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Peru 2023 GEEA tour reflections

What a privilege it was to be included with this inspiring group of teachers in Peru! I was initially nervous about the economics aspect of the tour, but the group made me feel included and comfortable enough to ask questions. Going to Peru was a bucket list item for sure, and this tour fulfilled all my hopes.

I am excited to share so much of what I learned with my own students and with other teachers in my school and district.

### **Lima**

Lima was a fascinating city. Our tour guide was engaging, and the traffic was something to remember! It reminded me of a wonderful story that is part of the AP Spanish Literature course, “Como la vida misma (Like Life Itself),” by Rosa Montero, about being stuck in traffic. I would like to incorporate some of the pictures I took, and pictures I glean from other members of the group, in a lesson presenting this story. One of the questions I often use when introducing this story is “Why do normally polite people become rude, or even enraged, when stuck in traffic?” I was surprised by the patience with which the Limeños faced their daily commute. It seemed there was a language of car horns, which announced one’s presence but did not seem to offend or cause conflict.

I am excited about the discussion that this one cultural difference can lead to. What does it mean when you honk your horn in traffic? How do other drivers react?

The schools we visited in Lima were wonderful. One lesson that stood out to me was in an economics class. The theme was corporate responsibility, and the students were asked to choose a company and research the ways that it gives back to the community. The lesson was introduced with a fascinating story of Nueva Fuerabamba. This is exactly the kind of current events story that I love to turn into lessons for my classes at all levels. I will be taking this story and writing leveled versions of it to add to my class library and to my lesson plans this year. In AP Spanish we will delve even deeper into the story, and perhaps replicate the activity that I observed in the Lima school. My students will also examine companies in Spanish-speaking countries and the ways that they contribute to the communities where their business has an impact. (<https://widerimage.reuters.com/story/relocated-peru-villagers-spurn-shiny-new-town>)

The San Francisco Convent gave me multiple lesson ideas. Diego de la Puerto's 1696 painting of The Last Supper will surely fascinate my students. The painting is full of Inca symbolism and hints at resistance to the Spanish colonialization of Peru at the same time as it playfully combines Peruvian culture and food (guinea pig and potatoes) with the traditional Last Supper iconography. And of course, the catacombs will make for a lesson the students will love.

I have some questions about Lima that I want my students to explore. For instance, Kennedy Park – why is a Peruvian park named for a US president, and what about those cats? Surfing was invented in Peru? That is worth exploring and perhaps debating.

## Cusco

My curiosity about Peru has turned into a bit of an obsession. I have spent much of my vacation after returning from Peru online, looking for connections that I can make and maintain with the schools and places we visited. I have followed their Facebook pages and watched their videos. I might even have spent several hours watching videos of driving through Lima (<https://youtu.be/dk-NdzCrxvw>).

While in Peru I did not buy a chess set, but there were many for sale. Ricardo Palma, a Peruvian writer, tells the story of “El Inca ajedrecista,” (The Chess Playing Inca), which describes the bringing of the game of chess to the Americas, and posits that Atahualpa, the last Inca, might not have lost his life had he not been so intelligent, learning Spanish and mastering the complexities of chess simply by being a captive observer. I will use this story in my classes this year.

I am intrigued by the bulls placed on the rooftops all over Cusco. I found limited information online, mostly from shops or tourism sites, and only hint at the history and legend of these objects. But the Peruvian embassy in Ireland, of all places, hosted an exhibition that led me to this brochure, which will soon be a lesson in my Spanish classes in Richland, Washington. (Link: <https://bit.ly/3uiW15m>)

The ruins and history of Cusco were overwhelming. I am not sure how I will incorporate all that I learned and saw into my classes. However, there are some questions that I have pondered in the weeks following our trip that my students may also find compelling: How did the Inca maintain such a vast

empire without a written language? What might Peru be like today had the Spanish not conquered and plundered their way across Latin America?

### **Posada Amazonas**

This was my favorite part of the trip. I loved the connection and collaboration that gives the Ese Eja people a stake in the preservation of the jungle. The school in the Community of Infierno was welcoming and inspiring, and even though I am not trained as an interpreter, I appreciated the chance to use my Spanish at the school. The medicinal plants that the children learn about and cultivate was very impressive. I wish that we had more of that sort of thing in the US.

It was here that we learned about the legend of el Chullachaqui, a shapeshifting creature that tricks its victims into going further and further into the jungle until they are hopelessly lost. This will fit right in with a lesson on other legendary characters, such as el Pombero, el Chupacabras, la Llorona and el Cucuy.

I also love that there are real life opportunities for my students to participate in citizen science. The light trap hike was fantastic, and while I did not discover any new species of moth, I was excited about the chance to participate myself. Wired Amazon (<https://www.wiredamazon.com/>) is something that I will introduce my students to, whether for a single class period or an ongoing project.

Other things that I want to share with my students about the jungle are the thrill of fishing for piranha, the sound of howler monkeys in the morning, the importance of the ceiba trees and protecting the river otter populations.

### **Food**

I love to find culinary experiences beyond the typical Mexican fare to share with my students. Some Peruvian treats that I will be sharing this year:

Causa – I bought a jar of yellow aji, and we will be making causa in class. Apparently, Peru's yellow aji (chili pepper) has just been declared by Taste Atlas to be the best vegetable in the world.

Chicha morada – I bought some purple corn that will be turned into a delicious drink for my classes.