



## *25 Great Ideas for Hispanic Heritage*

- Hispanic Heritage Month, celebrated September 15th through October 15th, is a great opportunity to kick off a whole year of cultural discovery. These 25 fresh ideas - from Aztec math to Carnival masks - are easy to put together, and they offer students the chance to celebrate their own heritage while appreciating the uniqueness of others.
- 1. **READ, REVIEW, AND RECOMMEND** Partner with a local library to create a display of Hispanic heritage-themed books. Have each student select a book and write a short review to be displayed at the library.
- 2. **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR CLASS** Share your classroom culture by creating a Web page filled with photos and captions.
- 3. **PLANT A MEMORY FOREST** Plant a tree in your community for each Hispanic hero your class selects. Tag each tree with a mini biography highlighting that hero's contributions.
- 4. **MAKE A CULTURAL CONNECTION ONLINE** Global e-mail pen pals (try [www.epals.com](http://www.epals.com)) are a great way for students to practice "authentic language" as they learn a second language.
- 5. **ECUADORIAN MIGAJÓN MINIATURES** Students can create tiny animals, flowers, and people just like artisans in Ecuador do. To make the dough, each student will need one slice of white bread, crust removed, and one tablespoon of white glue. The dough will be quite sticky at first but will become manageable with kneading. Mold the dough into tiny shapes and allow to air-dry overnight. Decorate with acrylic paint and display!
- 6. **PONCE CARNIVAL MASKS** Bring the vivid colors of Puerto Rican Carnival to your classroom with traditional papier-mâché masks of red, yellow, and black. Begin with one large paper plate for each student. Thinking about the plate as the face of a clock, cut 2" slits at 2 o'clock, 6 o'clock, and 10 o'clock. Overlap the edges of the slits and affix with

tape to make the mask 3-D. Cut two holes for eyes. Add horns to the mask by rolling small sheets of poster board into cones and attaching them with tape. Using a thin paste of water and flour and strips of newspaper, cover the mask with 3-4 layers of papier-mâché. Once the mask is dry, bring it to life with brightly colored paint and traditional patterns of dots. Then take your masks on parade!

7. **PAPELES PICADOS** Add a festive touch to the classroom with traditional Mexican punched papers called papeles picados. Fold thin construction paper in a variety of colors into quarters, eighths, cone style, or fan style to achieve a variety of looks. Use scissors and hole punches to create a perforated pattern. Hang the completed papers along a string using tape.
8. **ZAPOTEC RUG PAINTINGS** When there's not enough time to weave, recreate these beautiful geometric rugs from Mexico using paint. Begin with a sheet of poster board for each student. Using rulers and pencils, draw zigzag, stair-step, and straight lines across the poster board. Incorporate angular shapes such as diamonds and triangles. Once the pencil layout is complete, use poster paints or markers to fill in the design.
9. **GROW A HERITAGE GARDEN** Plant staple crops common in many Spanish-speaking countries, such as corn, beans, squash, and peppers. Have students keep a log tracking the growth of the various plants. Extend the project by researching staple foods of other regions.
10. **THE AIR WE SHARE** Monitor the daily air-quality index for your city (available at [Airnow.gov](http://Airnow.gov)). Have students study the results and look for trends. What are small actions we can take to help improve air quality for everyone on the planet?
11. **PICK THIS TRIP!** Students don the role of travel agent when they research and present highlights of a trip to a Spanish-speaking city or country.
12. **ADOPT A CITY** Select a world city to "adopt," such as your city's [international sister city](#). Display photos of people and places, as well as a clock set to the local time. Have students report on local news events.
13. **MY HOME COUNTRY** Celebrate diversity in your classroom by inviting ELL students to share photos of their hometowns, important cultural items, and basic phrases in their native language.
14. **WHAT'S YOUR HERITAGE?** Ask students to investigate their own heritage and report back to the class on the origins of their ancestors. Graph the results and discuss how

the class reflects, or differs from, city, state, and national demographic statistics. For current census data, visit [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

15. **AZTEC MATH** Spice up a math review activity by replacing the Arabic numerals with Aztec numbers.
16. **INTERNATIONAL OUTFITS** Do you know how far your clothes traveled before they even reached the store where you bought them? Have students inventory the items they are wearing and the country of origin for each item. What is the total number of miles for each student? For the entire class?
17. **MY SPANISH DICTIONARY** Have the class create a lively illustrated dictionary of Spanish words, complete with visual or verbal memory tricks for remembering words' meanings.
18. **LABEL MAKER** Give pairs of students a pad of sticky notes and a Spanish-English dictionary. Play festive music while students label everything in the classroom with a bilingual label. When the music stops, have students take a tour of the room and practice the new words.
19. **WORLD ALPHABET COLLECTION** Gather newspaper clippings or online printouts showcasing scripts from other languages. Create a special bulletin board celebrating the myriad of ways people write. An excellent resource is [Omniglot.com](http://Omniglot.com).
20. **PLAY COLOR, COLORCITO** In this traditional Spanish street game, the child who is "It" says "color, colorato" ("color, little color") and then the name of a color. Everyone must run to touch something that color in order to be "safe." If It tags a player, he or she becomes the new It and play continues.
21. **MOVE TO THE BEAT** Reenergize students between activities with a Latin dance party. Play selections of tango, merengue, folk music, or Tex-Mex and ask students to feel the differences in the beat as they move their bodies.
22. **CAN YOU READ MAYAN?** Introduce students to the ancient Mayan alphabet and ask each student to write his or her name in Mayan glyphs on a sheet of paper. Collect all the sheets, then give each student a sheet to decode.

23. **WRITE YOUR OWN FOLKTALE** Read one of the many traditional folktales from Spanish-speaking countries and then write new stories based on the traditions of these tales.
24. **OUR HERITAGE ALBUM** Compile a class album of significant Hispanic Americans throughout history featuring lots of drawings, invented memorabilia, and simulated newspaper clippings. [Get ideas for your album.](#)
25. **MUSICAL STORIES** Give students the beginning paragraph of a traditional folktale, and then play a selection of Spanish music to inspire them to write the end of the story. Is the music sad or happy? On what kind of occasion would this music be played?

## **GREAT READS THAT CELEBRATE HISPANIC HERITAGE**

### *I Love Saturdays y domingos*

By Alma Flor Ada (PreK-2) A bilingual girl recounts Saturdays spent with her Euro-American grandparents and Sundays with her Mexican-American Abuelito and Abuelita.

### *Cuckoo: A Mexican Folktale*

By Lois Ehlert (PreK-2) This bilingual tale from Mexico tells the story of the vain and lazy cuckoo who annoys the other birds with her constant singing. One day however, when a fire threatens the seed crops, it is the cuckoo who single-handedly saves the seeds.

### *Isla*

By Arthur Dorros (K-2) Through the power of story, Abuela takes her young granddaughter, Rosalba, on a trip to the Caribbean island where Abuela grew up.

### *Vejigante Masquerader*

By Lulu Delacre (K-3) The time of Carnival is approaching in the town of Ponce, Puerto Rico, and young Ramon dreams of becoming a vejigante, a masked reveler.

### *My Name Is Maria Isabel*

By Alma Flor Ada (Gr. 3-5) When Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez starts her first day of class at a new school, the teacher dubs her "Mary Lopez" as there are already two other Marias in the class. This story thoughtfully explores the significance of heritage in one's sense of self.

*The Most Beautiful Place in the World*

By Ann Cameron (Gr. 3-5) Life for 7-year-old Juan is difficult in his impoverished Guatemalan village, but his life is filled with beauty all the same. Abandoned by his mother, Juan lives with his grandmother and shines shoes to support the family, but his true desire is to go to school.