

[MSU Center for Latin America & Caribbean Studies]
[music playing] [Presents]
[What is Cinco de mayo?]

[Tween girl holding microphone and standing next to metal globe in building lobby]

>>T: Here we are at Michigan State campus asking people about Cinco de Mayo.

->>T:What do you think? What is Cinco de Mayo Celebrate?

- A. Mexican Independence Day
- B. National Taco Day
- C. Anniversary of the Battle of Puebla
- D. 5th of May

>>1: Um, I'd guess the Mexican Independence Day? Or, the 5th of May?

>>2: It's the anniversary of the Battle of Puebla

>>3: Um, Mexican Independence Day

>>4: I believe that'd be the anniversary of the Battle of Puebla?

>>5: Is it C?

>>6: I think I'm going to pick the first one.

>>7: Well it is the 5th of May but I think it's Independence Day of Mexico.

>>8: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it's Independence Day too.

>>9: I agree. Independence Day.

[Tween girl (T) sitting in coffee shop with Tween boys (A and D)]

>>T: What do you think? What does Cinco de Mayo celebrate?

Mexican Independence Day

National taco day

Anniversary of the Battle of Puebla

Or, the 5th of May?

The answer is the Battle of Puebla

>>A: Really? Wow. Did you get it right? If not,,you're just like 72% of the people we asked.

>>D: Cinco de Mayo commemorates the anniversary of the Mexican army defeating the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1862 during the Franco-Mexican War.

>>T: Mexico became independent in 1821.

>>A: I remember it like was 1808 (flashback harp sound)

->>D: That's when Napoleon Bonaparte [portrait of Napoleon on horse]

->>A: Whoa, he's creepy!

->>D: was emperor of France and invaded Spain.

->>T: This left New Spain in a predicament.

[Portrait of King Felipe]

->>A: The Criollos, people who were of Spanish descent but grew up in the New Spain territory, were tired of not having a voice or influence in the government. The Spanish king decided the laws, policies, taxes and didn't care if they were fair.

->>D: Wait, time out. Don't you mean the 13 colonies and the King of England?

[Map of Spanish Viceroy of New Spain 1819]

->>T: Nope, different empire. And country to the north. And about 30 years earlier. Empire and colony stories have many things in common so it's not surprising that the US and Mexico origin stories are similar.

->>A: But back to New Spain and growing resentment.

->>D: A small group of Criollos, including a priest named Miguel Hidalgo, started meeting in secret to plan a way to declare independence from Spain. They thought, "Hey, Napoleon took over Spain from King Carlos IV. We don't want to be ruled by the French so we should declare our independence to show how loyal we are the Spanish."

>>A: The Criollos thought Spain would see their declaration as an action for the Spanish and against the French? And not have a problem with it?

>>D: I know, right?

>>T: And the French would say, "oh, okay. Pardonmoi, our bad and accept the new country?" Really?

>>A: Not 100% sure what they were thinking but the Peninsulares -- Europeans in Mexico representing the king, either king -- did not climb on board with the plan when they discovered the plot.

>>D: Shocking!

>>T: Right? Instead the Peninsulares ordered the group of men arrested and executed before they could carry out their plan.

[Portrait of Hidalgo] - >>A: Learning of his arrest warrant, Miguel Hidalgo, a priest, decided to accelerate the plan for independence. He recruited a group of indigenous and mestizo volunteers and in the early morning of September 16, 1810 rang the church bells [bell sounds] in the town of Dolores, shouting,

[Portrait of Hidalgo shouting]

->>D: "Will you free yourselves? Will you recover the lands stolen 300 years ago from your forefathers by the hated Spaniards? We must act at once!"

->>A: Whoo-yay!

->>T: This became known as the "Grito de Dolores" or the Shout from Dolores.

[Portrait of Hidalgo]

->>A: Hidalgo teamed up with another conspirator, Ignacio Allende who was a Spanish captain who joined the independence movement. They led the militia to victory many times.

->>D: Unfortunately, when they got to the gates of Mexico City, Hidalgo had second thoughts and delayed their attack. Members of militia began to desert. Hidalgo had to retreat.

->>T: He tried to flee to the United States but was captured and executed.

->>A: Ouch. Despite the setback, the quest for independence continued.

[Mexican flag]

->>D: Ten years later, Spain finally agreed to independence and in 1821, Mexico became a sovereign country.

>>T: So what is the deal with Cinco de Mayo?

>>A: Similar to the US after independence, the new Mexican nation had to prove itself in the world - that it could take care of itself and stand up for itself against others.

>>D: That was not easy. First was the Mexican-American War against the US where Mexico had to defend itself.

>>T: Next was the Mexican Civil War in 1858. When Mexico emerged still a single country there were still many political divisions and the economy was...

>>A: Ruined?

>>D: Yes. Mexico had a lot of debt that it owed to Spain, England, and France.

[Portrait of Benito Juarez]

->>T: When Benito Juarez became president in 1861 he stopped repayment or defaulted on its debts.

->>A: Ooo, I bet the other countries did not like that.

[Map of Mexico]

->>D: No, France, Spain and Britain sailed to Veracruz, off the coast of the Gulf of Mexico to demand payment. Britain and Spain negotiated a settlement and withdrew.

>>T: Whew.

[Portrait of Napoleon III]

->>A: France, under Napoleon III, however, had slightly different plans.

->>T: What's the deal Mexico and Napoleons? –

>>D: Napoleon III wanted to reclaim the greatness of the French Empire under Napoleon Bonaparte.

->>T: So, he thought Mexico would be a nice territory to take over?

[Photo of beach, Photo of Chichin Itza pyramid]

->>A: Well, it is. Mexico is lovely. It's got beaches, ancient ruins, mountains,

[Photo of chiles and tortillas] great food...

[Map of Mexico]

->>D: Indeed. In late 1861, a large French fleet stormed Veracruz. President Juarez and his government retreated north.

->>T: The French decided to attack Puebla, a town south of Mexico City, in the eastern-central part of the country.

->>A: President Juarez managed to recruit 2000 loyal men, many of whom were indigenous or mestizo, a mix of European and indigenous ancestry.

[Painting of scene from the battle]

->>D: Under General Ignacio Zaragoza Sequin, they fortified the town and got ready.

[bugle call to battle]

->>T: On May 5, 1862, the French attacked at dawn.

[snare drum]

->>A: All day the battle raged.

->>D: Finally, the French retreated.

->>T: Wait, the French?

->>A: Yeah, the French. The better equipped, better trained, French army, lost 5 times, 5 times more men than the Mexican resistance.

->>D: Whoo-hoo!

[Portrait of Napoleon III]

->>T: Kind of. Napoleon III used this as an excuse to send more troops, eventually overthrowing the Mexican government.

->>A: Wait, hold on, hold on. Mexico's not part of France.

->>D: No, it's not. The war lasted until 1867 when France finally surrendered.

[Painting of battle scene]

->>T: That's 5 years after the Battle of Puebla.

->>A: The Battle of Puebla was significant because it unified the country and strengthened the resistance movement.

->>D: Cinco de mayo honors this unlikely victory and the men's bravery against the better equipped foe.

[Photo of Puebla city street]

->>T: It's more of a regional holiday with the most enthusiastic celebration in Puebla.

->>A: It's a lovely town.

->>D: True.

>>T: Want to learn more?

>>A: Go to history.com or mexonline.com

>>D: Hasta luego!

>>A: So taco, time guys?

>>T: Yeah, learning makes me hungry.

>>D: Yeah, let's go.

[The three get up and walk toward the camera. Camera goes to no signal]