Mexico’s Independence

- When is Mexico’s Independence Day?
  - September 16th in Mexico’s Independence Day.

- Why is Independence Day celebrated on September 16, 1810 if Mexico did not gain independence until September 28, 1821?
  - September 16th marks the day after the “Grito de Dolores”, which led the Mexicans to rebel against the Spanish. This event symbolically represents Mexico’s independence. If it were not for Miguel Hidalgo, this may never have taken place. Sadly, Hidalgo was not alive to see Mexico fully independent from Spain.

- Who is Miguel Hidalgo?
  - Miguel Hidalgo is responsible for Mexico’s Independence from Spain. He was a Catholic priest that cried the “Grito de Dolores” that led Mexicans to rebel against the Spanish. He was publicly executed one year later in 1811, which means he did not get to fully see Mexico as an independent country in 1821.

- What is the Grito de Dolores
  - The “Grito de Dolores” is the “Cry from Dolores”. Dolores was the city that Hidalgo resided in. In Spanish, the word “dolores” means “pains or aches”. Miguel Hidalgo used his priesthood as an advantage. At the time Mestizos did not attend church with the Spanish. This meant that he could speak to all of the Mestizo people at once and create a signal to attack the Spanish.

- What was the signal of Miguel Hidalgo?
  - The signal of Miguel Hidalgo was to ring the church bell. This meant that the time was right to rebel against the Spanish. The church bells, even today ring at certain times. Usually they are rung for major events like weddings and funerals, but also on the hour. Hidalgo knew that if he rang the bell at an off-time that only the Mestizo people would know what this meant. This is the official “Grito de Dolores”. Every year on September 16th, the President of Mexico rings the bell in honor of the first cry of independence for Mexico. Some parts of Arizona do this reenactment as well since at the time Arizona would be part of Mexico.

- What are Mestizos?
  - Mestizos are people that are mixed with Spanish blood and indigenous blood. In this case, the indigenous blood generally traces back to the Aztec people. The mestizos had fewer rights than the Spanish. Many Mexicans at the time were Mestizos (not all).
• Why did the Mexicans rebel against the Spanish?
  o The Mexicans were not happy with the Spanish because there were many more Mexicans than Spanish that lived in New Spain. Moreover, the Spanish had a lot of control over the Mexican people but did not take very good care of the land, government and other social affairs. This angered the Mexican people that they wanted to become independent from these people. It took about ten years to fully become independent from Spain.

• Is this why Mexico speaks Spanish?
  o Yes, the current language of Mexico is Spanish because the European group to conquer present day Mexico was Spain. Spain converted most of the native people to Roman Catholicism, which meant that they also had to learn the Spanish language. Most residents of Mexico speak Spanish today and it is still the official language of the Mexican government.

• Why was New Spain renamed Mexico?
  o The New Mexican government after its independence did not like the name New Spain because it showed Spanish dominance over the land. The mestizo people wanted to name the country something that made them stand out. Many Mexicans were mestizos and had ancestry from the Aztec tribes. This Aztec culture was unique to the Mexican people. The most powerful group of the Aztecs was the Mexica people. Therefore, the country was named specifically for these people. Mexico now contains a government like the United States and even has a president. The first President of Mexico was Benito Juarez.