

Scott Frandsen

Cápsula Cultural  
El Castillo-The Pyramid of Kulkulkan

Purpose-

To familiarize the students with traditions and ancient ruins of chichen-Itza.

Objective-

Students will be able to identify the pyramid “El Castillo,” describe some of the traditions that go along with it.

Evaluation-

Students will have pictures of many different pyramids and will identify “El Castillo.” They will also need to answer out loud, the questions; What is inside the pyramid? What can be found on the four corners of the pyramid? What was the sign that let the people know when to plant corn? What does the number of steps represent?

Basic Information-

The ancient mayan pyramid “El Castillo” stands about 80 feet high. It has nine terraces and four staircases leading to the top. The nine terraces represent the nine heavens and the four staircases represent the four cardinal points. Each staircase has 91 steps for a total of 364 steps. If you include the last step up to the summit platform, it makes one step for each day of the year. These staircases are at about a 45 degree angle, making the ascent quite challenging. At each of the four corners, the serpent god Kulkulkán, can be found descending to the bottom of the pyramid. The pyramid is built in a way that the sun hits the body of the serpent and gradually passes down the body until hitting the head as the seasons change. Once the sun was at the serpent's head, it was a sign to the local people to plant their corn. Inside the great pyramid, a smaller pyramid can be found. As was typical of the time, “El Castillo” was built on top of an already existing pyramid.

Class Presentation-

1. Activity-show pictures of the pyramid to the students. (Pictures can be found at any of the sites listed) while looking at the pictures, explain about the structure of the pyramid and the symbolism behind the snakes and stairs.
2. Vocabulary-el pirámide, la escalera (escalón), el serpiente, las estaciones, Dios, el cielo, la cumbre
3. Materials-Pictures of the pyramid or access to the internet sites;  
[www.Mysteriousplaces.com/mayan/elcastillo.html](http://www.Mysteriousplaces.com/mayan/elcastillo.html)  
[www.Hanksville.org/yucatan/el\\_castillo.html](http://www.Hanksville.org/yucatan/el_castillo.html)  
[www.Halfmoon.org/pyramid.html](http://www.Halfmoon.org/pyramid.html)