



Mexico Lesson Plan

Grade Level: K-2 **Activity Time:** 20-30 Minutes

Materials

- Mexico Brochure
- Pictures of **ofrendas**
- Pictures of **papel picado**
- Mexican Papel Picado Template
- Tissue Paper (8 ½ X 11), 3 pieces per child
- Scissors

Introduction: Read and complete the brochure with students. Tell them now they've read about Mexico, they're going to take a trip to Mexico to celebrate Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead).

Although "Day of the Dead" sounds like it's about death, it's actually a celebration of life. Dia de los Muertos is an opportunity to celebrate lives of family and friends who have passed away. Like any other celebration, it's filled with music, dancing, and decorations. It's celebrated in Mexico Here are some of the things you might see on Dia de los Muertos:

- **The ofrenda:** This is a temporary alter with pictures of loved ones who have died, along with objects that belonged to them as a reminder of their lives. Each ofrenda has 4 elements—earth, water, wind, and fire. Water is left in the pitcher so spirits can quench their thirst. **Papel picado**, traditional, colorful banners represent the wind. Earth is represented by food. Fire is represented by candles. The candles are put in a cross the represent the cardinal directions like a compass, so spirits can find their way.
- **Butterflies and Flowers** Monarch butterflies usually arrive in Mexico around November 1st. It is believed they hold the spirits of loved ones. Colorful marigolds, called *cempasúchil* are often placed on ofrendas for loved ones. *Those who celebrate Dia de los Muertos believe the colorful marigolds help spirits find the way to their ofrenda.*
- **Calaveritas de azucar, or sugar skulls**--along with toys, are left on the altars for children who have passed. The skull is used not as scary symbol but rather as a special reminder of life, which is why they are brightly decorated.

Share pictures of ofrendas with children and point out the four elements along with marigolds and sugar skulls.

Ask students, "What do you use to decorate for a special celebration?" Let students know they're going to be watching the beginning of the movie "Coco." Have them pay special attention to the colorful paper banners telling the beginning of the story. These are called papel picado. Papel picado means perforated (cut) paper. These colorful banners are used to decorate buildings and streets for special celebrations in Mexico.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3ISlWr0AGs>

Activity:

Tell students you're going to decorate your room with papel picado that they saw in the clip from "Coco."

1. Print out the papel picado templates
2. Have students select a design and fold the paper in half down the center.
3. Fold a stack of 3-4 pieces of paper inside the template
4. Use scissors to cut out the gray areas
5. Open pieces of tissue paper and hang around room

Wrapping Up:

Have students share and hang their creations with their classmates. Some follow-up questions you might ask:

- What are some holidays or traditions you celebrate?
- Does papel picado remind you of any decorations you use for celebrations?
What special things do you use to decorate for a party?

Why did you choose your design? Does it have a special meaning to you?