The Story of Cinco de Mayo

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Cinco de Mayo means the 5th of May, in English. In Mexico and in some parts of the United States, people celebrate Cinco de Mayo with music and dancing.
Some people believe that Cinco de Mayo celebrates Mexico’s Independence from Spain. However, it actually commemorates the Battle of Puebla in Mexico.
Let’s review some history, so that we can truly understand the importance of Cinco de Mayo.
By May of 1862, the American Civil War had lasted for over 365 days. The north and south were fighting over the issues of slavery and states’ rights.
Failure to reunite the American States, would have resulted in two separate countries in what is now the United States of America.
After the Mexican-American War and its own civil war, Mexico’s President Benito Juarez knew that his country was bankrupt. President Juarez decided not to repay money that Mexico had borrowed.
Since the countries of Great Britain, France and Spain had loaned money to Mexico, they sent armies to collect the debt.
After long discussions, Mexico was able to work out agreements to repay Great Britain and Spain. The French government was not interested in any agreement and ordered its army to stay in Mexico.
In 1862, France was considered to have the strongest army in the world. However, some people believed that France feared the power of the American States working together.
Napoleon III wanted to create a French empire in Mexico and perhaps help the Southern Confederate States defeat the North, in America. So, France declared war with Mexico.
On May 5, 1862, about 6,000 French troops met about 4,000 Mexican people armed with old rifles and machetes, in Puebla, Mexico.
Even though the French had the trained army, they were defeated by the untrained Mexican citizens.
Cinco de Mayo, the 5th of May, could be thought of as the day that Mexico protected the southern border of the United States of America from France.
Cinco de Mayo celebrates the defeat of Napoleon III’s French soldiers, in 1862. Each year, the Battle of Puebla is reenacted by citizens of Puebla, Mexico.
Today, in Mexico and some parts of the United States, people celebrate Cinco de Mayo with music and dancing.
Online Resources

Thank you to the following on-line resources:

MEXonline.com – Map of Mexico (Puebla)
http://www.mexonline.com/cinco-de-mayo.htm

The Battle of La Puebla (Mexico)
http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/timeline/10.html

Timeline of the Civil War
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/tl1861.html

Cinco de Mayo
http://clnet.ucla.edu/cinco.html

Portrait of Benito Juarez
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benito_Ju%C3%A1rez

Portrait of Napoleon III
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napoleon_III_of_France
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_French_Empire

Hispanic Heritage in America – Cinco de Mayo dancers
http://www.library.eb.com/hispanic_heritage/art-69621
Online Resources

*Thank you to the following on-line resources:*

**Battle of Puebla Mexico**
http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1863/june/puebla-mexico.htm

**Cinco de Mayo in Puebla (Mexico) - reenactment**

**Old Books**
http://www.fromoldbooks.org/pictures-of-old-books/

**Cannon photo**
http://www.wildwestweb.net/cwphotos.html

**Soldiers**
http://www.archives.gov/research/civil-war/photos/
http://www.archives.gov/research/civil-war/photos/images/civil-war-002.jpg

**Civil War Map**
http://www.pbs.org/civilwar/war/map1.html#

**Slave picture – including Harriet Tubman (far left)**
http://americancivilwar.com/pictures/
Online Resources

Thank you to the following on-line resources:

Map of France
http://www.informatics.org/france/maps.html

Old Maps of Spain, Great Britain, and France
http://www.gracegalleries.com/Spain-Portugal_Listings.htm
Portraits of Queen Victoria I of Great Britain
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_of_the_United_Kingdom

Portrait of Queen Isabella II of Spain
http://www.wildwestweb.net/cwphotos.html

French Soldiers – 1860’s

Cinco de May photo (cover)
http://www.ddbstock.com/cincodm1.html

The History of Cinco de Mayo
http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/timeline/10.html
http://www.mexonline.com/cinco-de-mayo.htm
http://clnet.ucla.edu/cinco.html
http://www.vivacincodemayo.org/history.htm
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