

# EXPOSITORY WRITING: THE COMPARE AND CONTRAST ESSAY

## INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVE:

Students will take information acquired about Día de los Muertos and apply their knowledge of either Halloween or Memorial Day to create a Venn Diagram and Compare and Contrast Essay. Oftentimes there is the misconception that Día de los Muertos is the “Mexican version” of Halloween. In order to clarify this, students will produce a Venn Diagram that compares and contrasts the two celebrations. This should reinforce the knowledge that the two holidays are quite different. If your students are familiar with Memorial Day, this may be a way for them to understand Día de los Muertos in light of another U.S. holiday that is more similar than Halloween. One way to extend this activity would be to complete 2 Venn Diagrams: (1) that compares Día de los Muertos with Halloween; and (2) that compares Día de los Muertos with Memorial Day. Then, as a class or in small groups, have students complete a Three-Way Venn Diagram that includes all three celebrations.

This activity can be used at the beginning or end of a teaching unit on Día de los Muertos. If it is used at the beginning, you will need to begin the activity by providing information and knowledge about Día de los Muertos. You can do this through various children’s books, articles, or DVDs that discuss Día de los Muertos. The introduction to this thematic guide lists various books and how they can be used in the classroom. This activity can also be used as a closing assessment for the unit. The expectations for the assignment are easily adjusted to meet the needs of your grade level. Students will go through the different steps of the writing process: brainstorming, rough drafting, revising, editing, final copy and publishing.

## RECOMMENDED GRADES:

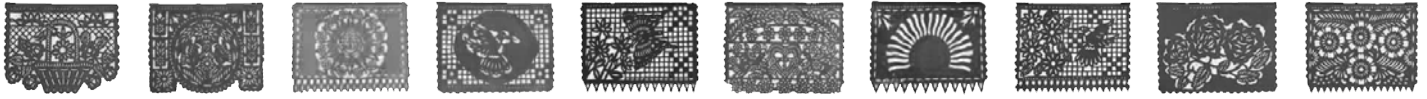
Adaptable for all grade levels.

## ESTIMATED TIME:

2-4 hours

## VOCABULARY:

- Día de los Muertos vocabulary and concepts
- Compare and Contrast
- Same and Different

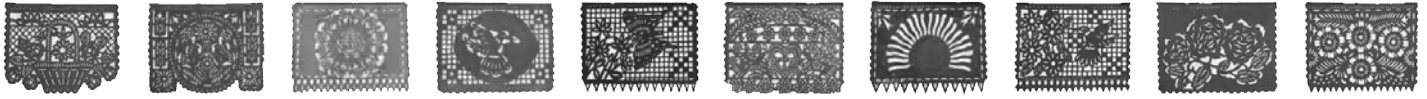


## MATERIALS:

- Pen or pencil
- Copies of Venn Diagram
- Paper for drafting
- Final copy paper
- Books, articles, photos, DVDs about Día de los Muertos

## PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce information on Día de los Muertos through children’s books, articles or other resources. Using large chart or butcher paper, keep a running list of information and vocabulary related to Día de los Muertos that the students are learning. This should be kept up throughout the unit to be used as class reference material for other assignments. If you are using this activity as a closing assessment, then simply review the information and reference materials the class has already learned or created.
2. Introduce or review the concept and purpose of a Venn Diagram. If this is the first time your students are using a Venn Diagram, you may want to complete this as a whole group. This can also be completed in small groups, pairs, or individually.
  - In preparation for the Compare and Contrast Essay, encourage students to think about items or information for their Venn in terms of how they relate to both celebrations. For example, if a student writes “Halloween takes place on October 31st”, encourage them to think about how this compares to Día de los Muertos and then write “Día de los Muertos takes place on November 1st and 2nd.” Here you want to guide students to compare ‘like’ things, so that they will then transfer this type of organized or ‘chunked’ information to their essay. Often younger students will want to write something like “On Halloween children go trick or treating, but Día de los Muertos is celebrated on November 1st and 2nd.” Begin modeling how to make appropriate comparisons during the Venn Diagram.
3. Once the Venn Diagram is completed, students can begin to draft their Compare and Contrast Essay. The next steps are largely dependent upon the grade level of your students. With younger students or students who have never done this activity, templates and modeling are key to their success.
4. First, review the purpose of the essay—to discuss how Día de los Muertos and Halloween (or Memorial Day) are the same and different.
5. Next, discuss the format of the essay in terms of number of paragraphs, indentations, and topic sentences. With younger students, this is typically a two-paragraph paper. You may want to create the topic sentences as a class by modeling one broad introductory sentence and then two specific topic sentences. For example: (1st Paragraph) Día de los Muertos and Halloween are two celebrations that take place in



the fall. Even though they are celebrated around the same time, they are very different holidays. . . .(2nd Paragraph) While they are very different, there are some things that are the same (OR that they have in common).

6. From here, students may begin writing their essays. Again, if this is a new essay format for students, model how they should write comparative sentences. For example, Halloween is \_\_\_\_\_, but Día de los Muertos is \_\_\_\_\_. Be sure to point out that they should be comparing or contrasting like things as mentioned above in the discussion of the Venn Diagram. For very young students, you may want to provide a template for the entire essay, including sentence starters and transitional words. For example:

Día de los Muertos \_\_\_\_\_ but Halloween \_\_\_\_\_. On Halloween \_\_\_\_\_, but on Día de los Muertos \_\_\_\_\_. People \_\_\_\_\_ on Día de los Muertos, but on Halloween they \_\_\_\_\_. Last, Día de los Muertos \_\_\_\_\_, but Halloween \_\_\_\_\_.  
Día de los Muertos and Halloween both \_\_\_\_\_. They also both \_\_\_\_\_. Both \_\_\_\_\_. Finally, they both \_\_\_\_\_.

7. When students have finished their rough draft, follow your classroom procedure for editing and revising. One approach would be to use the following procedure: rough draft, read out loud to self and revise, read out loud to partner and revise, meet with teacher for final editing and revising. Students then write their final copy on some sort of “special” final copy paper—perhaps paper with a special border then glued onto construction paper. Publish essays by hanging them in a designated area.

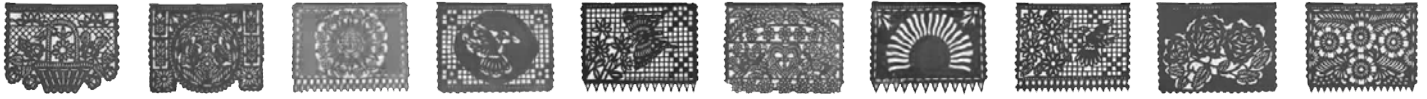
## STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS:

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.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.



## Writing

### Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### 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.

