

Diego Rivera 1886-1957

Diego Maria de la Concepcion Juan Nepomuceno Estanislao de la Rivera y Barrientos Acosta y Rodriguez ([I write this on the board before the presentation](#)) better known as Diego Rivera, was born on December 13, 1886, in Guanajuato, Mexico. At the age of three he began drawing and at thirteen, he began studying art at the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City.

Diego Rivera is considered to be the greatest Mexican painter of the 20th century. His paintings and national murals helped develop Mexico's identity. It is difficult to think of Mexico without seeing the bright, colorful images of Diego Rivera's paintings, depicting the pre-Columbian mystique and the working-class people of his beloved country. ([If you have any Mexican stuff - I bring it with me to show how colorful it is](#))

In 1906, Rivera received a scholarship to study in Europe. He studied in Spain and then later in Paris, France. In 1910, he returned to Mexico, where he had a successful show of his European work. The Mexican Revolution began. Rivera returned to Paris in June, 1911, where he was influenced first by cubism. If you remember cubism is trying to break things into almost puzzle pieces (of cubes). He later returned to a more realistic style, based mainly on his study of famous French artist, Paul Cezanne. ([GSWA has a Paul Cezanne picture of a bowl of fruit you can use. Rivera is a realist - which means he paints what he sees](#))

In July 1921, Rivera returned to Mexico and was hired by the Ministry of Education to paint murals on public buildings. He was paid to make murals in different areas in Mexico. He was very creative, as well as energetic and determined. Then people in Moscow and the United States requested him to paint murals. The most famous mural is the *Epic of the Mexican People in their Struggle for Freedom and Independence*, which condenses two thousand years of history onto the space of a wall.

Rivera was interested in working class people and used his paintings to fight oppressors of the poor. He was often unpopular because his paintings depicted scenes of the poor giving their lives in work, to industry, or in war—remaining impoverished while the rich and powerful held onto wealth. During the years of the Great Depression, when so many workers did not have jobs, these paintings were considered threatening to those in power. Rivera's radical political views and his stormy marriage to Frida Kahlo, another famous Mexican artist, remain a source of public fascination to this day.

From 1930 to 1934, Rivera was commissioned to paint murals in the United States. Wherever he went in the U.S., he created controversies, attracted admirers, and left lasting impressions on painters who emulated his mural techniques. His murals inspired

U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt to put hundreds of W.P.A. artists to work during the Depression Era, painting and sculpting for public buildings. Many of these sculptures and art pieces are still available in cities and museums for us to admire today. After one of Rivera's huge murals was destroyed at the Rockefeller Center in New York City, because it contained the face of Lenin, the leader of the Communists in Russia and an enemy of the United States, Rivera returned to Mexico.

Between 1935-1943, after the New York fiasco, it was difficult for Rivera to receive commissions for public murals. In 1955, Rivera was diagnosed with cancer, but continued to work, mostly creating easel paintings. In 1956, on his 70th birthday, Mexico paid tribute to Rivera. He died the following year and was officially honored and buried in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men in Mexico City. Rivera had a great love for Mexico and a deep interest in the Pre-Columbian heritage of his country. His murals, paintings, and drawings reflect that love and his dedication to teaching about Mexico and the rich history that it has.

Vocabulary:

Fresco: The art of painting by pressing earth colors or natural ingredients dissolved in water into fresh plaster.

Mural: A picture or decoration, usually a very large one, applied directly to a wall or ceiling.

Diego Rivera Activity

Materials Needed:

Card Stock

Cutouts of Them - they may look like paper dolls but I would not call them paper dolls. There are boy and girl people on paper which are to represent them.

Material cut into smaller pieces

Glue Stick

Markers or Crayons

Scissors

(The last 3 materials the students should have & I feel would be easier to do in their classroom)

Steps for Creating Art Project:

1. Diego Rivera was famous for his paintings making a political statement about the world. He felt he could change the world by painting a picture. Brainstorm about things in the world that you wish you could change: stop the war, cure a disease, give food to the hungry, end pollution, etc.
2. The students are to draw a picture of what they would like to change. They can use words such as "End Pollution" and a picture. They then take the paper person and they can cut material for their people. I have the material all cut in small squares but they can draw on the material and cut it.
3. There are examples in the file.