

# Zapatista Movement

Impact & Political Outcomes  
in Mexico

# Standards

**SS6H3 The student will analyze important 20th century issues in Latin America and the Caribbean.**

b. Explain the impact and political outcomes of the Zapatista guerrilla movement in Mexico.

# Teachers – Picture Analysis Activity

Put the students into six groups, and give each group one of the following pictures. Have the students look at the picture and make predictions about what is happening in the picture. The students should complete the Picture Analysis handout. Have the groups share their picture & answers with the class. After all pictures have been shared, have the class make a prediction about who the Zapatistas are and what they are fighting for.

\*All of the pictures are of the Zapatistas. I have found that most students know nothing about this organization, so the Picture Analysis has been a good way to spark their interest in the topic, especially after they see the masked men and weapons.

# Picture Analysis

**Your task:** Spend some time analyzing your group's picture, then answer the questions below.

1. What exactly do you see in the photograph?
2. How are the people dressed?
3. What are they doing?
4. Imagine that you are in the picture. What would you hear? What would you smell?
5. Prediction: What happened right **before** this image?
6. Prediction: What happened right **after** this image?



# Picture 1



Picture 2



# Picture 3



Picture 4





# Picture 5



Picture 6

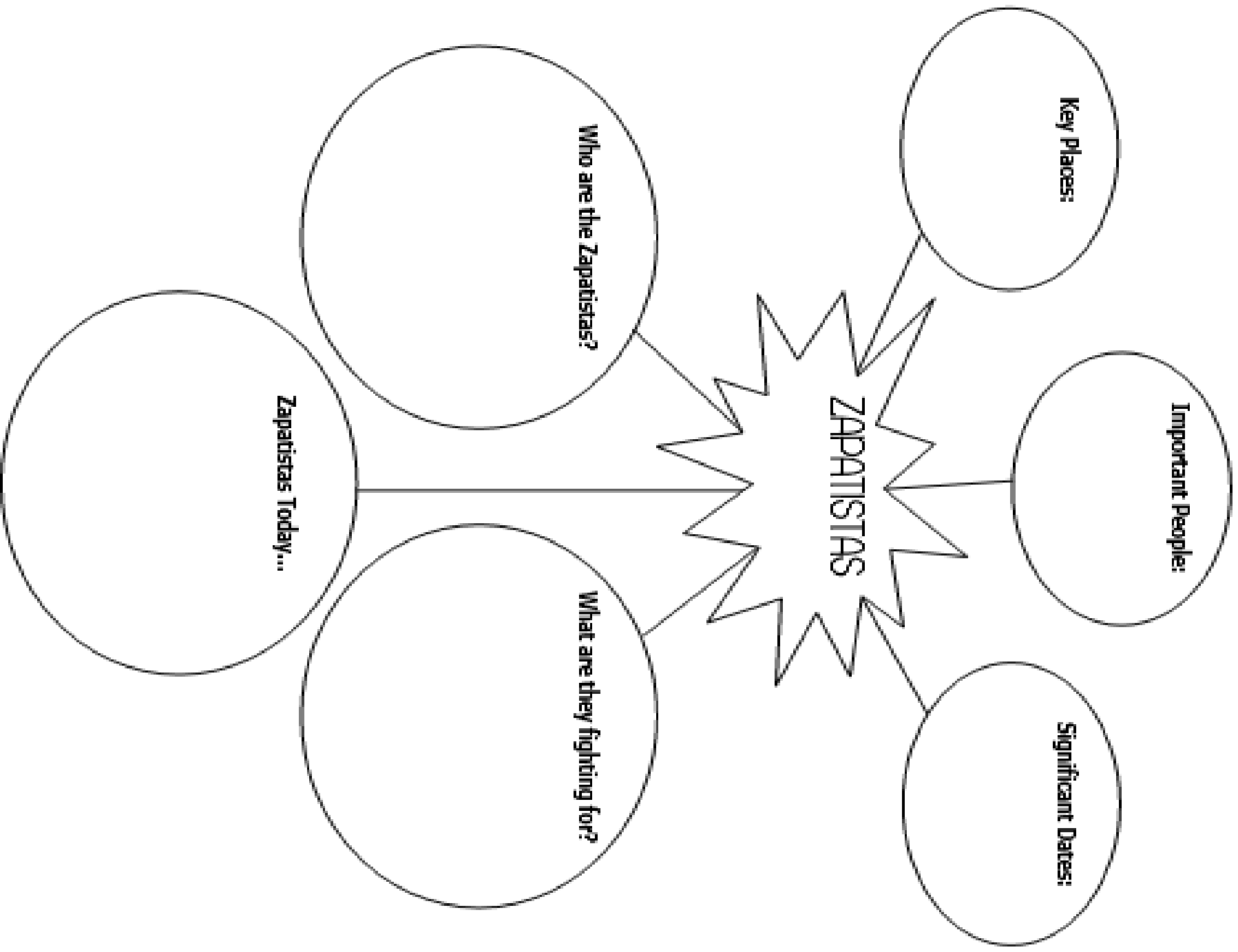


# Teachers

Print off the following page for each student. They should complete the graphic organizer while discussing the presentation.

# Zapatista Movement

Directions: Fill in the chart below with information from the Zapatistas PowerPoint.



## **Questions to Consider:**

1. What are "guerillas"?
2. What country & region are the Zapatistas located in?
3. Who are the majority of the members of the Zapatista Movement?
4. Who is Emiliano Zapata and how has he impacted the Zapatista Movement?
5. What are some good things that Chiapas is known for?
6. What negative things are happening in Chiapas?
7. How do the Zapatistas feel about NAFTA? Why?
8. What happened with the Zapatistas in 1994?

# Zapatista Movement

Impact & Political Outcomes  
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# What are Guerillas?

- They are generally small military groups that are made up of non-traditional soldiers.
  - These groups do not represent an entire country, but rather a common cause or idea.
- Guerillas use surprise attacks and sabotage (known as “guerilla warfare”) to attack their enemies.

# Zapatistas

- The Zapatistas are a guerilla group who support improved rights and living conditions for Mexico's indigenous (native) people.
- The group consists primarily of poor farmers and workers of indigenous American ancestry.





# Inspiration

- The Zapatistas get their name from one of the leaders of the Mexican Revolution, **Emiliano Zapata**.
- Zapata is a Mexican symbol for rising up against a government that oppresses the people.
- Zapata did not create the Zapatistas, but his lifetime achievements inspired the name of the group.

# Chiapas

- The Zapatistas are located in the Chiapas region of southern Mexico.
- Chiapas is a resource-rich state.
  - It produces over half of Mexico's hydroelectric power.
  - It's the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest petroleum-producing state.
  - It's the largest coffee exporting state.



# What's the Big Deal?

- Chiapas has the worst rates of poverty in Mexico.
  - Three-fourths of its people are malnourished.
  - Over half live in dwellings with dirt floors.
  - 19% of the population has no income.
  - 39% earn less than minimum wage (\$3 per day).
- Chiapas is a huge contributor to the global economy (water, oil, etc.), but its people are getting very little in return.
  - There is a huge division between the rich and the poor in the state.

Leader of Zapatistas  
Subcomandante Marcos



"The natural wealth that leaves these lands doesn't travel over just these three roads (leading to Chiapas). Chiapas is bled through thousands of veins: through oil ducts and gas ducts, over electric wires, by railroad cars, through bank accounts, by trucks and vans, by ships and planes...And what tribute does this land continue to pay to various empires? Oil, electric energy, cattle, money, bananas, honey, corn, cocoa, tobacco, sugar, soy...and Chiapan blood flows out through a thousand and one fangs sunk into the neck of southeastern Mexico."

# Time for Change

- The Zapatistas want to eliminate the division between the social classes in Chiapas (wealthy vs. poor).
- They feel that the indigenous people of Mexico need more help to improve healthcare, housing, education, and jobs.
- They have tried to peacefully negotiate with Mexico's government, but those agreements have not solved the peoples' problems...

## Chiapas Roadside Sign:



“You are in Zapatista rebel territory. Here the people command and the government obeys.”





# NAFTA's Impact

- In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect and allowed free trade between US, Canada, and Mexico.
- Some people in Mexico did not like this plan:
  - They believed that NAFTA would allow cheap farm goods to come into Mexico from the US.
  - They felt NAFTA benefitted the wealthy and hurt the poor Native American farmers by lowering prices of crops like coffee and corn.
  - They feared that farmers in Mexico would not be able to compete with the cheaper food.

# NAFTA & Zapatistas

- On the day NAFTA took effect, the Zapatistas used guerilla tactics and took over seven towns in their part of Mexico (state of Chiapas).
- The Mexican army was sent in to remove the Zapatistas.
  - Fighting lasted for several weeks until a cease-fire eventually ended it.

# Armed Takeover in Chiapas – 1994



# Zapatistas Today

- Even though the 1994 revolt was put down by the Mexican National Army, the Zapatistas did not go away.
  - They received recognition from governments worldwide, and the revolt helped put pressure on the Mexican government to fix the problems in the Chiapas region.
- The Mexican government and the Zapatistas are working constantly to come up with solutions in Chiapas.
  - The Zapatistas want more money and assistance from the government in helping to make the Chiapas region a better place to live.
- It's taking a long time...

# Quick Sketch: *The Zapatista Movement*

**Directions:** After reviewing the Zapatistas PowerPoint, think about specific words or phrases that help create a picture in your head of the Zapatista movement. Write these words and phrases in the box below (the more words you jot down, the better!). After reading over your words, sketch a quick picture that you were able to create in your head.

**Key Words and Phrases:**

**Quick Sketch:**

# Power to the People?

## A Case Study of the Zapatista Movement

**Chiapas:** The people of the southern state of Chiapas are among Mexico's poorest. The land of Chiapas, however, is among Mexico's richest. More than half of Mexico's hydroelectric power comes from Chiapas. Natural gas and oil are found there, and much coffee is grown. Yet, the resources go north to fuel other Mexican states.

Those hardest hit by poverty in Chiapas are the people of Mayan descent. Many of them do not speak Spanish. Most of them are small-scale farmers. They have less access to education and healthcare than most other Mexicans. When Mexico's leaders run for election or make public policies, they tend to ignore the needs and voices of the indigenous peoples. In addition, much of the best land for farming and ranching is controlled by a few wealthy landowners. These *rancheros* often act with the Mexican government in ways to benefit only themselves.

In the remote southern state of Chiapas, Mexico, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation began an armed rebellion against the Mexican government on January 1, 1994. The Zapatistas claimed to be fighting against poverty and injustice and for the rights of indigenous peoples. Led by a man referred to as Sub-Commander Marcos, hundreds of peasant soldiers, their faces covered by black ski masks or red bandanas, operated in the countryside. Although most Zapatistas carried weapons dating back to World War II, they occupied several key towns and attacked a regional military base. More than 100 people were killed in the uprising, including government soldiers, peasants, and government functionaries. The Zapatistas blew up telephone and electrical towers and detonated car bombs in Mexico City, injuring several people. The Mexican military responded with force, and international human rights groups accused the military of torturing villagers to get information about the rebels. Since 1995, the Zapatistas have been committed to negotiating with the Mexican government. Nonetheless, talks between the government and the Zapatistas have stalled. The conflict has pitted village against village, often spilling over into bloodshed. In 1997, for example, government forces massacred 45 villagers for their support of the Zapatistas. At the same time, the Zapatistas rely on the internet and cellular telephones to maintain a sophisticated communications network. Their Web site attracts thousands of visitors.



**Questions to Consider:**

- 1) Do you believe that the Zapatistas' decision to use force was acceptable and justifiable? Why or why not?
- 2) Are the Zapatistas terrorists or revolutionaries? Why?
- 3) Was the way that the force was used acceptable? Why or why not?
- 4) What is your view of the response of the state (Mexico's government) to the Zapatistas' use of force?
- 5) What would you recommend that they Zapatistas do in order to get their ideas across to the Mexican government?

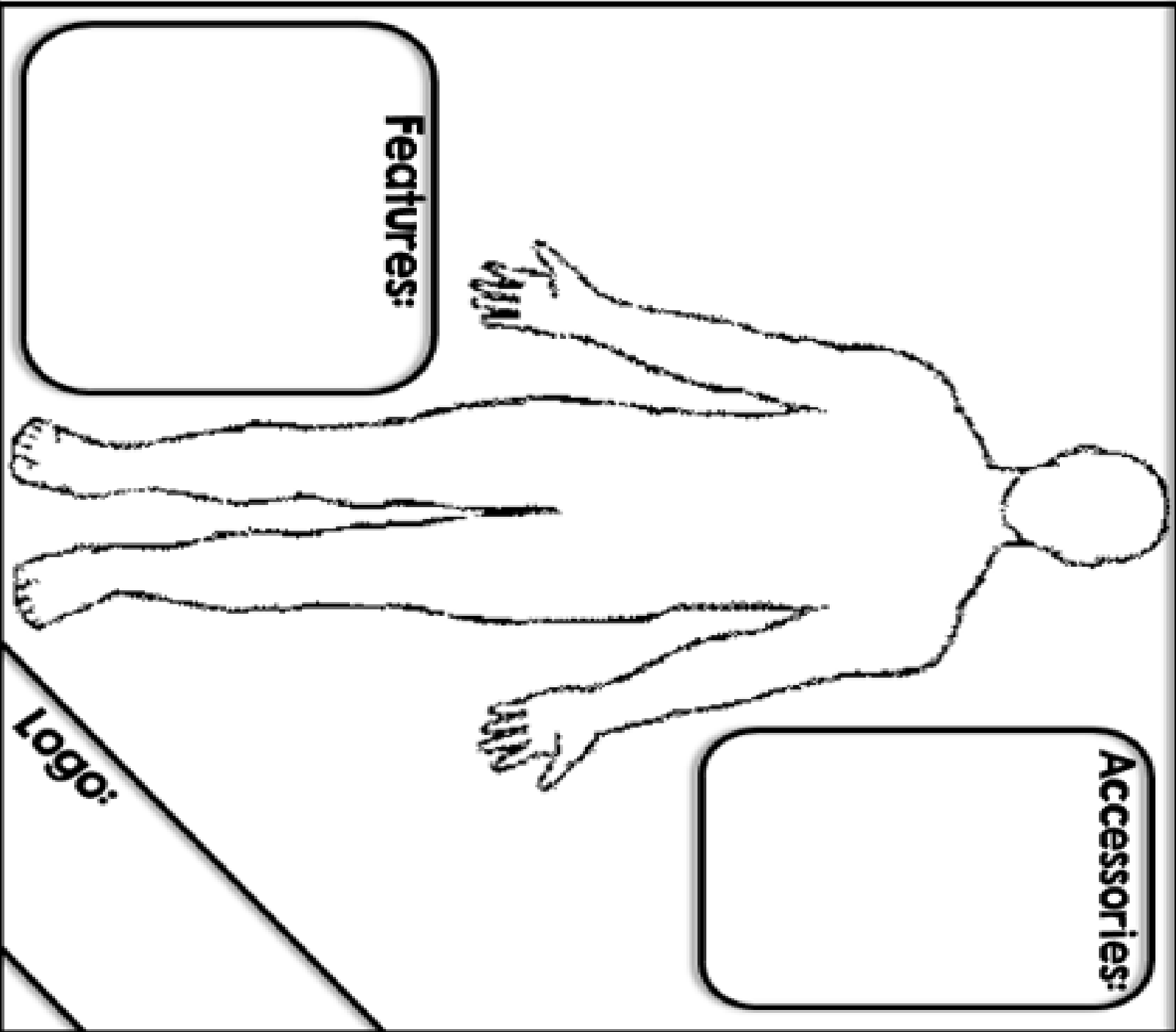




# Zapatistas Action Figure

**Your Task:** Congratulations! You have just been hired by a major toy company. Your first project is to design an action figure to represent the Zapatistas. Be sure to dress your action figure in ways that represent the group. Choose at least three special features that your action figure will have. These features should relate to the Zapatistas' Movement. Also include at least three accessories that come with your figure that are appropriate. Does your action figure have a catch phrase or motto? What about an arch nemesis (enemy)? Logo? Include those things in your figure's box!

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Accessories:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Features:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Logo:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Teachers

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