

## Background Texts about Mexico in the 1920s

**1. Mexico: Government and Revolution** From the years 1846 to 1911, Mexico was ruled by a dictator named Porfirio Díaz. In 1910, the poor and working-class people of Mexico rebelled against the wealthy landowners and Díaz. This was called the Mexican Revolution. Workers fought for many reasons. They wanted fair pay, equal rights, and to have better opportunities for their families. The Mexican Revolution was a long and deadly war for the Mexican people. But the outcome changed much in their society. For example, the Mexican Constitution was written during this period, in 1917. This constitution outlined the rules that the government must follow. It also gave all people of Mexico rights, regardless of whether they were workers or landowners.

**2. Mexico: Neighbor to the North** During the Mexican-American War (1846–1848), Mexico lost nearly half its territory to the U.S. Within two years, the United States had captured Mexico City and won the war. Mexico was forced to sell its northern territories, including Texas and what are now the states of California, Arizona, and New Mexico, to the U.S. for only eighteen million dollars. This was a very low price to pay for the amount of rich land the United States was getting from Mexico. Because of this, the U.S. and Mexico had very bad relations for many years after the war.

**3. Mexico: Rich versus Poor** Throughout Mexico's history, there have been small villages in the countryside. For generations families have lived and worked on the farms that surrounded these villages. The families who worked the land did not own any part of the farms. This meant that they did not make very much money, because they are paid low wages to work for the landowners. In fact more than 70 percent of Mexico's population in the 1920s was extremely poor.