

Featured Artifact: La Llorona Doll

<http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=2422>

Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the Present)



Look at the artifact presented to you. In a few sentences, respond to the following questions:

Describe: Objectively describe the artifact. What do you think it is made of? What does it look like? Does it look old or new? Is it intact, or is it damaged in some way?

Analyze: When, where or how do you think this item was used? What kind of person may have created or used this item? What significance do you think the object held, either for the creator or the user? Do you see words or images on the artifact that connect it to others (besides the creator and user)?

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Share your conclusions with a partner, then discuss the following:

Evaluate : Justify why you came to those conclusions about the artifact. What further questions do you have about the object? Of those questions, which could you solve by observing the object in person and which would you need to solve with research?

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Background Information

La Llorona, or the Weeping Woman, is the frightening figure of a heartbroken woman who drowned her children and haunts the night, especially by riversides. Her story is repeated to children throughout Latin America, with numerous versions circulating throughout Mexico and the American Southwest. She has been identified as the Aztec goddess Coatlicue, who, according to one legend, was heard weeping for her Aztec children on the eve of the Spanish conquest. Some identify her as the damned ghost of a poor woman from Ciudad Juárez, who stabbed her children and disposed of them in the Rio Grande in order to win the affection of a wealthy man. According to another legend, La Llorona is actually La Malinche, the crucial interpreter and lover of Hernán Cortés. After the fall of the Aztec capital, and having borne Cortés's first son, La Malinche was replaced by Cortés's first wife (who had been awaiting him in Cuba) and was hastily married off to one of his Spanish companions. La Malinche and La Llorona, whether considered as overlapping or totally separate figures, reappear frequently in Mexican popular culture, north and south of the border.

After reading and considering the background information, compose a response to the following:

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- Do you know any similar legends to the La Llorona one you read about? Describe them.
- What do you think was the purpose of scaring children with this particular story? Why would a story like this be told?

Synthesize: What does this object tell us about the era in which it was created, or the American experience as a whole? How would you describe the social, economic, or political climate of America during this time? What connections can you make between this object and other things that you have seen, read, or experienced?

Analyze: Address the following era-specific questions:

- How have economic, social and cultural developments in contemporary America shaped who we are as a country today?