El Día de los Muertos Festival

Grade Level:
Eighth Grade

Content Area:
Art, Social Studies

Class Period(s):
2 -3

Prerequisite Background knowledge:
As Mexico is not introduced in grade 1, the teacher will need to give students the basic knowledge necessary to comprehend the lesson.

Vocabulary:
Students should not just define these but tell why they are important.
1. Ofrenda
2. Papel Picado
3. Marigolds
4. Grooming Objects
5. Candles
6. Purple
7. Bright Pink or Orange
8. Red
9. White
10. Ancestors

Objectives:
Teach the students about El Día de los Muertos in a fun, exciting and memorable way while maintaining respect for the Latino culture.

State Standards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Arts (Visual)</th>
<th>Strand 1: Create, Concept 1: Creative Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>The student will develop, revise, and reflect on ideas for expression in his or her own artwork.</td>
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<td><strong>PO 203.</strong> Develop Plans for his/her own artwork (Sketches, models and notes).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Strand 1, Concept 1: American History</th>
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<td><strong>PO 1.</strong> Construct chart, graphs, and narratives using</td>
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Class 1 - Museum

Students will...

- Get an introduction to the day of the dead
- Learn about Latino art and customs

Materials

- Museum is free; transportation, chaperones, permission forms and perhaps a packed lunch is all that is needed.

Procedure

- Call 480-965-6224 or email anthro.museum@asu.edu and schedule an appointment with Catherine Nichols. Please arrive at least 10 minutes prior to your scheduled time.
- The museum can accommodate up to 30 individuals, but 10-15 individuals are ideal. Please include the number of individuals that plan on attending so arrangements can be made to have sufficient staff for your visitation.
- One chaperone must be present at all times for each group of 20 children. Two chaperones are preferred.
- Please schedule your visit one week prior to the date you want to visit the museum.
- Discuss museum behavior with any students or children before your scheduled visit. Students should have an understanding of museum etiquette. They will not be allowed to touch the art in the gallery, but there are a few interactive exhibits.
- The museum is ALWAYS free. Museum hours are Monday through Friday, 11AM to 3PM (Variable hours in the summer - please call ahead). Other times can be arranged by appointment.

Discussion

The exhibit focuses on all aspects of the Día da los Muertos holiday.

Important things for children to understand:

- Día da los Muertos is not a “scary” holiday like Halloween, it is to honor your ancestors.
• Halloween comes from the medieval Europe concept of death and its focus is demons, witches and other images of terror - all negative.
• Dia de la Muertos comes from Indo-Hispanic customs and its focus is love and respect for our ancestors, family relationships, community solidarity and humor in/after death – all positive.

Class 2 – Visual and Language Arts
Using inspiration from the visit to the museum, students are to create a work of art (or for Language arts write a work of fiction/non-fiction) that is inspired by Dia de los Muertos. You may want to restrict the types of visual arts (or genre if writing fiction) they can make. It may be important to review common themes in this style of art. For example: Altars, Death as a Farce, Remembering Ancestors, Marigolds etc. It is important that the students understand meanings behind each of the themes, such as Marigold being are used because it is believed that their scent will draw the persons soul from the after life or under world to the altar. Grooming objects such as soap, shaving objects and a towel are provided so the soul can clean up after the journey. Colors used are also important. Purple represents pain or mourning, bright pink or orange is celebration, red is sacrifice and white is hope.

Students will...
• Create art (Visual or Language).
• Recognize that certain cultures have celebrations unique to them.
• Recognize that certain values and beliefs may be shared and reinforced through a celebration.
• The purpose of an altar (non-religious).
• The significance of various items used in the holiday (marigolds, food, candles and grooming objects).
• The significance of the colors (Purple, pink, orange, red and white).

Materials
• Paper
• Visual: Crayons, paint, art supplies, ect.
• Language: Pen/Pencil
  Tip: Don’t forget, pink, white, orange, red and yellow are traditional colors

Procedure
  Ask students “have you ever baked a cake or made a meal for someone who is no longer living?” and/or “have you ever remembered a dead family member or pet with joy instead of sadness?” Re-introduce the idea of Dia de los Muertos (and Mexico also if you need to establish background knowledge with students). Explain when and where the Day of the Dead is celebrated.
  Show the students on a world map where the areas and countries in which it is honored are located. Reinforce museum visit with discussion about Mexico but be sure to explain to the students that there are areas in the U.S. including Arizona that celebrate this holiday as well.
Share information about this holiday. Check for understanding with questions and review ideas as needed. Ask students to draw/paint a picture or make art that resembles something they remember about this holiday.

**Discussion**

*Be sure to handle lesson carefully, American society does not handle death and dying as easily as other cultures.* The differences between Mexico and USA as far as the subject of mortality are a good place to start the discussion. It may be necessary to remind students that although you are comparing/contrasting USA and Mexico Dia de los Muertos is celebrated in some parts of the USA.

Ask student to think of a family member, friend or pet that has died. Ask them to share (if they choose) a happy moment. Ask the students to share what they think Dia de los Muertos means. Ask them to share their art or a part of their literature and what it means to them.

**Questions**

- How is dying looked at different in Mexico when compared to the United States?
- What is the purpose for building an altar?
- What can we do to honor our Ancestors?
- What do marigolds, candles and Papel Picado represent?
- Why do we leave food on the altar?

**Class 2 – Science**

Students will . . .

- Understand the meaning behind marigolds, sugar skulls and________
- Understand the science behind mixing the various ingredients.

**Materials**

**Sugar Skulls:**

1. Skull mixture will need to be prepared to dough state ahead of time by teacher and/or parent volunteer.
2. Recipe makes 4 skulls each twice as big as a golf ball
   - 1 cup marshmallow cream
   - 1/3 cup light corn surip
   - 1/8 teaspoon salt
   - 1 teaspoon vanilla
   - 6 cups sifted powered sugar
   - 7 oz (2 packages) almond paste – look in imported food section
   - vegetable food dyes
   - candy thermometer

**Butter Cream Icing:**

- Yellow, light green, light blue and pink are traditional colors
- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup solid vegetable shorting
• 1 teaspoon vanilla
• 4 cups powdered sugar
• 3 tablespoons milk
• vegetable food dyes
• Large bowl
• Electric mixer (optional)

**Procedure**

**Sugar Skulls:**
1. Combine marshmallow cream, corn syrup, salt and vanilla into 3-quart pan
2. Combine 2 cups sugar and slowly heat to 110 degrees F (44 degrees C)
3. Add almond paste
4. Turn off heat, stir until blended. Remove from heat.
5. Turn Mixture into a board covered with remaining 4 cups of powered sugar.
6. Knead sugar until dough is smooth
7. Store in refrigerator over night in tightly sealed container.
8. Sculpt into skull shapes
9. Detail with dyes and icing (see examples)

**Butter cream Icing**
1. In large bowl cream butter and shortening (with electric mixer if available)
2. Gradually add 1 cup sugar at a time beating well on medium speed. Scrap sides and bottom of bowl often.
3. When all Sugar has been mixed in, icing will appear dry. Add milk until light and fluffy.

**Tips:**
• Add dyes in very small amounts until desired color is achieved.
• Keep icing covered with a damp cloth until ready to decorate.
• When not using keep sealed in refrigerator. Keeps for up to a week, Rewhip before using.
• Put in to decorator bags or make your own out of butcher paper. This tutorial tells you how. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHHv22G8ixo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHHv22G8ixo)

**Discussion**
Talk with students and find what they found desirable about this activity. Go over why Sugar Skulls are created and what they represent. Discuss the science involved with mixing the ingredients. Ask students if these are the best possible ingredients for this application, ask students for other possible ways to make skulls out of other ingredients that would serve as the same function.

Questions

- How is dying looked at different in Mexico when compared to the United States?
- What is the purpose for making sugar skulls?
- What can we do to honor our Ancestors?
- What do the various colors of butter cream icing represent?
- What other materials can we use to serve the same application as sugar skulls?

Class 2 – Social Studies (2 days)

During the day of the dead festival, the students will explore the traditions of Latino and Hispanic culture and should be able to describe/teach their parents/another class the roles of masks, marigolds, candles and altars play in the celebration and why it is important to the these communities. Also the students will be asked about the value of art and why it is important. You can serve traditional baked good and put them on the altar. A good place to look for traditional, inexpensive, Hispanic baked goods is Food City. Traditional music, games, etc. is also a big part. Inviting parents to attend is also a wonderful idea; the more parents are involved in the classroom the better. If you decide inviting parents is not a good idea you should invite another class to attend the festival. This day is largely what you make of it, it does require planning to be successful.

Tip: If your budget does not allow for this then you can figure way around it:
- You can ask kids to bring money for the food for extra credit
- Ask for food donations from parents
- Work out a deal with the manager of the grocery store (Food City?) and see if they will donate food in exchange for sending a letter home to parents inviting them to come to the festival. The note should mention that Food City donated the goods.

Students will...

- Recognize that certain cultures have celebrations unique to them.
- Recognize that certain values and beliefs may be shared and reinforced through a celebration.
- The purpose of an altar (non-religious).
- The significance of various items used in the holiday (marigolds, food, candles and grooming objects).
- The significance of the colors (Purple, pink, orange, red and white).
- Teach their parents and/or another class about Dia de los Muertos.
Materials
Traditional Mexican Food to serve mostly baked goods.
Packages of multicolored tissue paper (also used on day 2)
Packages of green pipe cleaners
Scissors (Safety scissors work)
Ruler

Procedure: Day 1
Show the students on a world map where the areas and countries in which it is honored are located. Reinforce museum visit with discussion about Mexico but be sure to explain to the students that there are areas in the U.S. including Arizona that celebrate this holiday as well.
Share information about this holiday. Check for understanding with questions and review ideas as needed. Decorate desks as an altar. Make sure the students know the altar is not religious (Like the ones they may be familiar with from church); it is an ethnic altar.

• Have the Children draw/color/paint a picture of a deceased loved one. It could be any one they want to honor/remember, even a pet is appropriate. This will be the person to whom their altar is dedicated.
• Have the children make Papel Picado decorations out of the tissue paper/foil. It is done the same way they would make a snow flake during the winter months: Fold in half and follow attached patterns for traditional look or go wild and have the students come up with their own. If you wish their is a nice video tutorial you can show your students: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wy7XdmOeruw In the video, a child demonstrates and narrates the process. This will give the students confidence and will also make the students more interested.
• You can also roll the tissue paper up around balls of tissue paper (like a wrapping on a peppermint candy) and bound them together with yarn/ribbon to make long “banners” decorate the room with these or just the desks.
• Arrange desks around the room so they are in a circle, semi-circle or any shape where each student can see each other desk.
• Each child decorates their desk with the tissue paper/foil, their art work and “banners”

Tip: If your classroom has tables instead of desks you will need to modify this activity into a group activity.

Procedure: Day 2
Invite the parents or the outside class into your room. Be sure to have an area where they feel comfortable. If your class has beanbags those are wonderful to sit on. Divide the class into 3 parts.
• Group one should explain to the visitors the meaning and purpose of alters. While this is happening have the other two groups quietly serve the food.
• Group Two should identify each baked good and tell the meanings and purpose of having baked goods on the altar. This group can also touch on Papel Picado.
• Group Three can tell about the other objects that are common to altars and the meaning of the colors.

For the final activity of the day you are going to instruct the students and the visitors how to make paper marigolds. They can keep them or use them to decorate the altars the students made previously.

Discussion

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Ask student to think of a family member, friend or pet that has died. Ask them to share (if they choose) a happy moment. Ask the students to share what they think Dia de los Muertos means. Ask them to share their art or a part of their literature and what it means to them

Questions

• How is dying looked at different in Mexico when compared to the United States?
• What is the purpose for building an altar?
• What can we do to honor our Ancestors?
• What do marigolds, candles and Papel Picado represent?
• Why do we leave food on the altar?

Demonstration

To make marigolds:
• Layer four or five sheets of tissue paper, cut in to 8-inch squares. Don’t unlayer.
  Tip: For multi-color flowers, layer differed colors of paper on top of each other in the first step.
• Take a set of squares and fold accordion style so it looks like a think rectangle.
• Carefully cut a small V shaped notch on both sides. Twist the end of pipe cleaner around the notch.
• With the stem pointing straight down, gently pull up one layer of tissue into the center. Pull up the remaining layers, one by one. Repeat for the other side of the flower.
• Once all the layers are pulled up, fluff them in place to look natural.
  Tip: For sturdier stems, wrap two pipe cleaners together. Cut smaller or larger squares to change the size of your flowers. Add more layers for thicker flowers or less layers for thinner ones. For a shiny effect, dip the top edges in white glue
and then dip in loose glitter. Glue a pin on the back of a flower for a fluffy lapel decoration. Make smaller flowers and string them together as garland.