

## Day of the Dead

**WebQuest Description:** We know about Halloween, but how do they celebrate this time of year in Mexico?

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum:** Foreign Language

**Keywords:** Day of the Dead, Mexico, Dia de los Muertos,

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### Introduction

Did you know that Halloween is an abbreviation of 'All Hallows Eve'? It is the night BEFORE the actual holiday! In Mexico and many parts of Central and South America, as well as many cities in the United States, people celebrate All Souls Day and All Saints Day by celebrating Day of the Dead (Dia de los Muertos). This is a special holiday when loved ones who are deceased are remembered fondly. "Tell me how you die, and I will tell who you are... To the inhabitant of New York, Paris or London death is a word that is never uttered because it burns the lips. The Mexican, on the other hand, frequents it, mocks it, caresses it, sleeps with it, entertains it: it is one of his favorite playthings and his most enduring love." Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 1961) Here in America, this seems like a 'strange' custom - skeletons are clowns and sugar skulls are a tasty treat! We are going to explore this unique custom and learn that different doesn't have to mean scary.

### Tasks

Now, if you are ready, let's start. Create groups of 4. The first thing you need to do is create a team of 4 people. This is definitely a group project and requires teamwork. Make sure to ask your teacher if you need help creating your teams. Each team will be assigned a different aspect of this celebration. Team 1 will work with the special foods unique to this holiday. Team 2 will work with the art forms generated. Team 3's topic deals with the history and beginnings. Team 4 gets how the dead are remembered and team 5 in how the spirits are believed to be drawn and attracted. Prepare a report. Your first task is to write a short report about your team's portion of Day of the Dead using the resources such as books, websites and other materials given by your teacher (You will also find these resources in the Process section). Design a brochure/poster/prepare a project. Then, you will prepare a celebration brochure or poster or project to inform your classmates and families about your group's assigned element of The Day of the Dead celebration and its activities. Present your work. After completing your report and brochure/poster/project, your group will present your work about Day of the Dead. All groups must include the dates of the holiday and a brief definition/description.

### Process

OK, let's get started. First you will need to get in your groups and activate your prior knowledge. What do you already know? What do you want to learn? What do you want your classmates to learn? Next, do the research. Here are some great sites to get you started: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day\\_of\\_the\\_Dead](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Day_of_the_Dead) <http://www.azcentral.com/ent/dead> <http://www.dayofthedeath.com> <http://www.mexonline.com/daydead.htm> <http://www.inside-mexico.com/featuredead.htm> Team 1: The foods. List at least 3 foods used in this holiday that are not common to any other holiday. Include descriptions, recipes and how the food is significant. Team 1 may prepare one of the foods for the class in place of the brochure/poster. Team 2: The arts. List at least 3 art form used in this holiday that are not common to any other holiday. Include descriptions, pictures, drawings and how they are unique to Day of the Dead. Team 2 may do a skit or art show in place of the brochure/poster. Team 3: The history and beginnings of the holiday. List at least 3 aspects of the history of Day of the Dead. Include what cultures blended to contribute. The brochure/poster should incorporate the facts and be bright and appealing. Team 4: How the dead are remembered and honored. List at least 3 ways the dead are remembered and honored during this time. Team 4 may prepare an ofrenda or a diorama of a cemetery celebration in place of the brochure/poster. Team 5: How the dead are attracted and why. List at least 3 methods used to attract the dead and why they are used. Include why the date of the holiday is important. The brochure/poster should incorporate the facts and be bright and appealing. Remember to site your sources and use pics or photos with permission only. These 2 sites are helpful: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/library\\_of\\_congress](http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress) <http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/> There are several books and journals on the subject in the class library as well.

### Evaluation



**Credits**

**Other**