



## Day of the Dead – Make a Remembrance

**Subjects** Social Studies

**Grades** 7

### Brief Description

Utilizing cross cultural examples of the Day of the Dead celebrations, children are exposed to an alternative to mainstream Canadian attitudes to the dead. This discussion and craft activity may assist children in dealing with personal or community loss.

### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- View an alternative to mainstream Canadian attitudes to the dead
- Explore cross cultural musical and artistic expression

### Keywords

Mexico, Day of the Dead, death, remembrance

### Materials Needed

- access to the *¡Hola Canada! The Latin-American Collections at the Simon Fraser University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology* web site with video and sound capabilities
- tissue paper - narrow rolls
- twist ties
- tape
- table with a cloth
- music CD player
- small specialty food items brought from home or made in class
- photograph of the deceased

### Lesson

This lesson is appropriate after completing the other Day of the Dead activities on this web site. It must be done with sensitivity and compassion, assisting children in processing through a grieving experience. It may be helpful if they start with a commemoration of a community loss and move to a more personal loss.

Begin with viewing the video 'Day of the Dead', then perhaps making the sugar skulls and comparing the Day of the Dead in Mexico to Canadian Halloween. Lead a class discussion on the differences in the two celebrations.

Have the students describe the remembrance tables they see in the 'Day of the Dead' video, listing all the different things people have placed on the table of remembrances. Discuss how each of these things is a symbol for the deceased person or a symbol of death and life. For example, yellow flowers symbolize the sun and rebirth. Favorite foods remind us of good times we had with the deceased.

Have the students come up with a new list of symbolic items that should be included on their table of remembrance. Have children volunteer to bring as many of these things as is reasonable, given the circumstances. Drawings may be substituted for real items, like electronic toys or other expensive things that were important to the deceased. Music may be provided by CDs the students bring to class.

On the following day, set up the table of remembrance, roll flowers with the tissue paper and stick them with tape. Place the food, photograph and other items on the table. Spend a short period of time talking about the deceased person.

### **Evaluation**

Students are evaluated on the quality of their discussion contributions with regard to cultural expressions and differences. Do they understand that there are many ways to grieve, and in some cultures death is not a sad affair? Evaluate the drawings they produce, their ability to roll simple flowers and compose the table in an aesthetic way.