



Enter, stage left: Frida's imaginary friend. Her name is also Frida. They play games.  
Frida

Jonah Winter Illustrator Ana Juan Scholastic 2002  
Text and Illustration Pages 8-9

### Frida

Jonah Winter  
Ana Juan [Illustrator]  
Scholastic Books 2002

Frida Kahlo is possibly Mexico's most widely recognized and appreciated painter. Mainly self-taught, she belonged to a circle of innovative and influential artists in Mexico and internationally. Kahlo was married to the artist Diego Rivera. She was also an active participant in the cultural and political movements of her time.

Her work combines folk-art elements with a highly personal symbolism that can be both mysterious and disquieting. Her self-portraits painted between 1925 and 1954 offer a complex autobiography, exploring both physical and psychological pain. Kahlo contracted polio as a child and as a teenager was involved in a serious bus accident that required many surgeries throughout her life. Her relationship with Rivera was a source of conflicting emotions as well.

Frida Kahlo was born in Coyoacán, Mexico, to a Mexican mother and German father. At the age of fifteen, when she was preparing to enter medical school, she suffered a road accident. Though she never fully recovered, and her life would be increasingly filled with pain and disability, she began painting during

her recuperation from the accident. She sent paintings to the well-established Mexican painter Diego Rivera who encouraged Kahlo, and in 1928 the two painters married; their stormy relationship would last for the rest of Kahlo's life.

Largely self-taught, Kahlo was decisively influenced by the starkness, high color, and bold, naive figuration of the popular and religious arts of Mexico. She connected those arts with developments in French and Spanish surrealism, in which modernist abstraction gave way to realistic images placed in unexpected—even bizarre and nightmarish-juxtaposition. One of Kahlo's early supporters was the leader of the French surrealists, Andre Breton, who in 1939 sponsored an exhibition of her work in Paris.

#### Grade Levels

K-4

#### Curriculum Areas

Art • Language Arts • Technology

#### National Language Arts Standards

#### NL-ENG.K-12.8 DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to

gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

**National Art Education Standards  
NA-VA.4 UNDERSTAND THE VISUAL ARTS  
IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES**

Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places.

Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

**Objectives**

To introduce the book, *Frida*, written by Jonah Winter and illustrator Ana Juan.

To introduce to students that mythology and art help perpetuate traditions and customs of a culture or ethnic group.

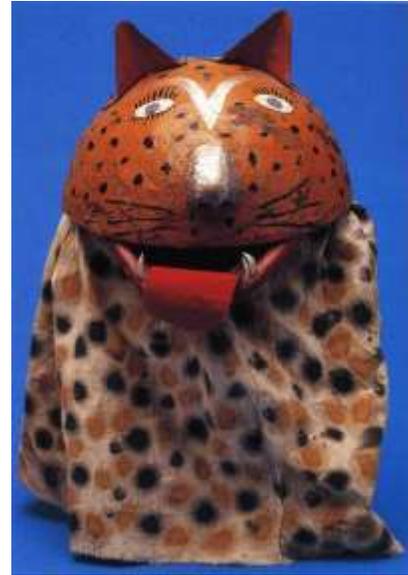
To introduce visual symbols and ancient Mexican art and folk art that have influenced Frida Kahlo in her art work.

To draw upon the ethnic, popular and folk-art of Mexican cultural heritage for their own art work.

**Activity**

The author, Jonah Winter starts out the text in *Frida*: "Frida's world is Mexico." This is a wonderful introduction to the teaching of Mexico as a country. Throughout the book are illustrations that introduce various pieces of folk art and fine art from Mexico.

Introduce students to the culture of Mexico through visuals such as a large globe, large map, folk art and fine art pieces, and other items collected from Mexico.



**Tiger**

Paper Mache

*Masks of Mexico: Tigers, Devils, and the Dance of Life.* New Mexico: Museum of New Mexico Press.

Barbara Mauldin 1999

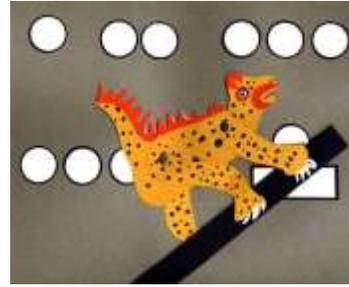


**Coloring Book Jaguar Costumed Figure**

*The Folk Art of Latin America: Visiones Del Pueblo Family Guide*  
Marion Oettinger, Jr. 1992.

### Activity

The Looking Exercise #1 will provide an introduction to the folk art masks used in Mexico for festivals. Students may make drawings of masks, use the coloring book illustration of Jaguar costumed figure, or make finger puppets of masked figures. (Excellent pictures can be found in books listed in the Resources.)



Jaguar Folk Art Toy  
Student Art Work  
Linda Kreft 1995

### LOOKING EXERCISE #1:

#### FRIDA

Jonah Winter

Illustrated by Ana Juan

Text Page 4



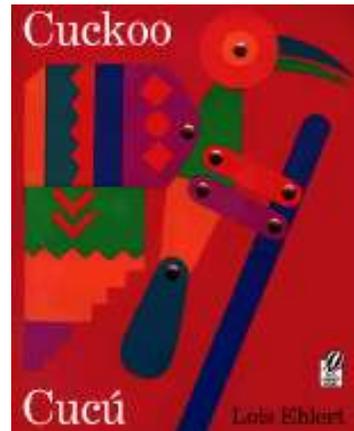
For little Frida, the world is Mexico. Her house is a blue house. It is in the town of Coyoacán.

What is going on in this picture? Describe everything you see.

What folk art is depicted?

Are the animals and plants important to the meaning of this painting?

What do you think will happen next?



Cuckoo: A Mexican Folktale Cucu: Un Cuento Folklorico Mexicano  
Lois Ehlert. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company. 1996.

### Explore another book: Diego, by Jonah Winter Illustration Page 4

Can you find Frida Kahlo looking out a window?

Diego Rivera? Costumed Festival Jaguar?

Compare costumed festival jaguar to Mexican folk art masks.



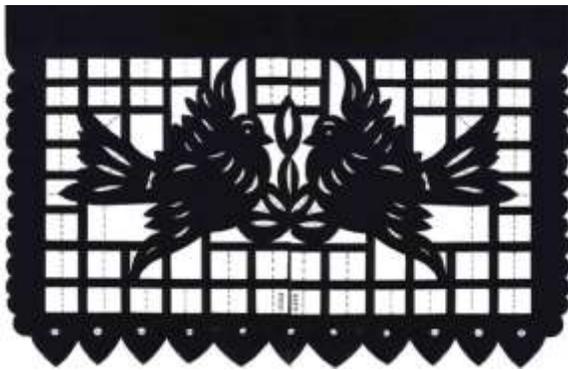
Jonah Winter. *Diego*. Illustrated by Jeanette Winter. New York: Knopf. 1991.

### Activity

This would be an opportunity to teach symmetry and Mexican Paper cutting. Examples of Mexican Paper cutting and techniques can be found in the book, *Mexican Paper cutting: Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects* by Kathleen Trenchard.

#### Papel Picado

Papel picado pierced and cut banners have been used to decorate for festive occasions for over 400 years in Mexico. To begin this project, cut a rectangle from tissue paper then fold down a 1-inch hanging flap along the length of the paper. Fold the paper in half crosswise so that the flap is on the outside. Fold the paper in half 2 more times up to the flap. Shape the outer edge with scissors and then cut designs along the folded edge. Unfold the paper once and cut the bottom folded edge. Open the flap folded down. Hang the banners on string and glue the flaps down.



#### Papel Picado

Kathleen Trenchard

*Mexican Papercutting: Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects*. New York: Sterling Publishing. 2000

### Activity

Oaxaca is one of the Mexico's largest and poorest states, yet its traditions and folk art are among the richest. Unsurpassed for their originality, colors and wizardry, Oaxacan woodcarvings (Figuras de Madera [figures of wood] or Alebrijes) have become a prized folk art. Alebrijes of Oaxaca, Mexico are now known and collected worldwide. Wood carving with Copal wood was introduced many years ago by Dominican monks for altar decoration. Over the years Oaxacan carving has evolved into a very creative and fanciful art form. Alebrijes come from the imagination of the carvers, traditionally the men of the village.

The women paint wonderfully minute and intricate designs all over the sculpture, adding to its fantasy-like appearance. They have become a very collectible and prized form of folk art.

Mexican folktales and art often depict fantastical themes and images. They involve animals transforming into other animals or objects, and people doing superhuman or impossible feats. Talk about what fantastical means and have students write and illustrate their own fantastical tales.

Let students look at images of the Oaxacan Alebrijes. Allow students to draw their own examples of animals with the detailed designs from Oaxaca.



#### Oaxacan Woodcarving

Manuel Jiménez Ramírez

Feline, 1997

Wood

Arrazola, Oaxaca

Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art

<http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/gm/enter.html>

### Activity

Frida Kahlo painted many paintings of her self by looking in a mirror. How has the illustrator suggested a mirrored self-portrait? Paint your own self-portrait. You will be the main person - the focus - of the painting. You do not need to paint your whole body. You can paint only your head and shoulders.

### Activity

Looking Exercise #2 gives an opportunity to use the Internet website created for the illustrator of the book.

In her notes, Ana Juan states:

"Although Frida lived with her five sisters, she was a lonely little girl. So she created an imaginary friend. Every time she wanted to meet her friend, Frida would do the same thing: she would steam up a floor tile with her breath and then with her finger she would draw a door on the steam. Then she would imagine herself escaping through the door, flying over the streets until she arrived in front of a shop called PINZÓN (which means "bird" in English). She would fly through the letter "O" in the word PINZÓN, which was printed on the store's sign, to the center of the earth, where her friend was waiting for her. Only then could she open her heart and tell someone her secrets. At the top left side of the illustration, we can see the circle of the letter "O," with the real world on the other side. I used the color blue because it adds to the floating feeling. Many objects inspired by Mexican folk art, such as masks and mermaids, surround Frida and her friend. I doubled her as if she were in front of a mirror because her imaginary friend was, in fact, herself."

### LOOKING EXERCISE #2:

#### FRIDA

Jonah Winter

Illustrated by Ana Juan

Text Pages 5-6



Enter, stage left: Frida's imaginary friend. Her name is also Frida.

What is going on in this picture? Describe everything you see. Do you have an imaginary playmate?

What folk art is depicted? Why is the image of a mermaid important in Mexican Folk Art?

What other folk artists have created mermaids? Compare the techniques of paintings to carved clay folk art.



Mexican Ceramic Mermaid  
Girard Collection  
Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe

### LOOKING EXERCISE #3:

#### FRIDA

Jonah Winter

Illustrated by Ana Juan

Text Page 11



Frida also paints things she sees through a microscope. She loves looking at things very closely.

What is going on in this picture? Describe everything you see. Have you looked through a microscope?

What folk art is depicted? What is Papier-mâché?



**Still Life With Parrot**

Frida Kahlo 1951

Oil on Canvas, 10x11 inches

Iconography Collection Harry Ransom  
Humanities Research Center, University of  
Texas, Austin

Terri Hardin. *Frida Kahlo: A Modern Master*.  
New York: Smithmark Publishers. 1997.

Page 113

**Activity**

The Looking Exercise #3 will provide an introduction to the folk art of ceramic earthenware and papier-mâché. There are a number of still life paintings that Frida Kahlo created with fruit and parrots.

**Activity**

In ancient Mexico, clay stamps were introduced to a new technique, the mold-made stamp, for mass production. The stamping process was frequently used to decorate pottery. It was applied to the surface of the vessel when the clay was still pliable. The result was a decoration in relief. Sometimes the stamps were used as a mold to make the whole vessel with its decorations.



**Flat Stamp Masked Figure with Headdress**

Terri Hardin. *Frida Kahlo: A Modern Master*.  
New York: Smithmark Publishers. 1997.

Page 80

This rigid, coifed figure in the ancient Mexican stamp, Masked Figure with Headdress, bears some resemblance to Kahlo's own self-portraits in both posture and style of dress.



**Flat Stamp of Man with Parrot**

Ancient Mexican Stamp

Pre-Columbian

Terri Hardin. *Frida Kahlo: A Modern Master*.  
New York: Smithmark Publishers. 1997.

Page 112

The stamp of Man With Parrot is a pre-Columbian emblem from Oaxaca; a man in a headdress is balancing a parrot on his arm. Parrots had been domesticated for centuries, and thus were, for Frida Kahlo, a tie to Mexico's ancient past. In her painting, *Still Life With Parrot*, the parrot is both a mascot and predator in this richly colored still life filled with ripening and decaying fruits, icons of sexuality, fertility, and dissolution.

**Activity**

The art of clay and cylinder stamps in Mexico was a clear influence for Frida Kahlo. Students can make cylinder stamps with molding clay. They can make prints from stamps, search card shops for stamps and create their own designs. Stencil printing can also be explored as a source of printing.



**Roller Stamp**

Student Art Work  
Linda Kreft 1995



**Pre-Columbian Stamp**

Design Motifs of  
Ancient Mexico.

Jorge Enciso. New  
York: Dover. 1953.

Page 8



Stencil Animals  
Student Art Work  
Linda Kreft 1995

**Activity**

In her notes, Ana Juan states:

"After her childhood sickness and nearly deadly accident, Frida was always in pain, even when she made the smallest movement. For Frida, her body was like a painful prison, so I painted her as captured inside a hawthorn bush from which she couldn't escape. The pain was as deep in her body as the roots of the hawthorn bush in the earth, and the pain separated her from the rest of the world. She always felt alone, and her only friend was nature, shown here in the form of the moon and fireflies."

**LOOKING EXERCISE #4:**  
**FRIDA**  
**Jonah Winter**  
**Illustrated by Ana Juan**  
**Text Pages 19-20**



After the accident, life will never be the same for Frida. She will walk with a cane-when she is able to walk. Her body will hurt, always.

What is going on in this picture?

Describe everything you see. Does the illustration depict the branches as arms of a loving parent?

**LOOKING EXERCISE #5:**  
**FRIDA**  
**Jonah Winter**  
**Illustrated by Ana Juan**  
**Text Pages 25-26**



She paints little magical scenes with words at the bottom. All over Mexico, people paint these kinds of scenes. Sometimes they are scenes of accidents with angels coming to the rescue. They are like prayers for people who are sick. They are called *ex voto*. Frida paints *ex votos* of herself when she is sick or in pain.

What is going on in this picture? Describe everything you see. What is an *ex voto*?

"*Ex voto* paintings, as I explain in the book, are little religious scenes painted by Mexican folk artists that often have words on them explaining what's happening in the scene. Frida Kahlo collected these little paintings, and they influenced her. Some of her paintings are like *ex voto* paintings with words on them. So from my point of view, it seemed like a good idea to tell her story in this manner; this seemed like one way to make her complicated life story a little simpler." Jonah Winter. Authors and Books. Scholastic.com

**Resources**  
**Books for Young Readers**

Ehlert, Lois. *Cuckoo Cucú*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company. 1996.

Fry, Frieda, Margaret Frith, and Tomie De Paola. *Frida Kahlo: The Artist Who Painted Herself*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap. 2003.

Oettinger, Jr. Marion. *The Folk Art of Latin America: Visiones Del Pueblo*. New York: Dutton Studio Books. 1992.

Jonah Winter. *Diego*. Illustrated by Jeanette Winter. New York: Knopf. 1991.

### **Resources for Teachers**

Hardin, Terri. *Frida Kahlo: A Modern Master*. New York: Smithmark Publishers. 1997.

Herrera, Hayden. *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.

Herrera, Hayden. *Frida Kahlo: The Paintings*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Mauldin, Barbara. *Masks of Mexico: tigers, Devils, and the Dance of Life*. New Mexico: Museum of New Mexico Press. 1999.

Trenchard, Kathleen. *Mexican Papercutting: Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects by Kathleen Trenchard*. New York: Sterling Publishing. 2000.

### **Internet Websites**

Ancient Mexican art  
<http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/ancient/>

The Diego Rivera Mural Project  
<http://www.riveramural.com/>

Enter Frida's World  
Conversation with the Illustrator-Ana Juan  
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks/events/frida/illustration1.htm>

Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art  
<http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/gm/enter.html>

My Hero Project-Frida Kahlo  
<http://myhero.com/myhero/hero.asp?hero=fkahlo>

Oaxacan Animal Carvings  
<http://www.nhusd.k12.ca.us/ALVE/wow/PAWS/oaxacan/oaxacanintro.html>

Oaxacan Woodcarving-Manuel Jiménez Ramírez  
[http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/gm/html\\_sub/wood.html](http://www.nmai.si.edu/exhibitions/gm/html_sub/wood.html)

PBS-The Life and Times of Frida Kahlo Works of Art-Self-Portrait With Monkey

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/fridakahlo/worksofart/monkey.html>

Talking About Mexico for Kids  
<http://www.elbalero.gob.mx/kids/about/html/home.html>