

Sugar Skulls

Objective: Students will create art in the style of a cultural tradition from Mexico

Topics & Keywords for Discussion: Day of the Dead, Calaveras, cultural art, mood in color.

Materials: Day of the Dead sugar skull template, pencils, art paper, colored pencils and markers.

Opening activity: Ask students if they've seen COCO, to describe the movie: What country is "COCO" based in? What is the holiday celebrated or depicted in the movie?

Share with students that November 1 and 2 are celebrated in Mexico as the Day of the Dead. The Day of the Dead (El Día de los Muertos or All Souls' Day) is a holiday celebrated in Mexico and Latin Americans of Mexican heritage living in the United States and Canada. The holiday focuses on gatherings of family and friends to pray for and remember friends and family members who have died. The celebration occurs on November 1st and 2nd in connection with the Catholic holiday of All Saints' Day which occurs on November 1st and All Souls' Day which occurs on November 2nd. Traditions include building private altars honoring the deceased, using sugar skulls, marigolds, and the favorite foods and beverages of the departed, and visiting graves with these as gifts. Learn more here:

https://youtu.be/_sSawpU81cl

Core Activity: Students are going to decorate "Calaveras," decorative sugar skulls in the tradition of Day of the Dead celebrations. Have them practice CONTOUR DRAWING to redraw the skull outline on a blank page. They can decorate their blank skull template before adding color, or utilize a more detailed template. As they decorate the sugar skulls, invite students to use vibrant, bright colors; refer to the movie Coco for an inspiration if needed.

Reflection: Students are going to want to take their sugar skulls home, see if you can have them pose and take a photo. Have students reflect upon the liveliness of the celebration of the Day of the Dead, and how the choices of vibrant colors create a sense of happiness. The mood of sugar skull art is a happy reflection of the past. Use this activity to make a connection between color and mood.



