



ONTARIO  
MUSEUM  
OF HISTORY & ART

# DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS: EVERYDAY HEROES



The exhibit is supported by the non-profit Ontario Museum of History & Art, Associates, the Friends of Ontario City Library, the Outh Family Community Library, Colony High Branch Library, and the Recreation & Community Services Department.

**Thursday, October 5 to Sunday, November 12, 2017**

**FREE ADMISSION**



**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

## Ontario Museum of History & Art

225 S. Euclid Avenue • Ontario, California 91762 • (909) 395-2510 • [www.ontarioca.gov/museum](http://www.ontarioca.gov/museum)

GALLERY HOURS: Noon to 4 PM • Thursday – Sunday

Mayor Paul S. Leon • Mayor pro Tem Alan D. Wapner  
Council Members Jim W. Bowman, Debra Dorst-Porada and Ruben Valencia

The Ontario Museum of History & Art is a public-private museum operated by the City of Ontario with support from the non-profit Ontario Museum of History & Art, Associates.



## Educator Resource Packet

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# Ontario Museum of History & Art

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Dear Educator,

The Ontario Museum of History & Art (OMHA) presents and preserves the art and culture of Ontario, California, its surrounding area, and highlights the history of its local residents. Through its collection, varied exhibits, and educational activities OMHA connects its diverse public in the richness of its Latino and Latin American residents through its annual *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) exhibit and supporting programs, including school tours and workshops.

OMHA has been honoring *Día de los Muertos* with exhibits for more than two decades. The multicultural exhibit *Día de Los Muertos* is a festive display of art that celebrates diverse cultural thoughts on life and death. Local contemporary artists pay tribute to the tradition in paintings, sculpture, mixed media, and altar installations. Also on view are the participants from the annual city-wide art contest, made possible by the City of Ontario's Community and Public Services Agency: Recreation & Community Services, Ovitt Family Community Library, Colony High Branch Library, and the Ontario Museum of History & Art.

We hope you will use the educational materials provided as a resource in different areas of study in the classroom and to help prepare your students for a visit to OMHA. To help you plan your lessons and units, we have included contextual information, extension activities, key terms, and resources for further study.

We look forward to having you join us for a visit to the Ontario Museum of History & Art this school year! Free tours and workshops are available for groups of all ages.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Horta  
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## What is *Día de los Muertos*?

*Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), is a vibrant celebration of life, ancestors, and loved ones celebrated on November 1st and 2nd. *Día de los Muertos* is a long standing cultural Latin American holiday with strong ties to indigenous Mexican culture. Though many of the traditional elements have remained, how and where *Día de los Muertos* is celebrated has changed.

Originally observed as death ceremonies during the autumn harvest festival of the *Mexika* (see definition below), the holiday was moved to November 1st and 2nd after the Spanish invasion. The result is a blending of indigenous rituals with the Catholic holidays of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. It is a time to honor and remember deceased ancestors and loved ones through food, music, religious and spiritual rituals.

More commonly known as “Aztecs”, the name given to them by Europeans, the *Mexika* were a native civilization of the Americas which dominated the Valley of Mexico prior to the Spanish invasion. Many rituals and symbols used for *Día de los Muertos* come from ancient *Mexika* beliefs and customs.



Each year *Día de los Muertos* is celebrated in cities, towns, and villages throughout Mexico on November 1st and 2nd. People attend mass, set up altars in their homes, and clean and decorate the graves of family members. They gather in cemeteries for picnics, dancing, and singing while reconnecting with their roots. Restaurants and bakery windows are decorated with painted skeleton figures eating the treats associated with the holiday – sugar skulls and *pan de los muertos*, a sweet bread that is often topped with colorful icing. Towns, big and small, now fill with American tourists drawn to Mexico to witness and take part in the celebrations.

Here in the United States, more and more communities are developing an interest in the holiday. Stores are stocked with *Día de los Muertos* art, sugar skull molds, and coloring books. Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Orange County hold a variety of celebrations, which includes the Ontario Museum of History & Art's own Family Discovery Day, a free festival celebrating *Día de los Muertos* in early November. For more information on programs, please visit [www.ontarioca.gov/museum](http://www.ontarioca.gov/museum).

*Día de los Muertos* is as much a celebration of life as it is a call to those who have passed to return and enjoy a holiday in their honor.



## What are *Ofrendas*?



*So Loved, So Missed*, 2014, Dee Marcellus Cole. Photo is courtesy of Ontario Museum of History & Art.

The focal point of *Día de los Muertos* is the *ofrenda* (altar) dedicated to a loved one(s) that has passed away. *Ofrendas* consist of offerings such as favorite foods and drinks, candles, *papel picado* (decorative hand cut paper), keepsakes, photographs, and fresh flowers. Skulls and skeletons are common fixtures on *ofrendas*, highlighting the joy of life.

Prior to Nov 1st and 2nd, observant families spend days preparing meaningful *ofrendas*. The *ofrendas* are stocked with food, drink, and most anything else the souls might need to enjoy their visit.

Ideally *ofrendas* are placed in the hub of the house. The *ofrenda* remains in place throughout the holiday.

Some *ofrendas* are dismantled after *Día de los Muertos*, but many artists and families display their *ofrendas* year-round. Museum and galleries exhibit *ofrendas* created by artists to celebrate *Día de los Muerto*. The *ofrendas* embody traditional elements but many artists put a contemporary twist.

*Ofrendas* are, without a doubt, the most spectacular project associated with the *Día de los Muertos*. Artists and families who make them love the creative possibilities they offer. Should their *ofrenda* be large or small? Elaborate or simple? Modern or traditional? Will it hang or extend across a large area? Will it be displayed inside or outside? Before you begin to craft your own *ofrenda*, be ready to answer those questions and gather objects, decorations, and mementos that will make the *ofrenda* as unique as the person it honors.

## An *Ofrenda* for the Chaffey Brothers

In 2015, the Ontario Museum of History & Art honored the founders of Ontario with a community *ofrenda*.

George Chaffey Jr., an engineer, was born on January 28, 1848 in Brockville, Ontario, Canada. William Benjamin Chaffey, born on October 21, 1856, also in Brockville, had a background in horticulture.



George and William Chaffey founded Ontario, California in 1882. They named the settlement after an Iroquois term meaning beautiful water, not only to pay homage to their home province but also to draw other Canadians to their colony. The colony later became known for its abundance of water, citrus groves, Armstrong roses, Graber olives, Guasti grapes, and the Hotpoint iron company.

The *ofrenda* dedicated to George and William Chaffey was exhibited in the Museum's *Día de los Muertos* exhibit and shows their interests and highlights of the City of Ontario.

*William and George Chaffey, 2015, Anna Torres.*

Photos are courtesy of Ovitt Family Community Library's Model Colony History Room.



**THINK ABOUT IT:** George and William brought their love of engineering and horticulture with them to the model colony. If you were one of the first settlers on new land, what are some of the things you would want to bring with you?

## Ofrenda Handout

### What do you find in an *ofrenda* and what do they mean?

The purpose of an *ofrenda* is to honor a loved one that has passed away. *Ofrendas* are made up of favorite foods and drinks, candles, keepsakes, photographs and fresh flowers.



**Salt** for the continuation of life

**Bread** to represent the dead



**Cempazuchitl Flowers**  
whose scent guides back the souls

**Water** for thirsty souls

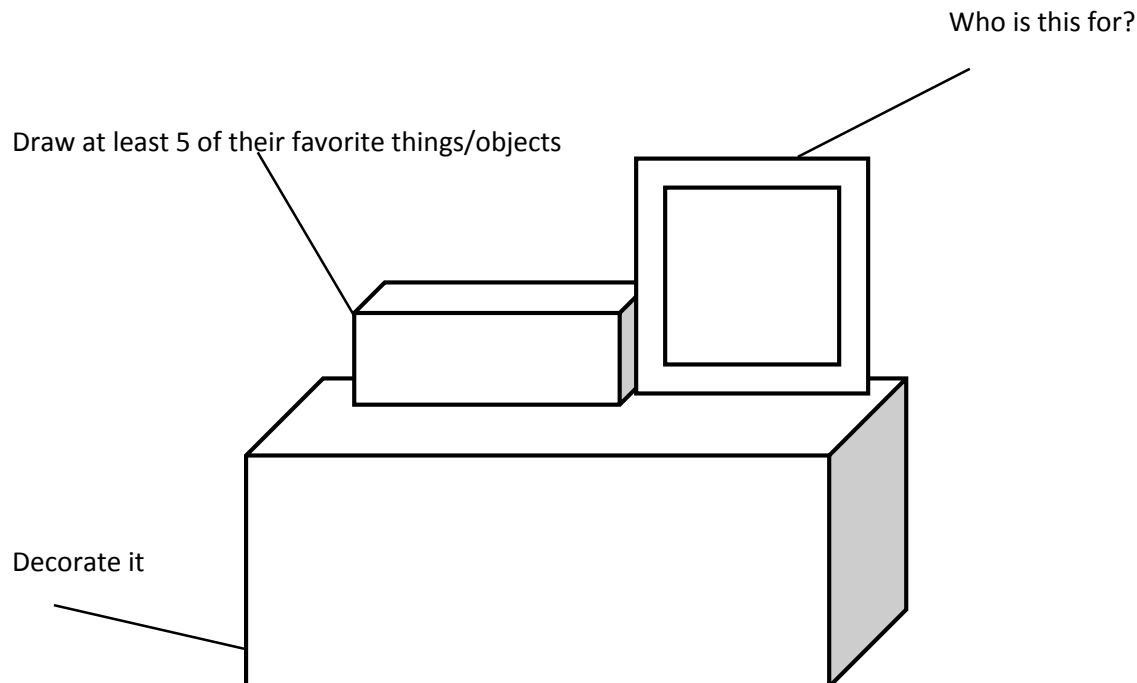


**Candles** to guide the spirits back

### Activity: Designing an *ofrenda*

To design an *ofrenda*, first you must decide whom you want to remember. Ask yourself these two important questions: **Has anyone you have known passed away? Or is there anybody who you admire that you would want to celebrate?**

Once you decide whom you want to honor, it is time to design your *ofrenda*. Remember that it is special to you and to the person or thing that you are honoring. You can be as creative as you like.



## What do similar traditions look like globally?

Many cultures around the world have similar traditions of honoring the dead, and like *Día de los Muertos*, they focus on traditional customs, remembrance, family, and friends.

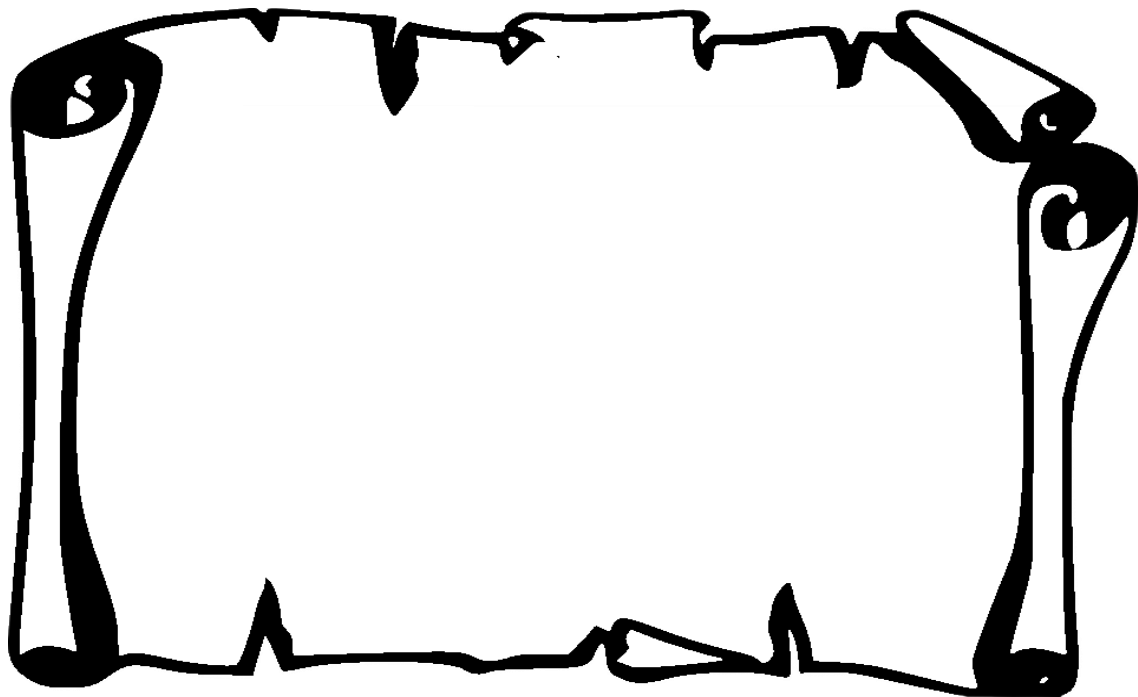
For example in China, the **Ghost Festival** is celebrated during the seventh month of the Chinese lunar calendar. It is thought that ghosts are able to visit from the afterlife during this time. Festival activities include prayers and offerings of food by family members. This festival has origins in Buddhist and Taoist cultures.

**Gai Jatra** is celebrated in August or September in Nepal, according to the Hindu calendar. Families who have suffered the loss of a loved one lead a cow throughout the village street. The cow is an important symbol in Hindu religion that is believed to help lead the deceased family member into the afterlife. The festival has origins in the 17th century.



**TRY THIS:** Have you ever been a part of a celebration like these? Draw or write about your favorite memory!

*My favorite memory. . . .*





## Who is José Guadalupe Posada?

José Guadalupe Posada (1851-1913) was born in the state of Aguascalientes, Mexico. In his early life, he worked as a teacher of lithography (printmaking) and in 1881, he moved to Mexico City where he became a newspaper illustrator.

His graphic work is well recognized and he often dealt with political, social, and moral themes. Posada's *calaveras* (skeletons) were later associated with *Día de los Muertos*. *La Catrina* or the Female Dandy was originally intended to poke fun at the upper class, during the autocratic rule of Porfirio Díaz.



*La Calavera Catrina*, José Guadalupe Posada, 1910-1913.

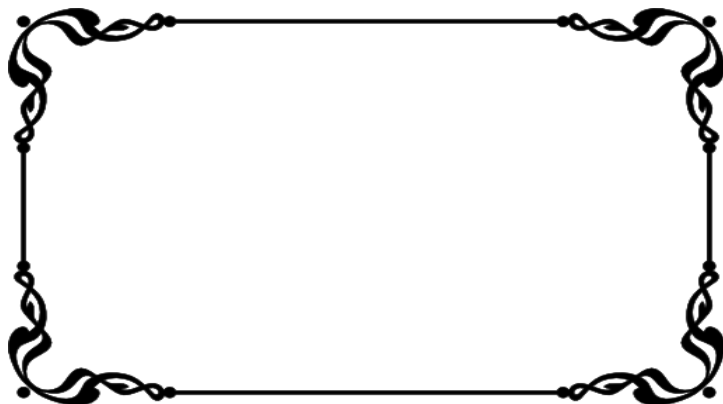
## What is a *calavera* poem?

A *calavera* (skeleton) poem is a way to make a comment about society and life. Oftentimes, *calavera* poems are used as humorous obituaries (commentary about a deceased loved one). Below is an example of a poem using humor to comment on a neighbor's dog.

*The neighbor's dog has chased me home,  
Everyday this autumn.  
I run away when I'm all alone,  
So it doesn't bite my bottom.  
Go ahead little dog and gnash your teeth,  
But some day you will be buried in bones!*



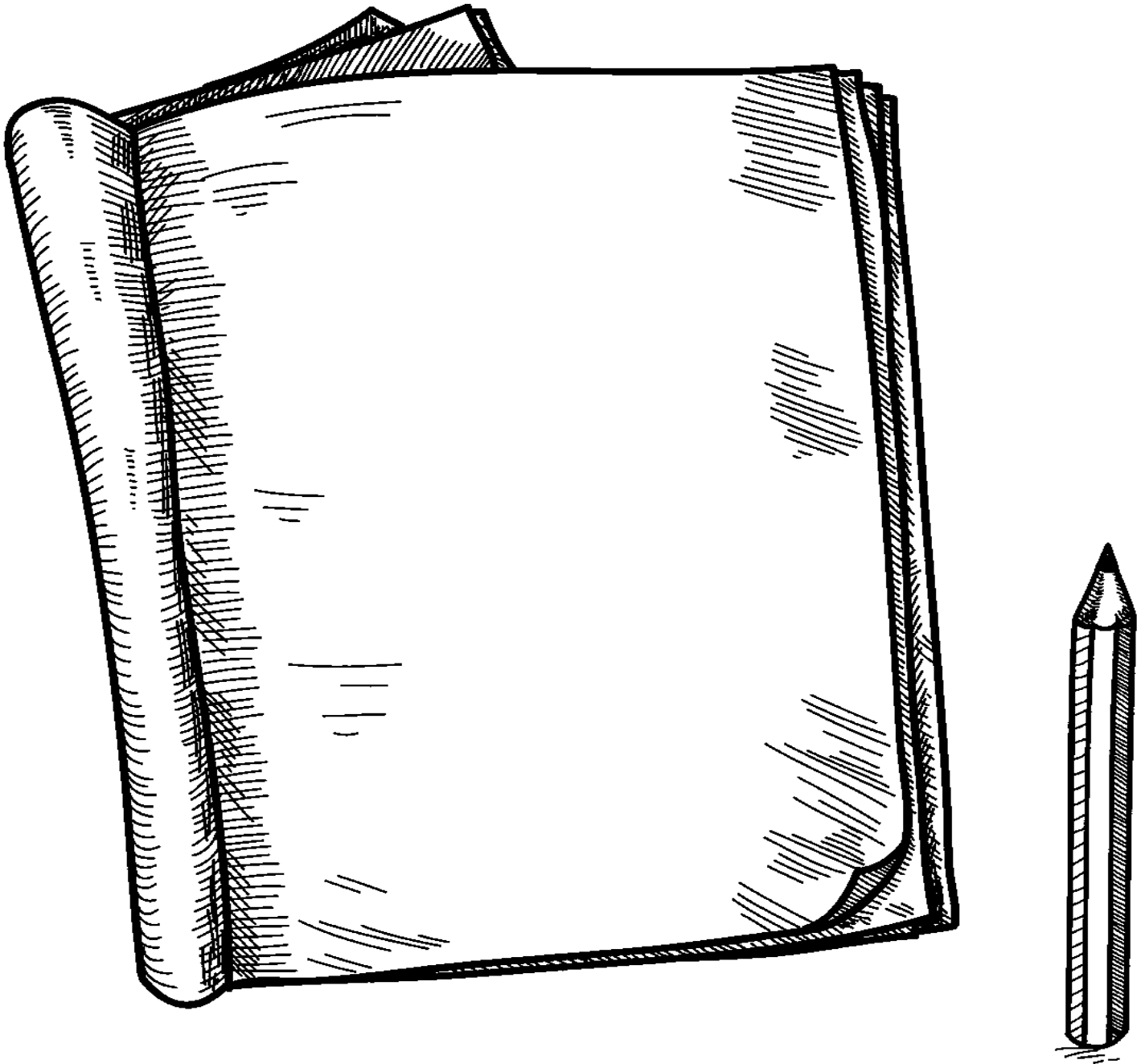
**TRY THIS:** In the space to your right, write your own *calavera* poem!



## Activity: Sketh a Print

Posada's prints depict *calaveras* (skeletons) mimicking human activities. Posada used his *calavera* prints to convey different types of messages about society and life.

To design a print, first you must decide which human activity your skeleton will mimic. Ask yourself these two important questions: **Do you want your sketch to be a comment on society or something a little more playful and fun?**



## What is *Papel Picado*?

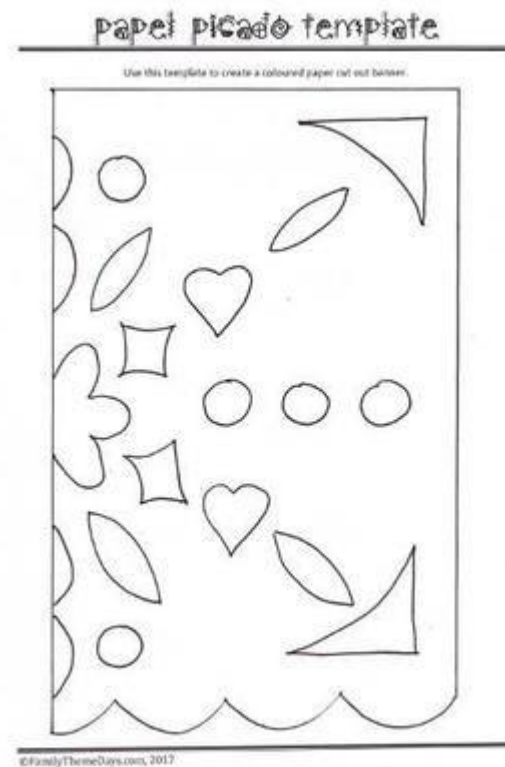
*Papel picado* is the Mexican art of creating hand cut paper. Artists who produce this art use a hammer and chisel to punch designs out of large stacks of layered tissue paper, sometimes up to 40 layers thick. Individual panels of different colors are strung together in a banner to create festive and colorful decorations for the celebration.

*Papel picado* made for the *Día de los Muertos* normally displays flowers, skeletons engaging in everyday activities, candles, foods, and words. *Papel picado* may be hung on walls, over doorways, or displayed on *ofrendas*. *Papel picado* is made in a similar fashion as a paper snowflake. However, the more detailed the image, the more intricate the process. Tempaltes like the one below are available online.

## How can I make my own *Papel Picado*?

To make your own simple *papel picado*, you are going to need: 12" x 18" colored sheets of tissue paper, scissors, colored string or yarn, and liquid glue. Simply follow the instructions below and you will be on your way to colorful and beautiful *papel picado*!

- 1) Fold a rectangular sheet of colored tissue paper in half horizontally to create an 8" size panel.
- 2) Using pencil, sketch one half of a design on the folded side of the tissue paper. Use rulers to divide the paper into sections. Designs must touch and connect to the other areas of the paper in order to form the shapes on the paper panels.
- 3) Using pencil, shade in the areas to be cut away.
- 4) With scissors or a craft knife, cut away the shaded areas of the design. Open the paper carefully. For more complex designs, fold the paper several times.
- 5) Once several banners are made, measure the string or yarn so that it extends beyond the length of the banners. Fold the top of the tissue paper panels over the string and glue or tape. Press the folded edges of the tissue paper panel firmly and wait until dry before hanging.



Source: [www.familythemedays.com](http://www.familythemedays.com)

## Activity: Designing your own *Papel Picado*

Today, professional craftsmen use chisels and blades to make intricate designs depicting flowers, birds, angels, crosses, skeletons, and even words. Today, many companies, create banners using machines and printers on paper and plastic.

Using the templates below, create your own *Día de los Muertos* *papel picado* banner!





## Key Terms

**Ancestor:** A person (usually more distant than a grandparent) from whom one is descended. **Día de los Muertos** is observed in honor of deceased **ancestors**.

**Calavera/Calaca:** A skeleton or skull. **Calaveras** are important **symbols** to **Día de los Muertos**. They are usually **depicted** in humorous ways, engaging in everyday actions like eating, drinking and dancing, or playing music.

**Cempazuchitl (sem-pa-soo-cheel):** The **Nahuatl** word meaning “flower of twenty petals” for the marigold flower, a type of chrysanthemum. It is also known as the “flower of the dead” in Mexico, due to its use in death ceremonies from the time of the **Mexika**. Commonly used on **ofrendas**.

**Depiction:** The way a **subject** or idea is shown or represented.

**Día de los muertos:** Day of the Dead is a traditional Latin American holiday with especially strong ties to Indigenous Mexican culture. Originally observed as death ceremonies during the autumn harvest festival of the **Mexika**, the holiday was moved to November 1st and 2nd after the Spanish invasion. Using **religious syncretism**, it is the result of blending indigenous rituals with the Catholic holidays of All Saints Day and All Souls Day. It is a time to honor and remember deceased **ancestors** and loved ones through food, music, religious and spiritual rituals.

**Mexika (meh-shee-kuh):** More commonly known as “Aztecs”, the name commonly used by Europeans, the **Mexika** were a native civilization of the Americas which dominated the Valley of Mexico prior to the Spanish invasion. Many **rituals** for **Día de los Muertos** come from ancient **Mexika** beliefs and customs.

**Ofrenda:** “Offering.” An **ofrenda** is the offering built for **Día de los Muertos**. It is also the word for the structure the offering sits on. **Ofrendas** include a number of elements, including the **ancestor’s** favorite things. An **ofrenda** can be built in a home, cemetery, exhibit gallery, or outdoors.

**Nahuatl (na-wat) :** The language spoken by the **Mexika** and still used by indigenous groups in Central Mexico.

**Pan de muertos:** “Bread of the Dead,” a sweet roll prepared especially for **Día de los Muertos**, decorated with symbols in the shapes of bones across the top.

**Papel picado:** “Cut paper,” decorations made by cutting designs into tissue paper for use as banners during celebrations. **Papel picado** is often used on **ofrendas**.

**Religious Syncretism:** The process of combining religious beliefs and practices from more than one religion or culture. **Día de los Muertos** is the result of combining indigenous and Catholic traditions.

**Ritual:** A pattern or system of actions performed by individuals or a group of people, usually connected to religious or cultural beliefs.

## Additional Resources

- Book  
Day of the Dead Crafts (2008) by K. Arquette, A. Zocchi, and J. Vigil published by Cantata Books Inc.
- Smithsonian Latino Center  
<http://latino.si.edu/dayofthedead>
- Arizona Republic Education Packets  
[www.archive.azcentral.com/ent/dead/articles/dead-education.html](http://www.archive.azcentral.com/ent/dead/articles/dead-education.html)
- Online Activities and Instructions for Crafts  
Papier Mache: [www.papiermache.co.uk/tutorials/day-of-the-dead-skull/1/](http://www.papiermache.co.uk/tutorials/day-of-the-dead-skull/1/)  
Papel Picado Instructions: [www.doverpublications.com/zb/samples/489949/sample4e.html](http://www.doverpublications.com/zb/samples/489949/sample4e.html)

## **Planning Your Visit to the Ontario Museum of History & Art**

### **RESERVATIONS:**

The Museum offers both guided and self-guided tours. A two-week advance notice is required for all tours and outreach programs. Tours are conducted Monday through Friday, from 9 AM to 3 PM. To make a reservation, call the Curator of Education, Rebecca Horta, at (909) 395-2510 or email [museumtour@ontarioca.gov](mailto:museumtour@ontarioca.gov). If your tour request falls within our regular open hours (Thursday through Sunday, Noon to 4 PM), a reservation is still required. Teachers can tailor their visit to topics learned in class.

### **PAYMENT:**

Admission is free but donations are greatly appreciated. Your donation supports our docent training and free public programs.

### **CONFIRMATIONS:**

The Museum will confirm your reservation via email prior to your trip or outreach. Emails will include a confirmation of the time, date, activities and an Educator Resource Packet. Be sure to read your confirmation email thoroughly to confirm your tour/outreach date and time.

### **EDUCATOR RESOURCES:**

Educator Resource Packets will be emailed out prior to your field trip and will include exhibit information, rules of behavior, tips for chaperones, and helpful hints for a successful fieldtrip.

### **FOOD:**

The courtyard and surrounding grounds are available for students to eat lunch with a reservation. Food and drinks are not allowed in the Museum galleries. In the case of inclement weather, the Museum does not have indoor eating facilities or food storage.

### **MUSEUM STORE:**

The Museum Store is available by request for purchases.

### **CANCELLATIONS:**

The Museum requires a one-week notice for all tour and outreach cancellations.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS:**

Please inform staff about special needs. All exhibits and restrooms are wheelchair accessible.

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