

# Sports and Leisure Activities: Then and Now

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## Objectives

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

1. describe how the game of the game of the Flyer and the Comelazoatze game were played in pre-Columbian Nicaragua.
  2. describe how the modern game of trompo is played in Nicaragua.
  3. identify other sports and games modern Nicaraguans play for entertainment.
  4. outline the career of Alexis Argüello and evaluate his importance in Nicaraguan society.
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## Materials

- Student Handout: **Early Entertainment in Nicaragua**
  - Student Handout: **Other Sports and Games**
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## Activities

1. Begin the lesson by asking students to compile a list of what they do in their free time. (i.e. watch TV, play video games, surf the Internet, play football read books, etc.) Write their responses on the chalkboard.
    - a. Ask students to determine how much it costs to conduct that activity by looking at the materials needed.
    - b. Examples: Watching TV
      - Cost of TV: \$200 to \$500 (or more)
      - Cable: \$ 50 per month.
      - Electricity: \$45 per month
  2. Distribute the student handout entitled **Other Sports and Games**.
    - a. Direct students to read the first section, entitled *The Economic Environment*.
    - b. Ask students to place themselves in the situation of an average Nicaraguan student. Which of their current activities would they have to surrender if they lived in Nicaragua? What type of things would they do to fill their time?
  3. Direct students to read the next two sections on the handout.
    - a. Ask students to compare trompo to the type of games they have played. Have they ever played a similar game? How was it played?
    - b. Ask students to explain what types of games or activities they can think of that they play that do not cost a significant amount of money but are a lot of fun, like trompo or soccer.
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4. Divide students into work groups.
    - a. Give each group a cap from a soda bottle and have them create or design a game to play with it.
    - b. Ask each group to compose a set of instructions for the game and to teach it to the class.
    - c. After each group has reported, explain that in Nicaragua, children are seen playing soccer on the streets with soda caps. The goal is between their legs.
  5. Direct students to read the last section of the handout, entitled *An Athlete With a Mission*.
    - a. Ask students to hypothesize why Alexis Argüello serves as a role model for young people in Managua.
    - b. What does his career indicate is possible for young people with dedication and determination?
  6. Distribute the student handout entitled **Early Entertainment in Nicaragua**.
    - a. Direct students to read the first section, entitled *The Game of Flyer*.
    - b. Ask students to summarize how the game was played.
    - c. Direct students to read the next section of the handout, entitled *The Comelazatoazte Game*.
    - d. Ask students to summarize how the game was played.
  7. Ask students to compare these early game to games played in American or European Culture. (Answers might include the may pole, May Day celebration, see-saws in the parks, early forms of a merry go round, etc.)
  8. Concluding Activities (Select those activities most appropriate to your subject matter and grade level.)
    - a. Using available library, Internet, and video facilities, have a group of student volunteers conduct research on Alexis Argüello's career and construct a documentary to present to the class.
    - b. Ask the students to draw a comic strip (8 to 10 frames), frame by frame, describing how either the Game of Flyer or the Comelazatoazte Game the was played. Captions can be underneath each frame for better understanding and to describe the process of the games.
    - c. Have a team of students reproduce working models of one of the two games to demonstrate how they were played. They may use such various materials as Lincoln Logs, toothpicks, rubber bands, string, etc., to reproduce their replica.
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## Other Sports and Games

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### **The Economic Environment**

Nicaragua remains one of the poorest countries in Latin America despite some recent advances. The country is in the midst of a complex process of political, economic, and social transition. Currently, Nicaragua has a population of 5.1 million inhabitants. The high level of poverty, around 50 percent of the population, is an obstacle to developing and maintaining the nation's fragile economy. The weakest and most vulnerable groups are those people, especially women and children, living in rural areas, in a fragile physical environment, characterized by less education, less access to basic social services and with fewer options and opportunities.

In the area of education, the main problem is that 45 percent of the population under the age of 18 do not attend school, whether because they drop out early or because they were never financially capable of entering the system.

Currently, only 29 of every 100 students that enter primary school actually finish; in the end, only 2 percent complete higher education. On average, Nicaraguans spend 4.9 years in education, a figure that drops to 2 years among the rural poor. Nicaragua remains one of the poorest countries in Latin America despite some recent advances. The country is in the midst of a complex process of political, economic, and social transition. Currently, Nicaragua has a population of 5.1 million inhabitants. The high level of poverty, around 50 percent of the population, is an obstacle to developing and maintaining the nation's fragile economy. The weakest and most vulnerable groups are those people, especially women and children, living in rural areas, in a fragile physical environment, characterized by less education, less access to basic social services and with fewer options and opportunities.

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Keeping the education and economic facts listed above in mind, how do children and other people have time, opportunity or money for athletics or competition?

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## Trompo



Children in Nicaragua entertain themselves without organized sports. A simple game called trompo is an inexpensive game to play. You have a top made of wood wrapped with a string with a metal point at the bottom. Just like a yo-yo, you put your finger in the loop of the string, hold the trompo in your hand and give it a whirl. The idea is to hopefully get the trompo to spin around like a top on the ground and knock your friends' trompo. If you miss your friends' trompo and the top is still spinning, you can pick it up in the palm of your hand as it still spins and try to knock the other trompo out again. Children of poor families can afford a trompo and are entertained by this game.

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**Soccer game,  
San Marcos**

Soccer, known as *fútbol* in Nicaragua and most the world outside the United States, is another game that is played in Nicaragua. Children with soccer balls are seen playing soccer wherever they can, in the street, in a central park, on a dirt field.

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## An Athlete With a Mission



**Alexis Argüello  
in his Managua  
Office**

Alexis Argüello grew up in Managua, Nicaragua and became one of the world's foremost boxing legends. He met 14 world champions, and in 1981, when he won the WBC lightweight crown, and he became the sixth man in boxing history to win a boxing title in three weight divisions: featherweight, super featherweight, and lightweight.

At 5-10, his height and reach provided him the kind of leverage that resulted in punching power. After four title defenses, Argüello sought yet another challenge.

His goal was to become boxing's first four-division champion when he squared off against WBA junior welterweight king Aaron Pryor. In a classic fight held at Miami's Orange Bowl in 1982, Pryor scored a dramatic 14th-round knockout. They met again one year later. When Pryor stopped Argüello for a second time, Alexis announced his retirement. But like many fighters, he returned to the ring. He came back several times, winning one fight each in 1985, '86, and '95 before retiring again in 1995.

Today Alexis Argüello tries to give back to the community that has embraced him as their champion. He runs a gym and training center in Managua that encourages young people to learn the self-discipline, pride, and confidence that comes from training and physical fitness. He uses his facility as a means for young people from the streets to start believing in themselves.

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## Early Entertainment in Nicaragua

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### **The Game of Flyer**

In the pre-Columbian time period, the people of Nicaragua used various forms of games and entertainment for dual purposes. They used the *Game of the Flyer* to help with the celebrations of a village's deity as well as entertain themselves.

The first game was very simple. It consists of an eight meter or twenty-four foot pole, some rope, a rectangular wooden frame and a statue of your village's deity. The deity, or god, was placed on the rectangular wooden frame at the top of the pole approximately eight meters or twenty-four feet high, in the beginning of the celebration. Two men or children were tied to the ropes and were coiled up the pole. They were then let go and the dozens of people in the crowd danced below until they received them. Then the crowd of people took the deity and placed it back in its shrine at their church or temple. The *Game of the Flyer* used to be practiced in village plazas all along the Pacific Coast of Nicaragua.

**This painting depicts *The Game of the Flyer*. The painting can be found in the San Franciscan Museum in Granada, Nicaragua. You can also find a replica of the game at this museum.**



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**The  
Comelazatoazte  
Game**

The second game is not as complex, except for the name, *The Comelazatoazte Game*. This game is very similar to that of a seesaw or teeter-totter in America. There are two very thick and strong vertical poles ending in one horizontal pole. A wooden peg is carved into the center of the horizontal pole. Another strong wooden pole revolves around the horizontal pole. Rope is twisted around the pole and serves as an axis. They place two very strong men on the end of the pole. These two men begin to get the pole to move in an up and down motion, eventually getting the swinging pole to move around the horizontal pole 360 degrees.

**This painting shows the Comelazatoazte Game. The painting can be found in the San Franciscan Museum in Granada, Nicaragua. You can see a representation of this game made to scale at this museum.**

