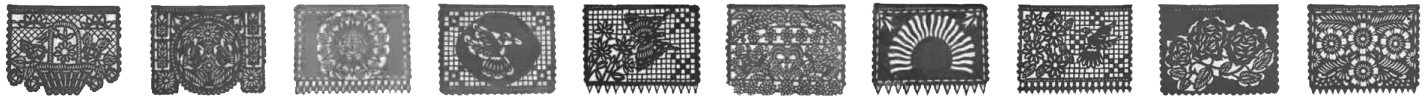


# ELL & GLAD-INSPIRED STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING ABOUT DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS



PRODUCED BY THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO  
LATIN AMERICAN & IBERIAN INSTITUTE



## LATIN AMERICAN & IBERIAN INSTITUTE

Because of the geographic location and unique cultural history of New Mexico, the University of New Mexico (UNM) has emphasized Latin American Studies since the early 1930s. In 1979, the Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI) was founded to coordinate Latin American programs on campus. Designated a National Resource Center (NRC) by the U.S. Department of Education, the LAI offers academic degrees, supports research, provides development opportunities for faculty, and coordinates an outreach program that reaches diverse constituents. In addition to the Latin American Studies (LAS) degrees offered, the LAI supports Latin American studies in departments and professional schools across campus by awarding student fellowships and providing funds for faculty and curriculum development.

The LAI's mission is to create a stimulating environment for the production and dissemination of knowledge of Latin America and Iberia at UNM. We believe our goals are best pursued by efforts to build upon the insights of more than one academic discipline. In this respect, we offer interdisciplinary resources as part of our effort to work closely with the K-12 community to help integrate Latin American content materials into New Mexico classrooms across grade levels and subject areas.

We're always glad to work with teachers to develop resources specific to their classrooms and students. To discuss this option, or for more comprehensive information about the LAI and its K-12 resources, contact:

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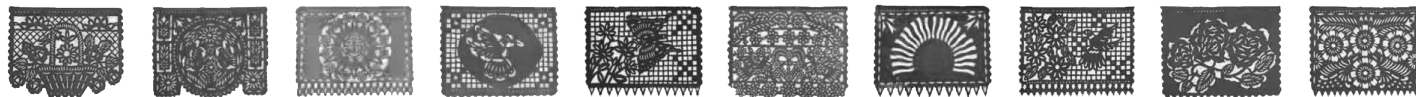
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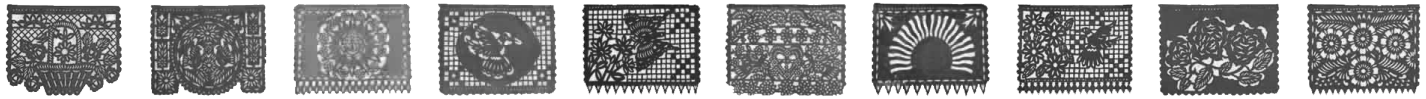
*\*Images: Cover photograph of Día de los Muertos ofrenda in the zócalo in Mexico City, 2013, reprinted here under CC © from Juan Chancas.*

*Repeated image of papel picado provided courtesy of Zanzibar Fair Trade in Sacramento, California.*



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## INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Día de los Muertos is an important celebration in Mexico and other parts of South America that dates back to the Aztec Empire, before the arrival and conquest of the Spanish. In recent decades, it also has become increasingly celebrated in U.S. cities which have significant Hispanic populations. Oftentimes in the U.S., Día de los Muertos is misunderstood as a variation of Halloween, but it is a very different celebration. It is a time during which families remember and honor their loved ones who have died. Death is acknowledged as a natural and normal part of life. Many who celebrate the holiday because that the spirits of those who have passed away return to visit their loved ones who are living. Families and communities create altars filled with brightly colored flowers, papel picado, sugar skulls, pictures of the deceased, and favorite foods -- items that commemorate the life of the departed. Cemeteries are cleaned and decorated. All of this is done as a way of inviting the spirits of our loved ones back to visit with us for one day out of the year.

The following activities were with the hope that they would encourage increased cultural awareness, appreciation and acceptance of Día de los Muertos. In the process of participating in these lessons and activities, students will better understand the cultural significance and purpose of Día de los Muertos celebrations.

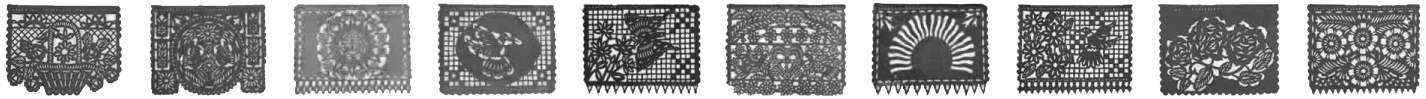
In the following you will find a series of lesson plans modeled after various GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) strategies. The following taken from the [Project G.L.A.D. website](#) offers more information on this teaching approach:

Project GLAD® is a model of professional development in the area of language acquisition and literacy. The strategies and model promote English language acquisition, academic achievement, and cross-cultural skills. Project GLAD® was developed and field tested for nine years by the United States Department of Education and is based on years of experience with integrated approaches for teaching language. GLAD is an instructional model with clear, practical strategies promoting effective interactions between students and students and teachers and students that develop metacognitive use of high-level language and literacy.

The following activities support comprehension, the development of academic vocabulary, oral language fluency, literacy skills, and cultural competence and awareness.

Unless otherwise indicated, Katrina Dillon created the curriculum materials on behalf of the LAII. The chant about Día de los Muertos was created and contributed by LAII graduate assistants Alice Donahue, Kalyn Finnell, and Charla Henley.





# OBSERVATION AND INQUIRY CHART

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

The purpose here is to introduce students to the topic to be explored, while focusing and engaging them through activating prior knowledge and exposing them to new content.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels

## ESTIMATED TIME:

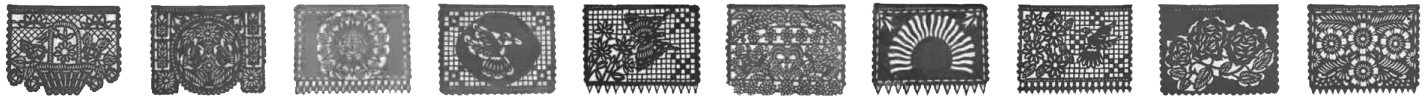
60 minutes

## MATERIALS:

- Various printed images
- Markers
- Glue or tape
- Large chart or butcher paper
- Sticky notes

## PROCEDURE - VERSION I:

1. **Preparation:** Do an internet image search for “Día de los Muertos” or “Day of the Dead.” Print off various images that are the most thought provoking and interesting. You only need one copy of each image, but you will need as many images as you have small groups in your class. Glue each image to the top of a large sheet of butcher or chart paper.
2. Explain to students that they will be working in small groups. Each group will rotate around the room to each table where they will find a different image glued onto a large piece of paper. As a group they will look at the image and discuss the questions: “What do you see?” “What do you think is happening?” “How does this picture make you feel?” Then, each student will either record their answer directly onto the paper or onto a sticky note that they then attach to the paper. If you want, you can have each group elect a secretary to do the recording. The purpose here is to activate prior knowledge, provide the space for students to share this, or introduce students to new content and pique their curiosity. Be sure to explain to students that they will have a set amount of time at each image—usually about 5-10 minutes, but the teacher can determine the appropriate amount of time for their age group.

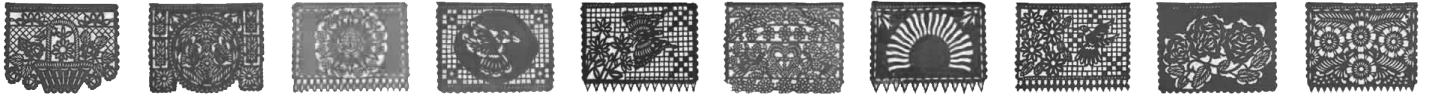


In order to make sure that all students have time to process the image before they start talking, the first minute or two at each image should be silent, absolutely no talking. Explain that you will give students a signal at the end of each round. When you signal, they should rotate to the next image at the next table until they have rotated through all the images.

3. Place one image at each table group with markers and sticky notes, if using. Begin the activity, rotating groups through each image.
4. Hang up all the images with comments. As a whole class, discuss each image, giving students time to share and respond to what they posted. Keep these posted throughout the unit, allowing students to revisit them and discuss them as they learn more about the topic and possibly the images themselves.

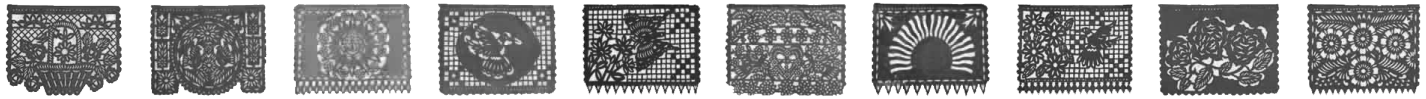
## PROCEDURE - VERSION II:

1. **Preparation:** Do an internet image search for “Día de los Muertos” or “Day of the Dead.” Print the TWO images that are the most thought provoking and interesting. You only need one copy of each image. Glue each image to the top of a large sheet of butcher or chart paper. Underneath one image write the question: What do you know about Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead? Underneath the other image write the question: What do you want to know about Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead?
2. Hang the images on the board so that all students can see them. Read the questions out loud and make sure that students understand them. Then give each student a few sticky notes and ask them to answer each question. If possible, color code the sticky notes. One color for what you know and a different color for what you want to know. As students finish have them stick their comments to the appropriate image.
3. When all students are finished, read their comments out loud and discuss them as a class. As their comments are addressed throughout the unit, refer back to the two charts.
4. Keep the charts posted through the unit. At the end of the unit, you can go back return to their comments about what they would like to know as a means of review and closure.



What questions do you have about Día de los Muertos?





# VOCABULARY CHART (COGNITIVE CONTENT DICTIONARY)

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

The purpose of this activity is to expose students to new vocabulary in a way which encourages engagement, comprehension, and retention of the information. Students will practice oral language skills and kinesthetic learning.

Note that while this exercise may seem time consuming, it goes very quickly once students understand the process.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels

## ESTIMATED TIME:

10-15 minutes/day

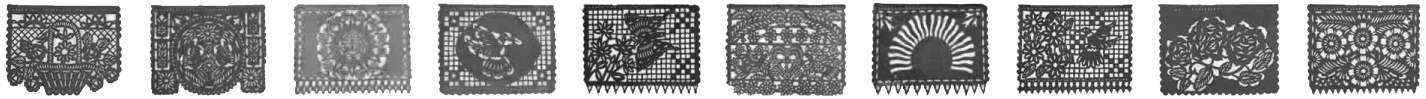
## MATERIALS:

- Markers
- Large chart or butcher paper

## PROCEDURE:

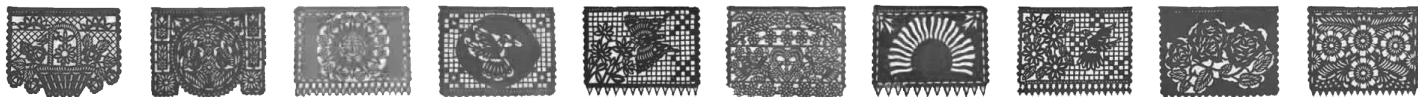
1. **Preparation:** Create a large table on butcher paper or chart paper. It will have as many rows as you have words (or as many rows as you can fit on your paper, you can always tape additional pages together to make your chart longer). It will have four columns (five if you want to include a picture/clue column). The column titles are: WORD, PREDICTION, FINAL MEANING, ORAL SENTENCE, and possibly PICTURE/CLUE. Write the first vocabulary word that the class will learn in the first row in the WORD column. Directly under that word (still in the same row) write an “H” and an “NH”. To aid in the visual chunking of content, the chart is typically color coded by column, so you will need as many different colored markers as you have columns.
2. For the sake of clarity, let’s use the word “remember” for the explanation here. With the chart posted



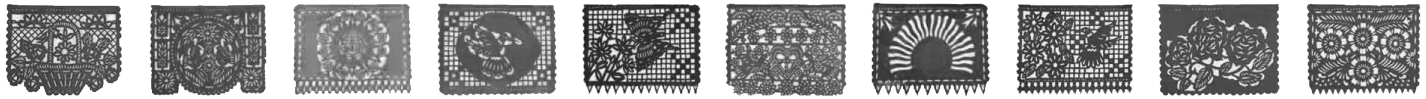


for the whole class to see, ask students to raise their hand if they've heard the word remember before today. Count the number of students who have heard the word and write this number next to the H. Then, ask students who have never heard the word remember to raise their hands. Count the number of students and write this number next to the NH. This serves as an informal assessment tool for you to gauge students' familiarity with the word.

3. Ask students to turn to their tablemates, partner, or small group and discuss what they predict the word remember means. Give students one minute to come up with a prediction. If students are unfamiliar with the word predict/prediction, be sure to discuss that first.
4. Give a predetermined signal for students to come back to whole group and ask students to take turns sharing their predictions. You can use this as an opportunity for language fluency and oral language practice. Encourage them to create complete sentences such as "We predict that remember means. . ." As students share, write their predictions in the PREDICTION column.
5. The next step is to create a signal movement that 'shows' the word. You can teach the students one you have in mind, or ask them for help in creating it and see what they come up with. They may need some guidance if they are not yet clear on the meaning of the word. Once students know the movement, they practice doing the movement while saying the word. If you want students to create the move, but don't think they have a strong enough understanding of the word, you can postpone the signal movement until after the "Final Meaning" discussion on day two. If adhering to GLAD strategy, your vocabulary instruction for the day stops here.
6. The following day write the final meaning of the word on the chart under the appropriate column. Read the definition out loud and discuss it in comparison to their predictions. Give a couple of examples of how this word can be used in a sentence. This is also a good opportunity to discuss parts of speech. You can identify the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, etc.) and then write it underneath the word you are discussing.
7. Ask students to create their own sentence using the word remember, then turn to their partner or tablemate and practice saying the sentence. This should take one or two minutes. Signal for students to come back to whole group. Go around the room having each student share his or her sentence. Correct the student if necessary and help them fix the sentence and say it again.
8. Introduce students to the next vocabulary word, repeating steps 2-5 for the next word.
9. **Review:** Each day review the words from the chart, practicing the signal movement and asking a few students to share an example sentence.



WORD	PREDICTION	FINAL MEANING	SENTENCE (examples)
(to) remember H: 23 NH: 2 verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to not forget</li> <li>• to have to do something</li> <li>• think about</li> <li>• to pay attention to</li> </ul>	to have or to keep an image or idea in your mind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I remember my first grade teacher.</li> <li>• We remembered to bring our permission slips.</li> <li>• I remember my first dog.</li> </ul>
tradition H:      NH:			
Celebration H:      NH:			



# THE BIG BOOK

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

A big book is a teacher created book that reiterates a main theme or “the big idea” of a unit and presents new content information. The book can be physically big if it is created using poster board, but a smaller version can be made using construction paper. In the big book content is presented on each page that reinforces the main idea. The main statement is the first and last sentence or paragraph on each page. The majority of the work in this activity is done by the teacher in preparing the book. For the students, this is more of a read aloud activity. For your use, we have created a big book about Día de los Muertos and included it in the appendix.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels

## ESTIMATED TIME:

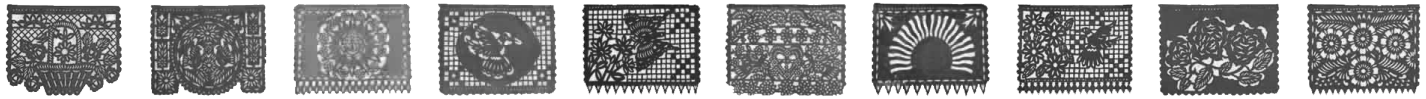
Varies depending upon the length of the book

## MATERIALS:

- Teacher-created Big Book

## PROCEDURE:

1. Preparation: Create or Print the provided Big Book. If you are creating your own book, find an image to illustrate each page (using an internet image search). Glue the image on one page, then the content information that should accompany the image on the next page. Students should be able to see both the image and the content at the same time. See the example we’ve provided for more guidance.
2. As a whole class, read the big book to students. After students have heard the main idea repeated a few times, encourage them to say the main idea with you at the beginning and end of each page. Depending upon the length of the book and the age level of students, this activity may need to be completed over multiple days. The book can also be read once at the beginning of the unit and then once at the end, allowing for discussion or connections students may make once they have learned more about Día de los Muertos.
3. This activity can be expanded to have students create their own big books. This can be done in small groups where each group creates one page, or individually where each student creates one page. Then compile all of the pages into one book.



# PICTORIAL INPUT CHART

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

This activity is adapted from a GLAD strategy where the teacher creates a large poster with important information overlaid on an image relevant to the unit or topic of study. Typically, in preparation for the activity, the teacher would lightly trace the image and the information on a large sheet of white butcher paper. When it was time to begin, the teacher would hang the white butcher paper on the board and begin coloring in parts of the image and tracing over the information she or he had already written in, while presenting the information to the class. When used as part of a GLAD unit, this strategy is combined with the concept of 10:2 teaching—for every 10 minutes of direct instruction, students are given two minutes to discuss with the class, a partner, their table group, etc., the information that has just been presented. This activity introduces students to new information, models how to categorize information, and provides an informational resource for later activities. It may take a few class periods to color in and trace the entire image and all the relevant information.

Included on the following pages are three different versions of a pictorial input chart: a hand drawn sketch that can be re-created on large butcher paper; a digital image with the content headings but no information; and a digital image with the content headings and information. If you don't have time to create the sketch, the digital image can be projected and used for this activity. The digital image can also be used to create a larger poster that can be laminated and then filled in with vis-a-vis marker which allows you to reuse the poster in subsequent classes or years

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels

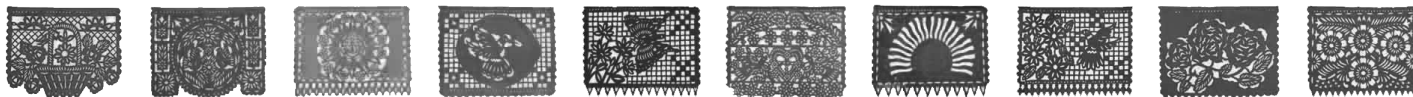
## ESTIMATED TIME:

Varies, approximately 1-2 hours

## MATERIALS:

- Markers
- Large chart or butcher paper





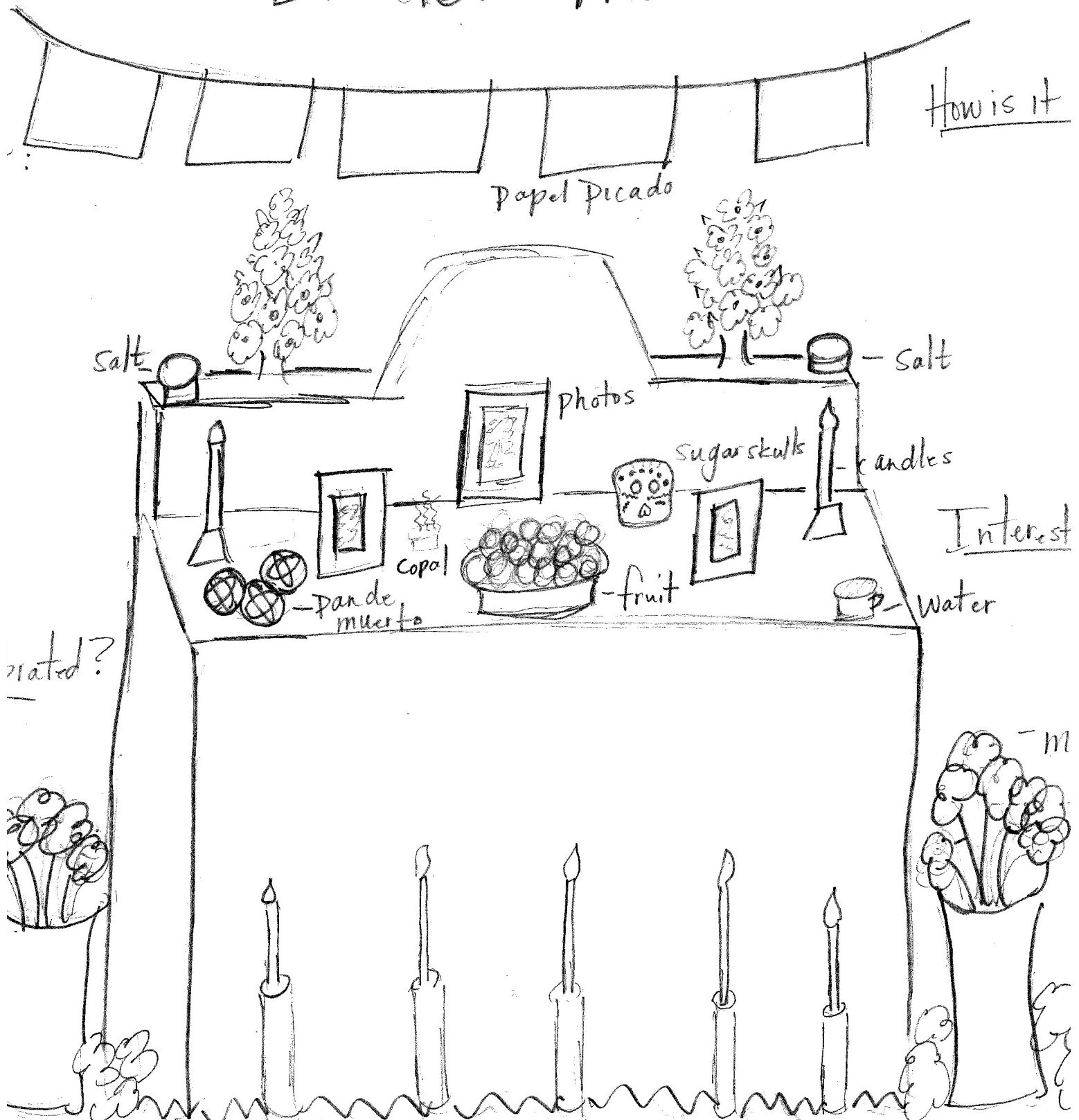
## PROCEDURE:

**Preparation:** If using the hand drawn version, lightly sketch the image onto the white butcher paper with pencil. Also prepare categories and the specific information you plan to include on the chart.

4. Hang the image where everyone in the class can see it. Using markers, begin to color in the poster while talking about the information you have planned to present to students. Present all of the information from one category before moving onto the next category and section of the drawing. Following the 10:2 model (or some adaptation of it), give students time to discuss with their partner or small group the information that they are being presented. Continue writing in the information and coloring in the image for as long as is appropriate for your age level. Continue the above in subsequent days until the image is completed.
5. Keep the pictorial input chart posted somewhere in the room for the rest of the unit. It can serve as a resource for other activities such as the Cooperative Sentence Strip Paragraph, The Compare and Contrast Essay, A Letter Home, or any of the poetry activities.

# Día de los Muertos

How is it



**Country of Origin:**

**How is it Celebrated?**

**Why is it Celebrated?**

**Interesting Fact:**

**Continent:**

The Americas (North, Central, and South America)





### Country of Origin:

Mexico, other countries in Central America, and parts of the US.

### How is it Celebrated?

By creating an ofrenda dedicated to the person who passed away.



### Why is it Celebrated?

To honor and remember ancestors and loved ones who have passed away.

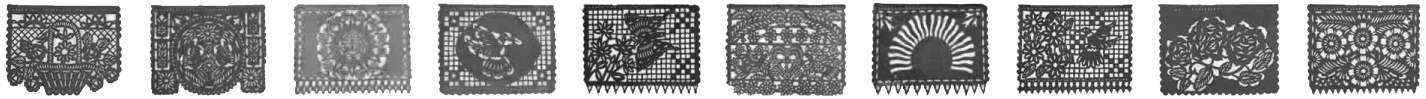
### Interesting Fact:

Water is placed on the ofrenda so that the spirits who return to visit may quench their thirst after their long journey.

### Continent:

The Americas (North, Central, and South America)





# CHANTS

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

Chants are a fun way to engage students while encouraging language fluency and reinforcing important ideas, concepts, and vocabulary.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels

## ESTIMATED TIME:

10-15 minutes/day

## MATERIALS:

- Chant
- Large chart or butcher paper OR equipment to project a Word document

## PROCEDURE:

1. **Preparation:** Find a chant(s) to use with your students. We have provided 3 here that you can use with your class or as a model from which to create your own. Write the chant on large chart paper that can be displayed in the classroom or create a word document that can be projected onto a screen.
2. Introduce students to the chant. Read it out loud to them at least once. Then have students practice saying it. Depending upon the length and difficulty of the chant, you may want to focus on 2 stanzas first, then add on in subsequent days. Once students are comfortable with the rhythm and language, you can highlight the concepts and vocabulary in the chant. Discuss the various concepts and/or vocabulary to be sure students understand what they are saying in the chant. Students may want to add movements to the chant. If using the strategies in the Cognitive Content Dictionary Chart, have students use the movements they've already created for vocabulary words that appear in the chant.
3. The chant(s) can be used throughout the day. They can be used while the specific unit is being taught, or they can be used at various transitional times such as before recess, lunch or dismissal at the end of the day.

Traditions Here There  
By Regina Rosenzweig and Kate Wyffels

Traditions here, traditions there  
Traditions, traditions everywhere

Dynamic traditions celebrating creatively  
Meaningful traditions influencing quietly  
Symbolic traditions inspiring hopefully  
And spectacular traditions gathering excitedly

Traditions in Soviet Union and China  
Traditions from the Pueblo Nations  
Traditions around Ghana, Africa  
Traditions throughout Mexico  
And traditions from all over the world!

Traditions! Traditions! Traditions!

Traditions  
(Sung to the tune of “The Ants Go Marching”)  
By Gloria Velarde

Traditions are important to us. . . .Hooray! Hooray!  
Traditions are important to us. . . .Hooray! Hooray!  
We practice them day to day,  
From them we have a lot of say,  
They shape our culture. . .today, today!

Traditions and culture integrate. . .Hooray! Hooray!  
Traditions and culture integrate. . .Hooray! Hooray!  
From them we learn to celebrate  
And observe important holidays,  
And traditions unite us. . .today, today!

Traditions teach diversity. . .Hooray, Hooray!  
Traditions teach diversity. . .Hooray, Hooray!  
We learn about how people live  
The more we learn, the more we give,  
It makes us a better world, in which to live. . .  
Today! Today! Today! Today!

Día de los Muertos: Welcoming la Familia  
To the tune of The Addams Family

Day of the Dead  
Snap snap  
Day of the Dead  
Snap snap  
Day of the Dead  
Day of the Dead  
Day of the Dead  
Snap snap

It's Día de los Muertos,  
Our doors are abiertos.

There's altars for remembering  
The loved ones who are lingering.

They follow the smell of flowers,  
They visit after hours.

Amamos los ancestros,  
They're all our family.

Day of the Dead  
Snap snap  
Day of the Dead



Snap snap  
Day of the Dead  
Day of the Dead  
Day of the Dead  
Snap snap

There's lots of celebration  
Among the population.

We all make the ofrendas  
Hoping they will send us

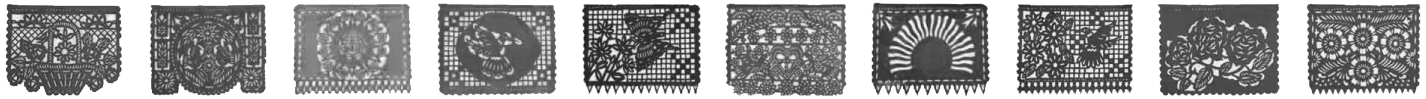
Memories, love and laughter  
And all our family.

Day of the Dead  
Snap snap  
Day of the Dead  
Snap snap  
Day of the Dead  
Day of the Dead  
Day of the Dead  
Snap snap

There's marigolds, salt and water,  
And sugar skulls in color.

We make papel picado  
To honor the amados

We eat the pan de muerto  
With all our family.



# COOPERATIVE SENTENCE STRIP PARAGRAPH

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

Here students will work in small groups to create sentences, then work as a whole class to create a paragraph from those sentences. This serves as both a review of content material and practice in both oral and written language fluency. This activity will work best after students have a strong grasp of the majority of the content to be presented in the unit.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels

## ESTIMATED TIME:

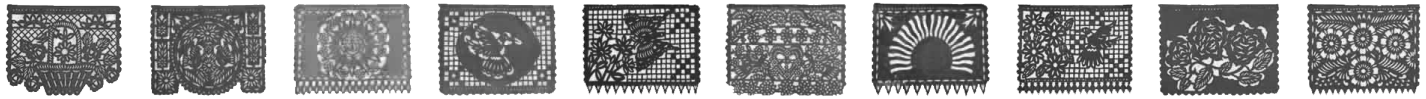
60 minutes

## MATERIALS:

- Large chart or butcher paper
- Large sentence strips
- Notebook paper
- Markers
- Magnets
- Tape

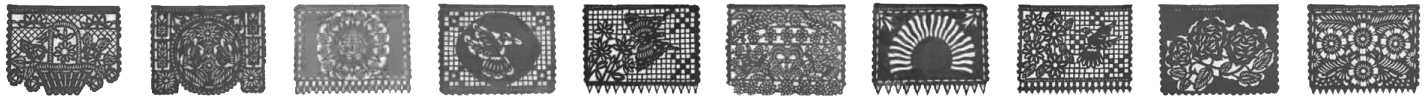
## PROCEDURE:

1. **Preparation:** Create a topic sentence that encompasses the unit you are studying. For a unit on Día de los Muertos, this could be something like “Día de los Muertos is an important celebration in Mexico and other parts of Latin America.” Or, “Día de los Muertos is a celebration that honors those who have passed away.” Write the topic sentence on large butcher or chart paper.
2. Read the topic sentence with students.
3. Explain to students that they are going to work in small groups to create a sentence that would be relevant for a paragraph with the topic sentence you’ve provided. In order to get students excited and engaged, a game-like quality is added to the assignment. After discussing options among their group, the group will write their rough draft sentence on a piece of notebook paper. When they have done this, they raise their hands for the teacher to check their sentence. If there are any errors, factual or grammatical, the teacher guides them to these mistakes without correcting it for them. Students must fix the



sentence and then raise their hands to have it checked again. If it is correct, students get the final copy sentence strip paper and re-write their sentence on it. The key here is that no two groups can write the same sentence about the same supporting fact. The goal is to finish as quickly as possible before someone else uses the same idea. When the students have finished their final copy sentence, they put it on the large paper underneath the topic sentence using magnets so that they can be easily moved during the editing process.

4. Once all groups have hung up their sentences, the class read through all the sentences together. Guided by the teacher, the class discusses the best order to put the sentences in—is there a sentence that should clearly go directly after the topic sentence? Are there facts that should be grouped together? As the class makes these decisions, the teacher moves the sentences around, visually modeling how to edit a paragraph.
5. When the paragraph is completely edited, the class reads it out loud together.
6. This activity can be done multiple times in one unit depending upon how many different kinds of topic sentences can be created. It can also be expanded upon asking each student or small group to create their own paragraph once the whole class activity has been modeled.



# PROCESS GRID

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

This is a great way to chart and review the information learned. It makes the most sense to use when there are multiple things to compare. Here, it would be most useful if students will study multiple cultural celebrations throughout the year. At the end of each unit on a celebration, the class fills in the appropriate information for that celebration. It can be created on large butcher paper, or projected onto a smart board or screen. Once all of the content information has been taught for a celebration or tradition, in a whole group setting have students provide the information to fill out the grid. It then becomes a resource that students can refer back to when completing assignments. On the following page is a sample grid; an editable version is accessible through the LAII website. The headings can be changed so that they focus on the content taught in the units. In the process, the headings become the organizing units that allow students to compare and contrast the various traditions or celebrations they learn about.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels

## ESTIMATED TIME:

30-45 minutes

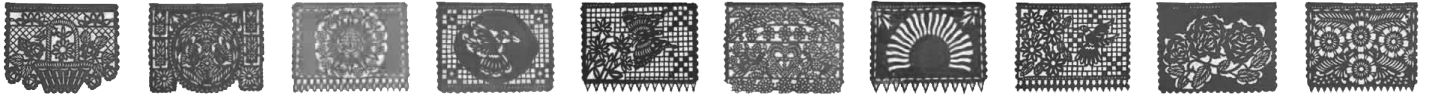
## MATERIALS:

- Large chart or butcher paper OR equipment to project a Word document

## PROCEDURE:

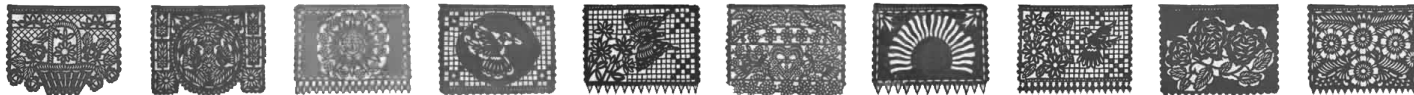
1. **Preparation:** Create the grid and post in the classroom where all students can see it.
2. As a whole group, ask students to supply the information needed to fill in each category on the chart. Continue until the entire row or grid is filled out.
3. Keep the grid posted for students to refer back to. If you cover up the squares with sticky notes, the grid can become the basis for a review game of jeopardy.





Cultural Tradition	Country of Origin	Continent	Why is it celebrated ?	How is it celebrated ?	Interesting Fact
Día de los Muertos					

Cultural Tradition	Country of Origin	Continent	Why is it Celebrated?	How is it celebrated?	Interesting Fact
Día de los Muertos					



## APPENDIX

BIG BOOK OF DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS.....

# The Big Book of Día de los Muertos

Written by Katrina Dillon

Día de los Muertos is a celebration to honor, remember, and celebrate the ancestors and loved ones who have passed away.





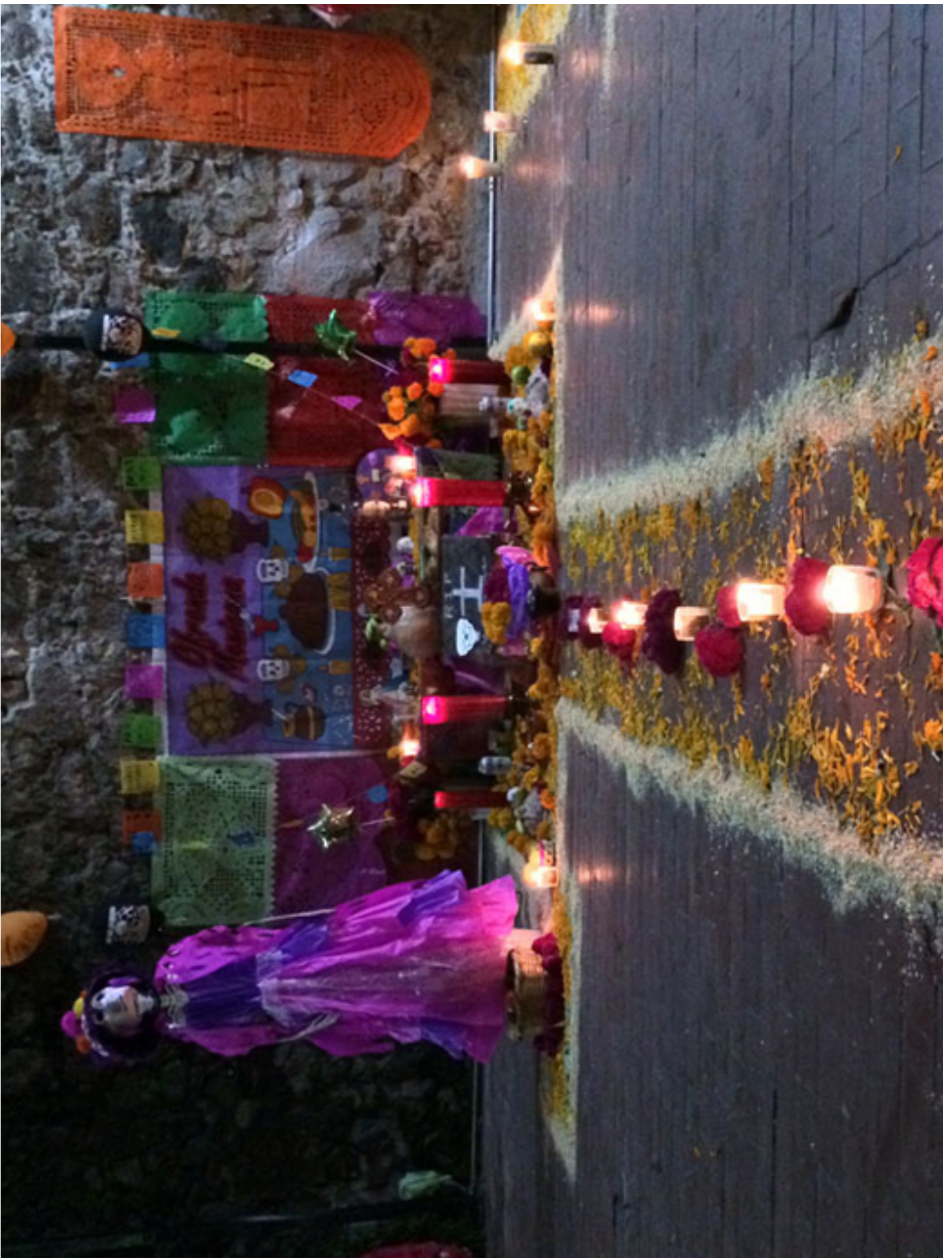


**The important thing about Día de los Muertos is that it is a celebration to honor, remember and celebrate the ancestors and loved ones who have passed away.**

Día de los Muertos is an important cultural celebration in Latin America. Not everyone in Latin America celebrates Día de los Muertos. It is most widely celebrated in Mexico, but people also observe it in Guatemala, Ecuador and parts of the United States.

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Día de los Muertos takes place on November 1st and 2nd. It is believed that on these two nights of the year the deceased may return and visit with the living. Many of the practices associated with the holiday are meant to guide the deceased back to the homes of the living, and once there, help them remember the sensations and experiences they had while they lived. For a brief time, the living and the dead are reunited.

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Ofrendas (offerings) are an important part of the Día de los Muertos celebration. Ofrendas are typically built on a flat, table-like surface or constructed as stairs. The items included in the ofrenda vary, but often include a cloth to cover the altar, photos of the deceased, the favorite foods of the deceased, and small mementos to commemorate the memory of those who have passed away. Some refer to ofrendas as altares, or altars, but these are not altars for worshipping, only remembering and honoring the deceased.

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Salt, water, copal and cempasúchitl flowers (marigolds) are also traditional items often placed on and around the ofrenda. The salt is believed to purify the spirits. The water is to quench the thirst of the spirits from their long journey. The copal rises like smoke, giving the air a sweet scent. The cempasúchitl flowers with their bright colors and unique scent form a path to guide the spirits home.

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Papel picado, loosely translated as “perforated paper,” is a folk art technique practiced in Mexico. Colorful pieces of cut paper are strung to flutter in the wind during many holiday celebrations, including Día de los Muertos. Specific color schemes are tied to each celebration. Pink, purple and orange are typically used to decorate for Día de los Muertos.

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Sugar skulls, also known as alfeñiques, are a traditional folk art from Mexico used to celebrate Día de los Muertos. Sugar skulls are colorfully decorated with a variety of materials including icing, sequins, and brightly colored tin foil. Families either make their own or buy them in village markets to adorn their ofrendas.

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Pan de muerto, or bread of the dead, is a traditional sweet bread made during Día de los Muertos. It is often made in a circular shape, like a bun, and decorated with bone shaped pieces. Some place it on the ofrenda. It is also eaten at the gravesite or ofrenda of the deceased.

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Skulls and skeletons (calacas in Spanish) are important icons or symbols of Día de los Muertos. These are not sad or scary, but created playfully and colorfully. They are meant to symbolize the cycle of life and our mortality. People will place the skulls and skeletons on their ofrendas, at gravesites, and in windows. Some people even paint their faces to resemble a skull.

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Día de los Muertos, once unknown to in the majority of the U.S., is now celebrated in communities across the country. In addition to honoring one's own deceased family and friends, it is a way to honor popular Latino icons, like Frida Kahlo or Cesar Chavez. It also honors the growing demographic of Latinos in the U.S. Many public ofrendas, museum exhibits, and local events commemorating the dead call attention to issues of social and political importance directly related to the deaths of Latinos.

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