



Day of the Dead / Día de los Muertos

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It is really incredible to see how different cultures celebrate a day like the Day of the Dead or as we say in Spanish Día de los Muertos. I'm from Venezuela and as long as I can remember people just visit their dead ones in the cemetery and take flowers to their grave on those days. It wasn't until I saw an animated movie related to that celebration that I really understood its meaning!

The Day of the Dead or Día de los Muertos is a day to honor and remember the loved ones that have died. Although it is celebrated in many Central and South American countries, it is in Mexico where it is more popular. It is celebrated on November 1st and 2nd, and even though it is close to Halloween, it is very different. It is not a day to cry or get spooked, instead it is a festive and colorful day where people go to the cemetery and remember their dead ones. Mexicans believe that the spirits return to the world of the living to spend a day with them. So they really prepare for that day setting up altars in their homes with photos, food and flowers and just wait for their visit.

This is a very nice festivity to create a lesson to show your students its meaning. They can learn that not always death has to be related to sorrow or fear. It can also be seen with happiness and delight. This lesson should be done in two classes. During the first class take 15 to 20 minutes to explain what the celebration is about and the traditions that are done during those days. You can show videos. It is great to set up an altar, so decide with your students if you would like to honor family and friends or a famous person. That way, students can bring things to put in the altar the following class. While everyone sets up the altar, they can talk about their dead ones, do some crafts and enjoy the day.

Introduction

Tell students that they will celebrate a special festivity. You can say something like “Vamos a celebrar el Día de los Muertos. Es un día especial pues nuestros familiares y amigos muertos vienen a visitarnos”. Tell them that you have to prepare for that day. Say: “Vamos a preparar esta celebración”.

There are many things that you can do with your students.

Create an Altar

Start with setting up an altar in the classroom. Families build an altar with photographs of the people than have died. They also put other offerings in the altar like candles, yellow flowers called



marigold, “Bread of the Dead”(sweet bread”), candy skulls, food, drinks, objects they loved, etc. Ask them to bring things about a person that has died in their family. This activity is also great to learn vocabulary related to the celebration.

Vocabulary

aofrenda (offering)
calavera (skull),
pan de muerto (skull rolls)
dulces de calavera (candy skulls)
flor de caléndula (marigold)

altar (altar)
Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)
candle (vela)
esqueleto (skeleton)



Crafts

Print out different Sugar skull masks so children can have fun coloring them. If you don't have time, have them take them home to color and then they can wear them the following day. They can also paint their faces!

Children can create skeletons, marigold flowers and skulls out of paper.

You can also read a book in class or watch some videos so children can learn more about the celebration.

Books

I Remember Abuelito: A Day of the Dead Story / Yo Recuerdo a Abuelito: Un Cuento del Día de los Muertos (Spanish and English Edition) by Janice Levy

Daniela's Day of the Dead (Cloverleaf Books: Fall and Winter Holidays) by Lisa Bullard

The Spirit of Tío Fernando: A Day of the Dead Story by Janice Levy

Videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfqnuIWWxbM>

<https://youtu.be/dgwyRaLG4qA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DQrqVq5nf34>

<https://youtu.be/GzaZidVrebA>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xca7k2ga__M