

FESTIVALS & CELEBRATIONS · GRADES 3–5

Día de los Muertos

(Day of the Dead)

Quick facts

When	November 1 and 2.
Where	Mexico, parts of Central America, and Mexican communities worldwide.
What it is	A festival to remember and celebrate loved ones who have died.
How it feels	JOYFUL — not sad. The idea: those we've lost are present in the celebration.

Different from Halloween

Día de los Muertos is sometimes confused with Halloween. They're VERY different. Halloween: spooky, scary, costumes designed to frighten. Day of the Dead: bright colors, marigolds, music, food. The skeletons in Day of the Dead aren't scary — they're DANCING. They represent loved ones still part of the family.

Day of the Dead traditions

Ofrendas (altars) Families build altars at home with photos of loved ones who have died. They include food the person loved, flowers (especially bright orange marigolds), candles, and sugar skulls.	Sugar skulls (calaveras) Decorated skulls made of sugar — bright, colorful, often with the name of a loved one written on the forehead. Not scary — celebratory.
Marigold flowers The traditional flower of the festival. Their bright orange and yellow colors and strong scent are believed to guide the spirits home.	Pan de muerto 'Bread of the dead' — a special sweet bread baked for the festival. Decorated with bone-shaped pieces on top.



Visiting graves

Families visit cemeteries, often staying long into the night. They clean graves, lay flowers, and share stories of those who have died.

Discuss

1. Why might it help to remember someone who has died with celebration rather than sadness?
2. Different cultures handle death and remembrance differently. What's important about that?
3. Is there someone you'd want to remember in a special way?

