i> .					
write original <i>corridos</i> based on the traditional form.					

Lesson Connection: Form and Theme in the Traditional Mexican Corrido  
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The University of Arizona Poetry Center, an area of emphasis within the College of Humanities, is a nationally renowned special collections library and archive, academic and community resource, and sponsor of numerous outreach programs, including a distinguished poetry reading series.

<http://www.poetrycenter.arizona.edu>



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## What is a Corrido?

The *corrido* is a musical form developed in Mexico during the 1800s and originally sung throughout the country. Although still popular in Mexico, over time it became known as “musica de la frontera” (border music) because it was especially popular along both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. This musical-poetic form continues to be popular wherever Mexicans and Mexican Americans live.

### Language

The following elements characterize the language in *corridos*:

- *Corridos* are stories told in poetic form and sung to simple, basic music, much like English ballads.
- *Corridos* use common, everyday language.
- Although traditional *corridos* were always in Spanish, in recent years some have appeared in English as well, or have mixed the two languages.
- The audience, if addressed is always addressed politely.
- The tone can vary from sincere to satirical.

### Structure

The stories that *corridos* tell, either fictional or historical, must be sung in the vernacular language of the people in order to be remembered (whether in English, Spanish or a mixture.) There is some variation in the poetic form, but most *corridos* have the following structure:

- 36 lines (6 stanzas of 6 lines each or 9 stanzas of 4 lines each)
- 7 to 10 syllables per line (sometimes the lines are repeated)
- Rhyme scheme that varies but most commonly uses an ABCBDB form in a six-line stanza or ABCB in a four-line stanza. (Sometimes couplets are used: AABB.)
- By tradition, the first stanza provides a setting for the story by either giving a specific date or naming a place.

### Content

The traditional historical *corrido* told about actual events, especially the exploits of famous heroes or the tragic deaths of individuals fighting unjust authorities. When *corridos* became more commercially exploitable, some became mostly fictional. Today, a *corrido* can be about almost anything. These are some of the popular subjects:

- animals (such as racehorses or roosters)
- tragic love affairs
- criminal dealings, especially with contraband and smuggling
- migration and migrant labor
- social and political events
- the struggles of everyday life along the border
- assassinations or other violent deaths
- humorous occurrences or relationships
- catastrophes
- hometowns and regions
- miraculous events
- wars and revolutions
- local or national heroes



Info Sheet

## "El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez" by Anonymous

### Translated by Américo Paredes

In the county of El Carmen  
A great misfortune befell;  
The major sheriff is dead;  
Who killed him no one can tell.

At two in the afternoon,  
In half an hour or less,  
They knew that the man who killed him  
Had been Gregorio Cortez.

They let loose the bloodhound dogs;  
They followed him from afar.  
But trying to catch Cortez  
Was like following a star.

All the rangers of the county  
Were flying, they rode so hard;  
What they wanted was to get  
The thousand-dollar reward.

And in the county of Kiansis  
They cornered him after all;  
Though they were more than three hundred  
He leaped out of their corral.

Then the Major Sheriff said,  
As if he was going to cry,  
"Cortez, hand over your weapons;  
We want to take you alive."

Then said Gregorio Cortez,  
And his voice was like a bell,  
"You will never get my weapons  
Till you put me in a cell."

Then said Gregorio Cortez  
With his pistol in his hand,  
"Ah, so many mounted Rangers  
Just to take one Mexican!"

### Source:

Reprinted with permission from the University of Texas Press, Austin. From Paredes, Américo. *With His Pistol in His Hand*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958.



## "Story of Gregorio Cortez"

A farm hand and *vaquero* (cowboy), Gregorio Cortez had not gotten into much legal trouble until a sheriff shot his brother while looking for a horse thief. On June 12, 1901, Karnes County sheriff W.T. "Brack" Morris, accompanied by two deputies, sought out Cortez because a resident in the town stated he recently acquired a mare after trading a horse with Gregorio Cortez. According to official testimony, the deputy who translated Morris's questions to Cortez was not a proficient translator. When Cortez said, "You can't arrest me for nothing," Morris believed he said, "No white man can arrest me." As a result, Morris shot and wounded Gregorio Cortez's brother Romaldo Cortez, and in retaliation, Cortez shot and killed the sheriff and fled. While trying to escape, Cortez was apprehended by a sheriff (Glover) and his posse in a nearby county. In the attempt to capture Cortez, Glover and one of his men, Schnabel, were killed. Cortez soon gained a reputation as a gang leader and sheriff-killer, and a \$1,000 reward was offered for his capture. Hundreds of men, including the Texas Rangers, sought to capture Cortez, but Cortez was able to evade them for 10 days. On June 22, 1901, Cortez's acquaintance, Jesus Gonzalez, led a posse to Cortez. Many consider Gonzalez a traitor to his people.

Tejanos, who saw Cortez as a hero able to evade the *rinches*, were the recipients of violence. By the time Cortez was captured, at least nine persons of Mexican descent had been killed and three wounded.

Once Cortez was captured, many organizations were founded to support Cortez and assist him in gaining legal representation. One lawyer, B.R. Abernathy, was instrumental in Cortez's trial, and instead of being charged guilty of first-degree murder of Schnabel, Cortez was charged with second-degree murder and was sentenced to fifty years in prison. However, a Texas Court of Criminal appeals reversed the verdict, and sentenced him to life in prison for the murder of Sheriff Glover. While in prison, Cortez worked as a barber, and meanwhile, many supporters of Cortez attempted to get him pardoned, and in 1913, the attempts proved fruitful. Cortez was granted a conditional pardon.



Info Sheet

## "El Moro de Cumpas" by Leonardo Yañez

El diecisiete de marzo,  
a la ciudad de Agua Prieta  
vino gente de dondequiera;  
vinieron a las carreras  
de Relámpago y El Moro,  
dos caballos de primera.

El Moro de Pedro Frisby  
era del pueblo de Cumpas,  
muy bonito y muy ligero.  
El Relámpago era un zaino;  
era caballo de estima  
de su amo, Rafael Romero.

Cuando paseaban al Moro,  
se miraba tan bonito  
que empezaron a apostar.  
Toda la gente decía  
que aquel caballo venía  
especialmente a ganar.

Cheques, billetes, y pesos  
le sobraron al de Cumpas  
el domingo en la mañana.  
Por la tarde, las apuestas  
pasaron de cien mil pesos  
en esa Copacabana.

Aprovecharon la apuesta  
rancheros y ganaderos,  
obreros y campesinos,  
cantineros y meseros,  
amigos y visitantes  
de pueblos circunvecinos.

Frank y Jesús Valenzuela  
taparon quince mil pesos  
con el zaino de Romero.  
Decía el Puyo Morales,  
"Se me hace que con El Moro  
nos ganan todo el dinero."

*Continued on the next page*

On the seventeenth of March,  
to the city of Agua Prieta  
people came from all over;  
they came to the races  
between Relámpago and El Moro,  
two first-class horses.

Pedro Frisby's Moro  
was from the town of Cumpas,  
very good-looking and very fast.  
El Relámpago was a chestnut;  
he was the favorite horse  
of his owner, Rafael Romero.

When they exercised El Moro,  
he looked so handsome  
that people started to bet.  
Everyone kept saying  
that that horse came  
especially to win.

Checks, bills, and coins  
were placed on the horse from Cumpas  
on Sunday morning.  
By afternoon, the bets  
exceeded a hundred thousand pesos  
in that Copacabana.

The betting was taken advantage of  
by ranchers and cattlemen,  
workers and peasants,  
bartenders and waiters,  
friends and visitors  
from neighboring towns.

Frank and Jesús Valenzuela  
put fifteen thousand pesos  
on Romero's chestnut.  
Puyo Morales said,  
"It seems to me that with El Moro  
they're going to win all our money."

Andaba Trini Ramírez  
también Chendo Valenzuela  
paseando ya los caballos:  
dos corredores de faja,  
dos buscadores de triunfo,  
los dos eran buenos gallos.

Por fin dieron el Santiago,  
y El Moro salió adelante  
con la intención de ganar.  
Ramírez le tupe al zaino  
y arriba de mediotaste  
dejaba El Moro pa' atrás.

Leonardo Yáñez, "El Nano,"  
compositor del corrido,  
a todos pide disculpa.  
Aquí se acabaron dudas  
ganó el zaino de Agua Prieta,  
y perdió El Moro de Cumpas.

Trini Ramírez and also  
Chendo Valenzuela walked along  
exercising the horses:  
two surcingle-style racers,  
two seekers after triumph,  
the two were real fighting cocks.

At last they started the race,  
and El Moro started off ahead  
intending to win.  
Ramírez quirted the chestnut  
and halfway down the track  
he left the Moro behind.

Leonardo Yáñez, "El Nano,"  
composer of this corrido,  
begs pardon of everyone.  
There is no doubt that  
the chestnut from Agua Prieta won,  
and El Moro from Cumpas lost.