



PAPEL PICADO I

INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

Students will learn about and create their own examples of papel picado as contextualized by Día de los Muertos celebrations. In the process, they will also learn about concepts of lines, color contrast, and value.

BACKGROUND:

Papel picado, loosely translated as “perforated paper,” is a folk art technique practiced in Mexico. Colorful pieces of cut paper are strung to flutter in the wind during many holiday celebrations, including Día de los Muertos, Christmas, Easter, and personal ceremonies such as weddings and christenings. Specific color schemes are tied to each of these holidays. Pink, orange, and purple, for instance, often decorate ofrendas for Día de los Muertos, while red, white, and green (colors of the Mexican flag) are used in commemorating Independence Day or Mexico’s patroness, La Virgen de Guadalupe.

It consists of rectangular pieces of tissue paper which are cut away into intricate, repetitive designs. Simple versions can be constructed by folding and snipping with scissors; more elaborate versions require awls, chisels, and other special tools. The design emerges as the artist manipulates the negative space of the tissue paper. Experts in the craft will handle many layers of paper at once, generating extensive designs that often include motifs such as flowers, birds, skeletons, crosses, and historic figures, among others.

Papel picado decorations are ephemeral, existing only during the celebration. They are typically displayed outside, where their delicate construction will disintegrate naturally in the wind and rain. This transitory existence is repeated in many of the other elements of Día de los Muertos celebrations, such as the fresh food and flowers that adorn many ofrendas at this time.

RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Appropriate for early elementary.

ESTIMATED TIME:

30-45 minutes for each version, or 1-1.5 hours for entire lesson. Note: This can be broken up into a two-day lesson with two separate activities.



VOCABULARY:

- Papel Picado
- Fold
- Cut
- Line
- Shapes
- Over
- Under
- Contrasting Color
- Color Value

MATERIALS:

- Multi-colored tissue paper or foil paper. Note: You may want to use double-sided paper with contrasting colors or madras tissue paper.
- Scissors
- String
- Glue Stick

PROCEDURE:

Version I (Easiest)

1. Give each student a piece of tissue paper (square or rectangular).
2. Fold the paper: Modeling for the students first, demonstrate how to fold the tissue paper like a fan or an accordion. Fold the paper back and forth (about 2-3 inches each time) until you have folded the entire piece of paper and are left with a long, narrow rectangle. Discuss what contrasting colors are if you are using contrasting paper.
3. Have students fold their paper as you have just demonstrated.
4. Begin cutting the paper: Modeling first, demonstrate how to cut down the long edges of the rectangle (you will not cut the short edges). You can cut waves, miniature triangles, squares, half circles, etc. You want to be sure to have a firm grasp on the paper, because as you cut you are eliminating the edges that keep the paper held together. You will end up with a stack of strips of tissue paper.
5. Have students cut their tissue paper, creating any design around the edges that they would like. Encourage them to use a different design and shapes on the two sides.
6. Folding the strips: Modeling first, taking one strip at a time, fold the strip in half so that the two short edges meet. While continuing to hold the edges of the first strip together, take the next strip and fold

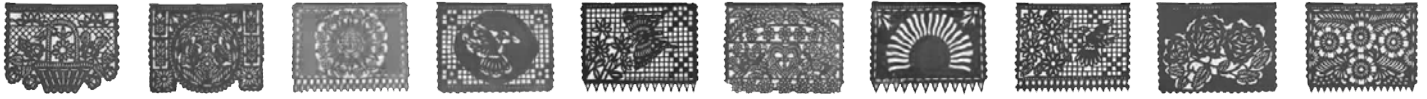


its edges together, then, put it next to your first strip, now holding four edges together. Continue to do this until you have folded all of the strips of paper and are now holding all of the folded edges together. Then, staple the edges together to hold all the paper strips in place.

7. Have students fold the paper as you have demonstrated, circulating around the room to help them as needed.
8. Now, you make create a garland by punching a hole where the strips are stapled together and stringing them together. You may also want to have students repeat the activity so that they have two that they can staple together to make a flower shape.

Version II (Basic Garland)

1. Give each student a piece of tissue paper (square or rectangular). You may want to use the madras colored tissue paper for this activity
2. Fold the paper: Modeling for the students first, demonstrate how to fold the tissue paper like a fan or an accordion. Fold the paper back and forth (about 2-3 inches each time) until you have folded the entire piece of paper and are left with a long, narrow rectangle. Discuss what contrasting colors are if you are using contrasting paper.
3. Have students fold their paper as you have just demonstrated.
4. As a class, fold the rectangles in half from left to right. You now have two short edges (right and left) and two long edges (top and bottom).
5. You will want to model this before you have your students do it. You are going to make two stair case like shapes at the top of the not folded, short side of the rectangle (if you folded to the right, you'll be cutting the short, right edge or if you folded to the left, the left short edge). The staircases will meet at the center of this short, not-folded side. On the top edge, start about an inch from the short, not-folded side, begin cutting a staircase, stopping when you reach the center of the short edge. Then, do the same thing along the bottom edge, so that the two staircases meet in the center of the short edge.
6. Now, cut designs into the long edges (bottom and top) of the rectangle. Students can cut various shapes (triangles, rectangles, half circles, leaves, bottom or top half of a star etc.) into these edges.
7. Unfold the short edge of the rectangle so that you now have a long narrow rectangle. First unfold the top long rectangle. Do not glue this strip down in the next step. This is the string fold and will be glued around the hanging string in the last step.
8. You are going to glue the sides of the fan together along that center fold line. You will need to glue all of the rectangles together in one direction, then flip the tissue paper over and glue each rectangle together on that side—always along that center fold line.
9. Take the bottom rectangle and put glue all of the way across it from left to right, then glue the two



halves of that bottom rectangle together. You should now have a shape that resembles a fan.

10. Take two chairs and place them somewhat far apart. The chairs are going to support the string or ribbon that will create the garland of fans. Tie or tape on end of the string to one chair and the other end of string to the other chair. The chairs should be far enough apart that the string is taut.
11. Take the string fold (the top rectangle that you did not glue down). Place glue on the back of this rectangle, then fold it over the hanging string and press it down onto the top edge of the fan so that the fan is now hanging from the string or ribbon.

STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS

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