



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 20 Word Count: 905

Book Summary

Día de los Muertos is an informational nonfiction book that explains a traditional celebration that has taken place in Mexico for thousands of years. In many parts of the world, people continue to hold celebrations around November 1 and 2 to honor people who have died. It is a time of happiness and joy, when loved ones are remembered, honored, and celebrated. Photographs support the text.

Book and lesson also available at Levels K and N.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of asking and answering questions to understand text
- Identify main idea and details
- Identify and use adjectives and the nouns they describe
- Read and understand foreign vocabulary

Materials

Green text indicates resources are available on the website.

- Book—*Día de los Muertos* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- [KWLS / ask and answer questions, main idea and details, adjectives worksheets](#)
- [Discussion cards](#)



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on an interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if the books are reused.)

Vocabulary

*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on [VocabularyA-Z.com](#).

- Content words:

Story critical: *altars* (n.), *ancestors* (n.), *cemetery* (n.), *honors* (v.), *spirits* (n.), *traditions* (n.)

Enrichment: *cultures* (n.), *generations* (n.), *procession* (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Create a KWLS chart on the board, with one letter heading each of the four sections. Introduce and explain the [KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet](#). Review or explain the *K* stands for knowledge we *know*, the *W* stands for information we *want* to know, the *L* stands for the knowledge we *learned*, and the *S* stands for what we *still* want to know about the topic.

- Ask volunteers to share how their families honor and remember loved ones who have passed away. Write *Día de los Muertos* on the board, and ask students what they know about the words. Ask leading questions if necessary, such as which language it is, what it means, and what the day might celebrate. As students share their prior knowledge, fill in the first row (K) on the board with information students already know about the topic. (There may be a very limited amount of information offered by students at this time, depending on their prior knowledge.) Add any new information to the first row on the board. Have students complete the same section of their KWLS worksheet.
- Ask students what they would like to know about Día de los Muertos. Have them fill in the second row (W) of their worksheet. Write their questions on the class chart.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, fiction or nonfiction, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name, photo credits).
- Preview the table of contents on page 3. Remind students the table of contents provides an overview of the book. Ask students what they expect to read about in the book, on the basis of what they see in the table of contents. (Accept all answers students can justify.)

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Ask and answer questions**

- Discuss with students how having prior knowledge about the topic, and asking and answering questions while reading, can help readers understand and remember the information in a book.
- Direct students to the table of contents. Remind them the table of contents provides an overview of the information in a book and how it is organized. After previewing the table of contents, use it to model asking questions.
Think-aloud: I can use the table of contents to think of questions I would like to have answered about Día de los Muertos. For example, the third section is titled "Is It Halloween?" That question makes me think the two have something in common. The front cover shows a person dressed in costume and face paint. It makes me wonder if Halloween and Día de los Muertos are the same thing. I'll have to read the book to find out. I'll write my question on the chart.
- Have students look at the other section titles. Have them write any questions they have, on the basis of the covers and table of contents in the W section of their KWLS worksheet.
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at the photographs and maps. Invite students to read through the glossary. Have them add any additional questions they might have on their KWLS worksheet. Invite students to share their questions aloud. Write shared questions on the class chart.
- Explain that sometimes readers don't know anything about a topic before they read a book. Reassure students it's acceptable to have a limited amount of information on the K section of their worksheets at this point. Explain to them when they continue reading and filling out the worksheet, it will become evident how much more they know about the subject after reading the book.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Main idea and details**

- Have students look at the map on page 3 and read the caption. Write the following list of words on the board: *Montana, Texas, Arizona, and California*. Ask students to describe what these words refer to (states). Point out the definitions of these words helps to identify a main idea. (There are seven different states that have large Día de los Muertos celebrations.) The words *Montana, Texas, Arizona, and California* are the details that support this main idea.
- Explain sometimes the amount of information about a topic is so large it is grouped into sections or chapters, and each section or chapter of the book has its own main idea.
- Model using the table of contents to infer supporting details in the text.
Think-aloud: I know the title of the book is Día de los Muertos, and that has to do with the main idea of the book. When I look at the table of contents on page 3, I see the section titled "Sugar Skulls." I know skulls are the bones of the head, but I wonder if sugar skulls are made especially for the Day of the Dead. They must have something to do with the main idea. When I read, I know I will find out even more details about Día de los Muertos. As I read, I will pause after a few pages to review in my mind the important details. This strategy will help me make sure I understand what I'm reading. I know good readers do this when they read, so I am going to look for supporting details as I read this book.
- Have students turn to the table of contents and list some of the supporting details they think they will read about when they read the book *Día de los Muertos* (children, art, and so on).

Introduce the Vocabulary

- As students preview the book, ask them to talk about what they see in the photographs, maps, and diagrams. Reinforce the vocabulary words they will encounter in the text.
- Write the following (story critical) vocabulary words on the board: *altars, cemetery, and traditions*. Remind students they can look for context clues in the text and photographs to help them define an unfamiliar word.
- Give groups of students a large sheet of poster paper with each of the vocabulary words in a bubble drawn on the page. Have them write and draw what they know about each word, reminding them to collaborate and share ideas.
- When all groups are finished collaborating, invite them in to a class discussion. Create the same design on the board as that on their posters, and ask volunteers to share their group definition aloud. Create a class definition for each word, using students' prior knowledge.
- Review or explain the glossary contains a list of vocabulary words and their definitions. Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Have them locate the glossary at the back of the book. Invite a volunteer to read the definition for *altars* in the glossary. Have students compare the definition with their prior knowledge of the word. Then have them follow along on page 14 as you read the sentence in which the word *altars* is found to confirm the meaning of the word. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words.

Set the Purpose

- Have students think about what they already know about Día de los Muertos as they read the book to find answers to their questions, and write what they learned in the L section of their KWLS worksheet.


During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 8. Remind them to look for information about Día de los Muertos that will answer questions on their KWLS worksheet. Encourage students who finish before everyone else to go back and reread.
- When students have finished reading, have them circle any questions on their KWLS worksheet that were answered and write any new questions that were generated.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Día de los Muertos

- Model answering a question and filling in the third section (L) of the KWLS chart.
Think-aloud: I wanted to know if Halloween and Día de los Muertos were the same thing. I found out that while the two holidays happen around the same time of year, they are very different. I read Halloween is often about scaring people, while Día de los Muertos is a time of happiness and joy, when some people in certain cultures remember and honor loved ones who have died. I noticed another interesting section title, "Day of the Dead for Children." I wonder how children celebrate this holiday, and if they are given special costumes as well. I will write these new questions on my chart. Encourage students to write different questions on their own chart.
 - Have students write answers to the questions they circled in the L section of their KWLS worksheet. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read the book. Record shared responses on the class KWLS chart.
 - **Check for understanding:** Have students read pages 9 through 12. Have them write any answers they found while reading in the L section of their KWLS worksheet and additional questions they raised in the W section. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read pages 9 through 12. Write shared responses on the class KWLS chart.
 - Invite students to share the important details they identified in the section titled "When and Where?" Write these details on the board. Have students work with a partner to identify the main idea from these details (Día de los Muertos celebrations, usually around November 1 and 2, happen in many parts of the world, such as Mexico and the United States). Discuss their responses as a class and write the main idea and supporting details on the board. Point out how referring to photographs and maps helps readers understand the points being made in the text.
 - Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to continue to look for and write answers to their KWLS worksheet questions, and to identify important details in each chapter. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their KWLS worksheet as they read.
-  Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- *Think-aloud: I wanted to know how children celebrate this holiday, and if they are given special costumes as well. I read children decorate cardboard wings to wear in a special parade in some cities. I learned they make loud noisemakers, learn circus tricks, and paint their faces to go with their special costumes. Now that I'm finished reading this book, I would like to know more about Día de los Muertos parades for children, such as where else they occur in the world, and what their traditions are. I will write those questions down in my chart.*
- Ask students to share questions they added to their KWLS worksheet while reading, and ask them what questions were answered (or not answered) in the text. Have students write answers they found while reading in the L row of their KWLS worksheet.
- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading, and looking for the answers while reading, keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they have read.
- Remind students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this text. Brainstorm other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions. Invite students to fill in the final section (S) of their KWLS worksheet with information they would still like to know about Día de los Muertos.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Talk about how stopping to review the important details helped students remember the facts and better understand the information. Ask them to use the important details they identified to confirm or refine the main idea of the book.
- Have students reread page 17, looking for supporting details about the main idea. Write the details about “Sugar Skulls” on the board (*every year for Día de los Muertos; made with white sugar pressed into molds; decorated with colorful frosting; children in the US and Mexico love eating them*). Ask students how this information supports the main idea of the section. Write the main idea on the board above the supporting details. (Some people make sugar skulls to celebrate Día de los Muertos.)
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [main-idea-and-details worksheet](#). When students have finished working, discuss their answers.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about people coming together to celebrate a cultural tradition. Now that you know this information, do you think you will celebrate this year on November 1, to honor people who have died?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Adjectives

- Review or explain that *adjectives* are words that *describe nouns or pronouns*. An adjective tells *which one, how many, or what kind*. Remind students words ending in *-ly*, such as *happily* and *quickly*, are *adverbs* used to describe verbs, and will be discussed in another lesson.
- Write the following sentences on the board. Ask students to count the number of adjectives in each sentence.
Children wear masks and glittery angel wings.
The loved ones who have died are remembered, honored, and celebrated.
Some people who celebrate Día de los Muertos make colorful sugar skulls every year.
- Have individual students come up to the board and circle the adjective(s) in each sentence. Then have them underline the noun or pronoun each adjective describes. (In sentence one: *glittery* and *angel* are circled, and *wings* is underlined. In sentence two: *loved, remembered, honored, and celebrated* are circled, and *ones* is underlined. In sentence three: *some, colorful sugar, and every* are circled, and *people, skulls, and year* are underlined.)
- Point out sometimes more than one adjective can describe the same noun (*glittery angel wings*), and adjectives can come either before or after the nouns they describe (*as remembered, honored, and celebrated* describe *the loved ones*). Ask volunteers to identify whether the adjectives on the board are telling *which one, how many, or what kind*.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in pairs to reread page 18 and circle all of the adjectives they find. Discuss the results as a group, identifying the nouns or pronouns each adjective describes. Ask volunteers to identify whether the adjectives are telling *which one, how many, or what kind*.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [adjectives worksheet](#). Read and discuss the correct answers once all students have finished working independently.

Word Work: Foreign vocabulary

- Discuss the Spanish vocabulary used in this book. Have students turn to the title page and find the Spanish words (*Día de los Muertos*). Ask them to tell what these words mean in English (*Day of the Dead*).
- Have students turn to page 9 and find a Spanish word. Write *mariachis* on the board. Ask students to tell how the book describes *mariachis* (musicians). Talk about the men holding guitars in the photograph, and have a volunteer read the caption below. Ask what the *mariachis* are doing in this photograph. Explain when pronouncing the letter *r* in Spanish words, the tongue is rolled. Model saying *mariachis* and *Muertos* aloud. Then have students practice saying the words.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Día de los Muertos

- Have students turn to page 15 and find the Spanish words. Write *pan de muertos* and *tamales* on the board. Ask students to tell what they mean (“bread of the dead” and a favorite food made from meat, chilies, and ground corn).
- **Check for understanding:** Have students write each Spanish word on an index card. Have them write the English equivalent on the back of each index card. Divide students into pairs. Have them show their partner each Spanish word, asking their partner to provide the English equivalent.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. With someone at home, have them reread the text and tell about the information they wrote on the chart. Have students also take home their completed KWLS worksheet and explain what each section means.

Extend the Reading

Expository Writing Connection

Provide print and Internet resources for students to find out more about the history of Día de los Muertos in ancient Mexico. Citing information from their research and the book, have them write a report, which includes at least three paragraphs, including an introduction, a body, and conclusion. Encourage them to add illustrations, diagrams, or photographs to their report. Have students create their own book about Día de los Muertos, making sure it includes a front and back cover and illustrations or photographs. Have each student proofread and edit their book before submitting a final copy. Either bind each report separately, or bind all of the reports together to make a class book with its own front and back cover.

Visit WritingA-Z.com for a lesson and leveled materials on expository writing.

Social Studies Connection

Create a forum for discussion about cultural traditions. Ask students to share why they think they are important, and what it means to different generations as these traditions are handed down. Ask volunteers to share their traditions, and talk about why these traditions are important socially. Discuss how honoring culture and keeping traditions shapes a nation’s history.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment**Monitor students to determine if they can:**

- consistently ask relevant questions about a topic prior to and during reading; locate answers to their questions and write them on a worksheet
- identify the main idea and supporting details to better understand the text in discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify the use of adjectives in the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- identify and fluently read foreign vocabulary; identify the English equivalent for each Spanish word during discussion and with a partner

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)