



BOOK SET: DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

This book set includes *** different fiction and non-fiction picture books related to Día de los Muertos, a celebration that takes place in various Latin American countries November 1-2.

BARRILETE: A KITE FOR THE DAY OF THE DEAD

Written by Elisa Amado and photographed by Joya Hairs. Groundwood Books, 1999. Grades 2+).

This is a photo essay which documents a family's progress as they celebrate the Day of the Dead in Guatemala, where the holiday is celebrated in part by building large kites (some are over seven meters across), also called barilletes. Given that many descriptions of this holiday omit kite-building as one of the practices, this book offers a useful look into the variety of celebrations; however, it is rather scarce in exploring the holiday overall and should be used only when complemented by other texts.

1 copy

BETO AND THE BONE DANCE

Written and illustrated by Gina Freschet. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001. (Grades K+).

With warm, softened imagery, Freschet tells the story of Beto and his family as they work together to craft an altar in honor of Beto's recently departed grandma. Through the simple text, readers learn simultaneously about the reverently serious purpose behind the holiday as well as the enthusiastic celebrations that characterize it.

1 copy

CLATTER BASH! A DAY OF THE DEAD CELEBRATION

Written by Richard Keep. Peachtree, 2008. (Grades K+).

Another humorous and inverse perspective on the holiday, author Keep uses the text to depict the festivities of the departed family members whom are celebrated during Día de los Muertos. After the family members leave their offerings at the altars, the skeletons come out to "clatter bash" and celebrate throughout the night. Upbeat rhymes with occasional Spanish words capture the sounds of the evening and the beautiful illustrations based on papel picado designs are engaging without being scary. Despite the lighthearted approach, the story nonetheless manages to convey a good sense of the practices, foods, and images associated with the holiday.

1 copy



DAY OF THE DEAD

Written by Tony Johnston and Jeannette Winter. Harcourt, 1997. (Grades PreK+).

Above a small town in Mexico, the sun rises like a great marigold, and one family begins preparations for an annual celebration, El día de los muertos, the Day of the Dead. Soon they will go out into the night, join their neighbors, and walk to the graveyard to welcome the spirits of their loved ones home again. Framed by decorative borders and peppered with Spanish words, Day of the Dead is a glorious introduction to a fascinating celebration. A note at the end of the book provides factual information about the holiday..

1 copy

DAYS OF THE DEAD

Written by Kathryn Lasky and photographed by Christopher G. Knight. Hyperion Books, 1994. (Grades 3+).

Photos accompany text that gives brief, personalized Day of the Dead stories in a few different places around Mexico. If one understands that this book is a story about the life, death and subsequent Day of the Dead celebrations, then it is a nice accompaniment to a lesson on the holiday and will lend a more personal feel. It does not provide much background on the holiday itself, but rather is centered on telling the stories of the lives of the characters preparing for the holiday. It will give kids a better understanding of the different ways in which kids their age live. This book is not recommended as a stand alone reference, but will nicely complement other texts.

1 copy

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Written by Roseanne Greenfield Thong and illustrated by Carles Ballesteros. Albert Whitman & Co., 2015. (Grades PreK+).

It's Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) and children throughout the pueblo, or town, are getting ready to celebrate! They decorate with colored streamers, calaveras, or sugar skulls, and pan de muertos, or bread of the dead. There are altars draped in cloth and covered in marigolds and twinkling candles. Music fills the streets. Join the fun and festivities, learn about a different cultural tradition, and brush up on your Spanish vocabulary, as the town honors their dearly departed in a traditional, time-honored style.

1 copy





DÍA DE MUERTOS NÚMEROS: A DAY OF THE DEAD COUNTING BOOK

Written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. Abrams Appleseed, 2023. (Grades PreK+).

From award-winning and beloved author-illustrator Duncan Tonatiuh comes this celebratory bilingual picture book centering on a Día de Muertos ofrenda (Day of the Dead altar), constructed annually to honor the memory and welcome the spirit of a loved one. The book uses a counting structure, from one to ten, to focus on family members and their offerings, with a double-gatefold finale that opens to reveal the family gathered around the fully decorated ofrenda with all of their offerings. Included at the back of the book is a brief author's note that lends additional context on the holiday.

1 copy

FELIPA AND THE DAY OF THE DEAD

Written by Birte Müller. North-South Books, 2005. (Grades K+).

Unlike many of the books for younger readers that use humor to defuse the seriousness of the holiday, this book shows author Birte Muller embracing and elevating the profoundly personal meaning. We follow the young protagonist, Felipa, as she mourns the loss of her UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute | 89 grandmother and as she comes to reconcile that mourning with positive memories of their time together. In passing references, readers gain a glimpse of the customs of Día de los Muertos, but not enough to fully explain the holiday. This book offers a meaningful and necessary glimpse into the holiday's importance for individuals and families, but should be paired with a nonfiction text to explain the customs more fully. Its setting in the Andes is a rarity among Día de los Muertos books, many of which focus on Mexican practices.

1 copy

FUNNY BONES: POSADA AND HIS DAY OF THE DEAD CALAVERAS

Written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2015. (Grades 1+).

Discover the story behind José Guadalupe Posada's iconic Día de Muertos skeletons in this fascinating picture book from award-winning creator Duncan Tonatiuh. Funny Bones tells the story of how calaveras came to be. The amusing figures are the creation of Mexican artist José Guadalupe (Lupe) Posada (1852–1913). Lupe learned the art of printing at a young age and soon had his own shop. In a country that was not known for freedom of speech, he drew political cartoons, much to the amusement of the local population but not to the politicians. While he continued to draw cartoons, he is best known today for his calavera drawings. They have become synonymous with Mexico's Día de Muertos festival. Calaveras are skeletons performing all sorts of activities, both everyday and festive: dancing in the streets, playing instruments in a band, pedaling bicycles, promenading in the park, and even sweeping the sidewalks. They are not intended to be frightening, but rather to celebrate the joy of living and provide humorous observations about people. Author and illustrator Tonatiuh relates the pivotal moments of Lupe's life and explains the different artistic processes he used.

1 copy



JUST A MINUTE!: A TRICKSTER TALE AND COUNTING BOOK

Written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales. Chronicle, 2003. (Grades K+).

This is a vibrantly colored, vivid story of Day of the Dead told through counting in both English and Spanish. Señor Calavera is ready to take Grandma Beetle to the next life, but after he meets her and counts with her, he decides to leave without her. Each number is a different preparation for the holiday, which gives young kids a sense of the culture behind the tradition.

1 copy

JUST IN CASE: A TRICKSTER TALE AND SPANISH ALPHABET BOOK

Written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales. Roaring Brook Press, 2008. (Grades K+).

Much like her previous book, *Just a Minute!*, author Yuyi Morales has created once more a vibrant and illustrative book. This one focuses on Día de los Muertos and the alphabet, whereas her previous text focused on numbers. In *Just in Case*, readers take a new trip with Señor Calavera, who is worried and perplexed about what to give Grandma Beetle for her birthday. This heart-warming and award-winning tale explores possible gifts by imagining a different present for each letter of the alphabet. From the good-natured text to the glowing illustrations, this is a lovely Día de los Muertos book for young readers.

1 copy

MARIA MOLINA AND THE DAYS OF THE DEAD

Written by Kathleen Krull and illustrated by Enrique O. Sánchez. Maxwell MacMillan International, 1994. (Grades 1+).

It's the first of the Days of the Dead in Mexico, and Maria Molina and her family are in the graveyard to honor her baby brother Pablo, who died when he was just a few months old. A candle flickers in the dark night, and on Pablo's grave they have placed his favorite toys, some chocolate, a sugar skull, and even a small pan de muerto. Throughout Mexico, other families are doing exactly the same thing, for the three-day festival of The Days of the Dead is one of Mexico's most important holidays.

1 copy



MI FAMILIA CALACA/MY SKELETON FAMILY

Written by Cynthia Weill and paper mache by Jesús Canseco Zárate. Cinco Puntos Press, 2013. (Grades PreK+).

Welcome to the family! It's just like yours: father, mother, sister, brother, abuelita, gato, even a great-great grandmother. Well, but there's something just a little bit different about this particular family. Maybe it's those clothes they wear...just a little bit fashion backward. And the colors! So vibrant and...lively. Maybe that's what it is. They are just so full of life while looking almost other worldly. Cynthia Weill's bilingual collaboration with artist Jesus Canseco Zarate teaches young readers basic information about relationships, while also celebrating the colorful tradition of Mexico's Day of the Dead. Canseco Zarate long-limbed sculptures are a playful twist on traditional Mexican iconography of the skeleton that stretches back through the country's art history to José Guadalupe Posada's engravings and Aztec sculpture.

1 copy

THE FESTIVAL OF BONES / EL FESTIVAL DE LAS CALAVERAS: THE LITTLE-BITTY BOOK FOR THE DAY OF THE DEAD.

Written by Luis San Vicente. Cinco Puntos Press, 1999. (Grades 2+).

This book was originally published in Mexico, but it serves well as a bilingual introduction to Día de los Muertos for younger readers. The imagery of the skeletons is irreverent and lighthearted. It is incomplete without additional nonfiction information, so this book is best paired with another text for those previously unfamiliar with the holiday.

1 copy

THE REMEMBERING DAY/EL DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Written by Pat Mora and illustrated by Robert Casilla. Piñata Books, 2015. (Grades 1+).

Long ago in what would come to be called Mexico, as Mama Alma and her granddaughter, Bella, recall happy times while walking in the garden they have tended together since Bella was a baby, Mama Alma asks that after she is gone her family remember her on one special day each year. Includes facts about The Remembering Day, El día de los muertos.

1 copy





UNCLE MONARCH AND THE DAY OF THE DEAD

Written by Judy Goldman and illustrated by René King Moreno. Boyds Mill Press, 2008. (Grades 1+).

A family celebrates Día de Muertos, a holiday for remembering those who have passed. When the monarch butterflies return to her Mexican countryside, Lupita knows that Día de Muertos, "the Day of the Dead," is near. She and her favorite uncle watch the butterflies flutter in the trees. When a butterfly lands on Lupita's hand, her uncle reminds her that she should never hurt a monarch because they are believed to be the souls of the departed. Lupita and her family get ready for the holiday. When the first of November arrives, the family will go to the cemetery to honor the memories of their loved ones. But this year is different—Lupita's uncle cannot join them. Now, Lupita learns the true meaning of the celebration.

1 copy

