

# FRIDA KAHLO

[1907–1954]

**F**rida Kahlo was a Mexican painter, known for mixing traditional Mexican folk art with surrealism. Surrealism is a form of painting that is inspired by dreams and uses images that are symbolic of other things.

When Frida was young, she was enrolled in a prestigious school where she was studying medicine. While there, she was in a terrible trolley accident that broke nearly all of her bones. She healed and was able to walk again, but the pain remained with her for the rest of her life. After the accident she decided to devote herself to painting, which was what she loved to do.

At a young age she married the already famous painter Diego Rivera. His work was usually large painted murals that depicted the struggle of the working class in Mexico.

Frida's paintings, however, were much more personal. She painted many self-portraits, and also many works about her heritage. After becoming famous, she spent most of her time in the U.S. She valued the traditional Mexican way of life, but was living in a heavily industrialized country. In one of her self-portraits she is painted in the middle of the canvas; in one half the scenery behind her are metal tubes and smoke stacks, on the other there are scenes of traditional Mexican life and ancient relics.

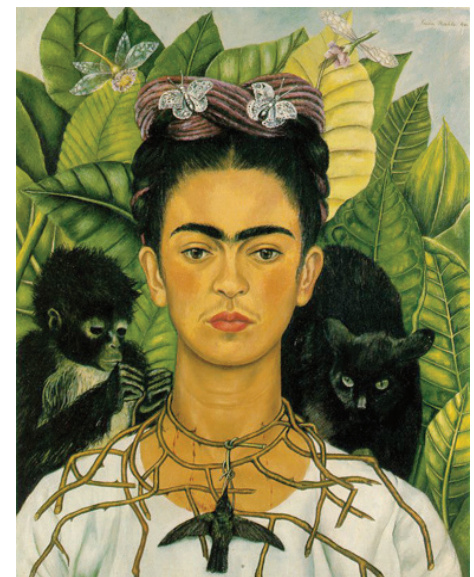
Many of Frida's paintings have symbols in them that are used repeatedly. One of the symbols she often used was a monkey that is native to Mexico. Christian symbols, such as the crucifix and the crown of thorns, are used in her work as well. The use of symbols, and the theme of identity in her work, is what caused many people to consider it surrealism. However, it is sometimes called magic realism, which is a style that shows very realistic things in unlikely situations. Many South American writers around Frida's time used this name to describe the work they were doing.



*Self-Portrait Dedicated to Dr. Eloesser*



*Self-Portrait on the Border Between Mexico and the United States*



*Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird*

# FRIDA KAHLO EXERCISE

Most of Frida's work was about her identity and where she was from. She created many paintings about it, but also did a lot of writing. On the back of this page, write a paragraph about where you are from. Then sketch a picture to go along with it.