

UNC-DUKE CONSORTIUM IN  
LATIN AMERICAN &  
CARIBBEAN STUDIES



In this two-part lesson, teachers will guide students to learn about Guatemalan weaving, using a book read along, a short research project, and an optional art activity. Teachers will first facilitate an understanding of cause and effect while reading the short story, *Rainbow Weaver* by Linda Elovitz Marshall; this book also provides a baseline for learning about Guatemalan weaving. Then, students will build upon their basic knowledge of weaving from the prior day to conduct a short research assignment with their classmates. An optional third day allows students to experience weaving first-hand as they make their own weaving project out of recycled materials. Finally, students will reflect on what they have learned about the subject.

**Lesson Title/Focus:** Learning About Guatemalan Weaving

**Grade Level:** 3rd/4th

**Length of Lesson:** 2-3 class periods

Desired Results	
<p><b>Content Standard(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Standard 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.</li> <li>○ RL.4.3: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Standard 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ W.3.5: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.</li> <li>○ W.4.5: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Standard 3:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly in complete sentences at an understandable pace.</li> <li>○ SL.4.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; adjust speech as appropriate to formal and informal discourse.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>Understandings/Goals</b> Students will understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How a character's actions build on one another.</li> <li>● That weaving is an important part of Guatemalan culture, particularly for women.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Essential Question(s)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How do a character's actions affect the plot?</li> <li>● What is weaving? How is it done in Guatemala?</li> </ul>

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**Student Objectives (Outcomes)**

Students will be able to:

- Describe how a character’s specific actions move a story’s plot forward.
- Build knowledge about Guatemalan weaving.
- Read/watch and take notes on resources.
- Verbally reflect on what they have learned about Guatemalan weaving.

**Assessment Evidence**

**Performance Task(s)**

- Writing assignment about how the main character’s actions affect the plot.
- Jigsaw research project on Guatemalan weaving.
- Voice recording about what students have learned from the read aloud and research project.

**Other Evidence:**

- Cause and effect graphic organizer.
- Student pair discussions about the book.
- Student note-taking during research project.
- Group discussions during research project.

**Learning Plan**

**Materials**

- *Rainbow Weaver* by Linda Elovitz Marshall
- Physical or digital\* map
- YouTube video about daily life in Guatemala
- Cause and effect graphic organizer\*
- Resource jigsaw\*
- Copies of each of the 4 research project resources\*
- [Optional art activity]: scissors, rulers, markers, thread materials, loom materials.

\*Located in the Additional Resources section

**Day 1: Introduction/Before (:00 - :10):** Tell students that for the next two class periods, they will be learning about the country of Guatemala, pointing to the country on a physical or digital map. Play the YouTube [video](#) titled, “Meet Jarol from Guatemala – A day in his life” from start to 1:35. Ask students to discuss with a partner the following questions: What did you learn about Jarol’s day-to-day life in Guatemala? What are some differences between his life in Guatemala and life in the U.S? Similarities? Allow groups to share out what they talked about while you draw a Venn diagram on the board writing down their responses.

[Advanced option: have students complete venn diagrams in groups/pairs/individually.]

After completing the Venn diagram, introduce the book. Read the title and author. Tell students that they will continue to learn about Guatemala, as it is the setting of the story.

**Day 1: Instruction for Learning and Engagement/During (:10 - :35):** Begin reading story. Ask students what actions Ixchel takes, based on the text and illustrations. Stop on page 7, and model how to

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answer the questions, “What is happening here? What happened to cause her to make her own loom?” (Example answer: Ixchel is making her own loom because her mother told her “no,” she could not help her weave.) Have them in the first box in the cause/effect graphic organizer.

Continue reading. Stop on page 10. Ask students to discuss with their partner and answer the questions, “What is happening here? Why is Ixchel using blades of grass as thread? Ask for volunteers to share their responses. Have them fill in the next box in the organizer. Continue reading. Stop at page 15. Ask students to discuss with their partner and answer the questions, “What is happening here? What happened to make Ixchel sad?” Have them fill in the next box in the organizer. Stop at page 20. Ask students to discuss with their partner and answer the questions, “What is happening here? What materials did Ixchel use to make the fabric? Where did the plastic bags come from?” Have them fill in the next box(es) in the organizer.

After reading, ask students to discuss as a whole group how Ixchel’s actions affect the plot. Guide them to complete the remaining opening spots in the graphic organizer. Prompt students to think about how their own actions affect their own lives. Ask students to return to their seats and work with their group to collectively write a paragraph to explain how Ixchel’s actions affect the plot.

[Advanced option: have students complete the paragraph in pairs/individually.]

**Day 2: Engagement and Practice/During: (:00 - :30):**

*Classroom setup: Designate and label a table for each working group (1-4). Set up four stacks of paper: one pile is copies of Resource 1, another is for Resource 2, and so on. Be sure to label the stacks 1-4. Pull up the YouTube video on a laptop or computer (try to avoid showing it on the large screen or board, if possible, so that other students do not get distracted by the video). Have it ready on table 4.*

Inform students that they will be completing a brief research project with their classmates about Guatemalan weaving. Assign each student a number 1-4; these numbers will tell students which resource they will become “experts” on.\* Once they have their numbers, instruct students to pick up the paper corresponding to their number and to sit down quietly at the correct numbered table. Once the class is settled, explain the activity.

Explain jigsaw activity. Students will have 5 minutes to individually read/watch their assigned article/video and take notes on their own piece of paper. Then, students will get together with their peers with the same number to discuss the article or video they were assigned. In these groups, students will have 5 minutes to discuss their resource and make sure everyone understands it. They will come up with a list of 3-4 most important takeaways from the resource. Have them record those notes, as well as the resource number and title, in a jigsaw piece. **Every group member should write down the same notes.** Finally, students will return back to their original table groups (or groups with all 4 resources represented) and report their notes to their whole group for about 10 minutes. Students will fill in a jigsaw piece for each resource, writing down the name of the resource and the notes the “expert” talked about. Set a timer for each phase; students should switch to the next step when they hear the timer go off. Make sure students understand the structure of the activity before beginning. When each timer goes off, guide them in their transitions.

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\*Article 3 is intended for a lower reading level. Resource 4 is a video intended for more visual learners.

**Day 2: Closure/After: (:30 - :50):** Facilitate a class discussion on what students learned throughout the research project. Start by debriefing Resource 1, having corresponding student experts report what they learned from the article. Repeat until all resources have been discussed. After debriefing each resource, conduct a more general class discussion considering the following questions: What was the most interesting thing you learned about Guatemalan weaving? Why is weaving important to Guatemalan women? What tools and materials do they use to weave? Would you weave for a hobby? Why or why not?

After about a 10-minute class discussion, inform students that their final task will be to record themselves speaking about what they have learned in the last two class periods. They should answer the question: “What is your favorite thing you learned about Guatemalan weaving? Explain.” Answers should be about 5 sentences long. Have students complete recordings in whichever manner works for you and them.

*Some suggestions for recording logistics are listed below.*

- *Record at home (using a smart device)*
- *Set up a computer/other device in the classroom for students to take turns recording themselves. Have students work individually to ensure they get recorded.*
- *Set up various computers/other devices in the classroom for students to take turns recording themselves. Have groups work together to ensure everyone gets recorded.*

**Day 3: Optional Art Activity: (:00 - :50):**

*Prior to this day, choose what recycled materials you would like students to use for the weaving project. Some examples for threads are: plastic grocery bags, paper grocery bags, magazines, wrapping paper, and newspapers. Some examples for looms are: paper plates and cardboard (from cereal or other food boxes). In the days prior, host a “resource drive”- have students bring in the materials you decide on. Supply supplementary materials if needed. [Option: Collaborate with your school’s art teacher! Have them complete this activity in art class or during an enrichment period.]*

*Classroom setup: Have thread and loom materials displayed. Scissors, rulers, and markers on every table. Instruct students on how to complete the weaving project, walking them through step by step, creating an example as you go. First, students will need to cut “threads” out of the recycled materials. Then, they will create their looms. Next step: weaving with recycled materials!*

*Here are some video resources to help you facilitate the weaving project:*

- [Plastic Bag Weaving](#)
- [Cardboard Looms](#)
- [Paper Plate Looms](#)
- [Weaving with Recycled Materials](#)

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# **Additional Resources**

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**Resource 1: Article about Weaving with Plastic Bags**

The Mayan people in contemporary Guatemala are among the most skilled, artistic weavers in the world. Yet they face many problems: poverty, lack of education, and unemployment. To earn money for food and education, Mayan weavers have begun repurposing plastic bags as “threads” that they weave on traditional backstrap looms. Using ancient patterns and techniques, the Mayan weavers now employ plastic threads as well as traditional threads to create beautiful purses, clutch bags, placemats, coasters, pencil cases and baskets. Sold through fair trade cooperatives in the United States and other countries, their products bring much-needed money to the weavers’ families. At the same time, the weavers help clean their villages and keep traditional Mayan cultural values alive.

**Glossary:**

Contemporary: Modern, present day

Unemployment: Not having a job

Repurposing: Reusing

Backstrap looms: Looms are tools used to weave. Backstrap looms can be folded up and carried easily on your back.

Ancient: Very old

Fair trade cooperatives: Small groups of people who help make sure the trade of goods is fair

Mayan: An ancient group of people who used to live in what is now Guatemala

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**Resource 2: Article about Backstrap Weaving**

Backstrap weaving is a traditional skill passed down by women in Mayan communities. According to Mayan legend, the goddess Ixchel, who represents female empowerment, taught the first woman to weave. (Note: Ixchel is the name of the main character in Rainbow Weaver.) Baby girls are given the tools for weaving at birth and begin learning to weave around age eight or nine. One end of a backstrap loom is secured to a strap around the weaver's back and the other end is attached to a fixed object like a tree or post. Sticks at the top and bottom hold the vertical threads. The colors of the vertical threads determine the design of the weaving. The weaver passes horizontal threads through the loom to make fabric. A backstrap loom is portable; it can easily be rolled up and carried.

**Glossary:**

Mayan: A very old group of people who used to live in what is now Guatemala

Legend: Myth, old story

Goddess: A female god- someone who is important and respected

Empowerment: Becoming more powerful

Loom: A tool used to weave

Fixed: In this case, it means not moving, still

Vertical: A line that runs up and down

Determine: Decide

Horizontal: A line that runs left and right

Portable: Easy to carry (There are context clues in the last sentence!)

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**Resource 3: Quote about Young Girls Weaving**

“As a rule, we girls don’t play, because our mothers find it hard to let a girl go off and play on her own. Girls have to learn to look after things in the home, they must learn all the little things their mothers do. Mothers never sit around at home with nothing to do. They’re always busy. If they haven’t any specific job to do, they’ve always got their weaving... So our games are mostly weaving or things like that, but at least we can do it together. There’s a place in the fields which is so wonderful and pretty and shady that all the girls get together – seven or eight of us – and sit under the trees and hang up our weaving. We talk and weave. It’s how we enjoy ourselves with our friends.”

-Rigoberta Menchu

**Glossary:**

Specific: Special

Wonderful: Great, awesome

Shady: Protected, blocked from the sun

Enjoy: To have fun



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**Resource 4: Weaving Video**

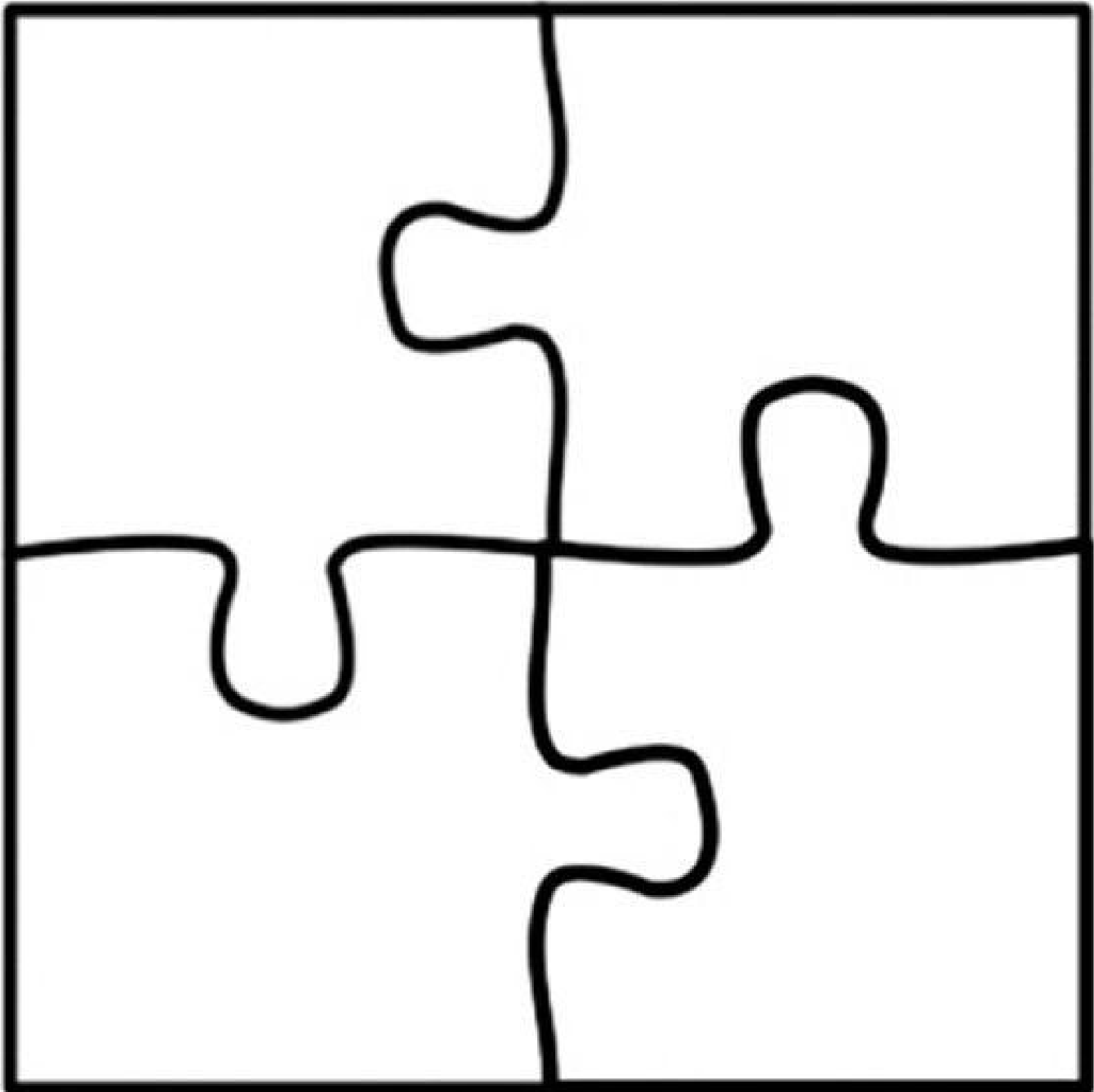
Watch the video titled, [“The Art of Backstrap Weaving”](#) on YouTube. While you watch, be thinking about these guiding questions:

1. Describe the tapestries (the finished weaving projects) using 3-4 adjectives.
2. Describe the weaving process using 3-4 adjectives.
3. Does weaving look easy or hard? Explain.

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## Resource Jigsaw: Guatemalan Weaving



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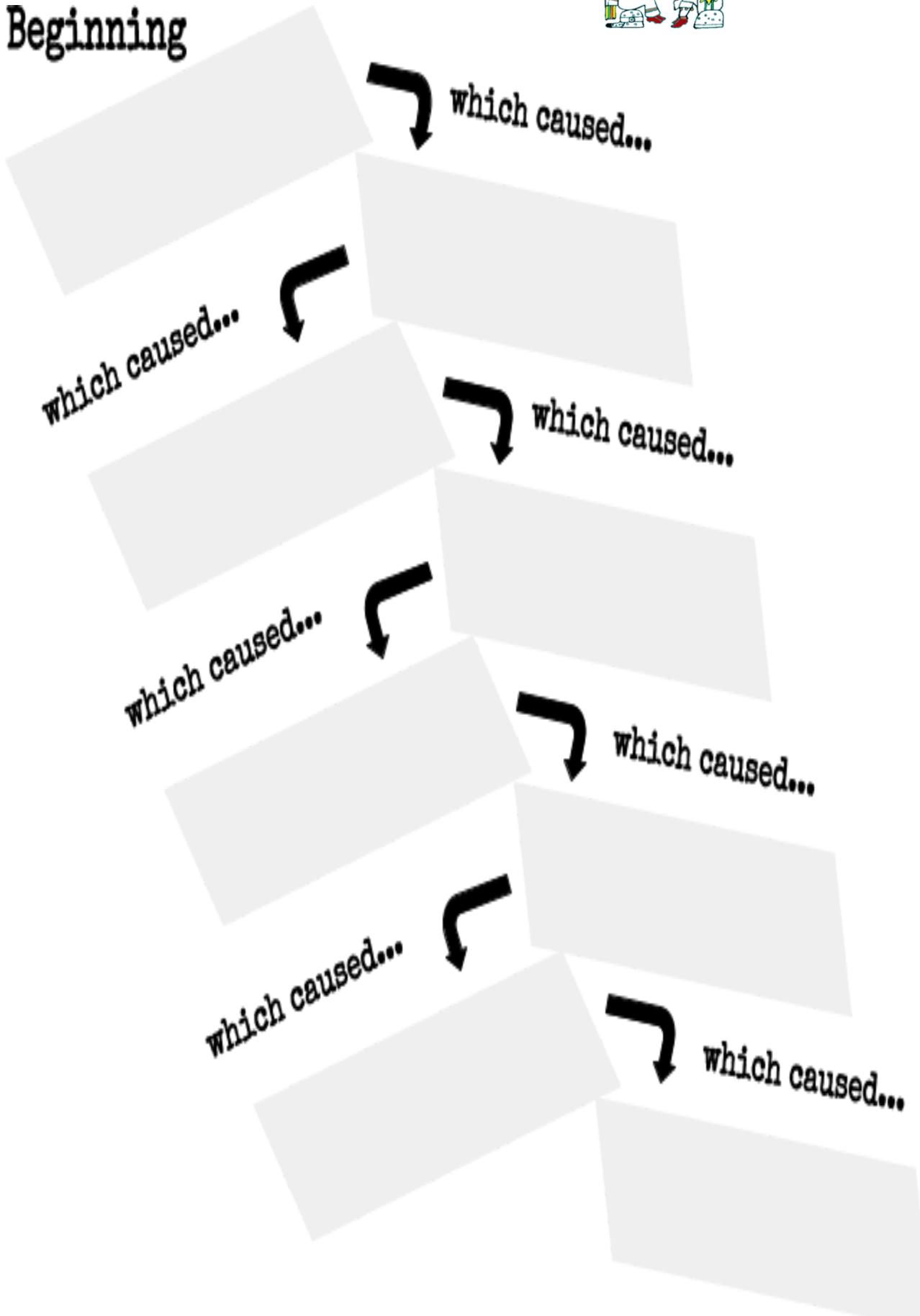
Map Showing Guatemala



From <https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/camerica/gt.htm>



Beginning



Cause and Effect Graphic Organizer

End