The Land of Guatemala

God has given the people of Guatemala a very beautiful and unique country. It is the westernmost country of the seven countries that make up Central America. Central America is an isthmus—a narrow strip of land which connects two larger bodies of land—and it connects North America to South America. Guatemala covers 42,042 square mile and is approximately the size of Tennessee. Though Guatemala lies close to the equator, the climate varies across the country due to extreme variations in elevation. Its nickname, “Land of Eternal Spring,” was given to the area around Guatemala City (the capital) because of the comfortably warm days and cool nights.

About two-thirds of the total land area of Guatemala is covered by mountains. The main range is the Sierra Madre, which runs east to west across the country and is parallel to the Pacific Ocean in the south. Some of the mountains are active volcanoes. Earthquakes also occur. In 1976 an earthquake was responsible for more than 20,000 deaths and left millions homeless. The area of land between the mountains and the southern coast is the Pacific Lowland. This stretch of land measures about 50 miles wide and is home to sugar and cotton plantations, ranches, and farms. The Northern Plain has the fewest inhabitants and is the least developed part of the country. Much of the land is covered with tropical forests. Woods such as mahogany are found in abundance, but rough terrain makes travel and living conditions in this area difficult. The Highlands are found between the Lowland and the Northern Plain. Most of the people live in this region, where most of the corn and coffee crops are raised.

Guatemala is a land of beauty and diversity. It has more species of plants and animals than the entire United States. The quetzal, the national bird, is bright green with tail feathers up to two feet long. Other tropical birds, flowers, insects, animals, and plants inhabit the area in the north. Dinosaur fossils have been unearthed in the central and eastern areas.

Guatemala’s most important natural resource is its soil. Coffee is by far the most important agricultural export, although bananas, cotton, and sugar cane are also sold to other countries. Corn (the most important staple of the Guatemalan diet), rice, beans, pigs, and poultry are raised for local consumption, not for profit. Along with beautiful wood for fine carpentry, the thick forests provide oils and chicle (an important ingredient for chewing gum) which also are exported.
### LHM – GUATEMALA
**Lesson 1 – Lesson Plan – The Geography of Guatemala**

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<th>BASIC INFORMATION BY LEVEL</th>
<th>PRE-K/GRADE 4</th>
<th>GRADES 5-8</th>
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<td><em>• It is the westernmost country of the seven countries that make up Central America.</em> <em>• It is approximately the size of Tennessee.</em> <em>• Its nickname is “Land of Eternal Spring”</em> <em>• Guatemala City is the capital city and the largest city in Guatemala.</em> <em>• Guatemala’s most important natural resource is its soil, with coffee being the most important agricultural export.</em></td>
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<td><em>Additional information:</em> <em>• Approximately 2/3 of the land is covered by mountains.</em> <em>• The Sierra Madre runs east to west across the country, parallel to the Pacific Ocean in the south.</em> <em>• Central America is an isthmus—a narrow strip of land which connects two larger bodies of land. It connects North and South America.</em> <em>• The quetzal is the national bird.</em> <em>• Woods such as mahogany are found in abundance.</em></td>
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| GOALS FOR THE LESSON | Children will be introduced to Guatemala, its people, and its culture. They will also learn about some of the needs of Guatemalans. | Children will be introduced to Guatemala, its people, and its culture. They will also learn about some of the needs of Guatemalans. | Children will be introduced to Guatemala, its people, and its culture. They will also learn about some of the needs of Guatemalans. |

| ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION | Students will color the first page of the map. **Introduce “Miguel the Cochero” using script 1.** | Students will color the first page of the map. **Introduce “Miguel the Cochero” using script.** **Optional extension for grade level: BLM G1** | Additional options in lesson plan details |

| SUGGESTED MATERIALS | Crayons, markers, colored pencils  
GMAP1 (in blackline masters)  
Introduction to Miguel the Cochero (BLM1)  
Miguel the Cochero Day 1 Script (BLM 2)  
GPIX 1  
GPIX 2 | Crayons, markers, colored pencils  
GMAP 1 (in blackline masters)  
Introduction to Miguel the Cochero (BLM1)  
Miguel the Cochero Day 1 Script (BLM 2)  
GPIX 1  
GPIX 2 |  |
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<td><strong>LESSON PLAN DETAILS</strong></td>
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<td>Distribute the student map. Show the photos of the children. Holding up a student map, say, “This is part of the country of Guatemala.” Have the children glue the picture on the map. Then say, “These are children Jesus loves who live in Guatemala. Jesus is with them in Guatemala just as He is with us here.” In Guatemala, pencils are precious! If you do not have a pencil, you cannot go to school— that’s how important even the small things are! We will be their friends in Christ— amigos en Cristo! Each day we will talk about the children and the country of Guatemala.</td>
<td>Distribute first page of the student map. Show the photo of the children. Holding up a student map, say, “This is part of the country of Guatemala.” Have the children glue the picture on the map. Then say, “These are children Jesus loves who live in Guatemala. Jesus is with them in Guatemala just as He is with us here.” In Guatemala, pencils are precious! If you do not have a pencil, you cannot go to school— that’s how important even the small things are! We will be their friends in Christ— amigos en Cristo! Each day we will talk about the children and the country of Guatemala.</td>
<td>As students see the photos, ask them what they know about poor or homeless people. How would they feel if they had to get their food, furniture, and even their clothes from a garbage dump? Ask them to think of needs much greater than the physical ones (love, acceptance, Jesus, etc.). Impress upon them that the people in Guatemala are proud, happy and hard working but often find themselves without the means to make a decent living. It is to these families that students will send notes of love and faith.</td>
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| You may tell your children more information: “These children live in Guatemala City. It is the largest city in Guatemala. The people in Guatemala speak the Spanish language. Do you know any words in Spanish?” (Encourage the children to share the Spanish words they know.) Say, “We will practice those words and learn new words this week as we learn about Guatemala and the children there.” | You may tell your children more information: “These children live in Guatemala City. It is the largest city in Guatemala. The people in Guatemala speak the Spanish language. Do you know any words in Spanish?” (Encourage the children to share the Spanish words they know.) Say, “We will practice those words and learn new words this week as we learn about Guatemala and the children there.” | Moving On
- Words for the day – Hola (hello)
- Cómo se llama usted? (What is your name?)
- Por favor (please)
- Me llamo (My name is …)
|
| Show the children the photo of the girl at the garbage dump. Say, “In Guatemala City, some families build their houses near the garbage dump. The families work together to collect bottles, cardboard and other things to sell and recycle. It can be dangerous to be in a garbage dump. There are sharp pieces of garbage and other things that could hurt people. Vultures fly around the garbage dump looking for food to eat. The garbage makes a gas that sometimes explodes!” | Show the children the photo of the girl at the garbage dump. Say, “In Guatemala City, some families build their houses near the garbage dump. The families work together to collect bottles, cardboard and other things to sell and recycle. It can be dangerous to be in a garbage dump. There are sharp pieces of garbage and other things that could hurt people. Vultures fly around the garbage dump looking for food to eat. The garbage makes a gas that sometimes explodes!” | 2. G 1 – Students will learn basic facts about Guatemala by “digging” in the garbage for words to complete the clues. The cross in the center reminds them that Jesus is the most important treasure anyone could ever have. His love is for all people; those who have plenty and those who struggle to find food and shelter every day. Perhaps students can think of ways to use or recycle things that they might normally throw away. (Old games to a children’s home, recycle trash, etc.) |
| “The children who collect things from the garbage dump could use our prayers. We can share our blessings from God with them.” | “The children who collect things from the garbage dump could use our prayers. We can share our blessings from God with them.” | Answers to G 1 –
1. Central America
2. Isthmus
3. Tennessee
4. earthquake
5. tropical
6. quetzal
7. dinosaur
8. Indian, Maya
9. Spanish
10. Ladino
11. marimba
12. coffee
13. corn
14. chicle
15. Jesus |

**CLOSING PRAYER**

“Dear Jesus, thank You for loving us. Thank You for loving the children of Guatemala. Bless our letters we will send to the children. We want to show our love for them and share Your message. Amen.”

Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for all of Your wonderful creation. We praise You for loving us and taking care of our needs. We ask that You would help us minister to our brothers and sisters in Guatemala through our prayers and letters. Help us to give freely of our abundance just as You have given eternal life to us through Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.
“Miguel the Cochero”

To promote “Contigo en Guatemala,” you may want to recruit a “spokesman” to play the character of “Miguel the Cochero.” This person should be outgoing and friendly, enjoy being in front of groups of people, be able to adopt a different “personality.” An older student, a parent or teacher will work, but you can easily use any puppet—even a simple one you make—to use Miguel in individual classrooms.

Be creative with the idea of “Miguel.” Adapt it to your situation. “Miguel” could just appear to greet the children and pantomime, while someone else presents the talk. For the children, seeing a character like “Miguel the Cochero” will help them connect with and think about the children in Guatemala.

Who is Miguel?
“Miguel the Cochero is a friendly person who uses a horse cart to show people around Guatemala. There is a real “Miguel” in the city of Antigua who gives cart rides through the city. For our purposes, “Miguel” will show us the entire country of Guatemala. “Miguel,” like the people of Guatemala, is polite and friendly. “Miguel” should greet people with a hearty handshake. In Guatemala, one tries to individually greet as many people as possible. Getting someone’s attention is done by making a “tsst tsst” sound. Most finger or hand gestures are considered impolite, vulgar, so pointing or gesturing with the hands is not done. To point, people often purse (or pucker) their lips in the direction of whatever they are indicating.

In addition to the scripted phrases, “Miguel” might ask, “Cómo está?” (How are you?), show respect by using the titles (Señor, Señora, Señorita), leave with the words “Nos vemos” (See you later) or “Mas tarde” (later).

How should an actor as Miguel look?
“Miguel the Cochero” can develop a special “look” for your audience. A broad-brimmed straw hat, a colorful shirt, a colorful woven sash belt wrapped around the waist and blue jeans are suggested. “Miguel” has simple props for use in the talks. The waist sash can be used for storage as we would use pockets.
Script One

Miguel the Cochero enters. Miguel follows the Guatemalan custom of friendly greetings. He shakes hands with as many people as possible saying “Mucho gusto!” Pleased to meet you! Or Hola! To get attention, he will make the sound “tssst, tssst.”

**Miguel:** “Buenos días (BWAY-nose DEE-ahs)! I am Miguel the Cochero at your service. (Miguel takes off his hat in a sweeping bow.) I’ve come from beautiful Guatemala! In my country, I am a ‘cochero.’” People take trips in my horse-drawn cart and I show them the sights of Guatemala!

**Miguel:** “I’ve come here for this week for your “trip” to Guatemala to be your cochero. No, no, I didn’t bring my horse and cart! Anyway, there aren’t enough seats for all of you! But, I will still tell you about my country and the children there.”

**Miguel:** “Tssst, tssst. Children in Guatemala don’t have the things they need for school and daily life. In Guatemala, if you don’t have a pencil, you cannot go to school! That is how important even the small things are to the children in Guatemala.”

**Miguel:** “In sharing the message of Jesus’ love, they will be receiving some precious news! The news that Jesus loves each and every one of them! These precious words will tell the children in Guatemala about Jesus! They will learn about Jesus just as you are learning about Jesus here. Tssst, tssst. They will know that Jesus loves them. The children in Guatemala will be happy to learn about their friends here in (your location).”

“Each day you will learn about the children and about the country of Guatemala. Each day you will create part of a map of Guatemala, and at the end of our trip, you will get to take it home.”

“Mucho gusto! I am pleased to meet you! We will have a happy time together on our trip! Vaya con Dios!(VI-ah con DYOS)! Go with God!”
Many people in Guatemala work hard to provide for their daily needs. Some are even forced to pick through large garbage dumps for food, furniture, and housing materials. Search through the pile of discarded items below to find the answers to questions about the Guatemalan people and their land and culture.

1. Guatemala is one of the seven countries of ________________.
2. Guatemala is on an ________________, a narrow strip of land that connects North America and South America.
3. The State of ________________ is about the same size as Guatemala.
4. A large ________________ killed over 20,000 people in Guatemala City in 1976.
5. Much of the northern part of the country is covered with ________________ forests.
6. The beautiful ________________ is the national bird. It can have feathers up to two feet long.
7. ________________ fossils have been found in the central and eastern parts of the country.
8. One group of people in Guatemala is the ____________ people. They are descendants of the ancient ____________ civilization which thrived there from 300 - 900 A.D.
9. The official language is ____________, but many people speak their native Indian languages.
10. ____________ is a term which refers to people of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry.
11. The national instrument, the ____________, is like a wooden xylophone.
12. ____________ is the most important export.
13. The food eaten in some form at almost every meal is ____________.
14. Gum is made from ____________, a sap from tree bark.
15. The greatest need of anyone in the world is ____________. People are presently reaching out to Guatemalans at the garbage dump with God's love and the message of Jesus' death and resurrection. Our letters can show our brothers and sisters in Guatemala that same love.