

¡Hola, Sarah! Let's Explore Cinco de Mayo!

Have you heard of Cinco de Mayo? Maybe you've seen colorful decorations or heard music around the fifth of May. Many people think it's Mexico's Independence Day, but that's actually a different holiday (September 16th)! Today, we're going to uncover the true story behind Cinco de Mayo and explore how it's celebrated. Let's get started!

What It's NOT:

First, let's clear up the biggest confusion: Cinco de Mayo is **NOT** Mexican Independence Day. Mexico declared independence from Spain on September 16, 1810, which is a major national holiday in Mexico.

What It IS: The Battle of Puebla

Cinco de Mayo (Spanish for 'Fifth of May') commemorates a special event that happened on May 5, 1862. On this day, a smaller, less-equipped Mexican army won a surprising victory over the powerful French army at the Battle of Puebla. It was a brave moment and a symbol of Mexican resilience, although the French eventually occupied Mexico for a few years after this battle. While it's a relatively minor holiday in most of Mexico, it's a big deal in the city of Puebla and is widely celebrated in the United States as a day to honor Mexican culture and heritage.

Activity 1: Map Detective & History Explorer

Let's find Puebla! Grab an atlas or use an online map to locate the country of Mexico. Now, can you find the state of Puebla and its capital city (also called Puebla)? See where it is in relation to Mexico City. While you're online (with permission!), maybe you can find a short, kid-friendly video explaining the Battle of Puebla – look for animated ones!

How is Cinco de Mayo Celebrated?

In Puebla, Mexico, there are parades, speeches, and battle reenactments. In the United States, it's become a vibrant celebration of Mexican-American culture. You might see:

- **Parades:** Filled with colorful floats, dancers, and musicians.
- **Music:** Lively Mariachi bands playing guitars, violins, and trumpets.
- **Dancing:** Traditional folk dances like 'Jarabe Tapatío' (the Mexican Hat Dance) with dancers in beautiful costumes.
- **Food:** While tacos and guacamole are popular everywhere, traditional food from Puebla (like Mole Poblano) is also highlighted.
- **Decorations:** Bright colors, Mexican flags, and 'papel picado'.

Activity 2: Make Your Own Papel Picado!

'Papel picado' means 'punched paper'. These are colorful tissue paper banners with cutout designs. Let's make a simple version!

1. Take a piece of colored tissue paper (or regular paper).
2. Fold it in half several times (like making a paper snowflake).
3. Carefully cut small shapes along the folded edges (triangles, curves, squares). Make sure not to cut all the way across the main folds!
4. Gently unfold your paper. ¡Voilà! You have your own papel picado. You can string several together to make a banner.

Adult supervision recommended for cutting.

Activity 3: Fiesta Flavors (Optional)

With an adult's help, maybe you could try making a simple guacamole (mashed avocados, lime juice, salt, maybe some chopped onion and tomato) or enjoy some fruit with a sprinkle of lime juice and mild chili powder for a taste of Mexican flavors.

Wrap-up: What Did You Learn?

Let's review!

- Can you tell me in your own words what event Cinco de Mayo celebrates? (The Battle of Puebla)
- What's the difference between Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day?
- What are two ways people celebrate Cinco de Mayo?
- Show me your awesome papel picado!

Extra Fun (Optional):

- Listen to some Mariachi music online. How does it make you feel?
- Learn a few Spanish words: Fiesta (Party), Hola (Hello), Gracias (Thank You), Música (Music), Baile (Dance).

Great job exploring Cinco de Mayo today, Sarah! You learned about history and culture, and even did some art!