



ARTE PARA TODOS:  
**EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS**  
**PAPER MACHE MASK ACTIVITY**



**Skull Masks**, called “calacas” or “caretas” have been worn on the Day of the Dead for decades to symbolize the nature of the dead. While these masks may look scary at first glance, most depict the dead as smiling or happy with eloquent and natural designs. In the past, masks, were used to scare the dead away at the end of the festivities. But in modern celebrations, people wear skull masks or paint their faces to represent a deceased loved one or as an expression of a spirit in a joyous place after life on Earth.



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### MATERIALS

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Paper plate or thick cardstock alternative</li><li>• 1 part flour 2 parts water mixture</li><li>• White paint or gesso</li><li>• Acrylic paint</li><li>• Sharpies</li><li>• Box cutter or exacto knife</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Newspaper, newsprint or computer paper</li><li>• Elastic or pipe cleaners for the straps</li><li>• Skull mask template</li><li>• Masking tape</li><li>• Colorful paint, paper, glitter, sequins, jewels, flowers, etc. to adorn.</li></ul> |
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### INSTRUCTIONS

Use the half skull template provided to make a complete skull image on the paper plate or cardstock alternative.

Fold your paper plate and cardstock in half and tape the template on top.

Cut out eyes, nose, and shape the jawbone. Cut slits in the mask.

Fold over and tape the slits to make the mask 3-dimensional. The sturdier the cardstock or plate, the more structural support your mask will have, however young children may need assistance with cutting.

Make paper mache mixture out of 2 parts water and 1 part flour in a bowl until gooey consistency is reached. Rip strips of about 1" x 6" from the newspaper/newsprint.

Place individual strips coated in flour/water mixture over your paper plate making sure to leave the holes you cut earlier. Alternate placing layers of strips in horizontal/ vertical patterns.

Let your mask dry overnight.

When mask is completely dry and hardened, use scissors or a box cutter to shape the mask. Draw inspiration from various pre-Columbian skull masks. Paint a base coat over dried mask, with gesso or white paint.

Decorate your mask with paint and designs, looking to nature and festivals for inspiration. Embellish your mask with glitter, flowers, etc.

Once your mask is finished and dry, add a strap by making holes on either side and stringing elastic or pipe cleaners through.



## ARTE PARA TODOS: EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS SUGAR SKULL ACTIVITY

### RESOURCES

Papel Picado Lesson Video

Mexic-Arte Museum Education Department Dia de los Muertos Lesson Powerpoint

[Mexic-Arte Museum Education Department Dia de los Muertos Education Guide](#)

[Mexic-ArteMuseum.org](#)

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