

CELEBRATIONS

Day of the Dead

Teacher's notes

Age: Teenagers/Adults

Level: Pre-intermediate upwards (A2+)

Time: 60 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. read and talk about cultural traditions connected with the dead
2. find out what their ancestors had in common

Language focus: vocabulary related to the Day of the Dead

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Procedure

1. Students answer the multiple choice questions in exercise 1 to test their basic knowledge of Mexico.

Key:

1. a
2. c
3. c
4. b

2. In exercise 2, students match the words 1–10 with the definitions a–j. They will need these words for the following task.

Key:

1. h
2. d
3. j
4. a
5. g
6. i
7. c
8. f
9. e
10. b

3. In exercise 3, students read the text and use the words from exercise 2 to fill in the gaps.

Key:

1. honour
2. passed away
3. altars
4. cemetery
5. marigolds
6. grave
7. tomb

8. spirits

9. skull

10. ancestors

4. Students discuss the questions in exercise 4 in small groups, or (especially if your students all come from the same country and culture) together with the whole class.
5. Students complete the three sentence beginnings in exercise 5 with information that they hope their future family members will remember them by. Provide an appropriate example for your students, e.g. *She was always a very patient and caring person. She looked after her mother when she was ill, and hardly ever complained.* Then get them to discuss their sentences about themselves with a partner or in small groups.
6. Working in pairs or groups of three, students take it in turns in exercise 6 to tell each other facts about their past family – encourage them to talk about people who have passed away a while ago (not just recently). When they come across something that both their ancestors have in common they should continue talking about this fact and should try to find more similar aspects from their families' lives. Hold a short feedback session after this task.

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Worksheet

Exercise 1: Mini Mexico quiz



- Mexico is a country in:
a. North America
b. South America
c. Europe
- Its main language is:
a. English
b. Portuguese
c. Spanish
- It has a population of about:
a. 11 million
b. 72 million
c. 127 million
- On its flag there is:
a. a snake
b. an eagle
c. a horse

Exercise 2: Day of the Dead vocabulary

Match the vocabulary with the definitions.

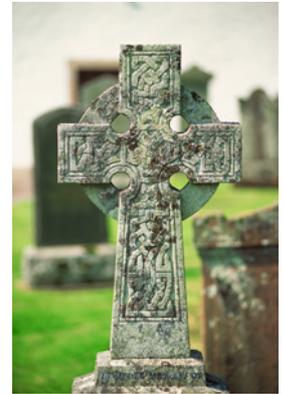
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|--------------------------|---|
| 1. altar | a. the place where a dead body is buried in a deep hole in the ground |
| 2. ancestors | b. a structure above the ground that can contain a dead body |
| 3. cemetery | c. a respectful way of saying that someone has died or is dead |
| 4. grave | d. people who are related to you who lived a long time ago |
| 5. (to) honour (someone) | e. the part of a person that many people believe continues to exist after death |
| 6. marigolds | f. the bones of the head |
| 7. passed away | g. show your respect or admiration for someone |
| 8. skull | h. a special table where religious ceremonies are usually performed |
| 9. spirit | i. plants with bright yellow or orange flowers |
| 10. tomb | j. an area of ground where dead people are buried |

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Worksheet

Exercise 3: Text



Use the words from exercise 2 to complete the text.

The Day of the Dead is celebrated on 2nd November throughout Mexico and in other parts of the world where many Mexicans live, such as the USA. It is a time when families gather together to (1) _____ relatives who have (2) _____. The celebration is sometimes called the Days of the Dead to refer to the three-day period which includes Halloween on 31st October and All Saints Day on 1st November.

Some people build private (3) _____ called *ofrendas*, others go to the (4) _____ and place favourite food and drinks and bright yellow Aztec (5) _____ on the (6) _____ of a family member or their family (7) _____. Mexicans hope that these gifts will make the (8) _____ happy and that they will bring good luck and protect their families.

The tradition of decorating a (9) _____ made of sugar is very special to the Day of the Dead. These often have big smiles and are very colourful. They help children to learn to respect life and to not be afraid of death.

During the festival families tell stories about their (10) _____ and how they lived.

Exercise 4: Traditions and culture

Discuss these questions.

In your country and culture:

- who looks after cemeteries and graves?
E.g. private companies, relatives, local authorities, etc
- what do people place on graves or tombs?
E.g. candles, photos, flowers, etc
- are there any special days or dates when people remember ancestors and others who have passed away?

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Worksheet

Exercise 5: What will they say?

How would you like your family to remember you?

Write three things that you hope people will say about you 100 years from now.

She / he always ...

She / he never ...

She / he was ...

Exercise 6: Speaking

Work in pairs. Take it in turns to tell each other facts about your family from the past. When you find something that your ancestors have in common, talk about this in more detail.