

# Salma Hayek

Salma Hayek is a noted member of the Hollywood A-list, well-known for her savvy acting talents and her dedication to using the spotlight to help people throughout the world. Hayek burst onto the scene in 1995 in *Desperado*, an action thriller directed by Robert Rodriguez. Though the role was her first to grab the attention of movie audiences in the U.S., Hayek had honed her acting skills in her native Mexico. Born to a Lebanese father and a Mexican mother in 1966, Hayek attended school in the U.S. for several years before returning to Mexico and landing a role on a popular Mexican soap opera, or telenovela, entitled *Teresa*.

Several high-profile film roles led to a dream project for Hayek when she signed on to produce and star in a film about famous Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. *Frida* garnered an Oscar nomination for Hayek and exposed millions of people to Kahlo's poignant story and influential artistic style. Known for her strong personality and for taking on brave roles, including producing the unlikely hit series "Ugly Betty," Hayek has become an icon for Latinas and popular audiences worldwide. A passionate advocate for the rights of women and immigrants, Hayek has lent her voice to help raise awareness about many important social issues. This one-hour biography traces her key roles and provides insights into how and why she has become one of the most respected women in Hollywood.

## Curriculum links

This biography of Salma Hayek would be useful for film, media, acting, ethnic studies and women's studies courses. It would be a great documentary to show during after-school activities or events. It is appropriate for mature high school students and college students. Teachers should view this program before showing it to students to ensure that it is appropriate for their age group.

## Vocabulary

Using the dictionary at [www.merriamwebster.com](http://www.merriamwebster.com) or an encyclopedia, students should define or explain the significance of the following terms:

<b>bravado</b>	<b>gravitate</b>	<b>telenovela</b>
<b>campy</b>	<b>mediocrity</b>	<b>witty</b>
<b>cinematic</b>	<b>protagonist</b>	
<b>conviction</b>	<b>surrealism</b>	



Salma Hayek in the movie *Frida*.

## Discussion questions

1. How would you describe Salma Hayek as a teenager? What personality characteristics do you think led her to pursue acting?
2. What is a telenovela? What role did Hayek play in one of these popular programs?
3. Why do you think Hayek decided to go to Hollywood? How did her work with director Robert Rodriguez help jump start her career?
4. Why do you think Hayek appealed to audiences in her roles in hit movies? What are some adjectives you'd use to describe her acting style and why?

5. Why do you think Hayek was so interested in starring in the film about Frida Kahlo?
6. What obstacles did Hayek face while getting the Frida project off the ground, and how did she deal with those challenges?
7. Why do you think the "Ugly Betty" series appealed to Hayek? What is unique about the series?
8. What are some of the major issues Hayek is an advocate for, and how does she address these problems?
9. If you had the opportunity to interview Hayek, what would you ask her and why?

## Extended activities

1. In 2004, Salma Hayek teamed up with the Avon Foundation to help raise awareness about the problem of domestic violence. Ask students to research this foundation online and create a short brochure or public service announcement related to this campaign. While working on the project, students should define and discuss domestic violence and include a definition with their final projects.
2. Hayek got her start through her high-profile role in a telenovela. Online or at the library, ask students to research this television format. Students should write a short report or create a PowerPoint presentation about this popular media format. They may want to work together in groups on these projects, and include key facts and figures about this popular genre.
3. Hayek's role in producing and starring in *Frida* helped raise the visibility of Kahlo's life and work throughout the world. Working in small groups, ask students to research Kahlo's life and work and create short presentations in PowerPoint or any other format. Students may also want to create their own artwork inspired by Kahlo's style.
4. Through watching this program, viewers learn about many of the challenges and opportunities Hollywood actors have as they develop their careers. *Frida* was a project Hayek was very passionate about, which was key to the success of the project. Ask students to write a short proposal for a film or television series they would like to see produced. They can do research online to learn about the typical length and format of a film and television "treatment" to help them create their proposals.

## Websites

More information from BIO about Salma Hayek:  
[www.biography.com/articles/Salma-Hayek-14514423](http://www.biography.com/articles/Salma-Hayek-14514423)

Visit the Hispanic Heritage site on BIO:  
[www.biography.com/hispanic-heritage/index.jsp](http://www.biography.com/hispanic-heritage/index.jsp)

A helpful site with background on Frida Kahlo:  
[www.fridakahlo.com](http://www.fridakahlo.com)

## Books

Herrera, Hayden. *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* (HarperPerennial, 2002).

Stavans, Ilan. *Telenovelas* (Greenwood, 2010).

Wine, Bill. *Salma Hayek* (Overcoming Adversity, Sharing the Dream series) (Mason Crest Publishers, 2009).