BRECKENRIDGE CREATIVE ARTS

ACTIVITY BOOK

FOR

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS
Rituals and Death Across the World

Different rituals or ceremonies exist across the world to cope with death:

In Mexico and the United States, families celebrate Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) by gathering at graveyards and presenting *ofrendas* (or offerings) for deceased loved ones on November 1st and 2nd. The first day of the holiday is called “Dia de los Angelitos” (Day of the Little Angels), and is dedicated to the souls of deceased children.

In China, the Chinese Ghost Festival is celebrated during the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar. During this holiday, families offer food and burn ghost money for the spirits.

In India, on the yearly anniversary of a loved one’s death, families offer “tarpan” to the dead. “Tarpan” means “offering of water to the deceased” and Hindus believe this water allows the dead to continue onto the next cycle of their existence.
A Guide to Your Favorite Tradition

Think about all of the traditions (holidays, rituals, etc.) that you have experienced in your lifetime and write down the name of your favorite one here:

Now let's imagine that you have to teach someone from Mars about this tradition. Think of all of the specific aspects of the holiday, observance, or tradition that you have chosen. When does it happen every year? Why?

Why do you honor this tradition?

Describe the rituals involved?

Do you dress in a special way? If so, how?

Are there any foods that you eat that are significant to your tradition?

Do you decorate your home? If so, how?

In the space below, draw a picture of you and your loved ones celebrating this holiday:
Components of an Offering (Ofrenda)

El Día de los Muertos is one of the most important and anticipated events in the Mexican calendar. Starting in the summer, preparations for ofrendas begin and money is set aside for celebratory expenses. Ofrendas are created for individual ancestors and cemeteries are cleaned and repaired in anticipation of visitors.

The following items are typical components of ofrendas:

- Water: satiates thirst of the spirit and represents purity and a source of life.
- Salt: carries purifying elements and is a symbol of wisdom. It can also act as an invitation to the altar.
- Calaveras de azucar or alfeñiques (sugar skulls): both sugar and salt express the bitter and sweet aspects of life.
- Flowers: represent love and the sun. Cempasúchitl (or marigolds) are the traditional flowers offered.
- A petate (or mat): offered for rest
- Toys for deceased children
- Favorite foods of deceased adults
- Pan de muertos (or bread of the dead) and tamales
- Incense: to create smells that are pleasing to the deceased.
- Papel picado (or paper banners) for decoration
- Copales (or blankets): to cover and decorate the altar
- Cascarones: Hollowed out chicken eggs filled with confetti or small toys for decoration

To build an ofrenda, first you must decide whom you want to remember. Has anyone you have known passed away, or is there anybody whom you admire that you would like to celebrate? Once you have chosen someone to honor, you are ready to begin.

1. Find something to use as the base for your ofrenda, like a table. (You can use smaller boxes to make levels.)
2. Place a photo or drawing of the person you are honoring on the table.
3. Decorate your ofrenda with colorful paper and pictures or drawings. Skeletons are popular decorations, but you can be as creative as you’d like!
4. Now decorate your ofrenda with flowers. Marigolds (cempasúchitl) are traditional, but you can also include the deceased’s favorite flower.
5. You may set out some favorite foods of the person you are honoring.
6. Optional: place candles or incense on your ofrenda.

Use the space below to design an altar/ofrenda for a loved one:
History of Mexican Art:

During the early 1900s--nearly a hundred years after Mexico won its independence from Spain, the Mexican government began to encourage the celebration of Dia de los Muertos as an official holiday. This was done as a way to unite a nation that was unsatisfied with its political leadership. The holiday created a sense of Mexican identity, but towns and cities continued to celebrate Dia de los Muertos with their own specific and varying customs.

Guadalupe Posada worked as an illustrator for various newspapers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His calavera (skeleton) representations appealed to many people and his drawings often included text. Posada effectively used his art to satirize politicians and to criticize aspects of society.

Write a poem

Calavera is Spanish for skeleton, but the word can also refer to a satirical poem. These poems were written as imaginary obituaries in which the author poked fun at someone or something living. Calaveras were very popular during the Mexican Revolution and were used to criticize the government. Calaveras deal with death in a humorous manner. Here is an example:

The neighbor’s dog has chased me home every day this Autumn. I run away when I’m all-alone, so it doesn’t bite my bottom. Go ahead little dog and gnash your teeth, but some day you will be buried beneath.

CHALLENGE: Try to say this poem in Spanish before looking at the translation below!

El perro del vecino me ha perseguido a la casa todos los días del otoño. Yo corro lejos cuando estoy solo, para que él no me muera el trasero. Adelante pues perrito y rechina tus dientes, pero algún día tú vas a ser enterrado abajo.

Now it’s your turn! In the space below, write your own calavera poem:
WORD SEARCH

Find the hidden words in the grid below. The words may be vertical, horizontal, diagonal or backwards.

1. ofrenda (offering) 11. cascarones
2. papel picado 12. candles
3. piñata 13. marigold
4. altar 14. pan de muerto
5. day of the dead 15. Oaxaca
6. calaca 16. angelitos
7. zarape 17. mole
8. copal 18. máscara
9. ceras 19. dulces
10. calavera 20. mariachis

Once you have found all of the words, look up the definition of 3 words that you don’t know:

SPANISH:_________ ENGLISH:____________
SPANISH:_________ ENGLISH:____________
SPANISH:_________ ENGLISH:____________

Now write several sentences (in Spanish) using the words above.
Mix and Match

Match the following vocabulary words to their definitions. If you are unsure, refer to the information in this packet for answers.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ofrenda</td>
<td>A. Yellow marigolds that are symbols of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pan de Muerto</td>
<td>B. The art of Mexican paper cutting</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Cempazuchitl</td>
<td>C. Burning incense left at altars</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Calaca</td>
<td>D. Offerings to honor the dead</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Alfeñiques</td>
<td>E. Day of the Dead</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Cascarones</td>
<td>F. Illustrator whose satirical drawing ‘La Catrina’ is one of the most recognizable figures of Day of the Dead</td>
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<td>7. Papel Picado</td>
<td>G. Bread of the dead</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Copal</td>
<td>H. Festive egg shells that are filled with confetti and trimmed in glitter</td>
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<td>9. Dia de los Muertos</td>
<td>I. Poems and songs written about the festival</td>
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<td>10. Angelitos</td>
<td>J. Whimsical skeleton figure that represents death</td>
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<td>11. Calaveras</td>
<td>K. Colorful iced sugar skulls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Jose Guadalupe Posada</td>
<td>L. Souls of children who have died</td>
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After checking out the Tony Ortega Exhibition in the Old Masonic Hall….

Which Tony Ortega drawing do you like the best? Why? Use the space below to describe that drawing. In your opinion, why is this drawing significant?


Pan de Muerto Recipe
Also known as death bread or bread of the dead, pan de muerto is a soft sweet bread shaped into a round bun with bone shapes on top.

Ingredients
- 1/4 cup margarine
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup warm water
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons anise seed
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 teaspoons orange zest
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- 2 tablespoons white sugar

Directions
1. Heat the milk and the butter together in a medium saucepan, until the butter melts. Remove from the heat and add warm water. The mixture should be around 110 degrees F (43 degrees C).

2. In a large bowl combine 1 cup of the flour, yeast, salt, anise seed and 1/4 cup of the sugar. Beat in the warm milk mixture; then add the eggs and orange zest and beat until well combined. Stir in 1/2 cup of flour and continue adding more flour until the dough is soft.

3. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic.

4. Place the dough into a lightly greased bowl, cover with plastic wrap, let rise in warm place until doubled in size (about 1 to 2 hours). Punch the dough down, shape into large round loaf. Reserve enough dough to shape a round knob and/or bone shapes. Place onto a baking sheet and loosely cover with plastic wrap. Let rise in warm place for about 1 hour or until about doubled in size.

5. Bake in a preheated 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) oven for about 35 to 45 minutes. Remove from oven let cool slightly then brush with glaze.

6. To make glaze: In a small saucepan combine the 1/4 cup sugar, orange juice and orange zest. Bring to a boil over medium heat and boil for 2 minutes. Brush over top of bread while still warm. Sprinkle glazed bread with white sugar.

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Sugar Skulls (Alfeñiques) Recipe

Molded from a sugar paste, sugar skulls (also known as calaveritas) are made for Day of the Dead and used to decorate ofrendas. Often, they are decorated with the name of a person, and they are eaten as treats.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 egg white from an extra-large egg or 2 from small eggs
- 1 teaspoon light corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Cornstarch, about a half cup, for powdering surface
- Colored sprinkles
- Food coloring
- Fine paint brush
- Colored icing

Directions

1. Sift sugar into a large mixing bowl.
2. In another bowl, mix the egg whites, corn syrup and vanilla.
3. Slowly pour the liquid into the powdered sugar. Mix with your hands until a sandy dough forms.
4. Form dough into a ball. At this point you can continue or you can refrigerate dough for later use.
5. Lightly dust surface with cornstarch as well as your hands. Pinch off a heaping tablespoon of dough and shape it into a skull.
6. If you’re using them, lightly press colored sprinkles into the soft candy.
7. Let the candy dry overnight.
8. When candy is dry, use the paint brush with food coloring to decorate the skulls. Or you can use frosting (one that will dry hard) with a fine tip to decorate them.
9. Hand them out as is, or wrap in a small cellophane bag tied closed with a small ribbon.

Tips:

- The skulls may not dry completely on a humid or rainy day.
- If you use the molds, you should follow each manufacturer’s instructions as some molds only work with certain recipes.
- The “dough” should be the consistency of damp sand - just moist enough to hold together. If “dough” is too dry and crumbly, add 1 teaspoon of water at a time to moisten.
- If “dough” is too moist, add sugar one tablespoon at a time until “dough” is the right consistency.
- If the candy has trouble drying completely, place in a 125 degree warm oven until dry.

Recipe by Chelsie Kenyon, [www.about.com](http://www.about.com)