



# CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

# Hispanic Heritage Month

Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how "We the People" interact with the government and each other. Let's help each other expand our civic literacy.

Every year, from September 15 to October 15, people across the United States celebrate [Hispanic Heritage Month](#). This special month honors the histories, cultures, and contributions of Americans whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. It serves as an opportunity to recognize the achievements and influence of Hispanic and Latino Americans in various fields, including science, art, music, sports, politics, and education.



The unique celebration timeline begins on September 15, as it marks the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Additionally, Mexico celebrates its independence on September 16, and Chile celebrates its independence on September 18. Starting the observance in mid-September allows each of these important dates to be included in the celebration.

Hispanic Heritage Month began as a [week-long celebration in 1968](#), when it was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. In [1988](#), [President Ronald Reagan](#) expanded it to a full month. Annual proclamations serve as a renewed public endorsement of the observance. They help raise awareness, encourage participation, and show that the issue or group being honored remains important to the nation or state. By issuing proclamations yearly, leaders can tailor the message to reflect current events, achievements, or themes. For example, a governor might highlight local Hispanic and/or Latino leaders or initiatives that are especially relevant that year. This flexibility allows the observance to stay fresh and meaningful rather than becoming a routine or overlooked event. Many observances, like Hispanic Heritage Month, are established by law but still receive annual proclamations as part of tradition. It's a formal way to kick off the celebration, often involving ceremonies, speeches, or special events.

Hispanic Heritage Month is more than just a celebration—it's a chance to learn about the diverse cultures and histories that shape the Hispanic and Latino communities. The term "[Hispanic](#)" refers to people who come from Spanish-speaking countries, but within that group are many different traditions, languages, and stories. The term "[Latino](#)" refers to people from Latin America. From the ancient civilizations of the Maya and Aztecs to modern-day leaders and artists, Hispanic and Latino heritage is rich and varied. Hispanic Heritage Month is a time to appreciate the diversity and strength that Hispanic and Latino cultures bring to the United States. It reminds us that our country is strengthened by the many voices and stories that comprise its history.

### You can celebrate by:

- Learning about famous Hispanic and/or Latino Americans like [Dolores Huerta](#), [Sonia Sotomayor](#), [Linda Chavez](#), [Mel Martine](#), or [Marco Rubio](#)
- Exploring cultural music, food, and art
- Reading books by Hispanic and/or Latino authors
- Attending local events or school programs



**HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH**  
TODOS SOMOS, SOMOS UNO  
WE ARE ALL, WE ARE ONE

### To Think and To Do:

Choose one aspect of Hispanic Heritage Month that interests you—such as a historical figure, a country's independence movement, a cultural tradition, or a form of art or music—and research it further.

### LEARN MORE

- [National Museum of the American Latino](#)
- [CRLs](#)
- [National Hispanic American Heritage Month](#)



**Lou Frey Institute**