

# THE DAY OF THE DEAD / EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS: A BILINGUAL CELEBRATION

## THE DAY OF THE DEAD / EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS: A BILINGUAL CELEBRATION

by Bob Barner, translated by Teresa Mlawer

Ages: 4-8

Themes: Holidays, Latin American Cultural Traditions, Family, Rhyming

Running Time: 9 minutes

### SUMMARY

It's the Day of the Dead, or the time to honor our ancestors. Families prepare by making special foods, burning incense, and visiting the cemeteries where their family members are buried. This spirited movie introduces students to the sounds and traditions of this popular holiday in side-by-side stories in both English and Spanish.

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will use context clues to figure out unfamiliar words.
- Students will identify the traditions and customs practiced on the Day of the Dead.
- Students will create Day of the Dead artwork and share stories about their own ancestors.

### BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Introduce using context clues as a strategy for figuring out unfamiliar words. Define context clues as: *words and pictures around an unfamiliar word that help the reader understand the meaning of the word.* Show students examples of unfamiliar words from different texts and demonstrate using context clues to infer the meanings of the words. Emphasize that pictures are often powerful context clues. Tell students that they are going to watch a movie about a holiday called the Day of the Dead that will contain some unfamiliar (to many), Spanish words. Provide students with a list of some of the words that they will hear and practice their pronunciation. Encourage students to watch and listen for these words and to use the context clues in the film to guess what the words mean.

Define and discuss ancestors with the students. Guiding questions:

- Who are your parents' parents? Who are *their* parents?
  - Where are our great-grandparents and *their* parents now?
  - How do we celebrate and remember our ancestors?
  - Does anyone in the room celebrate The Day of the Dead?
- Prepare students for viewing the movie by discussing different ways that people honor and remember their ancestors.

### AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Revisit the context clue strategy from the Before Viewing Activities. Review the word list that students received. Were they able to figure out any of the words? Give students a simple graphic organizer with spaces for 3-4 of the Spanish words. The organizer should have 3 columns: "Word I Don't Know / What I Think It Means / Clues or Pictures That Helped Me." Example:

Word I Don't Know	What I Think It Means	Clues or Pictures That Helped Me
empanada	A kind of food	"tacos, empanadas, mole, and treats" picture of food and kids cooking

As a class, choose 3-4 words from the movie to use context clues to understand. Fill in the graphic organizer together.

Compare and contrast the Day of the Dead with the American holiday of Halloween. Use a Venn Diagram to record ideas.

Guiding questions:

- Does anyone in the class celebrate the Day of the Dead?
- Is the Day of the Dead a scary holiday?
- What symbols or images for Halloween are similar to those for the Day of the Dead?
- What are the dates of each of these holidays?
- Why do people celebrate the Day of the Dead? Why do people celebrate Halloween?

Create some of the artifacts and food used during the Day of the Dead in class. If possible, invite parents and community members who celebrate the holiday to help. Invite students to bring photographs or mementos of their ancestors who have passed away. Play Mexican or Latin folk music, enjoy the food and artwork, and share stories with families and students.

Other resources to study the Day of the Dead:

<http://www.mexonline.com/daydead.htm>

<http://www.holidays.net/dayofthedeath/index.htm>

<http://www.inside-mexico.com/featuredead.htm>

**Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead,**  
by George Ancona

**Day of the Dead,** by Tony Johnston

### OTHER RELATED TITLES FROM WESTON WOODS:

**By the Light of the Halloween Moon,** by Caroline Stutson,  
ill. by Kevin Hawkes

**Chato and the Party Animals,** by Gary Soto,  
ill. by Susan Guevara

**Chato's Kitchen,** by Gary Soto, ill. by Susan Guevara

**A Dark, Dark Tale,** by Ruth Brown

**Dem Bones,** by Bob Barner

**Georgie,** by Robert Bright

**The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything,**  
by Linda Williams, ill. by Megan Lloyd

**Los Gatos Black on Halloween,** by Marisa Montes,  
ill. by Yuyi Morales

**The Pot That Juan Built,** by Nancy Andrews-Goebel,  
ill. by David Diaz

**Pumpkin Circle,** by George Levenson

**Teeny-Tiny and the Witch-Woman,** by Barbara Walker,  
ill. by Michael Foreman

**Too Many Tamales,** by Gary Soto, ill. by Ed Martinez

**A Very Brave Witch,** by Alison McGhee, ill. by Harry Bliss

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