



The Booklist Project



Focus: Culture-Specific Booklist

Mayan and Guatemalan

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List of Books from the
Mayan and Guatemalan Culture

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M.Ed. Reading

The Mayan and Guatemalan Culture

This book list is meant as a tool for teachers of ELL students who come from the Mayan and Guatemalan culture and would be interested in either learning more about their culture or need some literature that they can connect with on a more personal level. I geared my search of books toward the three to five grade levels. In producing this collection of books, I have used a few websites that I found helpful in culminating this list and I would find helpful if I were planning some lessons with these books. I used this grade span when thinking of the websites as well.

The first website is <http://www.terraexperience.com/>. This website is deceiving when you first enter it because it sells hand-woven ethnic doll clothes for the American Girl dolls. Within this website there is information on Mayan villages, clothes they wear, their language spoken and a very long list of children's books. There are also many pictures of Mayan life. Another section within this website is some teacher references. (http://terraexperience.com/Classroom_Teachers_Resources_Kits_Guatemala_Mayan_Culture.htm) This website provides teacher kits with a teachers guide and all of the supplies to teach your students about the Mayan lifestyle.

Another website I found that I thought would be useful in teaching students about the Mayan culture was <http://www.mayankids.com>. This site is kid-friendly and would be a great resource for your students if you were to assign a research project or use as a center to broaden their knowledge after teaching a lesson on this culture.

I also wanted to add some general culture sights that give some great information about the Guatemalan culture, as well as many other cultures that you might be teaching within your classroom. The first sight is

<http://www.kidsculturecenter.com/guatemala/guatemala.htm>.

This is the link to the Guatemalan information, but it is easy to navigate for both teacher and student to find other cultures as well. The other site that gives great information about the Guatemalan culture is

http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student.php?id=87.

Both of these sites could help a teacher to learn about their student's culture, or could help the students within a class learn about their friends' culture or find information on a culture study that they might need to complete.

Books

1. Castaneda, O.S. (1993). *Abuela's weave*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books Inc. [ISBN 1-880000-00-8]

Age range: Meant for ages five to nine.

Summary: Abuela teaches Esperanza how to weave and together they sell their handmade weavings at the Fiesta de Pueblos in Guate. Esperanza is plagued with worry. What if no one wants handmade goods when there are so many beautiful machine-made things they can choose from? It turns out Esperanza has nothing to worry about, and she and Abuela return to their family empty-handed and proud.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Developing level according to WIDA.

This book is written in English and is available in hardcover and paperback. There is a Spanish version of the book available: [El Tapiz de la Abuela](#).

Websites: <http://www.webenglishteacher.com/castaneda.html>

2. Matthews, R. (2008). *You wouldn't want to be a mayan soothsayer!* New York, NY: Franklin Watts. [ISBN 0-531-18746-2]

Age range: Meant for ages seven to ten.

Summary: This is an informational book about the Mayan Culture that uses humor to make learning fun. The author uses a cartoon/comic book format to represent the data, similar to *The Magic School bus* books. A perfect book for adopted children who might want to learn about their heritage or as part of a whole class research project for ELL students to feel part of the class curriculum.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Bridging to Reaching level due to the style of writing.

This book is written in English and is available in library binding and paperback.

Websites: <http://www.rupertmatthews.org/>
<http://teachwithpicturebooks.blogspot.com/>
<http://mrsbergsclass.com/index.html>

3. Menchu, R., & Liano, D. (2005). *The girl from chimel*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books. [ISBN 0888996664]

Age range: Meant for ages eight to twelve.

Summary: The Girl from Chimel is a collection of stories about Rigoberta's childhood living in Chimel before the conflict and civil war. Short stories include her impressions of the breathtaking world around her, her grandfather and grandmother's courtship and stories of her parents and siblings. This book is a wonderful exhibit of the beauties of the past.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Expanding into Bridging level according to WIDA.

This book was translated by David Unger from Spanish to English and is available in hardcover. There is also a Spanish version of this book: [Una Niña de Chimel](#).

Websites:

<http://hti.math.uh.edu/curriculum/units/2007/02/07.02.13.php>

(Focusing on Part 3 of the Mythology Unit)

<http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2008/11/rigoberta-menchus-three-books.html> - This website focuses mostly on *The Honey Jar*, but will give you more information on Rigoberta's other two books included on this book list.

4. Menchu, R., & Liano, D. (2006). *The honey jar*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books. [ISBN 0888996705]

Age range: Meant for ages eight to nine.

Summary: *The Honey Jar* is another trip to Rigoberta's past, only this time she is sharing stories her grandparents shared with her. These tales and Mayan myths include stories about our creation, animal stories and reasons for some existences. Many stories that include the underworld, the sun and moon, animals, plants and people that really help the reader to understand how the Mayans see their world.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Expanding to Bridging level according to WIDA.

This book was translated by David Unger from Spanish to English and is available in hardcover.

Websites:

<http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2008/11/rigoberta-menchus-three-books.html>

- This website will give you more information on Rigoberta's three books included on this book list.

<http://hti.math.uh.edu/curriculum/units/2007/02/07.02.13.php>

(Again, focusing on Part 3 of the Mythology Unit)

5. Menchu, R., & Liano, D. (2008). *The secret legacy*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books. [ISBN 0888998961]

Age range: Meant for ages four to twelve years old.

Summary: *The Secret Legacy* is about a seven-year-old girl named Ixkem who has been chosen by her 100-year-old grandfather to take over his special cornfields. While working in the cornfields she finds the b'e'n – secret animal spirits in which there are one born for every human. They take Ixkem to their underworld where Ixkem tells the b'e'n of the many stories and legends she has heard from her grandfather. In return, the b'e'n whisper secrets for Ixkem to take with her to her grandfather, where he finds peace and is able to say his final goodbye and rest for eternity.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Expanding to Bridging level according to WIDA.

This book was translated by David Unger from Spanish to English and is available in hardcover.

Websites:

<http://hti.math.uh.edu/curriculum/units/2007/02/07.02.13.php>

(Also, focusing on Part 3 of the Mythology Unit)

<http://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2008/11/rigoberta-menchus-three-books.html> - This website will give you more information on Rigoberta's three books included on this book list.

6. Mora, P. (2001). *The race of toad and deer*. Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books. [0-88899-434-6]

Age range: Meant for ages Birth to Preschool age.

Summary: This story is similar to Aesop's Fable *The Tortoise and the Hare*. In this version, Venado, the deer likes to show off. He believes he is the fastest and swiftest in the jungle and will undoubtedly win the race against Sapo, the frog. Like the well-known fable, brains win out and Sapo beats Venado with all of the jungle animals cheering him on.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the end of Developing to Expanding level according to WIDA.

This book is written primarily in English with some Spanish words within the text. It is available in hardcover and paperback. It also has a Spanish version available: [La Carrera del Sapo Y el Venado](#)

Websites: <http://www.patmora.com/> The author's website. For teaching ideas this website is great:
<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/multicultural-literature/activiy/15201.html:detoured=1>

7. Rhodes, T. (1994). *The hummingbird's gift*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children. [ISBN 1562826050]

Age range: Meant for ages five through nine.

Summary: Isidro and his wife Consuelo worry about how they will feed their children during a drought. Their wheat will die and they will make no money. Consuelo still finds it in her heart to feed the hummingbirds some nectar, and in return they teach her how to weave straw into figures they can sell at the Day of the Dead festival. The family makes enough money to last them the year and the drought is ended with rain and the village is renamed after the hummingbirds: Tzintzuntzan.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student at the Developing to Expanding level.

This book is written in English and is available in hardcover and library binding.

Websites: <http://www.stefanczernecki.com/>

8. Rockwell, A. (2000). *The boy who wouldn't obey: A mayan legend*. New York, NY: Morrow Junior Books. [ISBN 0-688-14881-6]

Age range: Meant for ages five to eight.

Summary: This book is about a boy who did the opposite of what he was supposed to do. Chac, one of the gods of the sky, kidnapped the boy and made him his servant. Chac was terrible to the boy and made his life miserable if he did not follow every

order. Eventually the boy followed orders and tried to make the best of it, but was scolded for doing what he thought was right too. The boy stole for the last time and fell from the sky to the sea, barely keeping afloat. Chac was sick of the thieving boy and sent him back home, where his family had missed him terribly. I chose this book because it is an old Mayan legend that many students of the Guatemalan and Mayan culture may have heard before.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Expanding level according to WIDA.

This book is written in English and is available in hardcover.

9. Volkmer, J.A. (1990). *Song of the chirimía: A guatemalan folktale*.

Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, Inc. [ISBN 0-87614-423-7]

Age range: Meant for ages four to eight.

Summary: This folktale is about a king named Clear Sky who has a daughter named Moonlight. She is the light of his life and when she becomes sad it is clear she is ready for marriage. Clear Sky searches for a suitor for Moonlight and finds the simple Black Feather. He is a wonderful singer, but Moonlight wishes him to sound more like the birds song. So, he sets out to refine his song in order to win the princess' heart. He encounters help from The Great Spirit and acquires a chirimía that makes the beautiful song he is searching for and wins the princess' heart. I chose this book because it is similar to the American tale of Aladdin and could help students from Guatemala feel connected to the American culture.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Developing level according to WIDA.

This book is a bilingual book with the English and Spanish version side by side within the book. It is available in hardcover and paperback.

10. Wahl, J. (1996). *Once when the world was green*. Berkely, CA: Tricycle Press. [ISBN 1-883672-12-0]

Age range: Meant for ages four to eight.

Summary: This story is of Corn Grower and his greedy ways. His world is perfect and quaint, but Corn Grower yearns for more, so he takes feathers and fur from animals and a shell from a turtle, killing the animals. He pays for his selfishness by losing his son, small ears and upsetting his wife, Moon Sun. He learns his lesson and is reunited with his son, learning that he should appreciate what he has and not be greedy. I chose this book because it is a story told in a more traditional Guatemalan fashion, which might help ELL's to connect to this story in a more personal way.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student who was at the Developing to Expanding level according to WIDA.

This book is available in hardcover and paperback.

11. Wisniewski, D. (1991). *Rain player*. New York, NY: Clarion Books. [ISBN 0395551129]

Age range: Meant for ages eight to twelve.

Summary: After hearing the Ah Kin Mai's prophecy: A year of terrible drought, a young boy named Pik challenges the rain God, Chac, to a game of pok-a-tok in an effort to bring rain to his desiccated village. This book is written primarily in English with some Spanish words within the text. I chose this book because the story includes a Mayan god and may be familiar to ELL's from the Mayan culture, adding a story to their list that may be familiar. It also could teach them something about their culture, as well as the lesson imbedded within the story.

ELL Level: This book would be good for a student at the end of the Expanding level and entering Bridging level according to WIDA.

This book is written in English and is available in library binding or paperback.

Websites: <http://www.ancientworlds.net/aw/Article/726643>

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A Project of the
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