

## **An introduction to the life of the Zapatista leader, Comandanta Ramona, using a short biography.**

**Levels:** 3-5, 6-8.

**Subjects:** English, literacy, history, bilingual.

**Objectives:** Learners will be introduced to biographical details of this key figure in the history of the Zapatista movement, examining her role and importance within that movement. It will address:

- a) The life and significance of Ramona.
- b) The early history of the Zapatista movement.
- c) The plight of indigenous peoples in Chiapas, Mexico.
- d) The role of women in the Zapatista movement.

Depending on the level, learners will be able to answer some or all of the following questions:

- a) Who was Comandanta Ramona?
- b) What were the main biographical details of her life?
- c) What were her principal ideas and beliefs?
- d) What relevance does she have today?
- e) Who are the important women leaders in their own communities?

Learners will practice the following reading sub-skills:

- a) Reading for specific information to answer True/False statements.
- b) Sequentially ordering the main biographical details of the text.
- c) Reflecting on the meaning of metaphorical and prosaic language of the text.
- d) Discussing important women leaders in their communities and researching their lives.

**Procedure:** At lower levels, this text can be used for a read aloud lesson. At higher levels, teachers begin the lesson by finding out what their students already know about Ramona. The True/False statements are then distributed along with the text. Learners read the text to check if the statements are true or false. Learners then put some of the main events of the text in the correct order in pairs. The teacher then examines some of the language of the text as a whole class activity. Finally, the learners discuss important women leaders in their communities as a springboard for further research.

The text can also be used in conjunction with the Spanish original as the basis for a bilingual lesson

### **Materials:**

'Ramona-Rebel Dreamweaver' (English language version)

<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/library/ramona-rebel-dreamweaver/>

'Ramona-Tejedora de Sueños' (Spanish language version)

<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/library/ramona-rebelde-tejedora-de-suenos/>

**In our Library, see also:**

'Who is Comandanta Ramona?'

<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/library/comandanta-ramona/>

'Comandanta Ramona Speech'

<http://www.schoolsforchiapas.org/library/comandanta-ramona-speech/>

## *Ramona - Rebel Dreamweaver*

### 1. True or false?

- a) Ramona led the Mayan men and women who took over San Cristóbal on the first of February 1994.
- b) Ramona was an indigenous Tzotzil woman.
- c) She was very tall.
- d) Ramona was a weaver.
- e) Indigenous women want schools, hospitals, food and dignity.
- f) Ramona said it is better to starve than to die fighting.
- g) Her sister donated a kidney when she was ill.
- h) Ramona spoke in front of 100,000 people in 1996.
- i) On the September 16th, 2005 she appeared in public for the last time.

### 2. In what order did the following events occur?

- a) The president of Mexico broke the truce.
- b) Ramona traveled to Mexico City and spoke in front of 100,000 people.
- c) Ramona died.
- d) Mayan men and women took over the city of San Cristóbal.
- e) Ramona was last seen publicly.
- f) The Law for Dialogue, Reconciliation, and a Just Peace in Chiapas was approved.
- g) Ramona had an operation.
- h) There was a huge march.

i) The dialogue for peace with justice and dignity began.

3. What do the following phrases in the text mean?

a) "The men and women of corn"

b) "Obsidian eyes"

c) "Small in stature but giant in dignity"

d) "Ramona became a rebel weaver of dreams"

e) "The voice of the voiceless"

f) "To steal 10 more years life from death"

g) "We have lost a piece of our heart"

4. Who are the most important women in the past and/or present of your communities? In groups, prepare short presentations about their lives using the Internet to find out more about them.

