

Christmas in Nicaragua

Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the Christmas story with the song “Cristo De Palacaguina.”
 2. Compare and contrast American and Nicaraguan Christmas traditions.
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Materials (English/ Spanish)

- Student Handout: **Christmas in Nicaragua**
 - Student Handout: **La Flor de Nochebuena**
 - Supplies for Spanish 1 Activity: Prepare folders of green red pink white and yellow tissue paper, scissors glue etc...
 - Student Handout: **Poem Project**
 - Student Handout: **Crista De Palacaguina**
 - Audio Clip: *Crista De Palacaguina*
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Notes to the Teacher

- You may wish to provide a typical Nicaraguan Christmas treat, *Bunuelos*, for the students to munch. (See the attached recipe)
 - There is also a song from the Purisima celebration to play while the students are working. It represents the typical sound of Nicaraguan music with the many fireworks in the background that accompany any celebration.
 - The activities in this lesson are structured for students with various levels of Spanish. Select those activities that are most appropriate for the students in your particular classes.
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Activities

1. Distribute the student handout entitled **Christmas in Nicaragua**.
 - a. Direct students to take a few moments to read through the description of the holiday celebration.
 - b. Ask students to compare the Nicaraguan celebration with their own. What are the similarities? What are the differences?
 - c. Ask students to explain which of the unique Nicaraguan activities they find most interesting. Why?
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2. At this point, select one of the following activities that is most appropriate for the students in your class.
- a. Spanish 1: Poinsettias
 - Distribute the student handout entitled **La Flor de Nochebuena**, tissue paper supplies, scissors, glue, etc.
 - Divide students into work groups and instruct them to follow the directions on the handout to create tissue paper poinsettias.
 - b. Spanish 2: Poetry activity
 - Distribute the student handouts entitled **Poem Project and Format Sheet**.
 - Review the directions with the class before instructing students to begin creating their poems.
 - c. Spanish 3: *Cristo De Palacaquina*
 - Distribute the student handout entitled **Cristo De Palacaquina**.
 - Direct students to underline cognates and known words.
 - Play the audio clip (*Cristo De Palacaquina*) and direct students to follow along by reading the stanzas on the handout.
 - The students will work in small groups with a portion of the song to translate for meaning.
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Christmas in Nicaragua

During the Christmas celebrations on December 7th, Nicaraguans prepare themselves for their yearly traditions that honor the immaculate conception. This celebration is called La Purisima (The Most Pure). The prayers and songs for the Virgin Mary and the enjoyment of these festivities are such that they are called “La Noche de Gritería” (The Night of the Screaming).

During “La Gritería” a great majority of the country, particularly the young, are out there to sing with all their might until they lose their voices. They stop at each house, whose main entrance or porch is decorated, to sing for the Virgin Mary. The hymns sung to the Virgin are well known by all and are very old. Someone from the crowd will ask loudly, “What is the cause of our happiness?” And the chorus will answer, “The conception of the Virgin Mary!”

Fireworks explode everywhere the entire time and treats are offered at every house. These treats might include rosquillas, leche de burra (a sweet called donkey’s milk) nacatamal (tamal stuffed with meat) oranges, lemons, and chopped caña (cane). The children get their treats in a bag and are even aloud to shoot at each other with water balloons. Finally the doors close when there are no more foods or candy to share.

In December elegant decorations fill homes and cities. On the outside of the houses, red poinsettias are an essential decoration. The interior decorations consist of orange balls filled with spicy cloves to which green lace has been attached to hang them from the doorways. These are called Muérdago and used like mistletoe. Their fragrance fills the room symbolizing the arrival of Christmas.

Houses are also decorated with red crepe paper. Women get together to cut out guiraldas simulating the poinsettia, which in Nicaragua is called Flor del Pastor. The nativity is placed in a corner of the house to remind everyone that Jesus is the center of the celebration. In order to stimulate the Christmas spirit, Churches start to play carols at 4a.m. over loud speakers.

On the morning of December 24th, Nicaraguans’ homes become happy places where families prepare dinner together. In Nicaragua, Christmas is a celebration where family and friends are invited to each others homes to celebrate the birth of Christ. The typical food for dinner is Valencian style rice similar to Paella, stuffed chicken, nacatamal, and freshly baked bread. Spanish biscochos are served for dessert.

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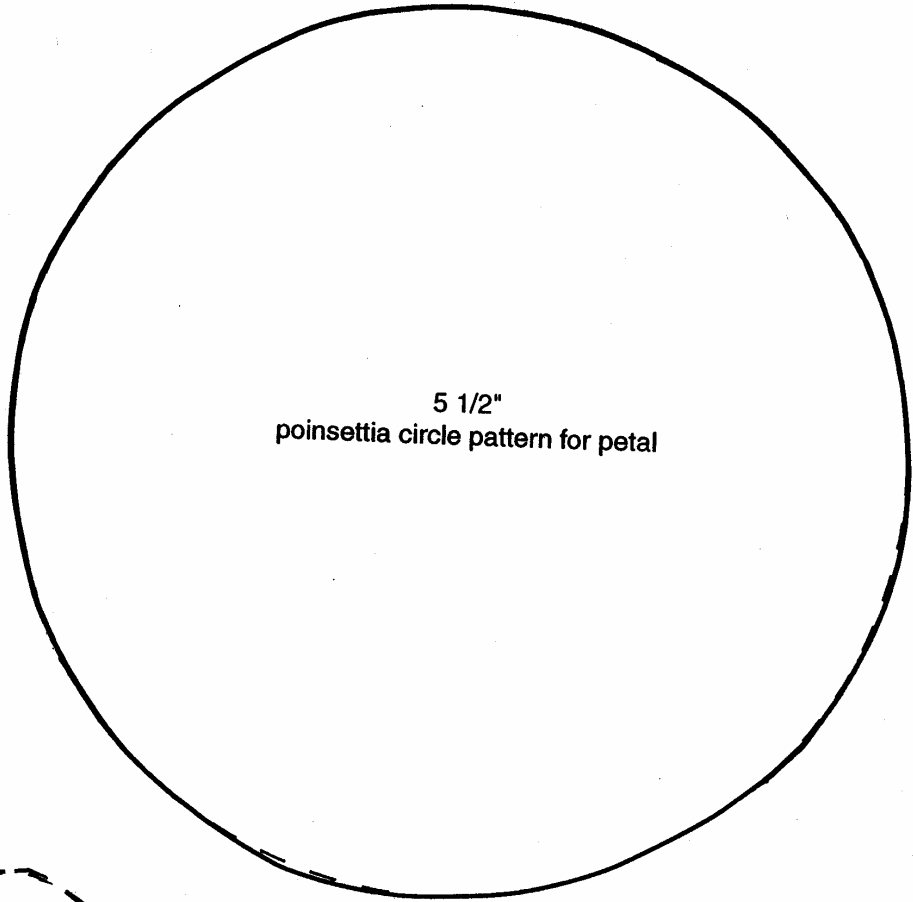
Late at night families prepare to go to church. The bells ring and the people go out to attend midnight mass. Inside the church incense is burned around the nativity scene, which occupies the entire top of the altar. Splinters of the ocote tree are added to the incense. When mass has ended people wait in line to kiss the Baby Jesus. Some people take some of the grass from the manger as a souvenir of the Mass.

After Mass the people return home and place the Baby Jesus in the nativity to symbolize that finally he has been born. Children then run around the house to find the presents that the Baby Jesus has left them. It is unusual to us in the United States that the 25th is basically just another day in Nicaragua. It is the 24th that all the focus falls on.

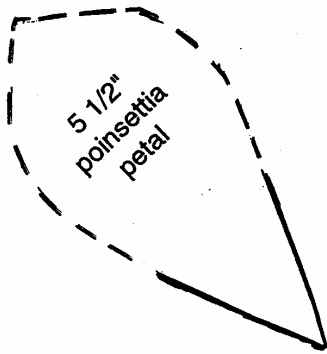
La Flor de Nochebuena

In order for your group to make poinsettias, you need to follow directions carefully.

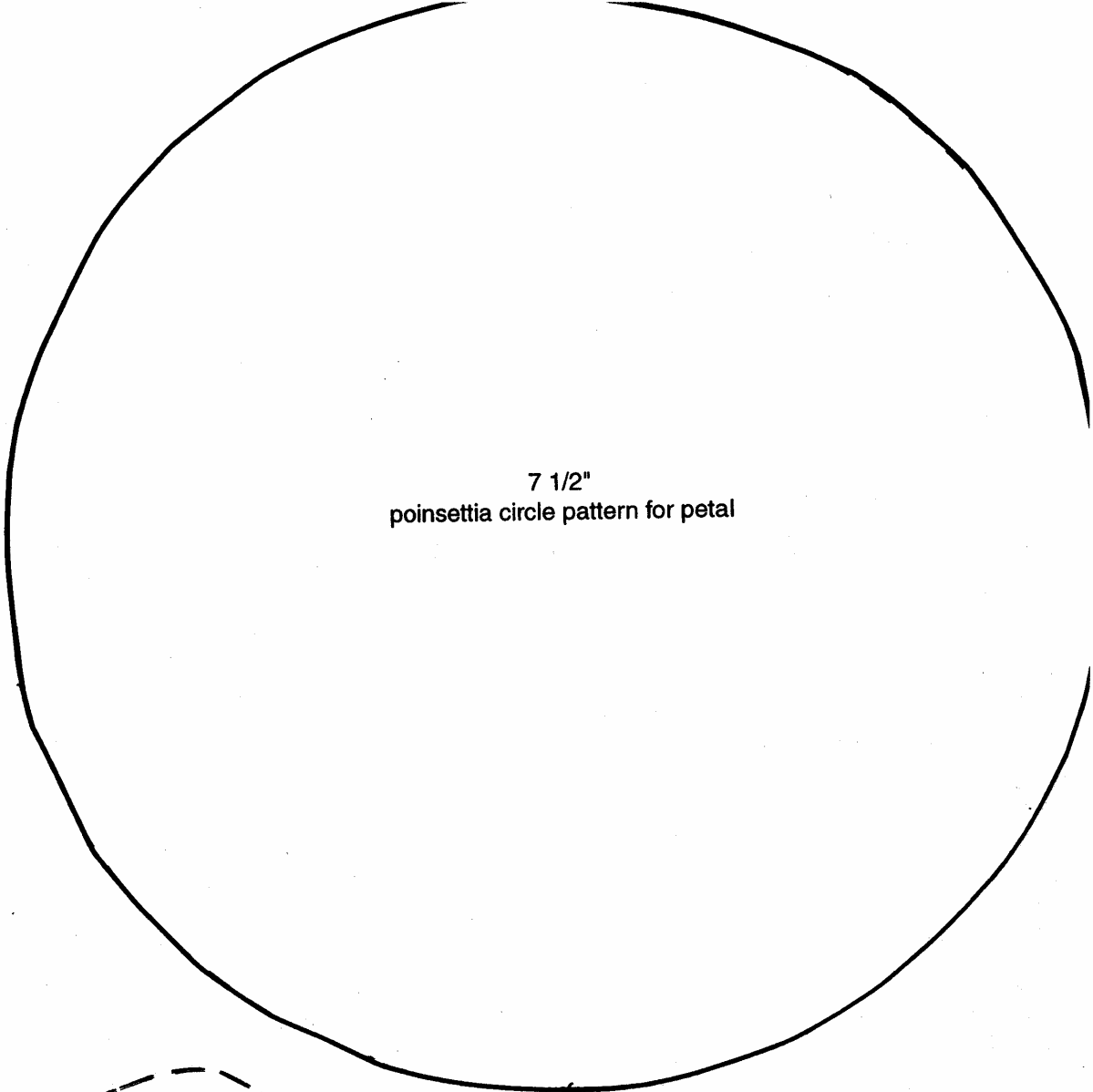
1. Group Leader should pick up group folder. In the folder are enough materials to make 3 flowers.
 2. Materials Chairman should go to the supply table and get any necessary materials. Example: glue, scissors, etc.
 3. Group should work together to make poinsettias.
 4. One group member should trace and cut all the 8 ½" green circles. These circles will make the leaves.
 5. A different group member should cut six 7 ½" circles from the large piece of tissue. The tissue in your folder will be either pink, red, or white.
 6. Another group member should cut three 5 ½" circles from the half sheet of tissue. The red, pink, or white circles from steps 5 and 6 will make the flower petals.
 7. When all the circles are cut, fold the circle in half 3 times. Trace the pattern of the petal or leaf onto the folded tissue. Cut out the pattern. Be careful not to cut near the tip of the pattern because this is the middle of the petals.
 8. Take the yellow tissue and fold it lengthwise and fringe the ends without cutting to the fold. Open this strip and gather in the middle. Pinch the end and fluff the fringe out. This is the center of the flower and the last to be glued onto the poinsettia.
 9. Assemble the flower by putting a few drops of glue in the middle of the green leaves and center the first 7 ½" circle of petals on top. Glue the center of the petals with a few drops of glue and position the other 7 ½" circle of petals on top. Next, glue the center of the 5 ½" circle of petals. Glue the yellow center of the poinsettia.
 10. After the flower dries, take a pencil and roll each colored petal to make the petals curl.
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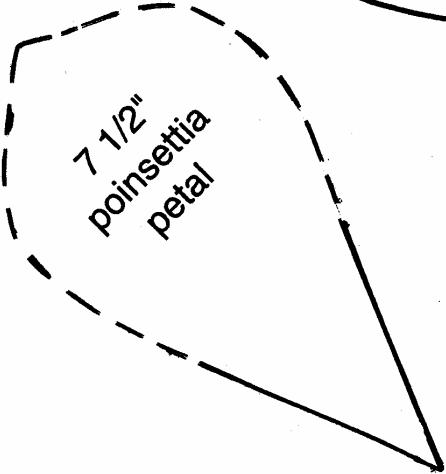
5 1/2"
poinsettia circle pattern for petal



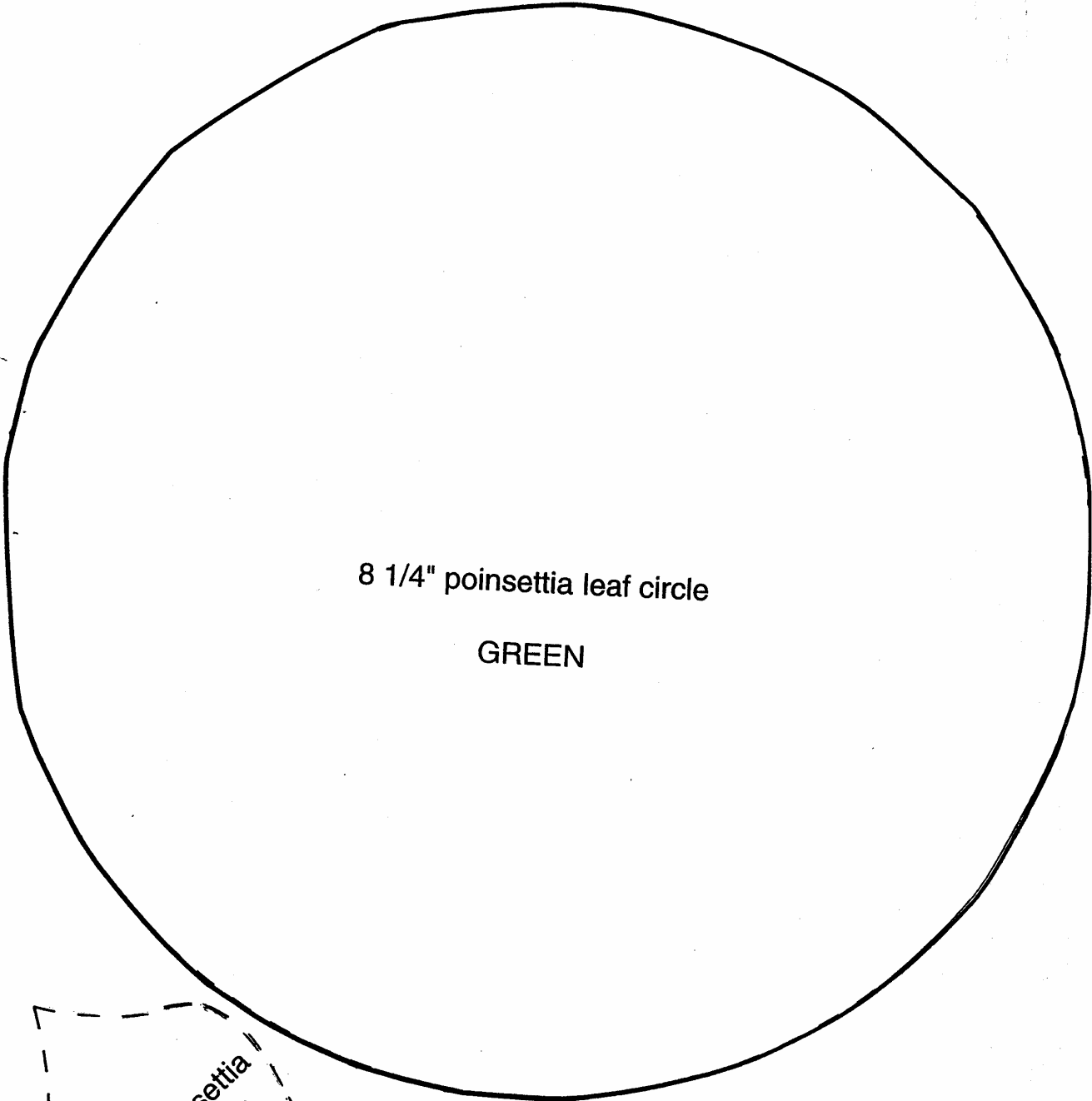
5 1/2"
poinsettia
petal



7 1/2"
poinsettia circle pattern for petal

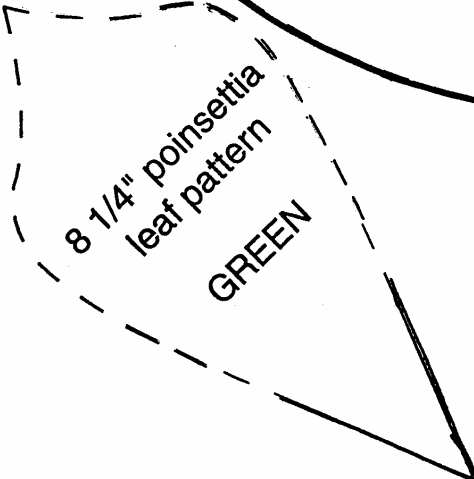


7 1/2"
poinsettia
petal



8 1/4" poinsettia leaf circle

GREEN



8 1/4" poinsettia
leaf pattern

GREEN

Poem Project

Instructions

1. Choose a symbol of Christmas or winter about which you could write a simple poem in Spanish.
 2. You are to write your original copy of your poem on the format sheet. Get it checked by your teacher to make sure that your grammar and spelling are correct before going on to step #3.
 3. Your corrected copy is to be rewritten on plain white paper and mounted on colored construction paper cut in the shape of the symbol you have described in your poem. Another option is to decorate your poem with your symbol.
 4. Grades for the written poem will be determined by the following:
 - Following instructions
 - spelling and grammar
 - creativity
 - neatness
 - quality of presentation.
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Format Sheet

(name of a holiday or winter symbol in Spanish)

(3 adjectives in Spanish that describe your symbol)

(repeat name of symbol)

(2 verbs in sentences describing what your symbol does)

(repeat name of symbol)

Me siento _____

(a feeling word telling how this holiday makes you feel)

Buñuelos Recipe



Ingredients

4 eggs
¼ cup white sugar
1 teaspoon vegetable oil
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup white sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 cup vegetable oil for frying

Directions

In a large bowl combine eggs with ¼ cup sugar and beat until thick and lemon-colored. Add the oil. Combine separately 1-1/2 cups of the flour, the baking powder and the salt. Gradually add this to the egg mixture and beat well.

Turn dough out onto a floured board (use remaining ½ cup flour) and knead thoroughly until dough is smooth.

Shape dough into sixteen balls. Roll each one into a circle about 5 inches in diameter. Let stand uncovered on waxed paper for about 10 minutes.

Heat oil in a deep fry pan to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Fry circles until golden brown, turning once. Drain on paper towels. Sprinkle with sugar/cinnamon mixture. Store airtight.

Makes 8 servings (16 cookies)
