

Miniclips: Global Celebrations and
Commemorations

El Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead)



About this video



MINICLIPS: GLOBAL CELEBRATIONS AND COMMEMORATIONS

El Día de Muertos (Day of the Dead)

Have you ever heard of El Día de Muertos, or the Day of the Dead? This video explains how people in Mexico, the United States, and the world celebrate the lives of people who are no longer with us at the beginning of November every year.

Essential question:

How can we show respect and honor for loved ones who have passed away, while also celebrating the joy of life?

Key vocabulary:

El Día de Muertos

ofrendas

calaveras

pan de muerto

marigolds

mourn

honor

remembrance

altars

Learning intention:

Learn about the significance of El Día de Muertos, including its cultural traditions and symbolism of the holiday, and be able to identify key elements of a traditional ofrenda.

Before watching

Make predictions and activate prior knowledge

- Ask students to take some time (approx. 2 minutes) to brainstorm cultural celebrations of significant events they know about. Have them share with a partner and then as a class. Write their responses on the board.
- If students did not generate the Day of the Dead or Halloween as one celebration, introduce it and translate El Día de Muertos into English (translation is: *Day of the Dead*).
- Ask students to share what they may already know about El Día de Muertos or the Day of the Dead. Have them volunteer to share any background knowledge they have. This can include if they have heard of it before, what they think this day is about, and what they know about its significance.
- Ask students to make predictions about the celebration and what it entails to activate prior knowledge and make connections.

Additional warm-up questions:

- What do you know about El Día de Muertos before? Have you heard about this celebration prior to today?
- Have you ever celebrated a cultural holiday before? Which one? How did you celebrate it?
- Do you think it is important to celebrate the lives of people or loved ones who have passed away?
- How do different cultures celebrate death and the afterlife? Can you think of any examples?
- When you think of the death or the passing of a loved one, how does it make you feel?

Note: When discussing death with students, be mindful of the sensitivities around the topic. Do not force students to share their experiences or feelings if they do not offer them freely.

Whilst watching



Watching as a class



Watch the interactive video as a class and ask students to respond to the prompts throughout the interactive.



Watching individually



Have students watch the video and complete the interactive on their own. Discuss the vocabulary and the student responses after watching the video.

After watching

Here are two activities to take your students' learning from the video further.

Activity 1: Day of the Dead vs. Halloween

Students will compare and contrast the Day of the Dead and Halloween celebrations to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural traditions and beliefs behind each holiday.

- Divide students into small groups of 2-4.
- Provide each group with a copy of the *Day of the Dead vs. Halloween: Venn Diagram* worksheet to compare and contrast the Day of the Dead and Halloween. Explain how a Venn diagram works if it hasn't previously been used.
- Give students think time to individually brainstorm similarities and differences between the two holidays on a blank sheet of paper or whiteboard. Give them topic examples such as costumes, decorations, foods, traditions, beliefs, and rituals.
- In their groups have students take turns sharing their thoughts using the Round Robin discussion strategy (students sit around a table in an academic discussion. Students go around the table each taking a turn to share their thoughts and will continue until all thoughts are shared.
- Every time a student shares an idea, they have to decide whether that's a similarity or contrast and add it to their graphic organizers.
- Have students complete the graphic organizer with their ideas.
- Have each group share their findings with the class and create a class Venn diagram or T-chart on the board or chart paper to summarize the similarities and differences between the two holidays.

Support

Provide a word bank or a list of key vocabulary related to the Day of the Dead and Halloween celebrations to help them identify similarities and differences between the two holidays.

Extension

Have students create a presentation or poster to showcase their findings and share them with the class. This should include a write-up to demonstrate the comparisons and contrasts between the two holidays.

Activity 2: Designing an ofrenda

Students will take part in designing an *ofrenda*, or altar, to honor a loved one who has passed away. This activity reflects the Day of the Dead tradition and gives students an opportunity to learn more about the cultural significance of this holiday. Ensure students understand the context and importance behind this tradition to avoid this activity being appropriated and superficial.

- Review the elements of an *ofrenda* based on what they saw in the video (photographs of the deceased, candles, flowers, and other objects that represent the life of the deceased).
- Have students think of a lost loved one they would like to create an *ofrenda* for. This can be a fictional person if they cannot think of someone.
- Have students work in small groups to brainstorm ideas for their *ofrenda* design.
- Encourage them to consider the personality and interests of the loved one they are honoring.
- Provide students with the *Design an Ofrenda* worksheet and have them start drawing things they'd like to include. Have students label the elements on their drawings.
- Color and share with a partner or the class when finished.

Support

Provide a sample *ofrenda* design to serve as a model for struggling learners. You can also have some of the *ofrenda* elements printed out ahead of time for them to just cut and place on their drawing.

Extension

- Have students use actual materials to bring their *ofrendas* to life using a large sheet of paper or cardboard as the base of their *ofrenda*. Have students gather materials from a provided selection, including construction paper, markers, stickers, and other decorative items. Students can share their designs with the class, explaining the significance of the objects they included and why they chose their particular design.
- Write a poem or a short description of their *ofrenda* and explain why they chose the specific items to include.

Conclusion

Ask students to respond to the essential question posed at the beginning of the lesson.

Ask if they still have any questions about the content presented in the video. Discuss and answer these questions as a class.