

# ANNOTATED K-12 BIBLIOGRAPHY

## ELEMENTARY

Amado, E. and Hairs, J. (1999). *Barrilete: A Kite for the Day of the Dead*. Toronto, ONT, Canada: Groundwood Books.

Appropriate for grades 2-5. This is a photo essay which documents a family's progress as they celebrate the Day of the Dead in Guatemala, where the holiday is celebrated in part by building large kites (some are over seven meters across), also called barilletes. Given that many descriptions of this holiday omit kite-building as one of the practices, this book offers a useful look into the variety of celebrations; however, it is rather scarce in exploring the holiday overall and should be used only when complemented by other texts.

Bracegirdle, P.J. (2012). *The Dead Family Diaz*. New York, NY: Dial Books.

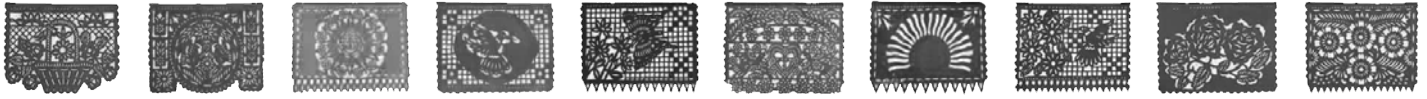
Appropriate for grades 1-2. Fun and engaging imagery akin to that by Tim Burton will ensure that this book draws students into the exciting narrative. Bracegirdle spins the traditional Día de los Muertos around for an imaginary take on what it might be like for a family already dead to celebrate the holiday by calling upon the living.

Freschet, G. (2001). *Beto and the Bone Dance*. New York, NY: Farrar Straus Giroux.

Appropriate for grades K-3. With warm, softened imagery, Freschet tells the story of Beto and his family as they work together to craft an altar in honor of Beto's recently departed grandma. Through the simple text, readers learn simultaneously about the reverently serious purpose behind the holiday as well as the enthusiastic celebrations that characterize it.

Gonzalez, E. and Haeger, E. (2010). *Rosita y Conchita: A Rhyming Storybook in English and Spanish*. Muertoons.

Appropriate for grades K-3. A new and lighthearted take on the holiday, marked by illustrations that will surely appeal to the younger readers. While the illustrations are the first element to jump off the



page, the text is not far behind. The authors spent no less time crafting the thoughtful narrative that tells of two twin sisters who, separated by death, try to reunite with each other. The book is neither particularly sad nor scary. Instead, it somehow manages to personalize the meaningful matter of loss and death through humor and endearing relationships. Side-by-side English and Spanish text provides an added benefit for bilingual classrooms.

Johnston, T. and Winter, J. (2000). *Day of the Dead*. San Diego, CA: Voyager Books.

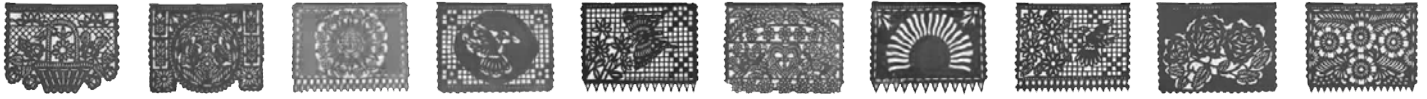
Appropriate for grades 2-4. Absolutely beautiful imagery reminiscent of folk art marks the story of a Mexican family's preparation for and celebration of the Day of the Dead. Through carefully placed Spanish words amid the English, the authors infuse the story with a sense of simple perspective. The short and direct language will help young readers grasp the personal elements behind the holiday without romanticizing or caricaturizing its practices. A rare and lovely resource for teaching about this Mexican tradition.

Keep, R. (2008). *Clatter Bash! A Day of the Dead Celebration*. Atlanta, GA: Peachtree, 2008.

Appropriate for grades K-4. Another humorous and inverse perspective on the holiday, author Keep uses the text to depict the festivities of the departed family members whom are celebrated during Día de los Muertos. After the family members leave their offerings at the altars, the skeletons come out to "clatter bash" and celebrate throughout the night. Upbeat rhymes with occasional Spanish words capture the sounds of the evening and the beautiful illustrations based on papel picado designs are engaging without being scary. Despite the lighthearted approach, the story nonetheless manages to convey a good sense of the practices, foods, and images associated with the holiday.

Krull, K. (1994). *Maria Molina and the Days of the Dead*. New York, NY: Maxwell MacMillan International.

Appropriate for grades 1-3. The story follows a fictional family from its life, first, in Mexico and then, afterward, in the U.S. The protagonist is Maria, a young girl in the family, who learns from her mother about how to celebrate Día de los Muertos in honor of a young infant brother and grandmother who have recently passed away. Through the mother's narrative, readers learn about the holiday's customs. A simple tale with a rich palette of illustrations, the story nonetheless



Levy, J. (1995). *The Spirit of Tío Fernando: El espíritu de tío Fernando*. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.

Appropriate for grades 1-3. This bilingual book traces the story of one family's journey to honor a deceased loved one. The story is told from the perspective of a young boy named Nando who is helping his mother with preparations to honor his favorite Uncle ("Tío") Fernando. Nando buys Day of the Dead treats and trinkets to place on the altar as he and his mother sit and honor Fernando. Easy to read with English text on one page and the Spanish text on the facing page, *The Spirit* tells a more personal story of the Day of the Dead for a younger audience.

Morales, Y. (2003). *Just a Minute!: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle.

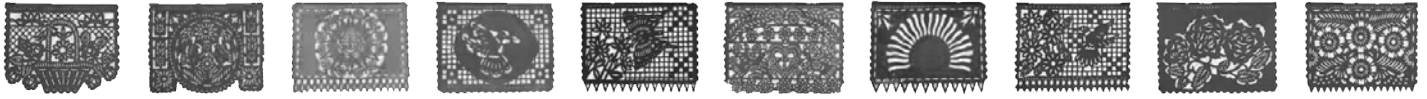
Appropriate for grades K-2. This is a vibrantly colored, vivid story of Day of the Dead told through counting in both English and Spanish. Señor Calavera is ready to take Grandma Beetle to the next life, but after he meets her and counts with her, he decides to leave without her. Each number is a different preparation for the holiday, which gives young kids a sense of the culture behind the tradition.

Morales, Y. (2008). *Just in Case: A Trickster Tale and Spanish Alphabet Boo*. New York, NY: Roaring Book Press.

Appropriate for grades K-2. Much like her previous book, *Just a Minute!*, author Yuyi Morales has created once more a vibrant and illustrative book. This one focuses on Día de los Muertos and the alphabet, whereas her previous text focused on numbers. In *Just in Case*, readers take a new trip with Señor Calavera, who is worried and perplexed about what to give Grandma Beetle for her birthday. This heart-warming and award-winning tale explores possible gifts by imagining a different present for each letter of the alphabet. From the good-natured text to the glowing illustrations, this is a lovely Día de los Muertos book for young readers.

Muller, B. (2005). *Felipa and the Day of the Dead*. Chambersburg, PA: North-South Books.

Appropriate for grades K-2. Unlike many of the books for younger readers that use humor to defuse the seriousness of the holiday, this book shows author Birte Muller embracing and elevating the profoundly personal meaning. We follow the young protagonist, Felipa, as she mourns the loss of her



grandmother and as she comes to reconcile that mourning with positive memories of their time together. In passing references, readers gain a glimpse of the customs of Día de los Muertos, but not enough to fully explain the holiday. This book offers a meaningful and necessary glimpse into the holiday's importance for individuals and families, but should be paired with a nonfiction text to explain the customs more fully. Its setting in the Andes is a rarity among Día de los Muertos books, many of which focus on Mexican practices.

San Vicente, L. (1999). *The Festival of Bones / El festival de las calaveras: The Little-Bitty Book for the Day of the Dead*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press.

Appropriate for grades 2-3. This book was originally published in Mexico, but it serves well as a bilingual introduction to Día de los Muertos for younger readers. The imagery of the skeletons is irreverent and lighthearted. It is incomplete without additional nonfiction information, so this book is best paired with another text for those previously unfamiliar with the holiday.

Winter, J. (2006). *Calavera abecedario: A Day of the Dead Alphabet Book*. United States: Sandpiper.

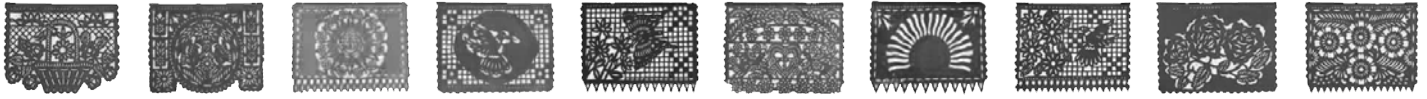
Appropriate for grades K-3. This picture book traces the alphabet through Día preparations. A perfect introductory book for children in the very beginning stages of learning Spanish; the pictures of the preparations are vivid and engaging, sure to delight young readers and give them a sense of joy about the holiday.

## MIDDLE

Alvarez, E.N. (Ed.) (2007). *Día de muertos: ofrenda viva de nuestros pueblos indígenas*. Distrito Federal, Mexico: Programa Editorial Compromiso.

Appropriate for grades 4-9. This Spanish book will appeal to younger audiences because of the vivid photographs and explanations of Día celebrations; older readers will find the Spanish explanations challenging, but understandable. Offers snippets on the historical underpinnings of the celebration as well as modern day festivities.

Ancona, G. (1993). *Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead*. New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books.



Appropriate for grades 4-6. *Pablo Remembers* is part photo album, part glossary and part story centered on the preparations for Day of the Dead. It walks the readers through the preparations necessary for this elaborate festival. The vivid photographs and simple text will keep children engaged as they spend a day in the life of Pablo, preparing for and celebrating, Día de los Muertos.

Goldman, J. (2008). *Uncle Monarch and the Day of the Dead*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Bill Publishing.

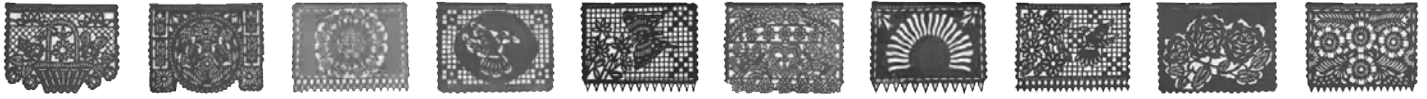
Appropriate for grades 3-6. This book is a beautiful illustration of how one Mexican family celebrates Día de los Muertos. “When the monarch butterflies return to her Mexican countryside, Lupita knows that Día de Muertos, ‘The Day of the Dead,’ is near.” So we learn about the approaching holiday and receive, simultaneously, a gentle introduction to the cycle of life and meaning of death. The brightly-colored pencil illustrations lend a magical feel to the text.

Hoyt-Goldsmith, D. (1994). *Day of the Dead: A Mexican American Celebration*. New York, NY: Holiday House.

Appropriate for grades 4-6. This photograph and picture book gives a brief history of the roots of the Day of the Dead and discusses how it can be celebrated in the US by following the preparations and festivities of a Mexican-American family in Sacramento, CA. The book offers snippets of information and pictures on ofrendas, Día preparations, food, masks, festivities and the evolution of the holiday. While complete enough for the younger reader (ages 8-9), the 12-year-olds reading this book may be asking for a bit more depth into the cultural significance of the various Día components and the history of the Aztec and Mesoamerican peoples. Overall *Day of the Dead* is an easy to read and concise introduction to the holiday.

Lasky, K. (1994) *Days of the Dead*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.

Appropriate for grades 3-6. Photos accompany text that gives brief, personalized Day of the Dead stories in a few different places around Mexico. If one understands that this book is a story about the life, death and subsequent Day of the Dead celebrations, then it is a nice accompaniment to a lesson on the holiday and will lend a more personal feel. It does not provide much background on the holiday itself, but rather is centered on telling the stories of the lives of the characters preparing for the holiday. It will give kids a better understanding of the different ways in which kids their age live. This book is not



recommended as a stand alone reference, but will nicely complement other texts.

Luenn, N. (1998). *Gift for Abuelita: Celebrating the Day of the Dead / Un regalo para abuelita: En celebración del Día de los Muertos*. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing Company.

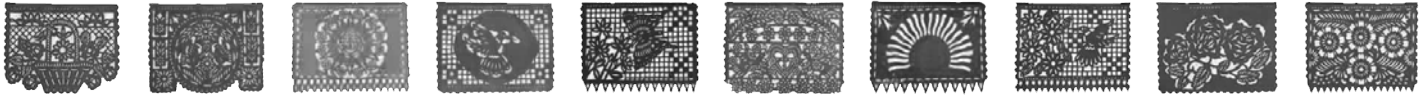
Appropriate for grades 3-6. This bilingual book tells the story of Rosita and her beloved grandmother who taught her how to plant, harvest, weave and cook. When Rosita's abuelita dies, her grandfather teaches her how she can still be close to her grandmother through the Day of the Dead. Some children may have difficulty with the subject matter, but this book presents death in a soft way, bringing the personal nature of Día de los Muertos to the forefront. Bilingual text is easy to understand on the page and the facing pages have very beautiful pictures painted in an almost abstract way - as a result, the book feels vibrant and engaging.

Pons, P.J. (2009). *Los muchos días de muertos en Morelos*. Distrito Federal, Mexico: Fondo Editorial.

Appropriate for grades 4-8. This Spanish language book contains information on Día de los Muertos celebrations in Morelos, Mexico. It offers guides for creating some of the most iconic pieces associated with the holiday and has nice photographs of the celebration in Morelos. Perfect for a Spanish reader looking to study the holiday in Mexico.

Rohmer, H. (1999). *Honoring Our Ancestors*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

Appropriate for grades 2-6. While not focused on Día de los Muertos specifically, author Harriet Rohmer provides a valuable resource here for teaching about the holiday. *Honoring Our Ancestors* is a collection of fourteen renowned artists who remember and honor their ancestors through stories, art, and photographs. The edited and illustrated essays show the artists paying homage either to their family or spiritual ancestors. This text may be used in complement to other Día de los Muertos texts in order to encourage students to think creatively and seriously about how they might honor their own ancestors.



## HIGH

Arquette, K., Zocchi, A., and Vigil, J. (2008). *Day of the Dead Crafts: More Than 24 Projects That Celebrate Día de los Muertos*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, Inc.

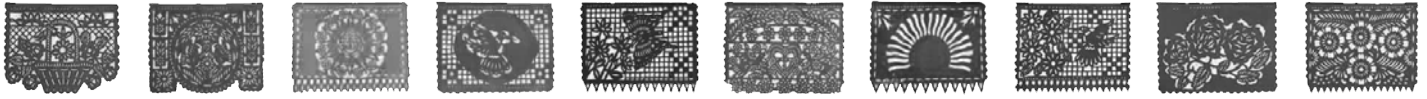
Appropriate for grades 9-12. This informative book consists of instructions for creating many art projects that are based on the customs of Día de los Muertos. Used on its own, it would be insufficient for explaining and understanding the holiday; however, used as a tool to help students understand the artistic elements of the holiday, it is meaningful. Projects include creating calaveras, masks, and skulls from paper mache, gourds, and sugar; ofrendas; jewelry, etc. This book should be paired with a more informative text so as not to risk trivializing the customs associated with this reverent holiday.

Andrade, M. (1999). *Through the eyes of the soul: Day of the Dead in Mexico / A través de los ojos del alma: Día de los Muertos en México*. San Jose, CA: La Oferta Review Newspaper, Inc.

Appropriate for grades 9-12. This is a bilingual text book that offers detailed information about the history of the people of Michoacan in relation to Day of the Dead practices. Offering dense information and pictures taken by the author on her travels, *Through the Eyes* could very easily be the focus of, or a great supplement to, a lesson centered on Day of the Dead. A word of caution with this book is the bilingual text can be confusing as both the Spanish and English are printed on the same page with only a slight difference in background color to distinguish between the two; it can pose a problem for teens that may have a reading or learning disability. Additionally, readers will need to bear in mind that this ethnography is of celebrations in two specific villages of Mexico (two of the most famous for their elaborate celebrations) and Day of the Dead celebrations may vary depending on geographic and cultural specificity.

This is one of four books that Andrade has written on the subject, each focusing on a different part of Mexico. Please see her other texts for examples of how the traditions vary in Mexico City, Mixquic, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla, Tlaxaca, San Luis Potosí, and Hidalgo, among others.

Berdicio, R. and Applebaum, S. (1972). *Posada's Popular Mexican Prints: 273 Cuts by José Guadalupe Posada*. New York, NY: Dover Publications.



Appropriate for grades 9-12. This book can be used as a complement to teaching about Día de los Muertos. Its compilation of nearly 275 woodcuts from José Guadalupe Posada make it an excellent text to introduce students to one of the iconic artists whose work has become so intertwined with Día de los Muertos imagery. The images are separated according to theme and include a special section dedicated to Posada's calaveras, the skeleton images that have become tied to the holiday.

Carmichael, E. and Sayer, C. (1992). *The Skeleton at the Feast: The Day of the Dead in Mexico*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Appropriate for grades 9-12. This informative and lavishly illustrated book provides a valuable reference point for instructors interested in exploring the holiday in a deeper fashion, more attuned to the Mexican culture, art, and folklore that underlie it. The authors Carmichael and Sayer together present background information that begins with the historic origins of the holiday and continues through to various traditional and contemporary practices. Key Spanish terms, including cempasúchil (marigold) and copal (incense) punctuate the text.

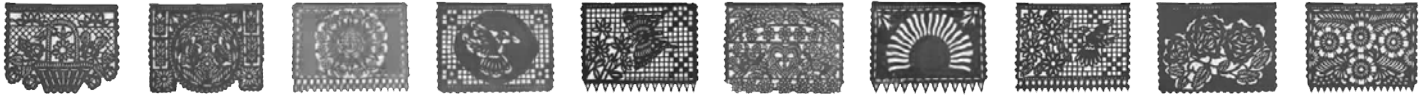
Garciagodoy, J. (1998). *Digging the Days of the Dead: A Reading of Mexico's Día de los Muertos*. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1998.

Appropriate for grades 9-12. Author Garcigodoy takes a unique approach to exploring Día de los Muertos, providing specific and detailed examinations of key aspects of the holiday. Rather than glossing the traditions overall, the text closely considers, for instance, the meaning of calaveras and their implications regarding gender, class, and identity politics in Mexico. Garcigodoy also traces the long chronology of the holiday, touching on the Prehispanic and Spanish-Catholic roots that have historically shaped associated customs. This is a valuable book for those interested in more fully understanding Mexican religion and culture, particularly in regards to Día de los Muertos.

Gutiérrez, R.A. et al. (1997). *Home Altars of Mexico*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Appropriate for grades 9-12. This book, illustrated by Dana Salvo, provides a wealth of factual photography to illustrate the customs of Día de los Muertos. Photographer Salvo traveled extensively through central and southern Mexico and in the process created deep relationships with the families whom she





interviewed. As a result, the photographs in the book are rare and accurate depictions of home altars from throughout the region, including altars constructed by indigenous people such as the Purpechan, Chamulan, and Zinacantan. This incredible book is a meaningful resource to introduce to students and will emphasize the diversity of peoples who celebrate Día de los Muertos and the variations in their respective customs.

Haley, S., Fukuda, C. (2004). *Day of the Dead: When Two Worlds Meet in Oaxaca*. Oxford, NY: Berghahn Books.

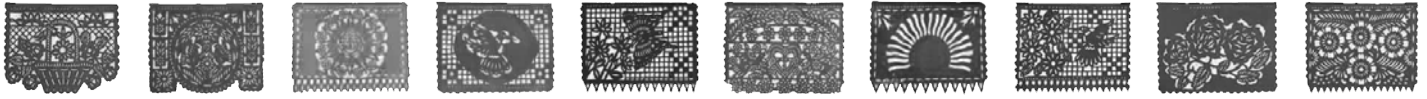
Appropriate for grades 10-12. This book explores the practices of Día de los Muertos through stunning photography, which is only enriched by a skillful and readable text that details extensively Día de los Muertos practices in Oaxaca, with much of the information supplied by individuals who have repeatedly practiced the holiday. The authors bring backgrounds in anthropology, archaeology, and the arts to bring the nuances of the holiday to the surface. Furthermore, because the text is rooted within a given locale, the authors avoid mistaken generalities and misleading blanket statements.

Iglesias y Cabrera, S.C. (2008). *Cuando los abuelos regresan: origen y simbología del Día de Muertos en México*. Distrito Federal, Mexico: Plaza y Valdes.

Appropriate for grades 10-12. This Spanish book offers detailed and lengthy information on the historical roots of Day of the Dead in Mexico from the Aztecs, Maya and Mesoamerican peoples to the current day festivals. It discusses the symbolism of the various celebrations (i.e. altars, bread, etc.). This is a great book for a native or advanced Spanish reader doing a report on Day of the Dead or seeking more in depth information.

López Casillas, M. (2008). *Images of Death in Mexican Prints*. Distrito Federal, Mexico: Editorial RM.

Appropriate for grades 9-12. This book expands the discussion of Día de los Muertos to look at the broader question of how Mexican culture deals and treats with death overall. Expert scholar López Casillas takes a moment here to consider Mexico's unique "blend of respect and irreverence for death and the afterlife" by surveying cultural imagery from Pre-Hispanic to contemporary times. The text is richly illustrated by accompanying depictions of death, allowing the book to serve more than simply an academic audience.



Norgert, K. (2006). *Days of death, days of life: Ritual in the popular culture of Oaxaca*. New York, NY: Colombia University Press.

Appropriate for grades 10-12. This book discusses death rituals in Oaxaca, Mexico, going beyond Day of the Dead traditions to also to discuss funerals, everyday dealings with death, and religious and cultural practices surrounding death. This scholarly book is a great addition to students wishing to delve deeper into the meanings of death in Oaxaca, which will bring them a deeper understanding of death in relation to Day of the Dead.

Ruiz, A. (Ed.) (2001). *La muerte en el espejo de la ciencia: tercer festival estudiantil de Día de muertos*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

Appropriate for grades 9-12. This Spanish book is a compilation of the winners from a competition centered on Día de los Muertos. The book includes photos of art installations, the students' original essays and stories. A wonderful book for high school students, which will showcase to them what their peers think and visualize for Day of the Dead.

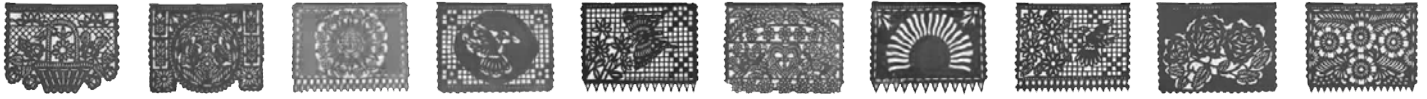
Salinas-Norman, B. (1994). *Indo-Hispanic Folk Art Traditions*. Oakland, CA: Piñata Publications.

Appropriate for grades 8-12. This book offers a set of year-round activities that are based in the customs of Día de los Muertos. All of the activities are meant to promote awareness and understanding of the holiday and its Indo-Hispanic roots. The text offers meaningful explanations of historical and cultural background alongside the art and performance ideas. Available as a Spanish-English bilingual edition.

Sayer, C. (2009). *Fiesta: Day of the Dead & Other Mexican Festivals*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Appropriate for grades 6-9. This book offers a more detailed account of Día de los Muertos and other festivals, tracing them through their catholic and indigenous origins. Photographs add nice visual weight to the text, helping students to visualize something that may be completely unfamiliar. Her chapter on Day of the Dead is elaborate, but easy to understand. This would be a good book to base a small book report or project off of. (Please note this review is only for the chapter pertaining to Día de los Muertos.

Trenchard, K. (1998). *Mexican Paper Cutting: Simple Techniques for Creating Colorful Cut-Paper Projects*.



New York, NY: Lark Books, 1998.

Appropriate for grades 9-12. Anyone who has studied or been otherwise exposed to the practices associated with Día de los Muertos are likely familiar with the common paper-cutting technique known as papel picado. In this book, Trenchard offers a collection of 20 different projects involving papel picado, from banners to luminarias. Alongside the hands-on instructions, Trenchard also provides a detailed history of the origins of the practice. A useful book to accompany other, more broadly informative texts.