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THE AMERICAS

COURSE COMPANION



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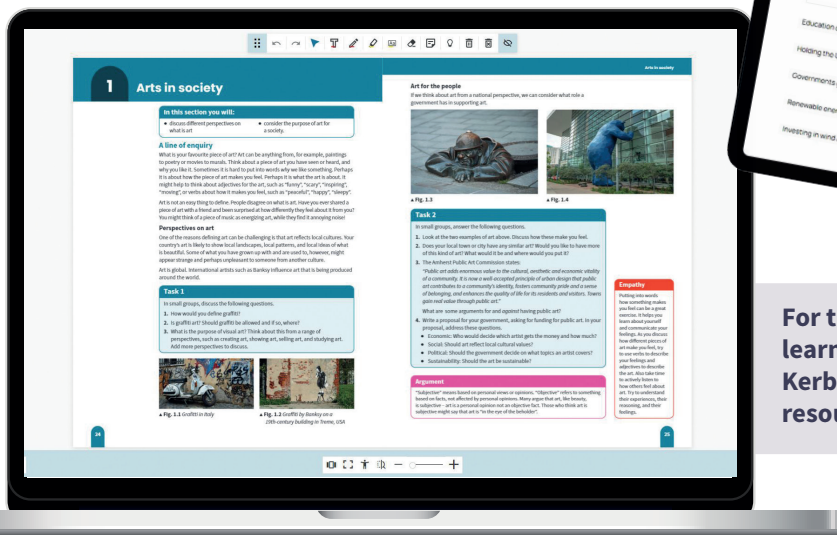
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Sample pages

Experiences of marginalized groups

Marginalized groups, such as Chinese–Mexicans and indigenous communities mentioned in the information boxes, continued to struggle throughout the revolution and after. They shared in some of the benefits of the revolution but were never fully recognized or given the help they needed. The revolution fell short, leaving these groups to continue enduring violence, displacement and exclusion, even though they had contributed significantly to the revolutionary efforts.

The revolution brought hardship on marginalized groups. Despite the challenges, many of them contributed greatly to the revolution, but the outcome for them post-revolution was complex at best. Many groups progressed after the revolution and as a result of the protections of the 1917 Constitution. However, their issues were far from resolved and would take a lot more fighting to achieve equality. For marginalized groups, the promises the revolution offered went largely unfulfilled.

The Chinese–Mexican community

In the late 1800s, there was a wave of Chinese immigration to Mexico, largely when Porfirio Díaz was president. They came for the same economic opportunities as US and European workers in agriculture, commerce and the railways. Many of the immigrants started small businesses and became essential to communities, particularly in northern Mexico. But no matter how essential they were, any economic success bred resentment and racism. To Mexican citizens they were another foreign economic competitor.

Unfortunately, the revolution would intensify anger towards groups like Chinese–Mexicans. This period was full of nationalistic fervour and rhetoric, which often turned towards blaming groups like this for the country's struggles. They were accused of taking jobs from Mexicans and were the targets of violence.

One of the most well-known incidents of anti-Chinese violence and racism was the Torreón Massacre of 1911. The Chinese community in Torreón was attacked by revolutionary forces and more than 300 Chinese residents were killed and many of their businesses were looted. The massacre was an outcome of the racist and nationalist climate, alongside economic resentment. Similar attacks occurred across the country, creating fear among many marginalized groups.

This incident emphasizes the position of Chinese–Mexicans during the revolution. Despite the intolerance across Mexico, Chinese–Mexicans would continue to assist in the revolution and contribute culturally and economically afterwards.

Theory of knowledge

Methods and tools

How do different historiographical approaches, such as Indigenous and feminist interpretations, help uncover new insights about the revolution?

Indigenous populations

Among the most oppressed groups in Mexico before the revolution were Indigenous populations, such as the Comanche, Apache, Yoreme, Yaqui and Pima. Under the rule of Díaz, many had their ancestral land and homes stripped away, only to be given to foreign investors for industrial or





agricultural projects. Many families were then forced into captivity on large haciendas, where they faced economic exploitation and loss of their culture.

Despite this treatment, Indigenous communities played a significant role in the revolution, especially in southern Mexico in support of their champion, Emiliano Zapata. They supported his ideals of land reform and the return of community lands. Many joined his movement, fighting next to him, hoping to gain back their rights and land.

Zapata's ideas eventually made it into the 1917 Constitution. However, this document was carried out insufficiently in the following years, forcing many Indigenous communities to pick up where Zapata in his death had left off, fighting for their land, voices and rights in the post-revolutionary era.

ATL Approaches to learning

Self-management and social skills

Write a diary entry from the perspective of a marginalized individual mentioned in this section. Write about the challenges facing you, your motivations and your hopes for the future. Share your entry with the class.

Education policies

Before the revolution, schools throughout Mexico were run by the Catholic Church or regional governments, making them mainly accessible for the elite and wealthy. The various educational standards held by the different regional governments led to many inadequacies with devastating results such as an 80% illiteracy rate. For these reasons, education became a major concern for presidents in the post-revolutionary era.

Obregón and education

President Obregón established the Secretariat of Public Education (SPE) and appointed José Vasconcelos to be its First Minister. He was in charge of all public education: primary, secondary, as well as state colleges and universities. He also ended up developing a network of vocational schools to help teach adults new skills like farming, reading and writing. Vasconcelos believed that the Indigenous population was a hindrance to social and economic progress and needed to be educated and assimilated, so he had thousands of new schools built, mostly in rural areas to help change the life and culture of peasants and farmers. These schools taught the basics of education, hygiene and healthcare, the Spanish language and Mexican history and geography.

Vasconcelos also started a magazine called *El Maestro* to assist rural teachers in their instruction and content. He reprinted classics like Homer and Cervantes and had thousands taken to schools all over the nation, also supplying them with "readers" that helped people improve their reading. Vasconcelos also increased the number of libraries across the nation, giving people access to books to read. There were more than 1900 libraries by the time he left office. In opposition to the political beliefs of President Calles, he resigned in 1924.

Calles and education

This left the office open for Calles to appoint José Puig Casauranc to head of the SPE from 1924–1928. Casauranc was greatly persuaded by Under-Secretary Moisés Sáenz who, in turn, was influenced by John Dewey, who believed in educating through practical experiences. He combined this theory of education with his ideas to stress nationalism and Mexican history, focusing on the positive goals of the revolution.

Casauranc also wanted to expand rural schools and their access to education, which he did, but he also gave them access to gardens, orchards and animals to take care of in order to make their education more practical. With the expansion of rural schools, the number of teachers increased as well as regular student attendance.

His focus was also on the assimilation of Indigenous culture, teaching them Spanish and Mexican history. Schools under Casauranc became centres of their communities, offering classes in art, music and general health. He opened a small number of model primary schools in the capital so that other schools would have a model of effective teaching methods. Arguably his greatest contribution was the building of several central agricultural schools that came with 2500 acres of agricultural land where new farming techniques were taught alongside general schooling.

While Vasconcelos allowed Catholic schools to continue to operate independently, President Calles shut down all Catholic schools. This coincided with the Cristero War and caused major disruption to the student attendance that both Vasconcelos and Casauranc had built up.

Education in Mexico would struggle for a short time from 1928 to 1930, as the SEP saw four different ministers rotate through the office, leading to a lack of cohesion in expectations and hampering any significant progress. This changed when Narciso Bassols came to the SPE for the last years of the Maximato, from 1931 to 1934.

Bassols was a socialist and had the responsibility of carrying out Calles' socialist education plan to include science and technology in schools. Like those before him, his goal also focused on the rural population, wanting to educate the campesino population in the hope that they would increase agricultural output, thus improving their local economies. He published *El Maestro Rural*, which was a teaching magazine assisting teachers in their classrooms and a tool for communicating expectations to rural teachers and students. He also ensured the supply of better-prepared graduates of the Escuelas Normales, the teacher-training college to teach in schools.

Under Calles' socialist education plan, Bassols implemented a sex education curriculum that met stiff opposition in most places, especially in rural communities. With their parents' consent and encouragement, the students protested against the curriculum. They saw it as unnecessary and it clashed with their religion and traditions. Teachers also began to protest and oppose Bassols when he wanted to begin to assess teachers. Facing such stiff opposition from students and teachers, Bassols resigned.

Cárdenas and education

Cárdenas came into office and appointed a new SPE leader, Gonzalo Vázquez Vela, who ran the office until 1940, throughout Cárdenas' tenure as president. Vázquez Vela was given an increased budget of nearly 15% of the total national budget. With that, he focused his attention, like those before him, on the rural population, especially after the disturbances of the Cristero War. He would oversee the construction of more than 4000 rural schools and increase student enrolment by more than 50%. Vázquez Vela added to the common theme of the SPE, assimilating the Indigenous population through education to make them more productive for the overall community and nation. See Table 1.3 for a comparison of the three presidents' education policies.



Reference

For more on Cárdenas' tenure, refer to Section 1.4: Achievements and challenges of the post-revolutionary state (1920–1940).

Aspect	Obregón & Vasconcelos	Calles & Casauranc	Cárdenas & Vázquez Vela
Educational philosophy	Assimilation of Indigenous people through education	Practical, experience-based learning influenced by John Dewey	Focused on rural education and post-Cristero War stability
Key initiatives	Built thousands of rural schools, promoted literacy, distributed classic literature	Expanded rural schools, introduced agricultural education, promoted nationalism	Oversaw more than 4000 new rural schools, increased student enrolment by 50%
Role of the Catholic Church	Allowed Catholic schools to operate	Shut down Catholic schools, leading to student disruptions	Continued secular (non-religious) education but focused on national unity
Support for teachers	Published <i>El Maestro</i> for teacher guidance	Expanded teacher training and increased rural teachers	Increased national education budget by 15% to support educators
Community impact	Schools provided basic education, hygiene and Spanish language tuition	Schools became community centres offering art, music and health education	Strengthened Indigenous assimilation and aimed to make education a tool for economic development
Challenges	Needed to build a national education system from scratch	Faced backlash for closing Catholic schools and introducing sex education policies	Had to rebuild education post-Cristero War and expand rural access

▲ Table 1.3 Comparison of the three education policies

Culture and the arts

Art: The muralist movement

The revolution sparked a burst of creative thought that manifested itself in images of Mexican history, experiences, traditions, culture, nationalism and the future. This creativity was best portrayed through the muralist movement, sometimes known as the Mexican Renaissance, led by *Los Tres Grandes* (The Three Great Ones): José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros. These artists tried to define a new post-revolutionary Mexico through their art, in the hope of educating the illiterate population to instill pride in the past and yet focus on the realities of the present day. Their murals were large public displays so that many people could see them. They used Mexican culture, revolution and nationalism as their influences.

In 1922, SPE minister Vasconcelos recruited Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros to paint large communal mural projects to instill nationalism and give their analyses of the revolution and its influence on Mexico's current state. Vasconcelos gave them their first job—painting murals at the National Preparatory School in Mexico City—and it was here that the three established the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors. The group created a paper called *El Machete*, which became the official paper of the Mexican Communist Party—all three of the muralists were communists to varying degrees. Their works included communist symbols through highlighting Mexican history and the daily struggles of the people.

Diego Rivera

Diego Rivera was touring Europe, gathering inspiration and ideas from frescoes, when Vasconcelos recruited him, asking him to return home and use his art in public



Discussion

In what ways did the revolution affect education?

spaces for the betterment of Mexico. After returning and touring the Yucatán he received his first job under Vasconcelos—a painting at the National Preparatory School. Here, he painted his first large-scale mural called *Creation*, showing the nature of arts and sciences. The students at the school were not used to such progressive ideas and art, so they were offended and tried to destroy the piece. He eventually finished within a year but was unhappy with the heavy European influence in it and wanted to include more Mexican ideals and influences in future pieces.

He completed other works at the SPE headquarters, the National School of Agriculture, the National Palace and the Cortés Palace in Cuernavaca under such titles as *Life of Zapata*, *The Rural Teacher*, *The Liberated Earth*, *Natural Forces Controlled by Humanity*, *Epic of the Mexican People* and *The Liberation of the Peon*. They all portrayed the glories and injustices of the revolution and of Mexico through the peasants, Indigenous population and revolutionary events. He worked hard to reflect Mexican social life as he interpreted it.

In the early 1930s, while in exile in the United States, he created several works, most notably for the Museum of Modern Art and the Rockefeller Center in New York. The pieces reflected the social abundances of the 1920s in the United States, while also showing the contradictions he saw in capitalism (see Figure 1.21). His use of communist symbols got him fired and his piece at the Rockefeller Center was destroyed when he refused to change it. He would later return to Mexico to produce more works of art.

Diego Rivera created a visual narrative celebrating both the struggles and triumphs of the Mexican people. His murals articulated revolutionary ideals, the lives of peasants, workers, indigenous communities and the inequalities and injustices facing them. His blend of Mexican tradition with modern art techniques echoed the revolution's social and political goals of moving forward as a country while holding onto a powerful cultural identity. His critiques of capitalism in his US pieces, spoke to global social justice and the revolution's larger concept of equality. Rivera very much used his art to not only inspire pride to recommit to the ideals of the revolution, but they were also a call to action and resistance.



▲ **Figure 1.21** Ford River Rouge car factory workmen depicted in a mural by Diego Rivera (1933), which is at the Detroit Institute of Art

José Orozco

Orozco began his career as a cartoonist in the press during the revolution. He saw the horrors of it—not only death, but also the dishonesty and deceitfulness of the generals and politicians in getting more for themselves at the expense of the masses. His paintings reflected much of this through tragic images of human imperfection that evoke sadness and pity in their viewers (see Figure 1.22).

He was employed to do his first work at the National Preparatory Academy, and like Rivera's mural, his two murals, *Reactionary Forces* and *Christ Destroys His Cross*—the latter showing Christ destroying his cross because he was not happy with what people had become—were not widely accepted and were nearly destroyed by the students. He completed several other murals, *The Trench*, *Cores and Malinche*, *Omniscience*, *The Destruction of the Old Order*, *The Strike* and *The Rich Banquet While the Workers Fight*, before leaving for the United States.

Like the other two muralists, he spent the beginning of the 1930s in the United States painting murals. He did several works in California, New York and Dartmouth College. In these, he proudly displayed the history of Mexico but also his critique of what he saw as the deception of capitalism. Later, he returned to Mexico to do some of his most famous pieces: *Man on Fire*, *Political and Ideological Exploitation* and *Hidalgo*. These increasingly focused on Mexico's culture and proud history but also the unreliability of humans and how it led to greed and the exploitation of others.

José Orozco's art portrayed the complexities of human nature and the reality of conflict. He used his art to critique the violence and corruption of revolutionary leaders and the human imperfections that allowed greed and exploitation to take place. In portraying these moral struggles of the revolution, he invited his audience to confront the painful truths about Mexican society and the romanticized notions of the revolution. Through his art, viewers were challenged to think that maybe the revolution had failed: it negatively impacted the people; it had shortcomings they may not have seen yet; and there is always a need for accountability in both politics and society.

David Alfaro Siqueiros

Siqueiros was a muralist, but with a very different background and social agenda than the others. He was a revolutionary soldier who had fought and witnessed the tragedies of the revolution and became a political activist. He found himself exiled from Mexico and in prison for his political activities on several different occasions. He spent time in Europe learning from the French and Italian influences and even spent time with Rivera in Italy.

He was contracted to paint his first mural for Mexico under Vasconcelos at the National Preparatory School, just as the other two had. His mural *Burial of a Martyred Worker* showed the oppression of Mexican labour juxtaposed with the freedom of death. The students tried to destroy the work as they had Rivera's and Orozco's.

After this, he was forced to leave Mexico because of his political activities and went to the United States where he was contracted to paint, mainly in California. He created two large murals, *America Tropical* and *Workers Meeting*, both of which critiqued American imperialism and capitalist oppression and displayed unions, interracial relations and racial unity, none of which were widely accepted in the United States at that time. Subsequently, both murals were covered and destroyed, and his work visa was not renewed.

ATL Approaches to learning

Thinking and communication skills

Using the IB Learner Profile, evaluate Diego Rivera on LP areas of strength and areas of needed growth. Then, discuss with your group how he became successful because of his strengths and despite his areas of growth.

Reference

For more murals by Rivera, see Figures 1.12 and 1.16.



▲ Figure 1.22 *Zapatistas Marching* by José Orozco

Theory of knowledge

Scope

How do the works of revolutionary muralists expand the scope of historical understanding by offering a visual narrative of the Mexican Revolution? What limitations might these artistic interpretations have in portraying the era's complexities?

ATL Approaches to learning

Thinking and communication skills

Using the IB Learner Profile in the Introduction, evaluate David Siqueiros on LP areas of strength and areas of needed growth. Then, discuss with your group how he became successful because of his strengths and despite his areas of growth.

ATL Approaches to learning

Research and social skills

Examine a revolution-inspired artwork. Analyse the work's themes and context, and identify any aspects of culture from the past and any cultural aspects that are aspirational or have changed. Swap your ideas with someone else in your class who has chosen a different artwork.

Discussion

Muralists shared their perceptions, realities and knowledge of the revolution through their art.

1. In what ways did the arts help others understand the history of the revolution?
2. In what ways did muralists use culture to understand the revolution and portray it in their murals?

Key term

Corridos: Mexican folk ballads that narrate historical events, social struggles and heroism, like Villa and Zapata's actions. They were often used as oral history to share stories of revolution, rebellion and resistance.

From here, he left for South America, where he started to develop the processes and techniques that would make him famous. He believed in continual experimentation with different techniques and new technologies.

He returned to Mexico in 1939 at the end of Cárdenas' tenure in office and painted *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie*, a visual struggle between the evils of fascism and democracy. Siqueiros created works that were full of political and social content, which later in his career included the struggle against emerging fascism.

David Siqueiros' murals were always a powerful voice for the marginalized and oppressed (see Figure 1.23). His art was ingrained with political activism, showing labour exploitation, critiquing imperialism and celebrating racial unity. Through his works, he forced audiences to question systemic injustices, inspired oppressed labourers to unite and continued the cultural legacy of the Mexican Revolution.

Music

Music during and after the revolution very much reflected the ideals and sacrifices made by the soldiers and their loved ones during the fighting. Musicians used the various ideas and themes of the revolution and coupled them with the new emergence of mass media after the revolution, namely radio and production.

During the revolution brass bands followed the armies, reflecting the regional traditions of music and instruments. Music and dancing were a significant component in the revolutionary armies as they would play music after wins, losses and even during battles to motivate the soldiers.

Corridos, or Mexican ballads, were around before the revolution but their association with the fighting brought them to the forefront. They incorporated simple language and became a communication tool to share stories and news of the revolution throughout the country. These narratives of social events were sung by soldiers around the fire at night—and usually had political undertones, themes of land reform, nationalism and women as a romantic theme. They used authentic and traditional musical instruments to accompany the songs.

The revolution certainly popularized this style of music (see Figure 1.24), but when it ended and technology entered the world of music, it all started to change. Styles started to change in the 1920s and 1930s. Girls started to cut their hair short, raised their skirt lengths and discovered the dance floor. This type of girl was known as "*Chica Moderna*", the modern girl.



▲ Figure 1.23 *Del Porfiriismo a la Revolución* by David Siqueiros

The radio was now delivering music to almost everyone across the nation and recording studios started to refine the sound quality. Radio stations not only helped the popularity of songs, artists and types of music but also helped foster a night life among young professionals, hence the *Chica Moderna*.

Mariachi was traditional rural music that used only stringed instruments and the voice. In the 1930s, it gained national popularity. The mariachi bands began to tour the country, and even the United States. A mariachi band accompanied President Cárdenas across Mexico on his campaign tour. The mariachis soon adopted trumpets because of the influence of big band music in the United States.

Music helped heal a torn nation during and after the revolution. It was a way for opposing groups to meet on common ground. Much of the music development was pushed by technology, which improved the style, sound and delivery, but Mexico's most famous music stems from the influence of the revolution.

Literature

A new literary genre emerged from the revolution known as "Novels of the Revolution". This genre included hundreds of novels by as many authors who were inspired by the events of the revolution. One of the most famous authors of this genre is Mariano Azuela. He was a doctor during the revolution and saw many of the tragedies that took place. He wrote *The Underdogs*, one of the first and most popular stories of its time.

Most of the novels, like Azuela's, are based on the revolution and real events. They are often dark, showing the loss and disorder that took place, but also trying to show the heroic side of the revolution. Other novels in this genre are: *They Gave Us the Land* by Juan Rulfo, *The Edge of the Storm* by Agustín Yáñez, *The Shadow of the Caudillo* by Martín Luis Guzmán. Nellie Campobello wrote titles including *Cartucho* and *Notes on the Military Life of Francisco Villa*.

A later generation also wrote stories based on the events from the revolution, like Carlos Fuentes' *The Old Gringo*. This literature was a reflection of, and was inspired by, the events of the Mexican Revolution. While it was very much intended to bring people's attention to the dark but very real side of the revolution, it also revealed the authentic source of nationalistic pride the revolution inspired.



▲ **Figure 1.24** Folk musicians in Mexico, around the time of the revolution

Reference

For more on Nellie Campobello, refer to the Using sources box in Section 1.6: Impact of the revolution.

Exam-style questions

1. "The arts played a significant role in uniting a deeply divided society after the revolution." To what extent do you agree with this claim?
2. Historians argue that the social reforms of the Mexican Revolution fell short of addressing systemic poverty and inequality. To what extent do you agree with this?
3. To what extent do you agree with the argument that "The participation of women in the Mexican Revolution challenged traditional gender roles but failed to bring lasting change"?
4. "The experiences of marginalized groups during the Mexican Revolution highlight the limits of revolutionary ideals." To what extent do you agree with this claim?

Evaluating arguments

"The Mexican Revolution inspired a cultural renaissance that redefined Mexican national identity." To what extent do you agree with this statement?