

Frida Kahlo:
Marginalized Groups Amid Mexican Modernism

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Individual Website

1200 student composed words on the website

2:58 media time on the website

500 student composed words on the process paper

After learning the 2024 National History Day theme was “Turning Points in History,” I chose a turning point when ideas were implemented in a way that impacted various people. Frida Kahlo’s art was this type of turning point because she fearlessly depicted marginalized groups during a time when artists did not commonly include them in their work.

During the summer of 2022, I attended a Latin art exhibit that showcased Frida Kahlo. At the Philbrook Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, I learned how Kahlo was a significant contributor to the artistic period known as Mexican Modernism. I realized that turning points in Kahlo’s own life catalyzed her to become an artist who represented marginalized groups: individuals with disabilities, indigenous people, and women.

To begin, I studied the diary written by Kahlo during the last ten years of her life. This diary was my most valuable primary source; I used several quotes and a drawing from it. Then, I utilized the museum labels of Kahlo’s paintings. They allowed me to gain a more in-depth understanding of what her art symbolized. After examining her art, I decided to create a website about her representation of marginalized people. I believe a website is the best way to portray my project because it allows me to display Kahlo’s

artwork and visually connect it to my thesis. I chose trim colors of green, white, and red to represent the Mexican Flag and incorporate Kahlo's culture. For the sub-header of each page, I used relevant titles of Kahlo's paintings.

After visiting another museum to view Kahlo's artwork, I began doing some deep research, starting with secondary sources to gain general knowledge. I intended to illustrate how art impacted cultural changes after the Mexican Revolution. One exhibit discussed how the Mexican Revolution influenced the artistic period that followed: Mexican Modernism. I began digging through original newspaper articles from the 1930s-1950s and Library of Congress archives that related to Kahlo's life and artwork. I incorporated many paintings to represent how Kahlo's work created turning points for marginalized groups. Kahlo's paintings have significance in history because she compels viewers to take notice of marginalized individuals in a new way. Some of her self-portraits showed her in a wheelchair and in various medical situations during a time when people with disabilities were underrepresented. Also, since Kahlo's maternal grandparents were Mexican, she integrated native flora, fauna, clothing, and cultural symbols into much of her artwork. Kahlo wanted to bring attention to that part of her

heritage because the indigenous people of Mexico were often overlooked. Finally, Kahlo represented women's issues in an original way. She addressed controversial topics like miscarriage and brought subjects to light that were previously considered taboo.

Society's views toward marginalized groups have significantly evolved in the decades since Kahlo died. Kahlo's artwork created turning points by bringing attention to what it means to be a person with disabilities, indigenous, and a woman. Today, Kahlo is a widely celebrated cultural icon because her artwork speaks to historically marginalized groups.