

STUDY GUIDE

TREKking MEXICO

Dance & Music by Mexico Beyond Mariachi



ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Trekking Mexico takes audiences on a journey spanning 500 years through the geography, music, dance and evolving culture of Mexico. Featuring dances from Veracruz, Guerrero, Michoacán, and more, *Trekking Mexico* is an adventure that takes audiences deep into this beautiful land.

Trekking Mexico is a music dance and storytelling adventure that celebrates Mexican culture delving into rich traditions of music and dance to deepen students' understanding of Mexican and Latin American culture. Featuring regional dances of Mexico, colorful costumes and traditional music *Trekking Mexico* teaches about Mexican culture beyond the expected!



[Watch this trailer](#) for *Trekking Mexico* to get a preview of what you'll see on the stage.

ABOUT THE CREATORS



ABOUT THE COMPANY

Mexico Beyond Mariachi (MBM) was created 15 years ago in New York City by a group of people who saw that there was a need in the community to know more about traditional Mexican performance culture that was extended past the stereotype of just Mariachi music. They wanted to explore “A Mexico beyond

the headlines, beyond the beautiful beaches, beyond the guys with big hats and trumpets.....” What seemed so obvious was being overlooked!

THEY HAD A BIG QUESTION:

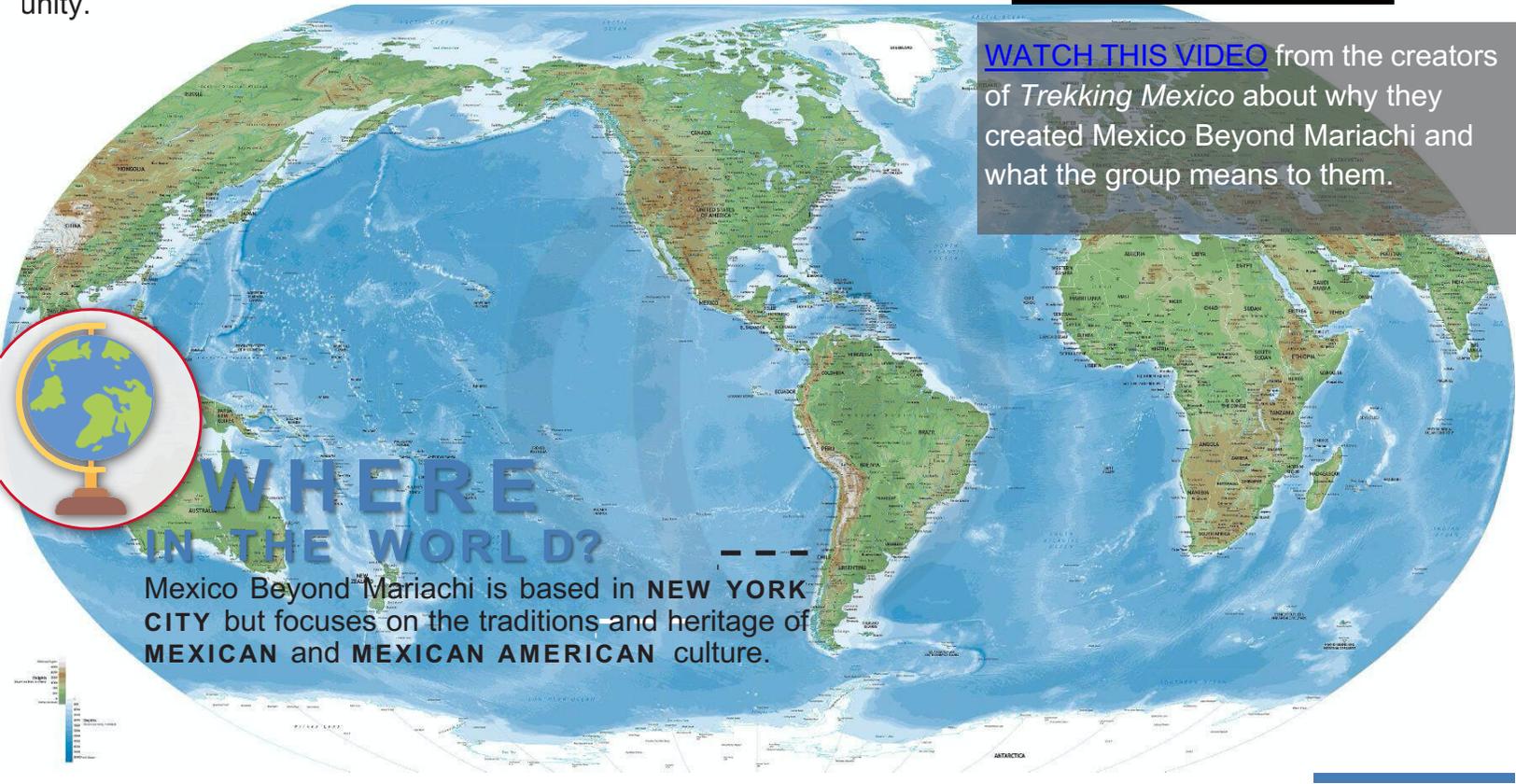
“Even though Mexican influence is all around us, what do people really know about the traditions of Mexico’s music and dance culture? Or the origins of the stories, legends, and myths that are interwoven together? And how do we share that knowledge with young audiences?”

RESPONDING TO THAT NEED,

MBM created *Trekking Mexico*. They have reached over 100,000 students in over 250 schools and communities. MBM began traveling around the United States to tell the story to young audiences and families around the United States. They believe it is an important time to reach new audiences with the message of equity, tolerance, and unity.



[WATCH THIS VIDEO](#) from the creators of *Trekking Mexico* about why they created Mexico Beyond Mariachi and what the group means to them.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Mexico BeyondTM Mariachi is based in **NEW YORK CITY** but focuses on the traditions and heritage of **MEXICAN** and **MEXICAN AMERICAN** culture.

SEEING A SHOW

Seeing a performance is different, even on a computer, than watching a movie or TV show. What is different and what is the same? Use the printable chart on [page i](#) to keep track.

In this performance you will see people singing, dancing, and acting on stage. **The performers use their body, facial expressions, and voice as tools. The performer's most important job is to communicate to the audience through their instruments and bodies.**

THINGS TO WATCH FOR

Use the glossary below to select one or two terms that you will watch for in the performance, the story, or the way the stage is set up. After the show, report your observations to the class. Add observations to a classlist or create a digital record using www.padlet.com.

GLOSSARY

BELIEVABILITY : theatrical choices thought to be true based upon an understanding of any given fictional moment, interpretation of text, and/or human interaction

CHARACTER TRAITS: observable embodied actions that illustrate a character's personality, values, beliefs, and history

CONFLICT: the problem, confrontation, or struggle in a scene or play; conflict may include a character against him or herself, a character in opposition to another character, a character against nature, a character against society, or a character against the supernatural

DIALOGUE: a conversation between characters

FOCUS: a commitment by a participant (an actor, technician, director) to remain in the scope of the project or to stay within the world of the play

GENRE: relating to a specific kind or type of drama and theater such as a tragedy, drama, melodrama, comedy, or farce

GESTURE: an expressive and planned movement of the body or limbs

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES: the underlying actions and events that have happened before the play, story, or devised piece begins

IMAGINARY ELSEWHERE: an imagined location which can be historical, fictional, or realistic

IMPROVISE: the spontaneous, intuitive, and immediate response of movement and speech

INNER THOUGHTS: the underlying and implied meaning or intentions in the character's dialogue or actions (also known as subtext)

MOTIVATION: reasons why a character behaves or reacts in a particular way in a scene or play

NON-REPRESENTATIONAL MATERIALS: objects which can be transformed into specific props through the imagination

OBJECTIVE: a goal or particular need or want that a character has within a scene or play

PLOT: a narrative as revealed through the action and/or dialogue; traditionally, a plot has the elements of exposition, inciting incident, conflict, rising action, climax, and resolution or falling action

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS: technical elements selected for use in a specific production, including sets, sound, costumes, lights, music, props, and make-up, as well as elements specific to the production such as puppets, masks, special effects, or other storytelling devices/concepts

SCRIPT: a piece of writing for the theater that includes a description of the setting, a list of the characters, the dialogue, and the action of the characters

STAGING: patterns of movement in a scene or play

STORY ELEMENTS: characters, setting, dialogue, and plot that create a story

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS: the elements such as sets, sound, costume, lights, music, props, and makeup used to create a unified and meaningful design for a theatrical production

THEATRICAL CONVENTIONS: practices and/or devices that the audience and actors accept in the world of the play even when it is not realistic, such as a narrator, flashback, or an aside

THEME: the aspect of the human condition under investigation in the drama; it can be drawn from unifying topics or questions across content areas



The entire performance of *Trekking Mexico* lasts just over 50 minutes

USING VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES:

(adapted from *Facing History and Ourselves*)

Watch the performance and then pose the following three questions in order. Pause after each question to give students time to reflect.

1. What do you **see**? What did you **hear**? What details stand out?
(At this stage, elicit observations, not interpretations.)
2. What do you **think** is going on? What makes you say that?
3. What does this make you **wonder**? What broader questions does this image raise for you?

Piece #1 Meshica / Aztec Music and Dance

SUMMARY:

The first piece in the performance brings audiences into a ceremonial music and dance that is believed to be hundreds of years old. Flutes, drums, small percussion as well as the dancers' movements, all work together to tell a story and pay homage to the elements in nature.

OBSERVE:

What do you see the musicians playing? Closing your eyes, how does the music make you feel? What information can you learn about the performers by observing their clothing? What animal sounds or instruments from nature do you see?

LEARN MORE:

Did you know that Mexico is the home of many Indigenous people? And that they speak native languages other than Spanish? Mexico, like the United States, has Native American or Indigenous people who are both members of tribal nations AND citizens of their country.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Indigenous people of Veracruz.

Piece # 2:

Xochipitzahua

This music is an example of the “synchronization” of cultures that occurred after the arrival of the Spanish colonizers in 1519. This song is sung in the ancient language of Nahuatl as well as in Spanish.

OBSERVE:

The instruments have changed from the first piece. Now, string instruments become part of the music of Mexico. The Aztec deity “Tonantzin” is re-imagined and now represented as the Virgin of Guadalupe.

CONSIDER:

How music changes depending on when the instruments were created and where they are played. What instruments do you recognize?

Piece # 3:

El Panuelo

(The Handkerchief)

SUMMARY:

This dance features three important instruments that come from different traditions of Mexican people. All the instruments - despite their different histories and sounds - work together to create balance in one beautiful song.

LEARN MORE:

Listen to each of the instruments play alone. How would you describe the sounds each one makes? How do you imagine they will work together?

Ayoyo te - ankle shakers made with seeds from the Chachayote Tree.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19WeznaldDQ>

Quijada de Burro - a percussion instruments made with the jawbone of a donkey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JQVvT65yzw>

Piece # 4:

La Danza de los Viejitos
(Dance of the Old People)

SUMMARY:

The next dance comes from the Purépecha people in the state of Michoacán. The dance usually features four old people who are meant to represent the four elements - fire, water, earth, and air. They start the dance with hunched backs relying on their canes, but soon they are dancing and moving freely. The dance is meant to remind us of the wisdom of our elders.

OBSERVE:

The Viejitos are wearing special clothing during their dance. They have a sarape - a cloak made out of blankets - each with designs and sombrero hats with long ribbons hanging down. They also wear wooden soled shoes, and an old man mask over their faces. They use their canes and their shoes to stomp along to the music with percussion sounds.

What do you notice about the Viejitos in the dance? How does their body change through the dance? How does their special clothing impact their performance?



Piece # 5:

Tabasco y El canto del Cenzontle
The Song of the Mockingbird

SUMMARY:

This dance from the state of Tabasco reminds us of the importance of our animal friends. You can hear the call of the mockingbird represented through the performance.

LEARN MORE:

Listen to the song of the real mockingbird. Can you hear the similarities between the instrument and the bird?

Mockingbird - El canto del Sinsonte
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRS9KQp3mys>

Can you spot a turtle shell? An antler? An animal bone?

Piece # 6:

Zamba

SUMMARY:

From the state of Guerrero, Mexico this song reminds us that even when we must do challenging work, we can still be joyful!

OBSERVE:

What do you notice about the clothing of the performers? What about the rhythm? Does the song make you feel joyful as well?

Piece # 7:

La Bamba

SUMMARY:

The music and dance comes from the state of Veracruz. Many different Indigenous people have made their home in the land now called Veracruz. Some of them still speak Náhuatl.

EXPLORE:

During this song the dancers try the test! How do they do it?

Use a long piece of ribbon or string to give it a try. Can you do it by yourself using only your feet? Can you do it more easily with a partner?

Piece # 8:

Torito Jarocho

Have you ever tried to lasso a bull? Well in this song we'll grab our imaginary lassos and try to capture a bull that runs to far flung places.
Get ready to sing "LASALO!"

CONSIDER:

How imagination is an important part of writing and singing a song. Where could that bull be going next?

What do you think of when you hear the word Mexico?

Before seeing the performance write down some things that come to your mind when you think of Mexico. After the show continue writing and see what's changed about your knowledge and perception of the country.

GOALS:

Activating Prior Knowledge

DISCUSSION STRATEGY:

Students can use sticky notes to write their observations and post to a whiteboard chart or talk to a shoulder partner about what they've seen.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER:

Use the chart on [page ii](#) as an individual printable or to project and complete together.

Categories: what do you THINK, what did you LEARN *through consulting a source*, what do you still WONDER about?

Note: The source in the LEARN column does not have to be an informational article or traditional book. A student, a student's family or a member of the community are also valuable sources for rich learning!

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

Other cultural/geographic regions have rich and meaningful traditional practices. These practices are meaningful to those persons in a similar way that my cultural/familial/religious practices are meaningful to me and my culture/family/religion.



.....

How can we care for the places we live and the future inhabitants? How do we live in balance with the Earth?

.....

GOALS:

- Conducting Research
- Organizing Information

RESEARCH STRATEGY:

Water is a very important element that is discussed in the show at various times. What instruments that in the show that you saw or heard come from water?

What type of geography exists in the different states that we traveled to in the show?

Did you see different clothing during the show? How were the clothes different and what did they tell you about the performers wearing them?



The ancestors are a powerful source of wisdom.

How does my connection with the past impact my life? Do those who came before me (in my family, culture/, religion, or community) help me today? Why or why not? Is this meaningful to you?

GOALS:

Drawing on Funds of Knowledge
Connecting to Self and Others

STRATEGY FOR ENGAGEMENT:

Define “ancestor” by asking for student input.
“What is an ancestor?”

Trekking Mexico defines ancestors as:
The grandmothers of our grandmothers and the grandfathers of our grandfathers -- the keepers of our wisdom!

DEFINE IT!
A kid-friendly definition from Merriam-Webster:
Ancestor 1: a person, typically one more remote than a grandparent that you are descended from: my ancestors are from Germany. *Noun.*
Ancestor 2: An ancestor, also known as a forefather, fore-elder or a forebear, is a parent, a grandparent, great-grandparent, great-great-grandparent and so forth. *Noun.*

Have students first complete a 5-minute quick write to the prompt:
In my (family/culture/religion/community) my ancestors are:

Invite students to consider both their family and any other identity or group to which they belong. Students may choose to write about their grandparents, a tradition in their church, or a cultural/ethnic/racial group. Where and who do they come from? Teachers may need to model examples, especially for younger students.

After completing the quick-write, students should be prepared to discuss whether they feel connected with their ancestors and why or why not they get wisdom or inspiration or strength from people who lived before them - often even before they were born! - with a partner or small group.

BIG QUESTIONS:

How do you connect with the past? Especially those who you are related to but haven’t ever met? How do these lives impact yours? Why do people across all kinds of religious, cultural, and geographic communities create traditions to mark important occasions and gather together?

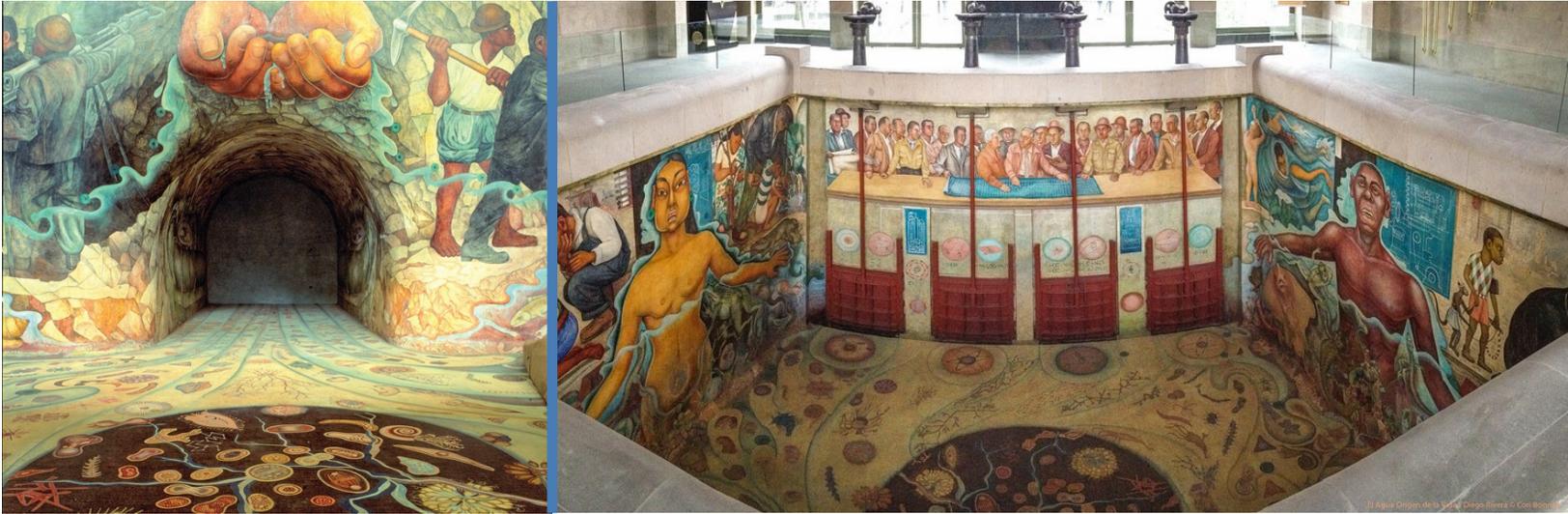
Have students complete a page to be made into a class book or ask students to create a thinglink (www.thinglink.com) using an image that represents one of their ancestors. Students may present their thinglink and explain their connections in a Living Museum gallery desk walk.

The family tree is a familiar image but one that often leaves out important people in our past. Using the metaphor of the river and image on [page iii](#) students may place themselves along the water’s edge, labeling and illustrating others who have impacted their lives’ path. Where is the river going? Where has it been?

Note: Some students may have less defined biological ancestral connections. Emphasize that ancestors can be related to us by blood/family or by a connection to a shared culture or interest. Who are the ancestors of basketball? Who are the ancestors of the Civil Rights Movement? Who are the ancestors of dance or poetry or hip-hop? Broaden the definition to include all kinds of wisdom-givers from the past.

ARTFORM 1: VISUAL ARTS

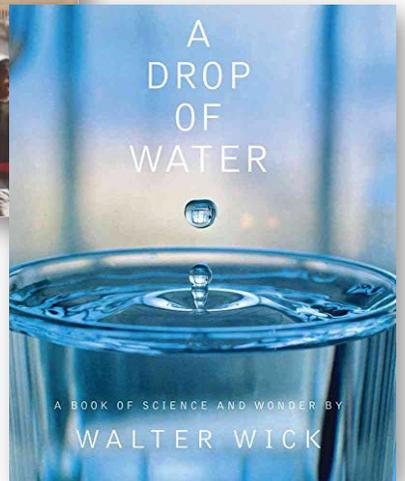
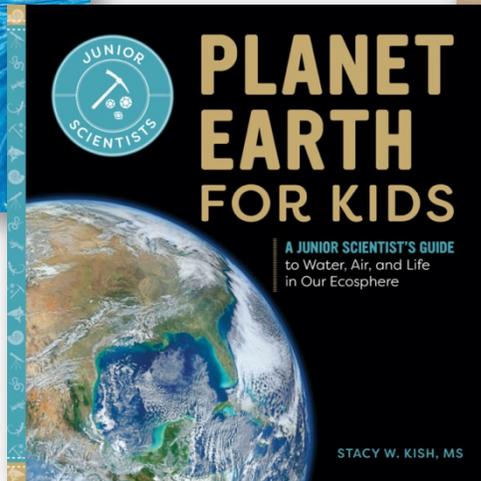
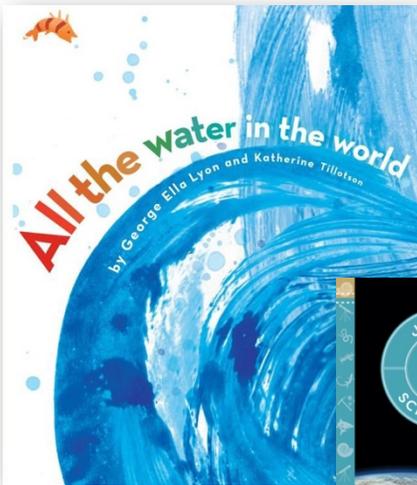
There is an amazing place in Mexico City in Chapultepec Park called Cárcamo de Dolores. It's an indoor/outdoor space created by the architect Ricardo Rivas and the artist Diego Rivera that celebrates the history of water in Mexico City.



Then follow the link to explore more:
<https://en.mxcity.mx/2016/06/underwater-mural/>

LEARN MORE:

Check out these books to learn more about water conservation!



The teacher can discuss with students:

After you leave the performance in some ways your experience of it has just begun! We want the ideas you thought about and the people you watched and listened to in the performance to stay in your mind. Take some time to consider one (or more!) of the questions below:

1. What part was most memorable or stuck out in your mind?
2. What idea did the performance make you consider? Did you have any connections?
3. What part was most interesting to see or to listen to? What was your favorite?"

Craft an email to share with your class, with families or with Mexico Beyond Mariachi, about your experience.

Follow our template below to get started.

Dear

DATE

Write a sentence or two about you – your name, age, or grade to introduce yourself!

(If you get stuck, here are some sentence starters to get you thinking:)

My favorite part of the show was...

While watching the show I felt... because ...

I have drawn a picture of the scene when...

This experience was special because ...

**Sincerely,
(your name)**

Students might choose to draw a favorite part or create a collage. They might choose to write a letter or a short story that is connected to the performance; they might even make a video where they share a review and post to the class webpage!

However, students choose to respond, we'd love to hear from you!

RESOURCES AND SOURCES

Indigenous Mexico

<https://indigenoustmexico.org>

Tour on Chapultepec Park

<https://en.mxcity.mx/2016/06/underwater-mural/>

Videos on Instruments:

Ayayote -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19WeznaldDQ>

Quijada de Burro -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2JQVvT65yzw>

Violin -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wh-pBxeHE3U>

Mockingbird

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRS9KQp3mys>

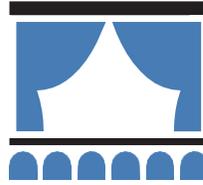
Facing History and Ourselves

Newsela:

<https://newsela.com/read/california-drought/id/2484/>

<https://newsela.com/read/natgeo-freshwater-resources/id/50453/>

Use this printable chart to list the similarities and differences between going to the theater and watching tv or seeing a movie. How are they the same? How are they different?



SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES

.....

what do you THINK

what did you LEARN

what do you still WONDER

