

Día de los Muertos Writing Essay

INSTRUCTOR SHEET

Extra Lesson: Cultural & Diversity Activity, by discussing the celebration and history of Día de Muertos in Mexican culture.

Age: 10+ years and older

History:

The origins of Día de los Muertos or 'Day of the Dead' began with the Aztecs some 3,000 years ago. Rather than fade away, it thrived and persisted, and eventually combined with Christian elements. It was originally celebrated, in the summer, but eventually moved to **November 1st** and **November 2nd** to coincide with All Saints Day & All Souls Day.

The two days are marked as a time of happiness, cooking, and decorating with bright colors. While fresh flowers are brought into the home. It was a time for family gatherings and celebrations, while preparing an altar/area. The altar/area would consist of marigolds also known as "flowers of the dead" (flor de muerto). It is believed that the scent of the marigolds attracts souls.

Another element at the altar/area are perforated paper (papel picado), it is believed that the holes in the paper, allow for souls to travel through and visit. The delicateness of paper also symbolizes the fragility of life.

While, Bread of the dead (pan de muerto), a bread shaped into a skull and dusted with sugar along with favorite foods of loved ones are placed out on the altar/area for hungry souls. Salt is laid out in a cross pattern, to purify souls. The last element for the altar/area includes photographs of deceased loved ones.

Families would take trips to the cemetery, to clean, maintain, and decorating graves. They would decorate with flowers, candles, pan de muerto, and ceramic skulls (calaveras). In school, children would create skeleton-themed crafts and prepare for the holiday.

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STUDENT SHEET

Extra Lesson: Cultural & Diversity Activity, by discussing the celebration and history of Día de Muertos in Mexican culture.

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Questions:

- 1.) What do you think the meaning of the celebration of Día de los Muertos?
- 2.) Do you and your family have similar celebrations or practices that honor your ancestors or deceased loved ones?
