

In this Collection unit, students explore primary source documents and conduct independent research to learn about some of Mexico’s most famous artists, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, an extraordinary couple who lived in extraordinary times.

In each sub-unit, students analyze primary source materials with a goal of building their ability to independently research a topic, generate a question, select and analyze credible sources, and write using those sources. Students learn to determine if a source is credible and understand the ethical uses of information; construct their own research questions and explore the Internet for answers; practice working with descriptive writing; and participate in a Socratic seminar about the complicated issues inherent in the work of Frida and Diego. As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they’ve developed to tackle a culminating research assignment—part essay, part multimedia project.

### Core texts your student will read:

- Excerpt: “Rockefellers Ban Lenin in RCA Mural and Dismiss Rivera” from *The New York Times*
- Excerpt: “Frida Becomes My Wife” from *My Art, My Life: An Autobiography* by Diego Rivera
- “Detroit Industry: The Murals of Diego Rivera” from *NPR.org* by Don Gonyea
- “Letter to Ella and Bertram Wolfe” from *The Letters of Frida Kahlo: Cartas Apasionadas* by Frida Kahlo, compiled by Martha Zamora
- Excerpt: “Statement by Frida Kahlo” from *My Art, My Life: An Autobiography* by Diego Rivera
- Excerpt: “Life with Frida” from *Frida’s Fiestas: Recipes and Reminiscences of Life with Frida Kahlo* by Guadalupe Rivera and Marie-Pierre Colle
- Excerpt: “Frida Kahlo” from *Smithsonian* by Phyllis Tuchman

### What my student will do/learn:

- Students conduct scavenger hunts to become familiar with the texts and images included in the Collection.
- Students construct effective research questions, evaluate Internet sources, and craft responses using those sources.
- After comparing Frida’s writing to a Shakespearean sonnet, students engage in descriptive writing of their own.
- Students establish expectations, prepare questions for, and engage in a Socratic seminar, discussing the lives, times, and work of Frida and Diego.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to one of the following prompts:

- a. Research Option 1: Informative Essay: Frida Kahlo: The Early Years—Why did Frida Kahlo begin painting? How did this circumstance affect the type of paintings that she did? What did that mean for her long-term career? Write an informative essay about the beginning and development of Frida’s artistic work.
- b. Research Option 2: Argumentative Essay: Who has the right to decide what public art should be: the artist or the public?—There was controversy surrounding Diego Rivera’s mural, Detroit Industry. Why did many people object to this work of art? What role does the public play when a work of art is being commissioned for a public space? What role does the artist play? Should Rivera have followed the demands of the public or was he right to follow his artistic instincts? You will write an argumentative essay stating your claim that either Rivera was right to follow his artistic vision or the public was right to demand that he paint the mural they envisioned. Be sure to identify at least 2 sources you can use in your work.

As you conduct your research in both the Collection and on the Internet, be sure to look for relevant facts, concrete details, and clear evidence to support your claim.

- Students also create a digital collage to share their essay research with the class.

**Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.**

1. As you worked to evaluate sources, what did you notice about the credible websites? What advice might you give a friend looking for information on the Internet?
2. What does it mean to “cite your sources?”
3. What are some facts that you learned about the lives, artwork, or times of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera? In what ways were Frida and/or Diego controversial? What do you think continues to inspire people about their lives and art ?
4. Can you share the descriptive poem you wrote using comparisons to describe an animal? (Provide feedback to your student by celebrating their poem and responding to something specific as a reader. For example, “It’s very funny when you describe the orangutan’s teeth as ‘sharp as my 2-year old baby brother’s teeth.’”