

CALAVERAS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The over-sized skeleton template on the following pages is reprinted here courtesy of www.azcentral.com.

INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

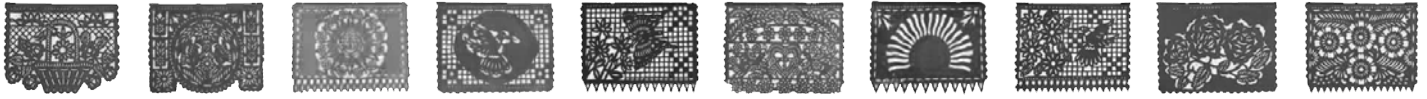
Students will learn about and discuss how the calavera imagery created by José Guadalupe Posada represents the view of death in Día de los Muertos. Students will understand the symbolism of the calavera in Día de los Muertos and will create their own calaveras.

BACKGROUND

José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913) was an “extremely prolific artist, creating about 15,000 prints in thirty years. He spoke to and for the everyday person. Inspired by ballads, native history, and folklore, as well as the political struggle of his day, Posada’s work has inspired generations of printmakers who came after him. He is perhaps best known for his representations of the calavera, the skull or skeleton, popularized in Day of the Dead celebrations on November 1 and 2, when the dead are invited to return to their families for a visit.”

“His popular calaveras were used in publications, and later were sold to the mostly illiterate public on street corners. Posada’s images of calaveras are X-ray versions of humans (and sometimes animals). They are dressed, ready to do their everyday work as soldiers, laborers, cooks, and various other jobs. These skeletal figures are also depicted drinking, eating, and playing musical instruments. They laugh and mock the upper classes, who will be equalized with the peasants in death. Posada’s Calaveras point out that wealth and position do not save one from dying. In the end, no matter how much status and money one has, death takes everyone. These witty and ironic illustrations allowed Posada to make statements that could not easily be put into words. His biting political criticism of the wealthy gave him wide appeal with the laborers and peasants.”

“Posada is remembered not only as a great artist but also, through his work, as a cultural critic. He had a great love for Mexico’s working-class people. He never married; instead, he spent his lifetime making political and cultural statements about what was happening in his country. Grounded in traditional folklore, his over-the-edge depictions of events, both real and imagined, played an important role in Mexican society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today, Posada is internationally known, and his work is frequently reproduced.”



(Source: Kristen G. Congdon & Kara Kelley Hallmark (2002). *Artists from Latin American Cultures: A Biographical Dictionary*. Greenwood Publishing Group.)

RECOMMENDED GRADES:

Adaptable for all grade levels.

ESTIMATED TIME:

1-3 hours (depending upon length of discussion of Posada, and time given to create calaveras)

VOCABULARY:

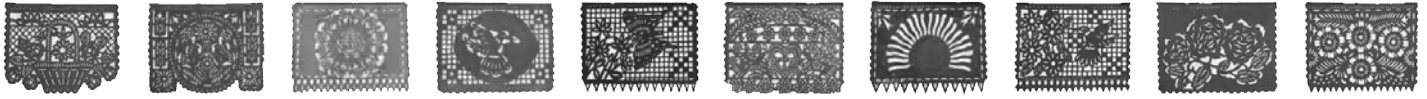
- Satire
- Calavera
- Muerte
- Death
- José Guadalupe Posada

MATERIALS:

- Scissors
- Glue Stick
- Calavera pattern
- Crayons
- Variety of art materials (e.g., construction paper, tissue paper, glitter, sequins, yarn, etc.)
- Brads (if using Pattern A or B)

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce the lesson by asking students what they think of when they see skulls or skeletons.
2. Introduce students to the images of calaveras used in Día de los Muertos through the work of José Guadalupe Posada. Explain that Guadalupe Posada was a well-known artist, illustrator and cartoonist recognized for his representations of calaveras, among other things. Here is a link to an online collection of José Guadalupe Posada's work: <http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/.landingpage/collection/joseguad> While there are hundreds of images in the collection, the following show his depictions of calaveras and or death: #79, 179, 180, 181, 211, 213, 242, 243, 311 and 312.
3. Discuss how Guadalupe Posada chooses to represent death and dying. For older students, discuss Gua-



dalupe Posada’s use of satire and how his art conveys his idea that death was the great equalizer among the rich and the poor.

4. There are multiple calavera patterns and projects included here. You will want to choose one according to the time and resources you have available. Pattern A creates a life-size skeleton in which students cut out the various bones or parts, connect them together with glue or brads, and then create clothes for the skeleton out of various art supplies such as yarn, construction paper, tissue paper, glitter, sequins, etc. Pattern B creates a much smaller calavera that could simply be colored and cut out. Pattern C is a mask that can be colored, decorated with glitter, and cut out. Hand out the calavera patterns to each student. Each student will then cut out and glue or attach the parts of their calavera together. Have materials like construction paper, crayons, colored pencils, markers, fabric, sequins etc. available for students to decorate their calavera. Remind students of the various calavera images they’ve seen to help them get started.
5. Display the completed calaveras around the classroom. The masks can be glued to yarn and strung across the room for a great classroom decoration.

RESOURCE:

Center for Southwest Research:
 New Mexico’s Digital Collections::
 Fernando Gamboa Collection of Prints
 by José Guadalupe Posada, 1888-1944

STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS

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

K-12 Common Core Standards Addressed

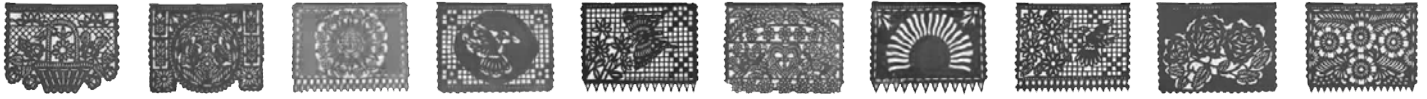
Reading

Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite

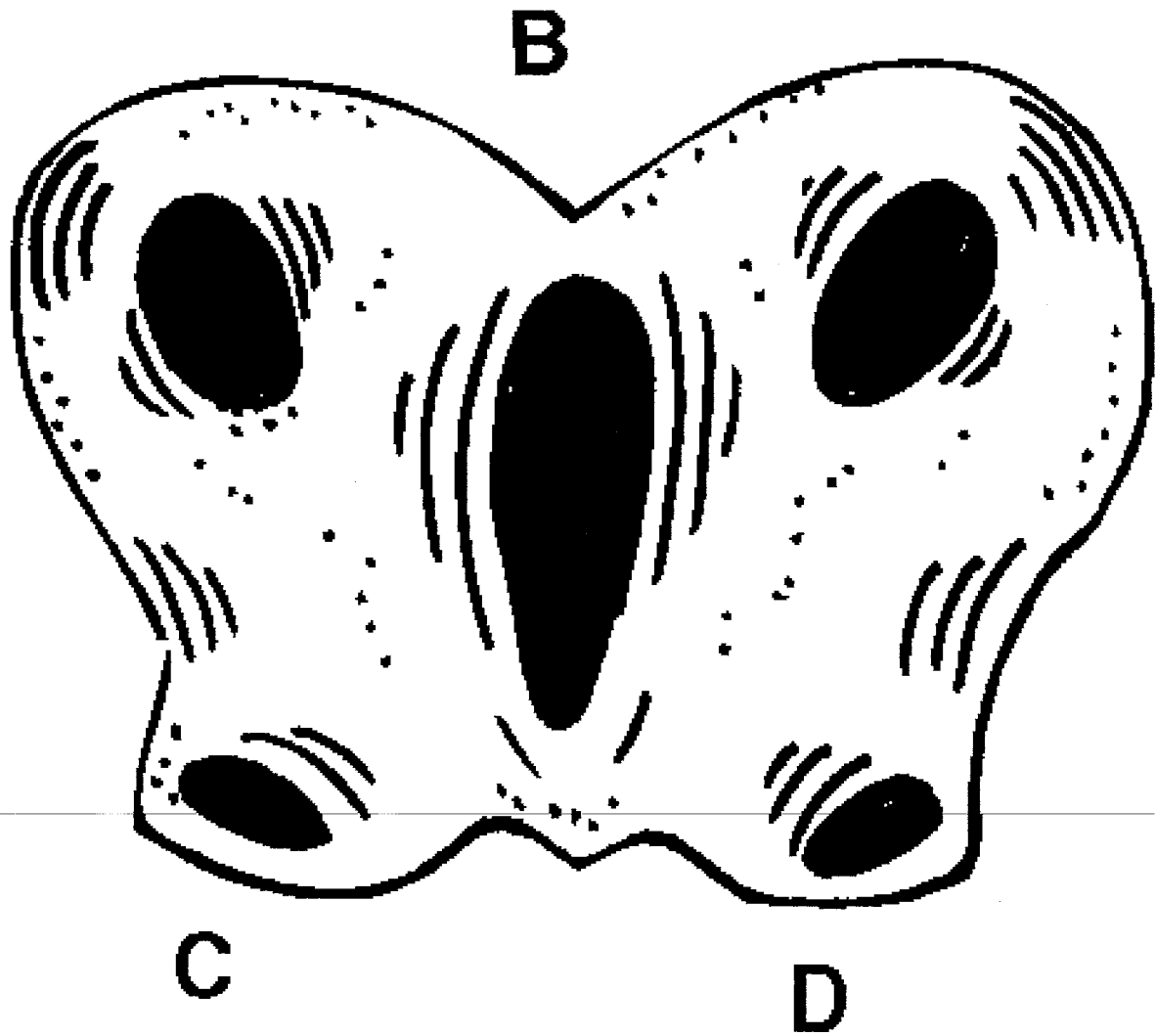


Figure 1.
 José Guadalupe Posada,
 “La Calavera de Cupido.”
 Center for Southwest Research.
 New Mexico Digital Collections.



specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support

- conclusions drawn from the text.



Make A Skeleton Puppet

Materials

Crayons, paint, markers, scissors, string or yarn, paper punch, glue, glitter, buttons, tissue paper, feathers etc.

Instructions

Print out the skeleton parts. Punch holes in the bones next to letters (each leg and arm bone will have a hole at either end, etc.). Cut out all of the parts. Color and decorate with glitter, paints, feathers etc. as you like. Let dry and tie bones together matching the letters (string will go through both B holes and both C holes, for example).

Once the skeleton is assembled, you can move him about as you like.

