





ARTE PARA TODOS: EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS PAPER MACHE LESSON PLAN



Masks, called “calacas,” have been worn on the Day of the Dead for decades to symbolize the nature of the dead and how they feel. 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, participants and dancers used careteas, or masks, to scare the dead away at the end of the festivities. But in modern-day celebrations, people wear skull masks or paint their faces, to represent a deceased loved one or an expression of themselves in a joyous place after life on Earth.

Arte Para Todos Lesson:	Dia de los Muertos	
Concepts	Cultural Awareness	
Subject Area	Art & Social Studies	
Lesson	Build & Decorate Your Own Paper Mache Skull Mask	
Examples:		
TEKS Correlations	<p>Art: 117.102-117.303</p> <p>(1A)(1B) The student considers concepts and ideas from direct observation, original sources, experiences, and imagination for original artwork and identify and understand the elements of art, including line, shape, color, texture, form, space, and value, as the fundamentals of art.</p> <p>(2A)(2B)(2C) The student integrates ideas drawn from life experiences to create original works of art; create compositions using the elements of art and principles of design; and produces modeled forms.</p> <p>(3A)(3B)(3C)(3D) The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture by analyzing artistic styles, historical periods, and a variety of cultures. The student develops global awareness and respect for the traditions and contributions of diverse cultures.</p> <p>(4A)(4B)(4C) (4A)(4B)(4C) The student responds to and analyzes artworks of self and others, contributing to the development of lifelong skills of making informed judgments and reasoned evaluations.</p>	
Essential Question	Where did the idea of celebrating death originate and how did it evolve into Dia de los Muertos?	
Abstract	The lesson incorporates the traditions of Dia de los Muertos, a historically rich tradition that integrates both pre-Columbian and contemporary Mexican customs. Students will gain an understanding of and apply traditional paper mache methods to create their own masks, which is a technique heavily used on the Day of the Dead for a variety of artwork and props.	
Learning Outcomes	The student will be able to identify the cultural roots of Day of the Dead as well as traditional forms of artistic expression. The student will understand and apply the principles of design to create their own paper mache mask.	
Vocabulary	Dia de los Muertos Calacas Calavera Pre-Columbian Catrina Ofrenda	Veneration Elements of Art Principles of Design Paper Mache

Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper plate or thick cardstock alternative • 1 part flour 2 parts water mixture • White paint or gesso • Acrylic paint • Sharpies • Box cutter or exacto knife <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper, newsprint or computer paper • Elastic or chenille stems for the straps • Skull mask template • Masking tape • Colorful paint, paper, glitter, sequins, jewels, flowers, etc. to adorn.
Lesson Components	<p>Use the half skull template provided to make a complete skull image on a paper plate or cardstock alternative. Cut out eyes, nose, and mouth and tape over the slits after folding them over, to make the mask 3-dimensional. The sturdier the cardstock or plate the more structural support your mask will have.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Let your mask dry overnight.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Decorate your mask with paint and designs, looking to nature and festivals for inspiration.</p> <p>Embellish your mask with glitter, flowers, etc.</p>
Accomodations	<p>Student may need addictional time, review of directions and redirection. Reword steps or questions in simplified language and allow space for movement or breaks. Supportive visual or auditory aids. Offer gloves or try a variety of materials if student has sensory sensitivities to paper mache mixture or paint (e.g., paper, colorful pens or markers). Modified art tools such as pring loaded or loop scissors when cutting.</p>
Final Product	

Additional Essential Questions

Why do people celebrate?

What is Dia de los Muertos?

What holidays and festivals are important parts of your culture?

What holidays and festivals are important in other cultures?

Why is Dia de los Muertos significant to Mexican and Mexican American culture?

What do celebrations around the world have in common?

What is a symbol? How are symbols used in celebrations and holidays?

What are the primary artistic and cultural symbols associated with Dia de Los Muertos?

Why is it important to learn about holidays that other cultures and countries celebrate?

How does the Mexican concept of death differ to what is taught in America?

How will you incorporate traditional Mexican designs in your work?

How does geography influence lifestyle and point of view?

What makes a place or culture unique and different?

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](#)

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The Community Youth Development program is funded through a
Grant from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services,
through the City of Austin