



## Traditional Mexican Paper Cutting: A Math Lesson

Grades: K, 1-2



**Overview:** Students will learn about Mexican paper cutting and making patterns

**Objective:** Students will:

1. Learn that the art form of paper cutting is from Mexico
2. Identify and make an ABAB pattern
3. Make a Mexican paper cutting

**Materials:**

- Red, white, and green tissue paper, 15 1/2- (vertical) by 20-inch (horizontal); directions for folding the tissue are below in Set Up and Prepare
- Scissors
- Rolled up construction paper (horizontally)
- KWL chart
- [Look What Came From Mexico](#) by Miles Harvey and [Colors of Mexico](#) by Lynn Ainsworth Olawsky
- Cut out green triangles, red squares, and white circles
- Paper clips
- Yarn or rope

**Set-Up and Prepare:**

1. Gather 15 1/2- by 20-inch sheets of tissue paper in green, red, and white (the colors of the Mexican flag). Fold the tissue paper in half, then fold in half again, and finally fold in half a third time. This should result in a rectangular shape.
2. KWL chart: K = what you know, W = what you want to learn, L = what you learned. Write this on chart paper and divide it into three sections: K W L  
Reproducible: [KWL Chart \(PDF\)](#)
3. For each student, roll one 12- by 18-inch piece of construction paper horizontally.

## Directions

### Day 1

**Step 1:** Begin this unit by doing a KWL chart with the class. Ask the students "What do you know about Mexico?" Then ask the students "What would you like to learn about Mexico?" (Accessing prior knowledge is so important because it is one way to drive your instruction of the unit. When writing down the students' responses, I always write their names next to what they said and I try to include a quick draw. Not only does it improve their self-esteem, but it's also a great resource for the students to look at during journal time.)

**Step 2:** Read the book [\*Look What Came From Mexico\*](#) by Miles Harvey. Afterward, see if any of the questions can be answered from the KWL chart and if so list the answers under the L part of the chart. ("What did you learn?")

**Step 3:** Focus on Mexican folk art. Show the students an example of a Mexican paper cutting. Discuss what they see in the cutting: color, patterns, and shapes. Play the pattern stomp game with the students. Place a red triangle down on the ground and then a green square, red triangle, green square, etc. Have the students stand in line and say the pattern as they are stomping on the shape. Add a white circle into the pattern. This exposure will be beneficial to the students later, when they are making patterns with their tissue paper.

**Step 4:** Model cutting the tissue paper with the students. I draw an ABAB pattern onto the tissue paper, all around the paper's edges. Then cut out the pattern with scissors. I usually cut triangle, square, triangle, square. Then I fold the tissue paper in half and along the fold of the tissue paper I cut more little triangles and squares.

**Step 5:** Open the tissue paper to its original size. The students are amazed to see how beautiful the paper cutting came out!

**Step 6:** Give each student their favorite color tissue paper and have them do what you just modeled. (Have many extras prepped just in case a student needs another one.)

**Step 7:** Tape the paper cutting horizontally to the rolled up construction paper. Put a piece of yarn through the hole of the construction paper roll. Tie the yarn at the top.

### Day 2

**Step 1:** Read the book [\*Colors of Mexico\*](#) by Lynn Ainsworth Olawsky. Discuss which one was their favorite color. When the students are at centers, call back each student one at a time to tell you something that they've learned about Mexico.

**Step 2:** Type up the students' responses and glue each response to the student's paper cutting. When all is finished open a paper clip and attach it to the yarn so that you can hang the paper cuttings from your classroom ceiling.