

# Diego Rivera's Murals

**Description**     **This lesson is designed for:**

- 40 – 50 minutes
  - 25-30 students
  - Spanish, Art, or Social Studies class
  - Grade 4-8
  - Country of Origin: Mexico
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**Objectives**     **As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:**

- List basic facts about Diego Rivera's life and importance in Mexican history.
  - Explain ways in which art can be representative of a culture and influence people.
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**Vocabulary**

- mural
  - fresco
  - mestizo
  - indígena
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**Materials**

**Related Files Provided with this Lesson**

- Student Handout with key: Timeline of Diego Rivera

**Teachers Need to Provide**

- Map of North America
  - Pictures of Rivera's Masterpieces (These can be found in the books or at the websites listed in the resource section.)
  - Poster board and materials to make murals.
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## Activities

### 2 min. **Introduction**

- Locate Mexico on the map and list facts students know about the country.

### 20 min. **Timeline of Major Life Events**

- Complete the timeline worksheet and discuss Diego Rivera's life and work. (See the related background material.)
- Examine various works of Rivera. (See related websites.)
- Describe what they see and identify elements of his work. (See the related background material.)

### 20 min. **Make a Mural**

- Working in small groups, students design a mural in Rivera's style. Add color. (This part can take more or less time depending on the materials chosen.)

### 3 min. **Wrap Up**

- Ask students to summarize the importance of Diego Rivera's work and how it reflects Mexican culture.
  - Allow for any final questions students have.
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## **Mexico**

- Mexico has 29 states.
- It is part of North America, just south of the United States.
- The Río Grande (Big River) forms the border between the U.S. and Mexico.
- Most people are mestizo, meaning their descendents are a mixture of American Indian and Spanish.
- Some people are indígena. Some groups are the Maya, Zapotec, and Nahuatl.
- Spanish is the official language, but 59 American Indian languages are also spoken.
- The climate ranges from tropical to desert, depending on the area of the country.

## **Diego Rivera**

- Diego Rivera was born December 8, 1886, in Guanajuato in Mexico, to Diego and Maria Barrientos Rivera.
- In 1892 when he was very young, Diego Rivera's family moved to Mexico City. Already he showed artistic talent.
- At Age 10, Diego announced he wanted to be an artist, so his parents' enrolled him in a night class at the prestigious Academy of San Carlos Art Institution.
- He graduated from high school in 1898 at the age of 12 and received money to attend day-school at the academy to study art.
- Rivera exhibited for the first time in 1906 when 26 of his paintings were in San Carlos Academy's annual show.
- His art was so impressive that Governor Teodoro Dehesa offered him a stipend to study in Spain in 1907.
- Diego lived and studied in Spain from 1907 – 1909 when he moved to Paris. He returned for Mexico's Centennial Independence Day in 1910, but returned to Paris in 1911.
- While in Paris, he befriended Picasso and worked on Cubism. In 1918, Rivera left cubism because he said "it lacked genuine universality."
- Diego returned to Mexico in 1921.
- Diego taught that art had to be where everyone could see it...on the walls. As a result, he used the fresco wall-painting technique. This means that the paint is mixed with wet

plaster that needs to be kept wet. Also, the artist uses torches to keep it hot. When finished, the painting has become a permanent part of the wall.

- He married two times: first Guadalupe Marin, who he later divorced, and Frida Kahlo (in 1928).
- He painted many murals in Mexico and a couple in the US. His work changed art in Mexico.
- Rivera died in November 1957.

## Diego Rivera's Artwork

- Rivera focused his art on the workers. He wanted to give workers pride in their jobs. Two other goals were to give Mexicans pride in their history and to show his optimism about what Mexico would be in the future.
- After painting a piece of his first mural, *Creation*, he wanted to get away from the European feel; so he visited Tehuantepec and drew hundreds of sketches of the Indians. From that point on his murals had a common theme. They depicted indigenous people favorably with men at work in various fields, etc. Again, he chose this theme to encourage ALL Mexicans to be proud of themselves and their heritage.
- *Creation* is an abstract mural showing energy in the universe, life, humanity, and factors that have made human beings into people (e.g., science, art, philosophy). The painting shows the result of his trip to Tehuantepec in the many indigenous figures. In the bottom left-hand corner, he painted his wife, Guadalupe Marin, to represent strength and song.
- Another mural, *Man at the Crossroads*, was painted 1933 on the Rockefeller Center wall in New York City. He painted Lenin as the leader of the procession, which inflamed many the U.S., so he was ordered to stop work. The painting was destroyed although Rivera was paid for the work. In response to this destruction, Rivera used the money he was paid for *Man at the Crossroads* to buy a wall in Mexico and recreate the mural. He also began painting moveable murals to be placed around the U.S.

## References

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## Websites

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Lucie-Smith, Edward. from *Lives of the Great 20th-Century Artists*. "Diego Rivera." <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/R/rivera.html>. (visited 5/19/2007).

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Rivera, Javier A. The Virtual Diego Rivera Web Museum. 1995-2006.

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# Time Line of Diego Rivera



1886 Diego Rivera \_\_\_\_\_

1892 \_\_\_\_\_

Entered San Carlos Academy.

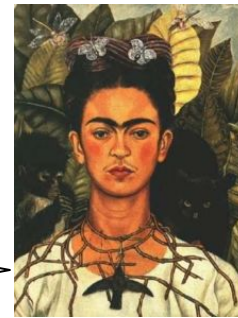
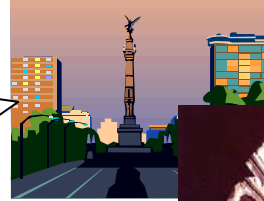
1907 1<sup>st</sup> Exhibition of his art.  
Traveled to Spain.

Returned to \_\_\_\_\_.  
Married Guadalupe Marin.

Divorced.  
Married Frida Kahlo.

Painted many murals in \_\_\_\_\_ and a couple in the \_\_\_\_.

1957 \_\_\_\_\_.





# Time Line of Diego Rivera, *Answers*



1886 Diego Rivera was born.



1892 Moved to Mexico City.

1896 Entered San Carlos Academy.



1906 1<sup>st</sup> Exhibition of his art.

1907 Traveled to Spain.  
Studied and worked in Europe.



1921 Returned to Mexico.  
Married Guadalupe Marin.

1928 Divorced.  
Married Frida Kahlo.



Painted many murals in Mexico and a couple in the US.



1957 Diego Rivera died.