



# CULTUREGUIDE GUATEMALA

SERIES 1  
PRIMARY (K–6)



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY  
**KENNEDY CENTER**  
FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# GUATEMALA CULTUREGUIDE

This unit is published by the International Outreach Program of the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies at Brigham Young University as part of an effort to foster open cultural exchange within the educational community and to promote increased global understanding by providing meaningful cultural education tools.

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# WHY STUDY CULTURES?

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For most of us, cultures are misunderstood; they are nebulous, vague, and hidden. Like the famous iceberg analogy, we know that most of what a culture is cannot be seen. But what does that mean? And why, then, should we study cultures if we do not know what we're studying in the first place?

In the late twentieth century, Brigham Young University did not embrace a new discipline, but rather a new area of study—the study of cultures. Typically, anthropology is the social science that studies cultures. Why should they have all the fun? The study of cultures unites other academic disciplines (as needed), drawing upon literature, political science, sociology, and even the more applied areas of nursing, social work, law, and business. The study of cultures has grown into nothing short of a revolt against disciplines, “a mode of inquiry” that looks at things in new ways.<sup>1</sup>

In 1982, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies established International Outreach as a formal program to help build bridges of intercultural understanding. Since then, more than 10,000 *gratis* cultural presentations have been given to local area public schools, taking students to new places using language, multimedia, and imagination. *CultureGuides* derive from the same expertise that has been honed in classrooms—with the exciting exception that these intercultural learning tools are not geographically bound. Thanks to the Internet, accessible multimedia technology, and our trusty iMAC, a limitless audience can learn about different cultures.

Globalization, the driving paradigm of the post-Cold War world, means that now, more than ever, culture matters. Culture is the invisible context that may keep us from understanding important people, places, and ideas; it exists whether or not we think about it. Intercultural education can help us, not only as an intellectual exercise, but also in very practical ways to combat racism, to expand business, and to communicate effectively.

*CultureGuides* share the same aim as Edward T. Hall, the eminent cultural scholar, to try and “make culture real.”<sup>2</sup> Even though our “student guides” are not present in every classroom, we hope that *CultureGuides* will make classrooms of the mind and cultural laboratories wherever you may reside.

<sup>1</sup> Ziauddin Sardar and Borin Van Loon. *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Totem Books, New York: 1998.

<sup>2</sup> *The Edge: The E-Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Summer 1998, Vol. 1(3) Posted 10/11/98, <http://interculturalrelations.com/v1i3Summer1998/sum98sorrellshall.htm>.

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# TRADITIONS

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## THE FESTIVAL OF FIREBALLS IN SENAHU

*Bolas de Fuego*, meaning fireballs, is a holiday the K'ek'chi and Ladino people of Senahu have been celebrating for years. It takes place during the days leading up to Christmas, and involves throwing fireballs at other members of the city. Today, few of the people who participate actually know the history or significance of the holiday. *Bolas de Fuego* stems from a synthesis of Mayan and Catholic traditions originally celebrated as a means of scaring evil spirits out of town.



### Starting Points

1. On a map, ask students to locate the city of Senahu. Tell them that in this city, the people celebrate a special holiday by throwing fireballs at one another.
2. Why do we have traditions? What are some of the traditions that Americans have? Why do you think that the Guatemalans continue to play the fireball game?
3. Halloween originated from people dressing up to scare evil spirits away. In what ways have people of other countries tried to scare away evil spirits? Tell the students that the Guatemalans have a tradition of throwing fireballs at one another to scare evil spirits away.



### Information

#### History of the Festival

To understand *Bolas de Fuego*, it is important to understand the Mayan calendar. The Mayan calendar was fundamentally different from the Gregorian calendar we use today. The Gregorian calendar is based on fifty-two seven-day weeks that comprise 365 days per year, with an extra day every four years. The Mayan calendar was based on eighteen twenty-day weeks, providing 360 days per year. At the end of this calendar, there was an extra month with only five days. Anciently, these five days, known as the month of *Wayeb*, did not have names and were considered unlucky. During the five unlucky days, people would begin a process of purification. Purification was achieved through the destruction of buildings, ornate objects, and carvings. The Mayan tradition has since been synthesized with Catholic traditions to create the holiday *Bolas de Fuego*, which is celebrated during the second week in December. It was once believed that the evil spirits who might be in the city would leave when people threw fireballs.

Each night of the week preceding *Bolas de Fuego*, mass is held. As night falls, activities begin in the great Catholic church that stands to the west of the city square. Music permeates the church walls and people standing in the square can hear the beat. After dark, people light fireworks. In anticipation, the crowd will

begin to quietly chant “fireballs, fireballs, fireballs.” Four teams then cart thousands of pre-made fireballs to the four corners of the city square. The fireballs are made from sponge-like material soaked in diesel fuel. When the first fireballs are lit, total chaos erupts (see **Traditions Visual 1**). People kick the fireballs along the ground until they see someone they want to hit. People are struck in the neck, face, and back. The fireballs burn quickly, however, and the skin is usually unharmed.

Most citizens of Senahu don’t know the history behind Bolas de Fuego. If asked why they play the game, a typical response is, “We play because it is what our parents played and what our grandparents played.” Bolas de Fuego is considered an essential holiday in Guatemala.



### Activities

1. With small paper balls, have the students play a game of fireballs. Have them divide into the four corners of the room and chant, “fireballs, fireballs, fireballs” or “bolas de fuego,” before they begin.
2. Have the students create their own holiday. Have them write down how this holiday originated and what games will be played during the holiday.
3. Have the students draw pictures of what they think Bolas de Fuego might look like in Guatemala.
4. Practice saying “bolas de fuego.”



### Discussion Questions

1. Does Bolas de Fuego seem like a dangerous holiday to you? Why do you think people still play it? Do we have any dangerous traditions associated with holidays in America?
2. Does Bolas de Fuego seem like an unusual holiday to you? Why? Can you think of any American holidays that might seem unusual to someone unfamiliar with these holidays?
3. What are some holiday traditions we share with other countries?

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# FOLKLORE & LANGUAGE

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## THE MAYAN KING AND THE VULTURE

Guatemalan folklore comprises a range of traditional customs, tales, sayings, dances, and art forms that have been preserved by the Mayan people. The people use tales from their heritage to explain current circumstances.



### Starting Points

1. To understand the following Guatemalan myth, it is important to know that in the K'ek'chi language, the word used for blessing is also the word used for cursing. This word is *osobtesinquit* (o sobte sin kil). For the K'ek'chi, there is both good and bad in the *osobtesinquit* that are given.
2. What is your favorite folklore tale? Is there an underlying message the story reveals about your culture?
3. What makes folklore intriguing?



### Information

#### The Mayan King and the Vulture Myth

The following is a myth that was told by Roberto Choc, a K'ek'chi Indian from Telemán. It contains mythical elements typical of most folklore and describes the origins of the Indian and Latin people of Guatemala.

One day, the Mayan king was working on his plot of land tending corn. As he toiled under the heat, the sweat dripped down his body. During a short break, he glanced up and noticed a buzzard lazily flying around his head. The king called to the buzzard and asked him to land so they could talk. When the buzzard landed, the king accused him of having an easy life and being able to fly around all day while the king had to toil under the hot sun so his corn would grow properly.

The buzzard and the king agreed to change positions. The king removed his clothing and handed them to the buzzard, who removed his feathers and gave them to the king. The king took flight and circled about as the buzzard began toiling in the field. As noon approached, the king's wife came to the buzzard with tortillas and beans for lunch. The wife noticed no difference in her husband, so the buzzard ate peacefully. After the buzzard finished with his work in the field, he returned home to the king's wife and lived as the king had. Years passed by like this.

At first, the king enjoyed his life as a buzzard. He spent his time flying about, enjoying the landscape. However, in time, he grew bored with the idea of being a buzzard. Everyday was the same, flying around watching the scenery or searching for animals to feed on.

The king returned to his home and landed next to the buzzard who was busy weeding the soil. The king told the buzzard that he liked being a buzzard, but that he wanted to return to his old life. The buzzard removed his clothing and returned it to the king and the king removed his feathers and returned them to the buzzard. He began working in his field just as he had done before he wore the feathers of the vulture. At mid-day, his wife came to the field to bring him his tortillas and beans. She noticed no difference in how the king looked or acted. After the work in the field was done, the king returned to his home.

In his home, the king found many more children than had been there when he left. He knew that the vulture was their father and he grew enraged by this thought. He left his home and went to the cantina in town to drink as much beer as possible. After drinking for a long time, he left, but he was so drunk that he was unable to walk and fell in a ditch alongside the road.

After some time, his wife passed him in the street. She noticed him in the ditch but paid no attention to him. Later, the king's own children passed by and noticed their drunken father had fallen in the ditch, yet they left him as he was. Finally, the vulture's children passed by and noticed the king had fallen down in the ditch and could not get out. They took pity on the drunk Mayan king, helped him out of the ditch, and carried him home.

As the king grew older and nearer to death, he desired to give his children an *osobtesinquit*. He blessed and cursed his children that they would have the strength to work in the cornfields and perform the manual labor that was required of them. He blessed and cursed them that they would eat corn and beans under the hot sun forever. To the children of the vulture, he gave the blessing and cursing that they would work in offices and eat meat at their meals.

Today, the Latin people of Guatemala are believed to be the ancestors of the vulture's children. They are the ones who work in the administrative positions. Work, for them, does not involve manual labor, but rather, analytical tasks. They are able to afford luxuries such as meat for their meals, just as the blessing and cursing by the Mayan king said. The blessing and cursing gave the Latin people a superior position to that of the Indians. The children of the vulture are a mix of Mayan and vulture descent.

The Mayan king's children, on the other hand, are now the Indians of Guatemala. Their positions carry a lesser status than the Latin people. They work the fields, sweating underneath the hot sun to plant, care for, and reap the corn they eat. They are not able to afford meat, and beans are part of every meal. The pureness of their race is retained because they are descendants of a Mayan mother and father.

One important aspect of this myth involves the exchange of clothing. In the story, the Mayan wife was unable to detect any differences between the buzzard and the king when they wore each other's' clothes or feathers. This signifies that the difference between the people of Guatemala is not detectable by skin color. During the beginning of the twentieth century, the Indian people of Guatemala wore special clothing representative of their hometown and the Latin people wore clothing reflecting their culture. Based on skin color alone, it would have been impossible to distinguish between a Ladino and an Indian person.



## Activities

1. Invent a myth about your heritage.
2. What are some stories we know from other cultures? Have the students relate some of these tales and then discuss meanings apparent in them.
3. Color the picture of the Mayan king and the vulture (see **Folklore & Language Visual 1**), or draw your own picture.
4. Act out the parts of the myth of *The Mayan King and the Vulture*. Have half of the class play the children of the Mayan king and the other half play the children of the vulture and give the different blessings and cursings to each group.



## Discussion Questions

1. How might the myth *The Mayan King and the Vulture* reflect and affect the Guatemalans' perceptions of themselves? What myths do we have in our culture? How do they affect our self-perceptions?
2. Most American fairy tales end happily. Does the myth *The Mayan King and the Vulture* have a happy ending? Explain. Why do you think the myth ended the way it did?
3. Do you find it interesting that the word *osobtesinquit* means both a blessing and a cursing in the K'ek'chi language? How were the *osobtesinquiles* the king gave to each of his children both blessings and cursings?

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# FOOD

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF CORN

Food is intrinsically linked to corn for the K'ek'chi people. The K'ek'chi verb “to eat” or *cua'ac*, literally means, “to eat tortillas.” Every meal is accompanied by a substantial amount of tortillas. A typical meal includes a cup of coffee, or *quem ha*, which is dough water, with a small portion of beans. The beans are extremely salty and spicy, as they are meant to be eaten with many tortillas.



### Starting Points

1. Many foods eaten by Guatemalans are found in the United States. Some of these include beans, tortillas, rice, coffee, and hot chili peppers. Which of these foods do you like best?
2. What do we eat most in the United States? Why is it we eat more of these foods than others during meals?
3. Do we believe certain foods will give us more strength than others? Think about what parents say about processed foods like candy and chips. Is it better to eat vegetables and grains or sweets?



### Information

#### Corn in Guatemala

Few food items carry as much importance for American people as corn does for the indigenous people of Guatemala. For the K'ek'chi Indians, corn is life. Corn is the most common motif found in Mayan hieroglyphs. The cornstalk symbolizes life, power, and the ability to survive. It is seen in the headdresses of the war captains, exhibiting power. It is seen growing out of the stomachs of fallen warriors, symbolizing rebirth.

According to Mayan scripture, corn is the substance the Mayan gods used to create the first man. The book *Popol Vuh* tells this story. The Mayan gods first tried to make a man from wood, but their creations lacked mind, soul, and religious conviction. The gods' last resort was to make man from corn. Their creations of corn-made humans became the indigenous people of Guatemala.

The K'ek'chi also believe that corn contains healing powers. They believe that when a person eats corn, the moisture becomes a bodily fluid that runs through the veins and arteries. This corn moisture makes it possible for the body to produce perspiration. Because the K'ek'chi believe perspiring rids the body of impurities, consuming plenty of corn will fill the body with enough perspiration to excrete disease.

Corn may be prepared for consumption in many ways. Various types include the fol-

lowing: *po'ock*, a boiled lump of corn wrapped in banana leaves; *cua*, which is identical to a tortilla; *sapo'och*, sweetened corn boiled in banana leaves with baking powder for a lighter texture; and *tamales*, a mixture of corn boiled in banana leaves. Tamales have a small portion of meat, such as chicken, pork, or beef, inside and a smooth texture outside, created with a generous amount of corn oil.

Each of these food items is eaten throughout the year, but each is also used for a specific purpose. Because of its compact nature, *sa po'och* is often used for long bus rides or trips to the field. It can be eaten and rewrapped and stored for later use. *Cua* is eaten at every meal in the house. Sweetened *po'och*, leavened with baking powder, is a traditional part of Christmas, Easter, and some Catholic celebrations. Tamales are also used during celebrations, such as Christmas and birthdays.

Although *cua* is eaten by the indigenous peoples at every meal, it is eaten in different amounts depending on the status of the family. Poor people eat as much food as wealthy people, but they eat more *cua* in proportion to the rest of their food. Because the wealthy can afford more meat and beans, they eat little *cua*.

The indigenous work ethic is manifest in the K'ek'chi's care for corn. They believe that hard work is essential to a righteous life and is a sign of prosperity. Great importance is placed on raising the corn crop every year. The men toil daily in their fields to eliminate and keep thieves away. Corn is the staple for their families and society; without corn, the K'ek'chi culture would cease to exist.

### **Recipe for Corn Tortillas**

#### **You will need:**

- 3 1/2 C masa harina (corn flour)
- 2 1/4 C water

#### **Preparation**

1. In a bowl, stir together masa harina and water until well blended.
2. Place dough on a clean surface and knead until flexible. Add more masa harina if the dough is too sticky, and add water if it begins to dry out.
3. Cover dough tightly with plastic wrap and allow to stand for thirty minutes. Preheat a cast iron skillet or griddle to medium-high heat.
4. Divide dough into thirty equal-sized balls.
5. Using a rolling pin, or your hands, press each ball of dough flat between two sheets of plastic wrap.
6. Place tortilla in preheated pan and allow to cook for about thirty seconds or until browned and slightly puffy.
7. Turn tortilla over to brown on the other side for thirty seconds more, then transfer to a plate.
8. Repeat with each ball of dough.
9. Keep tortillas covered with a towel to stay warm until they are ready to serve.

## Recipe for Frijoles Negros Volteados (Fried Black Bean Paste)

### You will need:

- 2 C black bean puree (refried black beans, canned)
- 1 T oil

### Preparation

1. Heat oil over medium heat in skillet.
2. Add bean puree and mix well with wooden spoon.
3. Stir until puree thickens and liquid evaporates.
4. Continue until mix begins to come away from the skillet and can be formed, by shaking the skillet, to make a sausage shape.
5. Serve warm with tortillas, farmer's cheese, or sour cream.



## Activities

1. Give a few kernels of corn to each student to plant.
2. Make corn tortillas as a class using the provided recipe (see **Food Visuals 1–2**).
3. Have the students eat what the poorest of Guatemalan people eat, tortillas and black beans. Use the recipe provided for authentic black beans.



## Discussion Questions

1. How do the K'ek'chi get their protein if they eat little or no meat? Explain that because they mix their corn and beans, they are able to form a complete protein and gain most of the vitamins and minerals they need to survive.
2. From what has been discussed, why do you think the people are so careful with their crops?
3. Where do you think the people typically grow corn? Why? Discuss how corn is usually grown on the sides of hills or steep ravines because large plantations that produce export crops need flatter land for harvesting machines (see **Food Visual 3**).
4. What would it be like to eat tortillas for every meal of the day? Do you think Guatemalans like it? Do you think you would like it? Why do they eat tortillas every day?

# CROSS-CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

## MAYAN TECHNOLOGY

Within the jungles of Guatemala and the Yucatan peninsula lie many Mayan temples and palaces. While Europe stagnated during the Dark Ages, the Maya charted the heavens. The Maya also developed a calendar, a system for writing, and a system of numbers. Though they had no metal tools, they constructed cities with magnificent architectural forms. Many of the ancient edifices have survived in places such as Palenque, Tikal, Tulum, Chichen Itza, and Uxmal.



### Starting Points

1. What are some technological advances we use now that were developed long ago?
2. What are the benefits we enjoy from technology? How would our lives be different if we did not have these technologies?
3. What contributions did the Maya provide to science?



### Information

#### Mayan Number System

The Maya were an advanced society that developed complex social structures to support their system of life. Their greatest advances were in architecture, mathematics, and astronomy. The Maya were especially fascinated by astronomical occurrences that could be recorded with their calendar. They also developed an extensive system of numbers.

The Mayan number system was based on units of twenty instead of the ten used in the American system. Our ten-based system contains ten different symbols; the Mayan number system has only three (see **Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1**).

Pictured below is how Mayan math would appear:

$$\begin{array}{c} \bullet \\ \hline \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \\ \hline \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \\ \hline \hline \end{array}$$

Our equivalent:  $6 + 8 = 14$

#### Mayan Calendars

The Maya kept track of time with a system of three different calendars. One calendar, known as the long-count calendar, displayed the total number of days that had passed since the Mayan date of *sero* in 3114 B.C.E. Because the base number in Mayan mathematics was twenty, the year consisted of 360 days. The following terms describe amounts of time on the long-count calendar:

### Number of Days/Term

- 1 = 1 *Kin* (or one day)
- 20 Kins = 1 *Uinal* (or 20 days)
- 18 Uinals = 1 *Tun* (or 360 days)
- 20 Tuns = 1 *Katun* (or 7,200 days)
- 20 Katuns = 1 *Baktun* (or 144,000 days)

### Day Names of the Solar Calendar

Our calendar is based on the sun. Rotations of the earth around the sun are known as years. Many years ago, the cycles of the moon were known as months, but with the rise of Christianity, months and lunar cycles no longer coincided. The ritual Mayan calendar, on the other hand, combined several cycles to track the movements of the sun, the moon, and Venus. This ritual calendar, known as *Tzolkin*, had 260 days. This calendar included the numbers one through thirteen with twenty day names, similar to our matching of days and weeks. The Maya also had a solar calendar that was called the *Haab*. This calendar had eighteen months, each with twenty days. The days of the month were numbered from zero to nineteen. Having a day correlate with zero was unique to the Mayan calendar. It was believed that the Maya learned about the power of the number zero long before Europe or China. The names of the days are as follows:

0. <i>Ahau</i>	5. <i>Chicchan</i>	10. <i>Oc</i>	15. <i>Men</i>
1. <i>Imix</i>	6. <i>Cimi</i>	11. <i>Chuen</i>	16. <i>Cib</i>
2. <i>Ik'</i>	7. <i>Manik</i>	12. <i>Eb</i>	17. <i>Caban</i>
3. <i>Ak'bal</i>	8. <i>Lamat</i>	13. <i>Ben</i>	18. <i>Eznab</i>
4. <i>K'an</i>	9. <i>Muluc</i>	14. <i>Ix</i>	19. <i>Caunac</i>

### Month Names of the Solar Calendar

To accommodate the five remaining days, a nineteenth month was created. This month, known as *Wayeb*, was considered to be a very dangerous time because the days had no names and were believed to have no souls. No fires would be lit during this time, and much mourning took place. The names of the months are as follows:

1. <i>Pop</i>	6. <i>Xul</i>	11. <i>Zac</i>	16. <i>Pax</i>
2. <i>Uo</i>	7. <i>Yaxkin</i>	12. <i>Ceh</i>	17. <i>Kayab</i>
3. <i>Zip</i>	8. <i>Mol</i>	13. <i>Mac</i>	18. <i>Cumku</i>
4. <i>Zotz</i>	9. <i>Chen</i>	14. <i>Kankin</i>	19. <i>Wayeb</i> (month
5. <i>Tzec</i>	10. <i>Yax</i>	15. <i>Muan</i>	of five days)

Each day was identified by its day name and month name. Arranging days with months determined the luck of certain days. For example, if a lucky day occurred during a month of unluckiness, one could expect a normal day. If an unlucky day corresponded to an unlucky month, there would be cause to worry. Like modern horoscopes, the Mayan calendars were used to predict the future.

### Mayan Pyramids

Pyramids were an essential part of indigenous Mayan religion. There were two types of pyramids: climbable and unclimbable. Both types were constructed from stone blocks and lime mortar. The climbable pyramids were used to perform sacrifices and

spiritual rituals. They were especially steep, with tall, narrow staircases. Their height drew attention to the rituals performed in the temple chamber at the top. Crowds would gather at the base, but only priests, in an effort to draw closer to the gods, were allowed to climb the stairs. The unclimbable pyramids were untouched because of their sacred nature. They were even steeper than the sacrificial temples.

Aside from serving as religious buildings, Mayan pyramids served other purposes. Because of their height, they served as visual landmarks for the Mayans as they traveled. Some of the Mayan temples served as burial tombs for Mayan kings. Small burial chambers located within the pyramids housed the remains of the dead kings. Inside, murals were painted on the walls, and treasures were left for the dead.



### Activities

1. Attempt to solve a few of the math problems using the Mayan Math Quiz (see **Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 2**).
2. Draw a picture of a Mayan temple. Describe what type of treasure might be found inside.
3. Learn to count as the ancient Maya did. Say the numbers aloud together (see **Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 3**).
4. Make pyramids using classroom materials.



### Discussion Questions

1. The Mayan temples are similar in style and function to Egyptian temples. Brainstorm possible reasons for this similarity.
2. Discuss the benefits or problems with a number system that is based on the number twenty. How would multiplication and division work in a number system of twenty?
3. What would it be like to track time on three different calendars? Do you think the Mayan people have three different birthdays each year?

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# FACTS ABOUT GUATEMALA

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**Official Name:** Republic of Guatemala

**Capital:** Guatemala City

**Government Type:** constitutional democratic republic

**Area:** 108,890 sq km

**Land Boundaries:** Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico

**Climate:** tropical, hot, humid in lowlands; cooler in highlands

**Lowest Point:** Pacific Ocean 0 m

**Highest Point:** Volcan Tajumulco 4,211 m

**Natural Resources:** petroleum, nickel, rare woods, fish, chicle, hydropower

**Natural Hazards:** numerous volcanoes in mountains, with occasional violent earthquakes; Caribbean coast subject to hurricanes and other tropical storms

**Population:** 13,314,079 (July 2002 est.)

**Ethnic Groups:** Mestizo (mixed Amerindian-Spanish or assimilated Amerindian—in local Spanish called *Ladino*), approximately 55%, Amerindian or predominantly Amerindian, approximately 43%, whites and others, 2%.

**Religions:** Roman Catholic, Protestant, indigenous Mayan beliefs

**Languages:** Spanish, 60%, Amerindian languages, 40% (more than twenty Amerindian languages, including Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, Mam, Garifuna, and Xinca)

**GDP:** \$48.3 billion (2001 est.)

**GDP Per Capita:** \$3,700 (2001 est.)

**GDP Composition By Sector:** agriculture 23%, industry 20%, services 57% (2000 est.)

**Labor Force:** 4.2 million (1999 est.)

**Unemployment Rate:** 7.5% (1999 est.)

**Industries:** sugar, textiles and clothing, furniture, chemicals, petroleum, metals, rubber, tourism

**Agricultural Products:** sugarcane, corn, bananas, coffee, beans, cardamom; cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens

**Exports:** \$2.9 billion (f.o.b., 2001) coffee, sugar, bananas, fruits and vegetables, cardamom, meat, apparel, petroleum, electricity

**Imports:** \$4.9 billion (f.o.b. 2001) fuels, machinery and transport equipment, construction materials, grain, fertilizers, electricity

**Trade Partners:** U.S., El Salvador, Honduras, Japan, Costa Rica, Germany, Venezuela, Mexico

**Currency:** quetzal (GTQ), U.S. dollar (USD), others allowed

**Exchange Rate:** 8.0165 quetzales = \$1 U.S. (January 2002)

# HISTORY AND HOLIDAYS

## TIME LINE

- 250–900 C.E.** Classic Maya period
- 900** The collapse of Classic Maya civilization
- 1523** Pedro de Alvarado of Spain invades and conquers Guatemala
- 1773** Guatemala becomes the center of government
- 1776** Devastating earthquakes strike Antigua, capital moves to present-day Guatemala City
- 1786** El Salvador becomes a separate unit from Guatemala
- 1810–1814** Spain is occupied by French troops during the Napoleonic Wars
- 1814** The French are defeated in Spain; King Ferdinand VII is restored
- 15 Sep 1821** Guatemala declares independence
- Feb 1931** Liberal general, Jorge Ubico, takes office as president
- Dec 1944** Juan José Arévalo is elected president after Ubico's forced resignation; Arévalo begins a decade of dramatic social, economic, and political change in Guatemala
- May 1954** United States launches a plan to overthrow Arbenz, with the help of the governments of Nicaragua and Honduras
- 1966–1970** Guatemala again has a civilian-led government
- 1970** Army officers again control the presidency
- 1976** Guatemala suffers from a devastating hurricane
- 1976** Violent earthquake claims more than 20,000 lives and leaves a million people homeless
- 1982** General Efraín Ríos Montt assumes control as a dictator
- 1983** Guatemala suffers from serious economic problems caused by declining tourism and a general international economic downturn
- Dec 1985** The military decides to turn over limited power to civilians
- 1987** Marco Vinicio plays a major role in bringing about the Central American Peace Accord
- 1990** United States cuts off most of its military aid and all arms sales to Guatemala
- 29 Dec 1996** A peace accord between the government and guerrilla forces is signed, ending the 36-year conflict
- Jan 1996** Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen elected president; first president to meet with guerrilla warriors

## HOLIDAYS

- 1 Jan** New Year's Day
- 27 Mar** Holy Wednesday (afternoon only)
- Apr** Easter
- Apr** Holy Week
- 1 May** Labor Day

**10 May** Mother's Day  
**30 Jun** Army Day  
**15 Aug** Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Guatemala City only)  
**15 Sep** Independence Day  
**20 Oct** Revolution Day  
**1 Nov** All Saint's Day  
**1–2 Nov** Day of the Dead  
**7 Dec** Burning of the Devil  
**24 Dec** Christmas Eve (afternoon only)  
**25 Dec** Christmas Day  
**31 Dec** New Year's Eve (afternoon only)

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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### GUATEMALA EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES

2220 R St. NW

Washington, D.C. 20008

Web site: <http://www.guatemala-embassy.org>

### DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Guatemala Tourism Commission, INGUAT

Phone: 1-888-INGUAT, Fax: (202) 18-4415

Web site: <http://www.centroamericano.net>

### BOOKS

Adams, Richard E.W. *Rio Azul: An Ancient Mayan City*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.

Asturias, Miguel Angel, Gilbert Alter-Gilbert, trans. *The Mirror of Lida Sal: Tales Based on Mayan Myths and Guatemalan Legends*, Latin America Literary Review Press, 1997.

Castaneda, Omar S. *Abuela's Weave*, Lee & Low Books, 1993.

Harbury, Jennifer. *Bridge of Courage: Life Stories of the Guatemalan Compañeros and Compañeras*, Common Courage Press, 1995.

Jonas, Susanne. *Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process*, Westview Press, 2000.

Menchu, Rigoberta. *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, Verso Books, 1987.

Montejo, Victor. *El Q'Anil, Man of Lightning: A Legend of Jacaltenango, Guatemala*, in English, Spanish, and Popb'Al Ti Jakalte Maya, Sun Tracks, Wallace Kaufman University of Arizona, 1993.

—. *Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village*, Curbstone Press, 1989.

O'Kane, Trish. *Guatemala: A Guide to the People, Politics, and Culture*, Interlink Publishing Group, 1999.

Quigley, Thomas and the Archdiocese of Guatemala. *Guatemala, Never Again!*, OrbisBooks, 1999.

Sohlesinger, Stephen c, et al. *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, Harvard University Press, 1999.

Wright, Ronald. *Time Among the Maya: Travels in Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico*, Grove Press, 2000.

### FILM

*National Geographic's Lost Kingdoms of the Maya*, Myrow, Jeff and Ed Spiegel (II), National Geographic, 1997.

### INTERNET SITES

#### CIA World Factbook:

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gt.html>

**Current Guatemalan Information (in Spanish):**

<http://www.nortropic.com>

**Guatemalan Business Information:**

<http://www.quetzalnet.com/>

**Guatemalan Newspaper (in Spanish):**

<http://www.prensalibre.com>

**Guatemalan Travel:**

<http://www.mayaventura.com>

**Guatemala's Geography:**

<http://www.geography.about.com/library/cia/blcguatemala.htm>

**Mayan Art:**

<http://www.artemaya.com>

**Washington Office on Latin America:**

<http://www.wola.org>

## Traditions Visual 1: Bolas de Fuego





## Food Visual 1: Guatemalan Kitchen




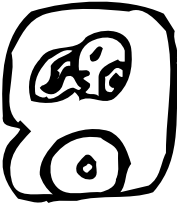


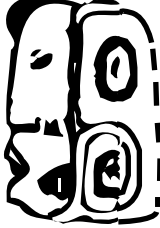






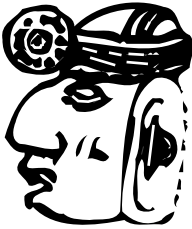



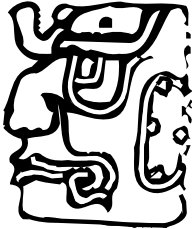










## Food Visual 2: Making Tortillas



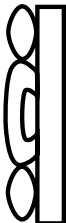








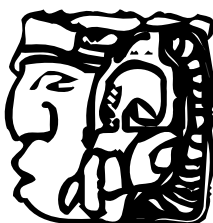










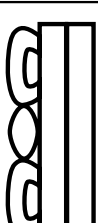








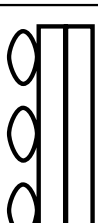



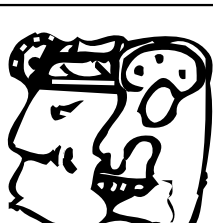
### Food Visual 3: Farmer Harvesting Corn



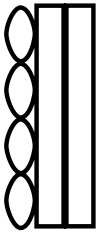

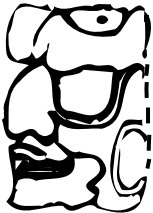
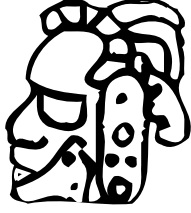
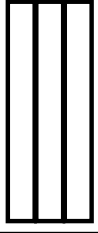



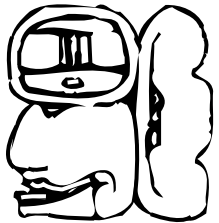
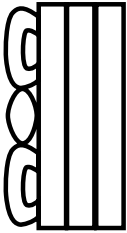



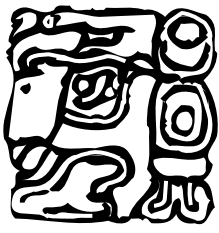
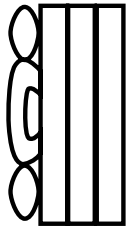

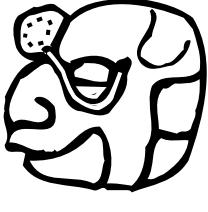

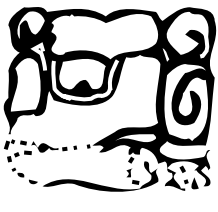
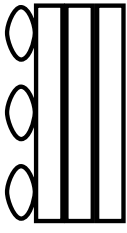




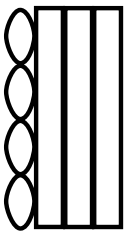



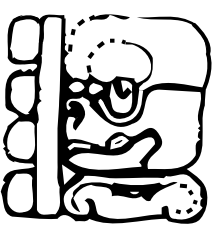


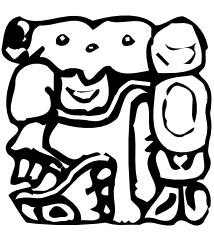

Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1: Mayan Number System (1 of 3)

	<p>ZERO 0</p> <p>MI</p>	 <div data-bbox="878 157 1474 346"> <p>The first column contains the monument symbols of the number system. The second column is the codex symbol with the English and Yucatec numbering. The third column contains the head variant symbols for the numbers.</p> </div>
	<p>ONE 1</p> <p>•</p> <p>HUN</p>	  
	<p>TWO 2</p> <p>• •</p> <p>KA</p>	  
	<p>THREE 3</p> <p>• • •</p> <p>OX</p>	  
	<p>FOUR 4</p> <p>• • • •</p> <p>KAN</p>	  
	<p>FIVE 5</p> <p>—</p> <p>HO</p>	  
	<p>SIX 6</p> <p>•</p> <p>—</p> <p>WAK</p>	  

Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1: Mayan Number System (2 of 3)

	SEVEN 7  UX			
	EIGHT 8  WAXAK			
	NINE 9  BOLON			
	TEN 10  LAHUN			
	ELEVEN 11  BULUK			
	TWELVE 12  LAKAH			
	THIRTEEN 13  OXLAHUN			

Cross-cultural Contributions Visual 1: Mayan Number System (3 of 3)

	<p>FOURTEEN 14</p>  <p>KANLAHUN</p>			
	<p>FIFTEEN 15</p>  <p>HOLOHUN</p>			
	<p>SIXTEEN 16</p>  <p>WAKLAHUN</p>			
	<p>SEVENTEEN 17</p>  <p>UKLAHUN</p>			
	<p>EIGHTEEN 18</p>  <p>WAXAKLAHUN</p>			
	<p>NINETEEN 19</p>  <p>BOLONLAHUN</p>			
	<p>COMPLETION</p> 			

## Mayan Math Quiz

**Codex Problems:** Draw answers to the problems in codex form by using the charts in this section.

1.

$$\begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \bullet \\ \hline \hline \hline \end{array} - \begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \bullet \\ \hline \hline \hline \end{array} =$$

2.

$$\begin{array}{c} \bullet \\ \hline \hline \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \\ \hline \hline \end{array} =$$

3.

$$\bullet \times \begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet \\ \hline \hline \end{array} =$$

4.

$$\begin{array}{c} \bullet \bullet \\ \hline \hline \end{array} / \bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet =$$

**Head Variant Problems:** Draw answers to these problems using the head variant charts in this section.

1.

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Head 1} \\ \text{Head 2} \\ \text{Head 3} \end{array} - \begin{array}{c} \text{Head 4} \\ \text{Head 5} \\ \text{Head 6} \end{array} =$$

2.

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Head 7} \\ \text{Head 8} \\ \text{Head 9} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{c} \text{Head 10} \\ \text{Head 11} \\ \text{Head 12} \end{array} =$$

## Mayan Math Quiz Answer Key

### Codex Answers:

1.



2.



3.

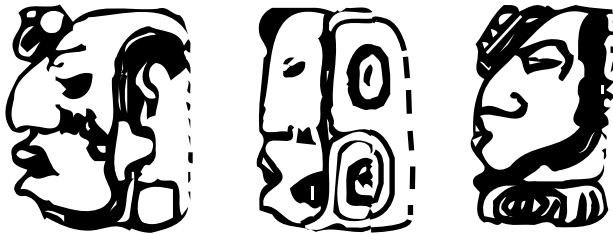


4.

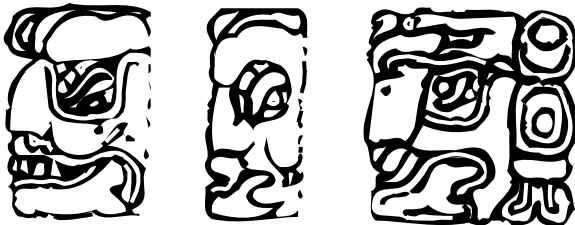


### Head Variant Answers

1.



2.



## Mayan Numbers

Number	Spelling	Pronunciation
One	hun	hoon
Two	ka	kah
Three	ox	ohsh
Four	kan	kahn
Five	ho	ho
Six	wak	wahk
Seven	ux	wook
Eight	waxak	washahk
Nine	bolon	bohlohn
Ten	la hun	lah hoon
Eleven	buluk	boolook
Twelve	la kah	lah kah
Thirteen	ox la hun	ohsh lah hoon
Fourteen	kan la hun	kahn lah hoon
Fifteen	ho la hun	ho lah hoon
Sixteen	wak la hun	wahk lah hoon
Seventeen	ux la hun	wook lah hoon
Eighteen	waxak la hun	washahk lah hoon
Nineteen	bolon la hun	bohlohn lah hoon



### **FLAG OF GUATEMALA**

The flag has three equal vertical bands of light blue (hoist side), white, and light blue with the coat of arms centered in the white band. The coat of arms includes a green and red quetzal (the national bird) and a scroll bearing the inscription LIBERTAD 15 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 1821 (the original date of independence from Spain) all superimposed on a pair of crossed rifles and swords, framed by a wreath.

## Map of Guatemala

