

# OFRENDAS

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

Students will discuss the materials used to create an ofrenda and understand their significance.

Students will design and construct their own ofrendas, experimenting with different types of visual representations as they create them. In the process, students will better understand the cultural significance of the ofrenda and the role it plays in Día de los Muertos celebrations.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels.

## ESTIMATED TIME:

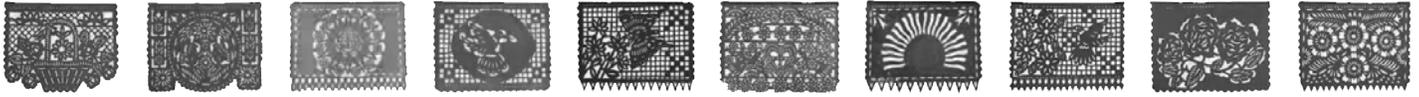
60-90 minutes.

## VOCABULARY:

- Ofrenda
- Altar
- Papel picado
- Copal
- Sugar skulls
- Pan de Muerto
- Calaveras
- Death
- Cempasúchil

## MATERIALS:

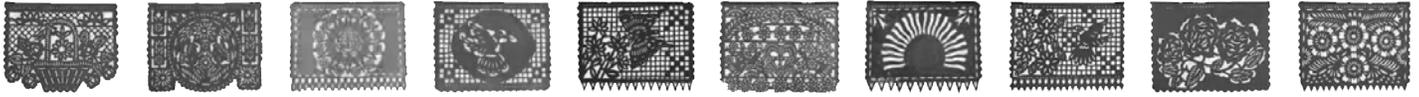
- Small poster board or other heavy paper for each student
- Shoe Boxes
- Glue
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Paint
- Scissors
- Glitter
- Sequins



- Tissue paper
- Ribbon
- Photographs
- Magazines or other pictures for collages
- Butcher paper
- Table cloth
- “The Day of the Dead Ofrenda: A Heartfelt Work of Art” (included at end of guide)
- Optional children’s books: (1) *The Spirit of Tio Fernando/El espíritu de tío Fernando: A Day of the Dead Story/Una historia del Día de los Muertos* by Janice Levy (2) *A Gift for Abuelita/Un regalo para Abuelita: Celebrating the Day of the Dead/En celebracion del Día de los Muertos* by Nancy Luenn (3) *Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead* by George Ancona (4) *Days of the Dead* by Kathryn Lasky

## PROCEDURE:

1. Discuss with students what they know or have experienced about death. Provide open-ended questions such as: Have you ever had a family member, a neighbor, or a pet pass away? How were they honored? What do you do to remember them?
2. Explain that they are going to create an ofrenda to honor or remember a person, a group of people, an event, or a particular issue that is important to them.
3. Have students read the article, “The Day of the Dead Ofrenda: A Heartfelt Work of Art.” You may also want to read a selection of the children’s books listed above. Depending upon how you organize your unit on Día de los Muertos, you may have already read some of these books as introductory content material, but if not, they would be appropriate material to introduce the concept and purpose of an ofrenda in the context of Día de los Muertos. These also provide great visual images of various types of ofrendas that can help students in planning their individual ofrenda.
4. Students can use posterboard or shoe boxes as the base for their ofrenda. Once they’ve decided on the theme for their individual ofrenda and planned a design they can begin creating it. If using a shoe box, students can paint the exterior and interior. Then, using the shoebox or poster board, students create the central image that represents their theme. They can use photographs, pictures from magazines or other objects. Then students can decorate using sequins, glitter, ribbon, tissue paper, handwritten messages, etc.
5. Once students have completed their individual ofrendas, have them create some version of a written explanation or accompaniment to explain their ofrenda. This can be as simple as a paragraph that explains who or what the ofrenda is in honor of. Or, you may choose to incorporate one of the other



writing activities included in this thematic unit such as “Calaveras and Conjuring with Words” from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art; the Acrostic poem about the person remembered by the ofrenda; or Calaveras Literarias.

6. Prepare a large table or area to display the students’ ofrendas. Cover the area with butcher paper or a table cloth. Papel picado, sugar skulls, marigolds, candles, pan de muerto, water, salt, and copal are often found on ofrendas and can be arranged along with the students’ work. Students may also want to bring in small objects that represent the person, event, or issue that their design honors to add to the ofrenda as well.

## STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS

### National Standards for Arts Education, Visual Arts Content Standards 1 -5

#### K-12 Common Core Standards Addressed

##### Reading

##### Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

##### Craft and Structure

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

##### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

##### Writing

##### Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

##### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.