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Thank you for downloading the Study Guide to go along with the performance presented by Arts On Stage. The last page of this Study Guide is a **Letter to Families** for you to send home with the child that includes information on what they saw to encourage parents to ask their child about the field trip.

Please direct any questions or correspondence (letters to performers from staff and/or students) to Arts On Stage. Make sure you note what performance and we will make sure they get into the right hands.

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***Presenting Live Professional Theatre Field Trips for Students & Families***



# Study Guide

There is no doubt that the Calpulli Mexican Dance Company (Calpulli Danza Mexicana) will leave their audience stunned and exhilarated. Their showcase of the regional dances of Mexico is astonishing – especially their unique interpretations of traditional Aztec dances. These thrilling dances are bound to entertain all ages and leave you in a state of amazement.

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# Objectives of the Performance

This performance serves to:

- Expose students to a live performance with high caliber performers;
- Maximize students' enjoyment and appreciation of the performing arts;
- Help students develop an understanding of the arts as a means of expression and communication.



This teacher's guide is designed to extend the impact of the performance by providing discussion ideas, experiential activities, and further reading that can promote learning across the curriculum. This program can be incorporated into study addressing the Learning Standards for the Arts as stipulated by the N.Y. State Education Department. Detailed information is available at: [www.emsc.nysed.gov/cia/arts/pub/artlearn.pdf](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/cia/arts/pub/artlearn.pdf)

## Learning Standards for the Arts ■ Dance

### Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts.

**DANCE:** Students will perform set dance forms in formal and informal contexts and will improvise, create, and perform dances based on their own movement ideas. They will demonstrate an understanding of choreographic principles, processes, and structures and of the roles of various participants in dance productions.

### Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

Students will become knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

**DANCE:** Students will know how to access dance and dance-related material from libraries, resource centers, museums, studios, and performance spaces. Students will know various career possibilities in dance and recreational opportunities to dance. Students will attend dance events and participate as appropriate within each setting.

### Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

**DANCE:** Students will express through written and oral language their understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of dances they see, do, and read about. Students will acquire the critical vocabulary to talk and write about a variety of dance forms.

### Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

**DANCE:** Students will know dances from many cultures and times and recognize their relationship to various cultural, social, and historic contexts. Students will recognize that dance is performed in many different cultural settings and serves many functions in diverse societies.



## MEXIKA TIAWI

The traditional Aztec dance "Mexika Tiawi" in Nahuatl is roughly translated as "Mexicans Onward!" The piece was debuted in 2008 and is based on the Aztec tradition known as the Tetzkatlipoka (black smoky mirror). The Tetzkatlipoka is an Aztec tradition that focuses on developing consciousness. The belief is that an equal balance of mind, body, emotion, and energy are believed to produce a healthy soul. The powerful dance form carries symbolism associated with natural elements; it is a high energy movement meditation that concentrates the life force of the participants to achieve self-knowledge and harmony. Calpulli's suite uses this inspiration to evoke glorious movements representing flight, planting grains, and horned deer.

The Aztecs thrived in Mexico from 1300 A.D.- 1521 A.D. Their traditions and ideas were assimilated from those of the Mayas, Olmecs, and Toltecs before them. In fact their language, Nahuatl, was inherited from the Toltecs. They were warriors. The arts, dance, and music were important to them and had several different songs and dances for special occasions such as weddings, rain, war, birth, and death.

Do you know the following Spanish words? *Tomate, Chocolate, Aguacate, Atlantico, Mexico*

All of these words originated from the Nahuatl language.



## QUE CHULA ES PUEBLA

Que Chula es Puebla (How Lovely is Puebla): The "China Poblana," or "Chinese Pueblan," is a term used to describe the traditional style of dress of women in the Mexican Republic. Legend states that a young female East Asian slave named Caterina de San Juan is responsible for the birth of this traditional style of dress. She was sold as a slave to the Pueblan Miguel de Sosa in Acapulco, Mexico. She often wore a sari (a female garment originating from India that is often wrapped or draped around the body) because she did not want to dress like the locals. She wore an embroidered blouse, long skirt, and shawl. Her style eventually influenced the traditional Mexican style of dress. Throughout history, the "Chinese Pueblan" has served as an image of Mexico's grace and beauty. The "China Poblana" has become a national symbol. The song and dance calls to Puebla's most praised cities and the goods each produces.

There is mystery behind the origins of the China Poblana, with some sources citing her origins in South Asia. With this inspiration, being based in Queens, New York, Calpulli used a base of Indian fabrics from the local community for its hand-made costumes.



Music is an important element of the performance. The music combines coastal Mexican rhythms, Aztec drums and sounds, and Mariachi to create a stimulating visual and auditory performance. Music and dance go hand in hand, and their multitude of influences and unique regional and historical characteristics mirror each other.

## COSTUMES

The Calpulli Mexican Dance Company will also showcase traditional Mexican costumes. Such garments can be very elaborate like the fascinating headdresses of the Aztecs and flowing gowns. Many costumes are handmade in New York City while others have to found in Mexico. Costuming is a source of pride for dance companies and communities in Mexico who perform, and this leads to diversity in interpretation and quality of craftsmanship.



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## Activities Before the Performance



**Curriculum Focus:** Social Studies

**Activity:** Research the culture and geography of Mexico with mini-lessons using the Five Themes of Geography

**NYC Social Studies Standard:** 3

Coordinate with Student Guide, "Where in the World is Mexico?"

### ⦿ Mini-lesson 1:

**Location** Demonstrate the use of a compass rose to determine North, South, East and West on a world map.

**Whole Group:** Students use map and compass rose to describe location. Absolute location: Locate Mexico, the United States and South America on a world map. Relative location: Where is Mexico in relation to the United States? To the rest of South America?

**Small Groups:** The geography of Mexico is identified by its mountains, the Sierra Madres, which cover 80% of the country. There are also many rivers and lakes. Mexico was called "the Land of the Shaking Earth" by the Aztecs because of the many earthquakes that plague the country. Locate specific places using topographical maps of Mexico. It would be helpful to find photographs that depict the following regions and locations and assign each group one location to pinpoint on their map. After the areas are found, share findings with the whole group.

### ⦿ Mini-lesson 2:

**Region** Explain how the physical features of the land, particularly the Sierra Madres (the "mother mountains") have influenced the geography and culture of Mexico.

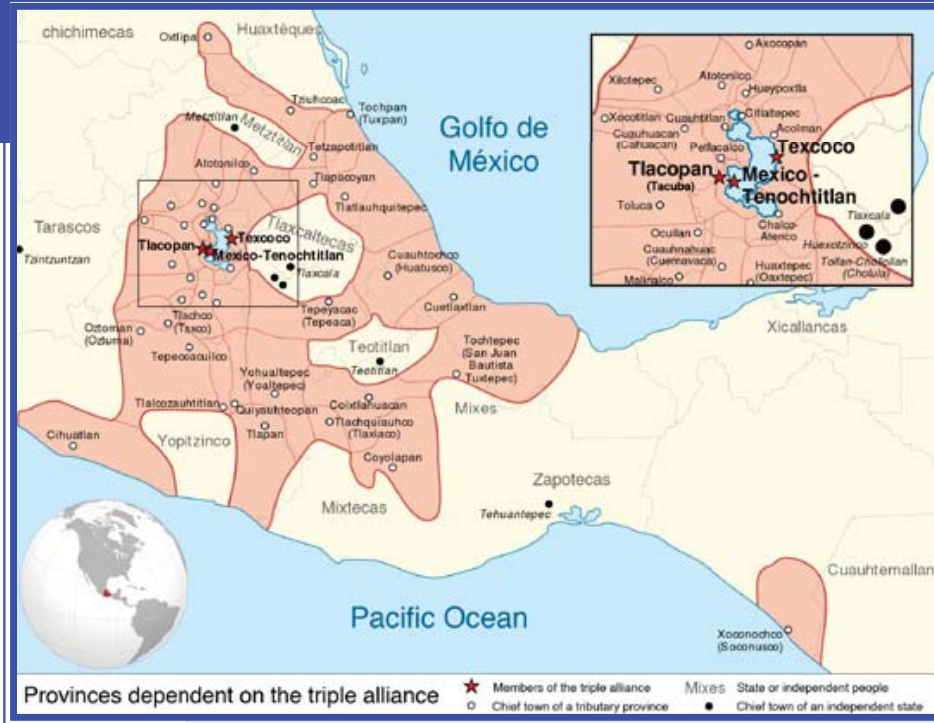
The three principal ranges are:

1. The Sierra Madre Oriental, which runs on the eastern border parallel to the Gulf Coast and past Mexico City, and has two of Mexico's highest peaks.
2. The Sierra Madre Occidental, which runs from the U.S. border on the north almost to Mexico City, and has canyons deeper and longer than the Grand Canyon in the U.S.
3. The Sierra Madre del Sur is not as high, but very rugged, and had isolated Mexico's west coast for many years.

These have divided the 32 states into three distinct regions:

1. Tierra Caliente: the southern Pacific and Gulf Coast areas. Hot and humid, this rainforest atmosphere can have between 60-140 inches of rain per year!
2. Tierra Fria: the northern states, drier and cooler because of its higher elevation.
3. Tierra Templada: the temperate land. Lying in between the other two regions, it encompasses most of Mexico, including the central Mexican plateau and Mexico City.





Map of the Aztec Empire lead by Tenochtitlan circa 1519, before the arrival of the Spanish.

## The Aztec Empire

The ancient Aztecs are said to have dated back to the early 13th century. The Aztec empire expanded over a large portion of Mesoamerica, or "middle America," which was home to hundreds of thousands of people. It is difficult to understand the exact boundaries of the Aztec empire, because the Aztec empire consisted of an alliance of city-states which had their own influence and control over certain areas. The map to the left can help you to better visualize the region of Mesoamerica.

In Mesoamerica, the Aztec people chose to live in areas where there were highlands separated by eroded volcanic peaks and staggered mountain ranges. When the Aztecs first came to be, they migrated around the Mexican Valley. They struggled to survive up until the year 1325, when they finally settled along the southwest border of Lake Texcoco. When they arrived here, they saw their country's future coat of arms: an eagle sitting on the stem of a prickly pear while holding a serpent in its talons. They regarded this as an omen and began to build the Aztec empire capital, Tenochtitlan.

## How did the Aztec people survive?

In order to survive, the Aztec people fished, hunted, gathered, and gardened. They were lucky to have valley rivers that were filled with fish, insects, shrimp, tadpoles, and ahuate, a naturally occurring pasta. Those who were closer to the ocean survived by eating crabs, oysters, fish, and turtles. Animals such as rabbits, snakes, armadillos, deer, pumas, coyotes, and wild turkey were also important food sources for the Aztec people.

They also raised plants such as cocoa, vanilla, bananas, squash, pumpkin, beans, chili, tobacco, onions, red tomatoes, green tomatoes, sweet potatoes, jicama, huautli, and maize.

What rituals and practices did the Aztecs participate in?

Human sacrifices were important in the Aztec culture during important religious and social occasions. For instance, in order to please the main Aztec god Huitzilopochtli (known as "hummingbird wizard," god of war, sun god, and patron of Tenochtitlan), captives and slaves were sacrificed and then offered up. The Aztecs believed that these sacrifices would prolong human existence and please their gods. Sacrifices were crucial in keeping the gods happy.



**The god Camaxtli**  
Mixcoatl or Camaxtli as depicted in the  
Codex Telleriano-Remensis.

The Aztecs also conquered other tribes but allowed them to retain their own rules and religion. When a tribe was conquered, they were expected to support the Aztec nobles, priests, and administrators with food, textiles, pottery, etc. The warriors who conquered and hunted to appease the gods were well-respected in the Aztec culture. In fact, there was a god of war, hunting, fire, and fate named Camaxtli (or Mixcoatl). This god was included in the Aztec religion in order to honor the warriors. It was believed that Camaxtli sent those who were slain in battle or sacrificed to become stars in the sky.

## How did the Aztecs communicate?

The Aztec people did not have a written language. Instead, they spoke Nahuatl. In order to keep their language alive, they used the method of direct representation and hieroglyphic paintings. Hieroglyphic paintings were often used in ancient civilizations to denote objects, concepts, or sounds through writing.

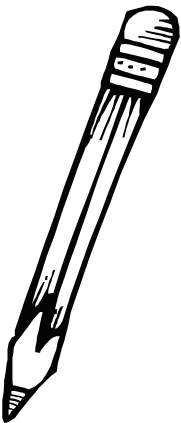


Dear Family,

Today, I saw a live, professional theatre performance presented by Arts On Stage called, Capulli Mexican Dancers. The performance celebrated and shared Mexican cultural traditions with vivid colors and rhythms of traditional Mexican dance and music. Attending a live performance is very different from watching a television show or a movie. Please ask me about my favorite moments and dances of the performance. I would like to tell you all the things I learned and remember best.

Love,

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Child's Name*



We welcome you and/or your child's comments. Artwork is always appreciated too! Contact information below.



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