



Mexico Activities

We are going to be looking at Mexico and its traditions

- Complete the knowledge harvest
- Colour the Day of the Dead skull and then have a go at creating your own.
- Add key locations to the blank map of Mexico
- Have a go at assembling the 3D model
- Carry out some research to help you complete to 'All About Mexico' task
- Write an information text about the Mexican tradition of Day of the Dead
- Use the 'Inspiration for a Story' sheet to write your own story
- Create a Mexico related quiz
- Imagine you are a teacher. Create 3 lessons for your class teaching them about the climate, traditions and life in Mexico.

Knowledge Harvest

What I know about Mexico

Things I would like to know about Mexico



All About Mexico

Capital City:

Population:

Size (square miles):

Bordering Countries:

Lakes and Rivers:

Color Mexico:



Mountains or Other Land Formations:

National Parks:

Man-Made Tourist Attractions:

Climate:

Natural Hazards:

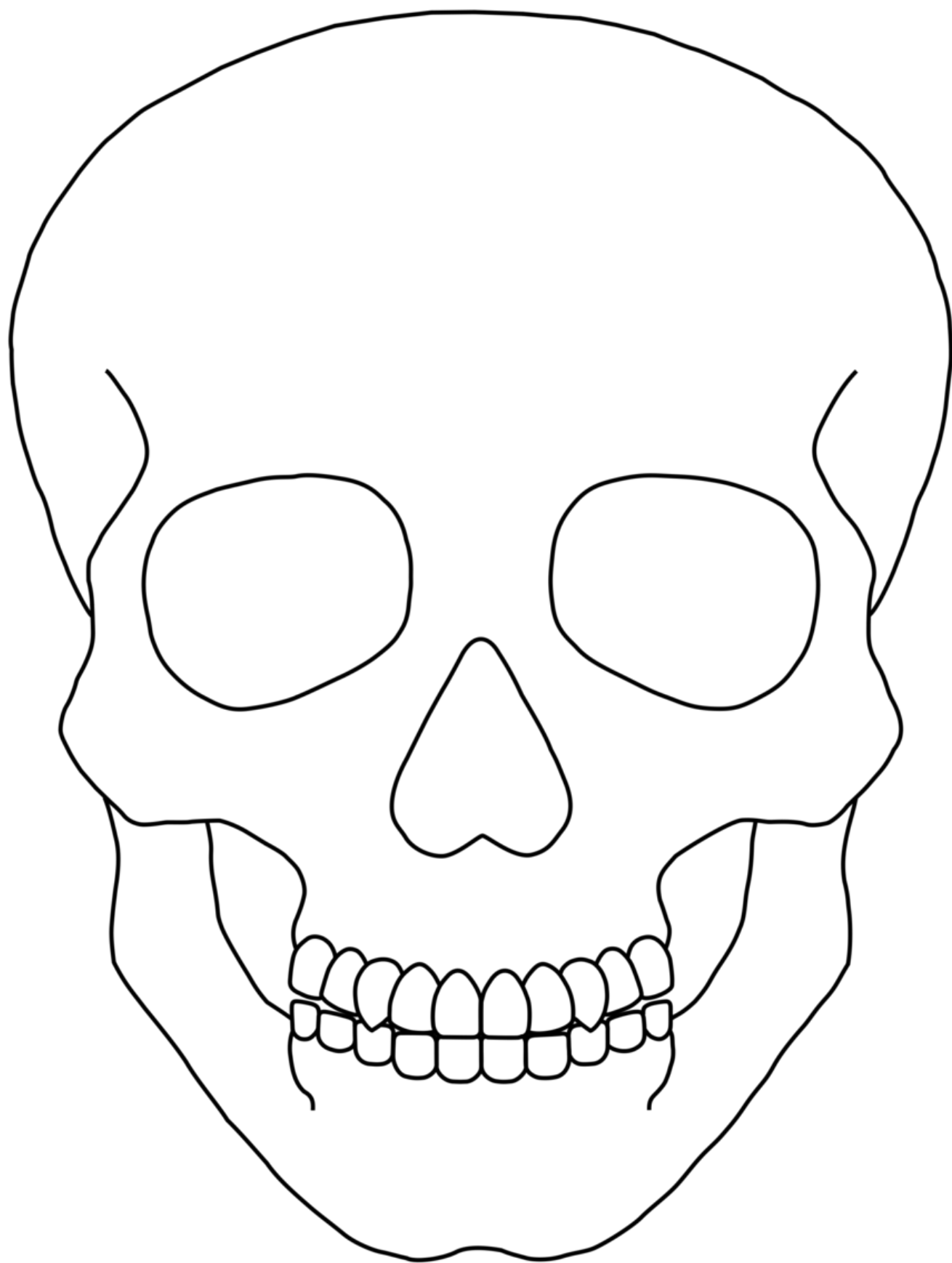
Map of Mexico

Using what you know about the country of Mexico, label these places on the map:

Mexico City, Gulf of Mexico, Pacific Ocean, Baja Peninsula, Yucatan Peninsula.



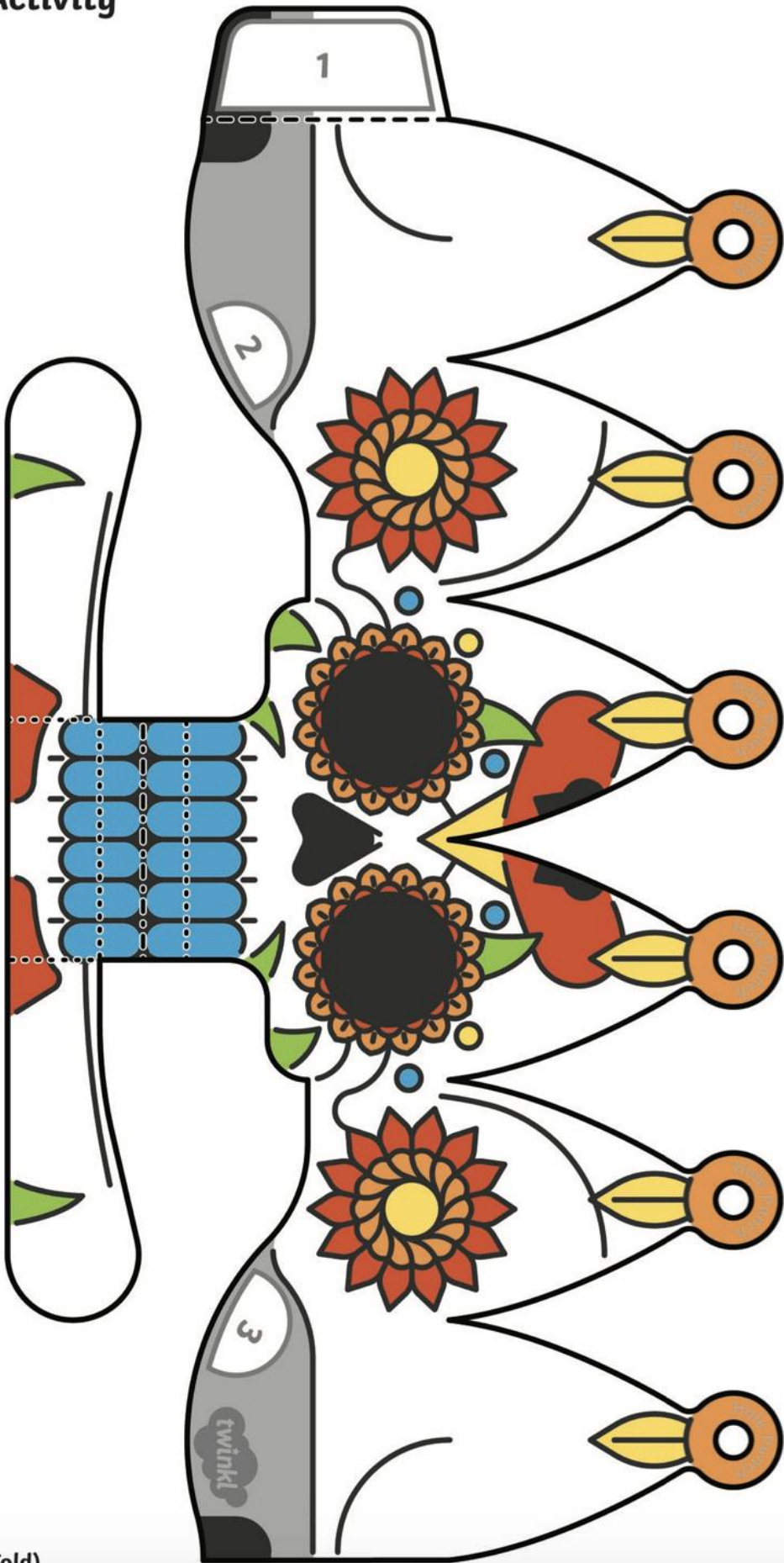




3D Skull Paper Model Activity

- 1) Carefully cut out the skull along the solid black line.
- 2) Use a hole punch to make holes in the spots shown.
- 3) Follow the key below and fold the skull along the dotted lines.
- 4) Curve around the skull and glue tab 1.
- 5) Place a split pin or string through the top holes of the skull.
- 6) Glue tabs 2 and 3 to the sides of the jaw.

- Fold Down
- Fold Up
- Guideline (Don't Fold)



Inspiration for a story

Look at the following images.

Use them as inspiration to write a story.



Day of the Dead

All about Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)

Day of the Dead is the English name for the Mexican festival Día de los Muertos. It is a celebration during which the dead are honoured. Surprisingly, it is not a sombre and melancholy time, but a time of rejoicing and memories. It is celebrated in Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala and other areas in Central and South America. Similarly, it is also celebrated in areas of North America, such as California and Texas, where the Mexican/American heritage exists.

The festival lasts for three days from 31st October until 2nd November and it is a fiesta of flowers, food, candles, parades, prayer and fun. People dress up as skeletons and wear elaborate costumes and masks.

The first day is on the same day as Halloween, the 31st October. On this day at midnight, it is believed that the gates of heaven are opened. The second day, the 1st November, is when the spirits of deceased children (angelitos) visit. The third and final day, the 2nd November, is when the spirits of adults visit.



Ofrendas

Ofrenda is the Spanish word for altar, which is an area created at graveyards with items to remember loved ones and where candles are lit to guide their spirits. Altars include: pictures of the deceased person, items that they liked, something to eat, candles, flowers and gifts.

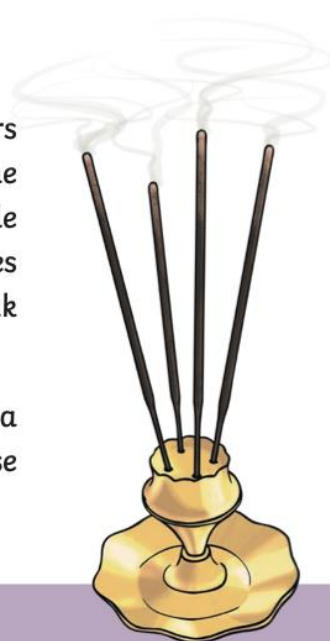


Day of the Dead

Soul Attraction

Candles (las velas) are lit during the afternoon at altars and grave sites to burn all evening. The light of the candles guide the way for souls. Sometimes, each candle lit represents a departed soul and certain coloured candles have meanings: purple for pain, white for hope and pink for celebration.

The final thing added to the altars is incense, which is a perfumed, white smoke thought to attract souls of those who have gone.

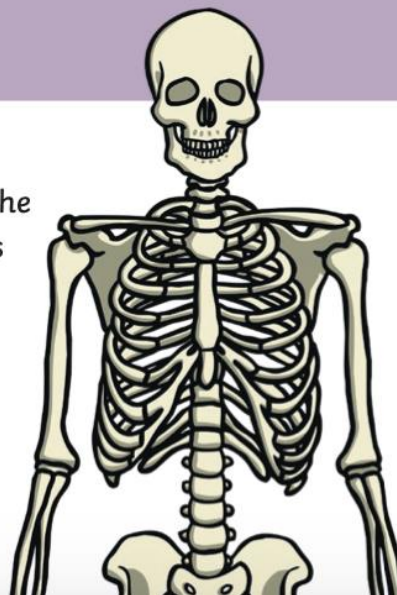


Pan de Muertos

During the celebrations, special bread called Pan de Muertos (bread of the dead) is eaten. This bread represents the souls of those who have passed on. The loaves are sometimes baked in the shape of skulls or round and decorated with bones. The bread is often decorated with brightly coloured icing or seeds, which represent happiness in some areas of Mexico.

Calacas

Skeletons are a constant emblem during Day of the Dead. Not only are skeletons seen in decorations but also in sweets, chocolates and toys. The toys and dolls are called 'calacas' and are used to introduce children to the idea of death so that they are not afraid of it. Often, the calacas are grinning because they are laughing at death. They are even shown as musicians or on horseback to show a joyful afterlife.



Day of the Dead Questions

1. Who took this festival to North America?

2. Why has the author used the word 'surprisingly' in the first paragraph?

3. Find the section on 'Ofrendas'.

a. What are they?

b. Where are they found?

c. Name three things you might find on an ofrenda.

4. What is the Spanish word used for candles?

5. You can find the word 'meurtos' in two areas of this fact file, can you work out its translation?

6. Why are the calacas often seen having fun or doing activities?

Day of the Dead Questions

7. What similarities can you identify between this festival and Halloween which happens at the same time in the UK?

8. Find the two fronted adverbials in paragraph 1.

9. Find as many synonyms for ‘dead’ as you can in the fact file.

10. How do you feel about having a festival for the dead? Explain your reasons as to why you think it is a good or bad idea.

Mexico

Official Name: United Mexican States

Population: Over 129 million (2017)

Capital City: Mexico City

Language: Spanish is the most widely spoken language but 6% of people speak native languages, including Nahuatl, Yucatec Maya and Mixtec.

Continent: North America

Mountain Range: Sierra Madre

Major Rivers: Rio Grande and the Yaqui

Currency: Peso

Government: Presidential Federal Republic

National Day: Dia de la Independencia (Independence Day) 16th September

Religion: 83% Roman Catholic, others a mixture of mainly other Christian religions.

Flag:



Climate: Two seasons – wet and dry. Temperatures vary depending on the area but summers can be extremely hot.

Famous Mexicans: Guillermo del Toro, Oscar-winning film director; Carlos Santana, musician; Frida Kahlo, artist; Salma Hayek, actress; Javier Hernández, footballer; Carlos Fuentes, author.

Mexico's History Timeline

- 1500-400 BC: Mexico's first major civilization, the Olmecs, emerge.
- AD 300-900: Classic Period: Teotihuacán and Mayan civilizations thrive.
- 1325-1428: The Aztecs migrate to Mexico's central valley and gradually establish as the most powerful force in central Mexico.
- 1517: The first Europeans visit Mexico.
- 1519-1521: Hernán Cortés arrives with troops and conquers Mexico. The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan is destroyed. Mexico City is rebuilt on the remains.
- 1521-1820: Mexico is under Spanish rule and is included in the Viceroyalty of New Spain.

Mexico's History Timeline

- 1810-1821: The "Cry of Dolores" spoken by Catholic priest, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, sparks revolt against Spanish control. The Mexican War of Independence rages on until 1821.
- August 24, 1821: Mexico finally gains independence from Spain in 1821.
- 1846-1848: Mexican-American War.
- 1910-1920: Mexican Revolution ends in the establishment of a constitutional republic.
- 1942: Mexico declares war on Germany and Japan.
- 1968: Mexico hosts the Olympic Games.
- 1985: Massive earthquake hits Mexico City, approximately 10,000 were killed.

Mexico's Flag

Green, white, and red with the national coat of arms in the center of the white stripe.

- Green Stripe: hope
- White Stripe: unity
- Red Stripe: blood of heroes

Mexico



Mexico's Geography

Mexico



- Located on the continent of North America
- Official name is United Mexican States
- Capital City: Mexico City

Mexico's Geography



- Third largest country in Latin America
- 14th largest nation in the world
- Borders the United States of America, Guatemala, and Belize
- Surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea

Mexico's Geography

Capital: Mexico City

- Most populated city in Mexico
- Located in the Valley of Mexico
- Oldest capital city in North and South America
- Largest Spanish-speaking city in the world

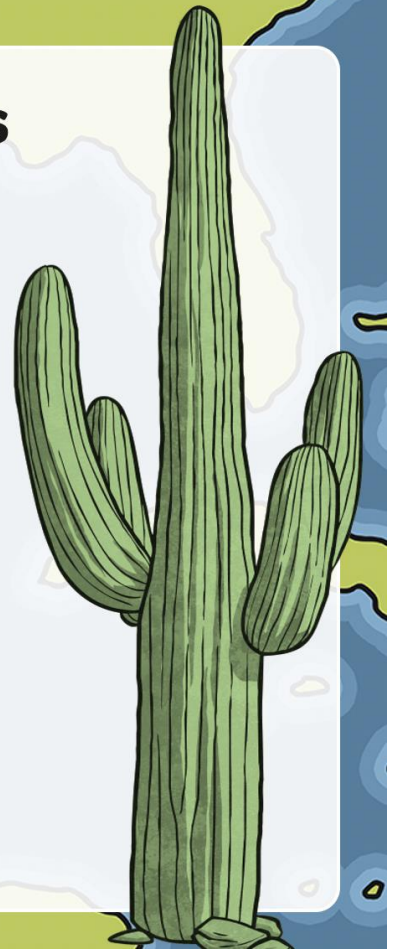


Physical Features

Copper Canyon: large group of canyons located in northwestern Mexico includes Basaseachic Falls, Mexico's second-highest waterfall

Chihuahuan Desert: second largest desert in North America

Lacandon Jungle: largest montane rainforest in North America



Landmarks

Chichen Itza: Mayan ruins located on the Yucatán Peninsula. Once one of the largest Maya cities and now one of the most visited archeological locations in Mexico.



Photo courtesy of Arian Zweepers (@flickr.com) - granted under creative commons licence - attribution

Teotihuacan: established in approximately 100 BC. It was the Aztec capital until it was conquered by Spain in 1521. Ruins of this beautiful city can still be seen in present day Mexico City.

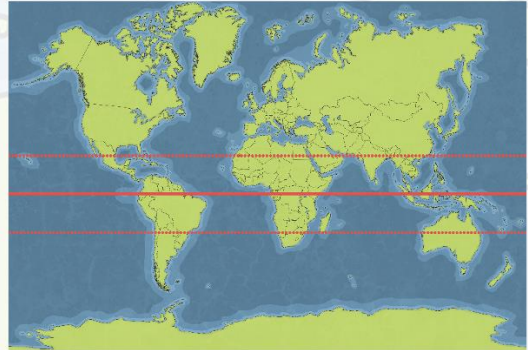


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Climate

Mexico's climate varies greatly depending on location.

- The Tropic of Cancer divides the country into temperate and tropical zones.
 - The area north of the Tropic of Cancer experiences a more varied climate including colder temperatures in the winter.
 - The area south of the Tropic of Cancer is hot and humid and experiences only small changes in temperature.
- Mexico also has dry and wet seasons.
 - Wet Season: May-October
 - Dry Season: November-April



Culture

- Spanish is the most spoken language in Mexico.
- Mexico hosts the largest number of Native American language speakers in North America.
- The largest religion in Mexico is the Roman Catholic religion.
- Football is the most popular team sport in Mexico.



Mexican Food

- Mole: a general name for a variety of different sauces used in Mexican cooking.
- Corn is a very important staple in Mexican food. It is used in a multitude of Mexican dishes but most commonly in the form of tortillas.
- Popular Mexican cuisine includes tacos, enchiladas, elote, guacamole, and tamales.



Holidays & Celebrations



Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead):

- November 1st – 2nd each year.
- A time to remember and celebrate loved ones who have passed away.
- Altars are created and decorated with favorite items and food of the deceased as a way to entice them to return.
- Sugar Skulls: one of the most well-known Day of the Dead decorations. These little decorations are typically made from granulated white sugar and decorated with bright patterns.
- Calaca: these skeletons are a very popular Day of the Dead tradition. They are often adorned with marigold and foliage and are meant to be joyful rather than scary.

Holidays & Celebrations

Diez y Seis: Mexico's Independence Day

- September 16th
- On September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo began a revolt against the Spanish rule.
- Cry of Dolores: first spoken by Hidalgo in the town of Dolores, it is considered to be the war cry of the Mexican War of Independence.
- Celebrated with fiestas (parties) and celebrations similar to those of July 4th in the United States.



UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA



What Is the Day of the Dead?

Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) is a celebration during which the dead are honoured.

It is not a sombre and melancholy time, but a time of rejoicing and memories.

It is a day when people go to cemeteries and create altars to be with the souls of friends and relatives who have departed.



When Is the Day of the Dead Celebrated?

Day of the Dead is celebrated across 3 days. The full three days is a fiesta of flowers, food, candles, parades, prayer and fun.

The first day is on the same day as Halloween, 31st October. On this day at midnight, the gates of heaven are opened.

The second day, 1st November, is when the spirits of deceased children (angelitos) visit.

The third day, 2nd November, is when the spirits of adults visit.



Where Is the Day of the Dead Celebrated?

It is also celebrated in areas of North America, such as California and Texas, where the Mexican/American heritage exists.

Day of the Dead is celebrated in Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala and other areas in Central and South America, specifically those with the Latino ethnic background.

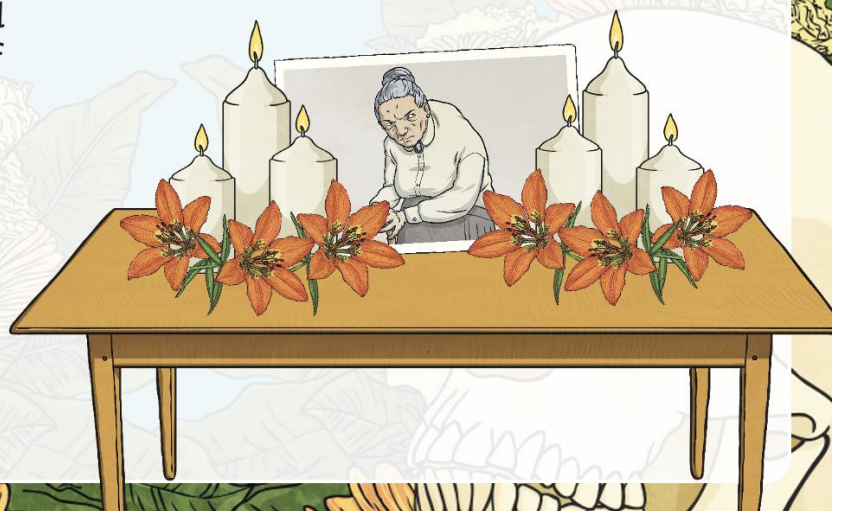


Ofrendas - Altars

People create ofrendas (altars) to honour the deceased. The altars are a space to remember loved ones and light candles to guide the spirits.

The altars include:

- pictures of the deceased
- items they were fond of
- something to eat
- candles
- flowers
- gifts

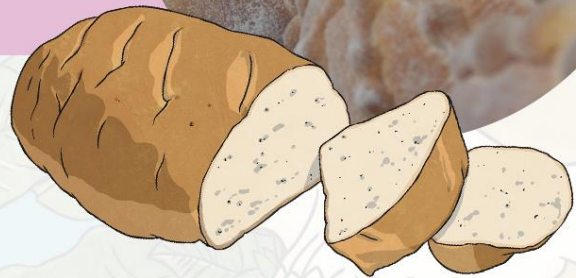


Pan de Muertos – Bread of the Dead

A special Day of the Dead bread called Pan de Muertos is eaten. This bread represents the soul of the departed.

The loaves are sometimes baked in the shape of skulls and sometimes are round loaves decorated with bones.

The bread is often decorated with frosting or seeds, which represent happiness in some areas of Mexico.



Food

Foods that the deceased enjoyed whilst alive are placed on the altar.

The dead have come back to visit when the food has spoilt. Fizzy drinks go flat, bread becomes hard and fruit softens.



Flowers

Flowers adorn altars, crosses, costumes and grave sites.

Orange and yellow marigolds are symbolic of life whilst ruby coxcombs are used as enticement for the returning spirits.

The sweet smell of the flowers guide the souls back to their homes and altars.



Papel Picado – Paper Decorations

Images are cut into thin colourful tissue paper and hung in repetitive patterns from length of string overhead and around altars.

These tissue paper decorations are called Papel Picado.

They adorn homes, businesses and markets too with depictions of skeletons and flowers.



Calacas - Skeletons

Skeletons are a constant emblem during Day of the Dead.

Not only are skeletons seen in decorations but also in sugar skulls, chocolate skulls, figurines and toys.

These skull toys and figurines are called calacas and are used to introduce children to the idea of death so that they are not afraid of it.



Often, the calacas are grinning because they are laughing at death.

The calacas show an active and joyful afterlife often depicted as musicians, brides or on horseback.



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Las Velas - Candles

Candles (las velas) are lit during the afternoon at altars and grave sites to burn all evening.

The light of the candles guide the way for souls. Sometimes each candle lit represents a departed soul.

The candles are placed in the four cardinal points to make a cross.

Certain coloured candles have meanings:

- purple – pain
- white – hope
- pink – celebration



Copal - Incense

A special expensive incense is lit to attract souls.



The incense is put on the altar last.

Bright white incense is considered the best because it lasts longest.

Parades, Masks and Costumes

Sometimes parades are held where people dress up as skeletons and wear elaborate costumes and masks.

The masks represent becoming another person or another being – alive or dead.

