

La Llorana – The Weeping Woman

All across Latin America, children are told not to go out after dark because La Llorana, the Weeping Woman, will snatch them away. The oldest roots of this ghostly tale are from Aztec and Mayan rituals that made their way into the Spanish folklore of the colonial period and created the story of La Llorana.

Early in the colonization of *New Spain*, what would later be Mexico to Panama, many Spanish men took advantage of their station as nobility in the New World. They formed relationships with the native women, or *indias*, promising to return to marry them and build a family with them. The women took them up on these promises, as most natives weren't used to *guile*, or being dishonest to get one's way, being a normal part of a human's character. Being married to a Spaniard would also elevate them in society, getting them out of the slave-like conditions the Spaniards imposed upon them and hopefully getting back some of the lands that were taken from their families.

One such woman was María, a beautiful young native girl who formed a relationship with an unnamed Spanish man who came to the New World seeking riches. For years they lived together as he amassed a small fortune in gold that came in from taking relics made from precious metals from the natives and building a *hacienda*, or large plantation-like ranch, in Central Mexico that grew cocoa to make into chocolate and send back to Spain. For all the years, María stood next to the Spaniard, helping to make the hacienda a home and a productive business.

One day, the Spaniard left to return to Spain, promising to return and asking María to continue to run the hacienda in his absence. By this time, they had one child together with another on the way. For the next 5 years, she dutifully watched over the hacienda and helped it to grow, as well as took care of the two young children.

When the day arrived that the Spaniard returned, María went to greet him at the port. As he disembarked from the ship, he had a woman at his side that had a young child in her arms. They all traveled back home, the new wife complaining about everything from the humidity to the dirtiness of the New World. María could only sit in stunned silence from disbelief.

Later that night, the Spaniard told María that the new woman was his wife. She fled from the house, crying in grief and left everything there. In her mournful state, she tried to run across a river, but was swept under by the current.

When she reached heaven, St. Paul asked María where her children were. She didn't know, having left them in the care of the Spaniard and his new wife, and so she was sent back to search for them, as she wouldn't be allowed into heaven without them. For this reason, you can still hear La Llorana walking the earth at night, crying out for her children so that she may enter into heaven.

Define the following terms:

1. Hacienda –
2. New Spain –
3. Indias –
4. Guile –
5. Llorar –

Comprehension

1. What did the Spaniard promise La Llorana?
2. How did La Llorana treat the Spaniard? How did he treat her?
3. What effect did the broken promise have on La Llorana?
4. Why does La Llorana weep and wander the earth?