

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.

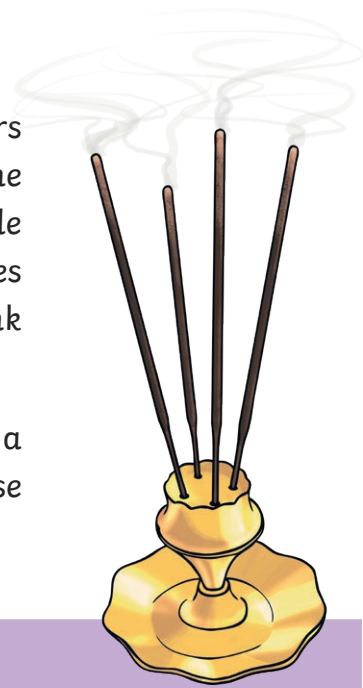


Day of the Dead

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.



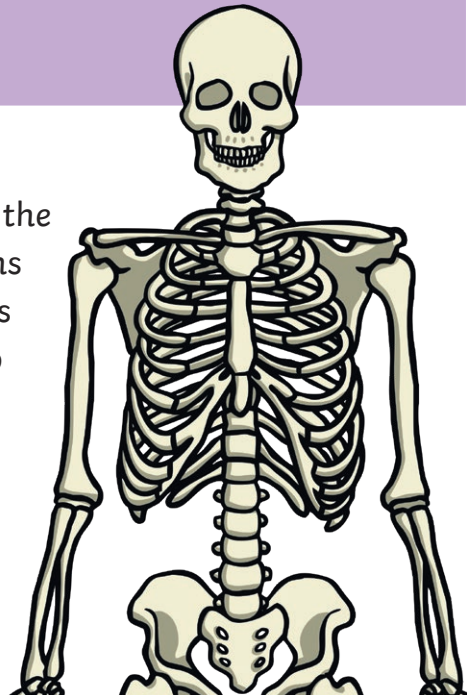
Pan de Muertos

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.

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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.

Day of the Dead Answers

1. Who took this festival to North America?

This festival was taken to North America by Mexicans.

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

It is surprising that death is celebrated in this way as in the UK it is a sad time. We are not used to seeing death in this way.

3. Find the section on 'Ofrendas'

- a. What are they?

Ofrendas are altars

- b. Where are they found?

Ofrendas are found in graveyards.

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

Three things you might find in an ofrenda are: (any three from) candles, pictures, items the person liked, incense, something to eat, flowers, gifts.

4. What is the Spanish word used for candles?

The Spanish word for candles is 'las velas'.

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

The word 'muertos' means dead people/the dead/the deceased.

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

Calacas are often seen having fun or doing activities because they are showing that the afterlife is joyful/fun.

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

Similarities between Day of the Dead in Mexico and Halloween in the UK are: (any from) they have skulls as symbols, the belief that the dead visit during that time, dressing up/face painting, 31st October/1st November, death as a theme, candles.

7. Find the two fronted adverbials in paragraph 1.

The two fronted adverbials in paragraph 1 are: 'surprisingly' and 'similarly'.

8. Find as many synonyms for 'dead' as you can in the fact file.

Synonyms for 'dead': deceased, departed, those who have gone, those who have passed on.

9. 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.

Open ended good for class discussion. Children might feel awkward about celebrating death in this way as it is very different to how we celebrate in the UK. However, you may find some similarities such as wakes/celebration of life parties.

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 called Día de los Muertos (say: dee-a de loss mur-toes). It is a celebration where the dead are honoured. Surprisingly, it is not a sombre and miserable time, but a time of happiness and memories. It is celebrated in Mexico, Ecuador, and other areas in Central and South America as well as in areas of North America, such as California and Texas, where Mexicans have brought the tradition.

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

The first day is on the same day as Halloween in the UK, the 31st October. On this day at midnight, it is believed that the gates of heaven are opened, releasing souls of those who have died. The second day, the 1st November, is when the spirits of children who have died 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 where candles are lit to remember loved ones who have died. Altars have lots of things on them including: pictures of the deceased person, things they liked, food, candles, flowers and gifts.

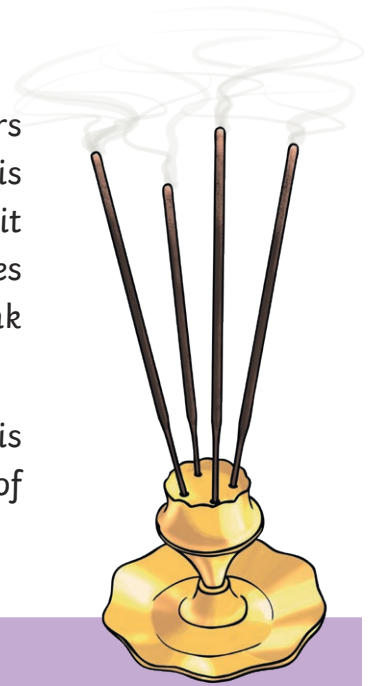


Day of the Dead

Soul Attraction

Candles (las velas) are lit during the afternoon at altars to burn all through the night. The light of the candles is said to guide the way for souls. Sometimes each candle lit represents a person who has died. Also, 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 nice-smelling, white smoke thought to attract souls of those who have gone.



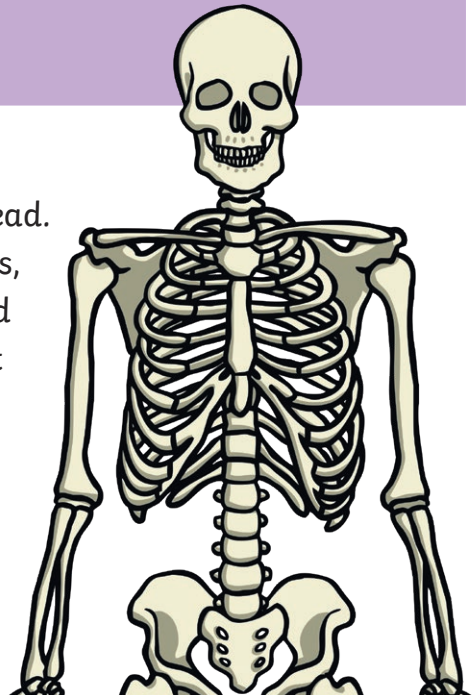
Pan de Muertos (say: pan de mur-toe)

During the celebrations, a special bread called Pan de Muertos (bread of the dead) is eaten representing people who have died. This can be found in the shape of a skull or sometimes a round loaf decorated with bone shapes. The bread is often decorated with brightly coloured icing or seeds, meaning 'happiness'.

Calacas

Skeletons are a main symbol of Day of the Dead. They are seen in decorations and also in sweets, chocolates and toys. The toys and dolls are called 'calacas' and are used to show children that death is something of which you should not be afraid. Calacas are usually smiling and having fun because they are laughing at death and showing that the afterlife is good.

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Day of the Dead Questions

1. In which continents is Day of the Dead celebrated?

2. In paragraph 1, what does the word 'sombre' mean?

3. Name two things you might find on an ofrenda.

4. Look at the title 'Pan de Muertos'. If this means Bread of the Dead, which word means 'bread'?

5. In the first paragraph of the 'Soul Attraction' section, why has the author used brackets after the word candles?

6. What are calacas used for?

7. Can you find any things that are the same between Day of the Dead and Halloween? (which happens at the same time in the UK)

8. Find the first paragraph in the 'Ofrendas' section. Why has the author used a colon in this paragraph?

Day of the Dead Answers

1. In which continents is Day of the Dead celebrated?

Answer: Day of the Dead is celebrated in North and South America.

2. In paragraph 1, what does the word 'sombre' mean?

Answer: The word 'sombre' means sad and serious (or equivalent answers).

3. Name two things you might find on an ofrenda.

Answer: Two things you might find in an ofrenda are: (any three from) candles, pictures, items the person liked, incense, something to eat, flowers, gifts.

4. Look at the title 'Pan de Muertos'. If this means Bread of the Dead, which word means 'bread'?

Answer: The word for bread is 'pan'.

5. In the first paragraph of the 'Soul Attraction' section, why has the author used brackets after the word candles?

Answer: The author has used brackets after the word candles to give extra information to the reader to explain what the word candle is in Spanish. NB: The most important part of this answer is 'extra information to the reader to explain'.

6. What are calacas used for?

Answer: Calacas are used to teach children that death is not to be feared. (Or equivalent answer).

7. Can you find any things that are the same between Day of the Dead and Halloween? (which happens at the same time in the UK)

Answer: Similarities between Day of the Dead in Mexico and Halloween in the UK are: (any from) they have skulls as symbols, the belief that the dead visit during that time, dressing up/face painting, 31st October/1st November, death as a theme, candles.

8. Find the first paragraph in the 'Ofrendas' section. Why has the author used a colon in this paragraph?

Answer: The author has used a colon because there is a list of items that follows.

9. Find as many antonyms for 'miserable' as you can in the fact file.

Answer: Antonyms for miserable are: (any from plus own examples) happy, joyous, cheerful, cheery, merry, jovial, jolly, gleeful, delighted, ecstatic.

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.

Answer: Open ended good for class discussion. Children might feel awkward about celebrating death in this way as it is very different to how we celebrate in the UK. However, you may find some similarities such as wakes/celebration of life parties.

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 called Día de los Muertos (say: dee-a de loss mur-toes). It is a time when people think about all the people who have died. You might be surprised to find out that it is not a sad time, but a time of happiness and good memories. It is celebrated in Mexico and other areas of Central North and South America where Mexicans have brought the tradition with them.

The festival starts on 31st October and lasts for three days. It is a colourful festival with lots of flowers, food, candles, parades, prayer and fun. People dress up as skeletons and wear colourful costumes and masks.

The first day is on the same day as Halloween in the UK and this is when it is believed that the gates of heaven open to let out the souls of people who have died. On the second day, spirits of children who have died visit and on the last day, spirits of adults who have died come.



Ofrendas

Ofrenda is the Spanish word for 'altar,' which is an area created at graveyards. At the altar, candles are lit to remember loved ones who have died. Altars have lots of things on them including: photographs of the person who has died, things they liked, food, candles, flowers and gifts.

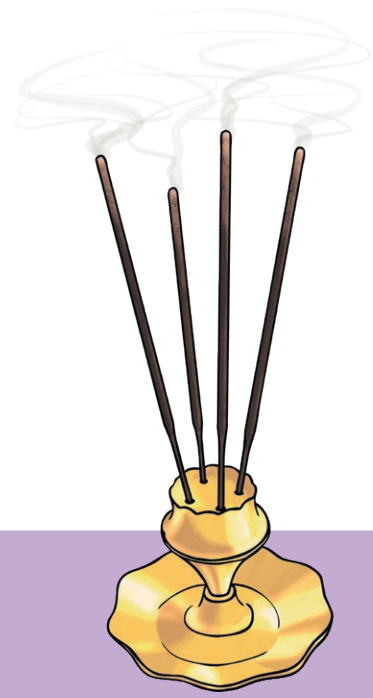


Day of the Dead

Soul Attraction

Candles are lit during the afternoon to burn all through the night. Sometimes each candle lit represents a person who has died. Also, coloured candles have meanings: purple for pain, white for hope and pink for celebration.

The last thing added to the altars is incense, which is a nice-smelling, white smoke said to help souls visit.



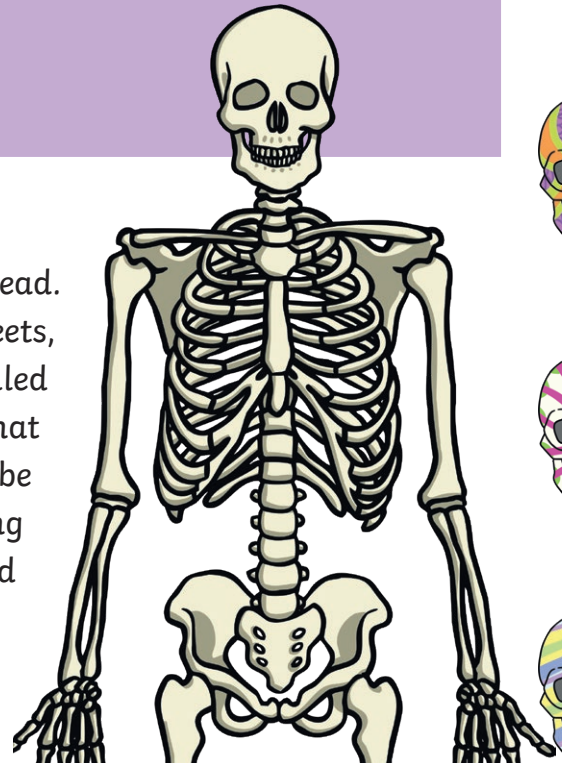
Pan de Muertos (say: pan de mur-toe)

This is a special type of bread that is eaten during the festival and its name means 'bread of the dead'. The bread can be in the shape of a skull or a round loaf decorated with bone shapes. The bread is often decorated with brightly coloured icing or seeds, meaning 'happiness'.

Calacas

Skeletons are a main symbol of Day of the Dead. They are seen in decorations and also in sweets, chocolates and toys. The toys and dolls are called 'calacas' and are used to show children that death is something of which you should not be afraid. Calacas are usually smiling and having fun because they are laughing at death and showing that the afterlife is good.

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Day of the Dead Questions

1. What does Día de los Muertos mean?

2. At the beginning the author writes: 'You might be surprised to find out that it is not a sad time...' why does the author think that you might be surprised?

3. Think about question 2. Can you think of some other words that also mean sad (synonyms)?

4. Name three things that people do during the festival.

5. Where would you find an ofrenda (altar)?

6. Find the 'Pan de Meurto' section. Write down as many adjectives as you can find in that section.

Day of the Dead Answers

1. What does Día de los Muertos mean?

Día de los Muertos means Day of the Dead

2. At the beginning the author writes: 'You might be surprised to find out that it is not a sad time...' why does the author think that you might be surprised?

We might be surprised because in the UK death is a sad time.

3. Think about question 2. Can you think of some other words that also mean sad (synonyms)?

Synonyms for sad: (any from plus any others) miserable, down, depressed, unhappy, gloomy, dismal, blue, crest-fallen, forlorn, woeful, heartbroken.

4. Name three things that people do during the festival.

Three things that happen at the festival are: (any three from) making altars, parades, praying, dressing up, lighting candles, eat bread.

5. Where would you find an ofrenda (altar)?

An ofrenda would be found in a graveyard.

6. Find the 'Pan de Muerto' section. Write down as many adjectives as you can find in that section.

Adjectives in the Pan de Muerto section are: special, round, bone, coloured.

7. What are calacas?

Calacas are toys or dolls that are skulls or skeletons.

8. This festival happens at the same time as Halloween in the UK. Can you think of anything in this festival that is the same as what happens at Halloween?

Day of the Dead in Mexico and Halloween in the UK both have: (any from) skulls/skeletons as symbols, the belief that the dead visit during that time, dressing up/face painting, 31st October/1st November, death as a theme, candles.

9. What does a white candle mean?

A white candle means hope.

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.

Open ended good for class discussion. Children might feel awkward about celebrating death in this way as it is very different to how we celebrate in the UK. However, you may find some similarities such as wakes/celebration of life parties.