

# DIA DAY LOS MUERTOS CALAVERA PUPPETS

Hannah Spitzer  
5th-6th grade



**Summary:** Students will investigate the social and cultural contexts of the hispanic holiday, “Dia de Los Muertos”. We will be reading from the book, *Days of the Dead by Kathryn Lasky* and making skeleton puppets using iconography from the holiday.

**Development Level:** This project is appropriate for 5th grade because they are exploring their individuality and identity through art. Part of that experience is learning to evaluate the relationship between art and human experience. By studying the art and traditions in other cultures, they are expanding their perspectives about identity as a whole. This project will also introduce them to a new material in art making, brad fasteners!

## **Specific Objectives:**

1) Students will make one “Dia de Los Muertos” calavera puppet.

- 2) Students will explore the cultural significance of Dia de Los Muertos to Hispanic culture.
- 3) 5.3 RE Students will Evaluate the relationship between works of art and human experiences.

**Materials List:**

- white chalk pastel/colored pencils/paint
- black paper
- tissue paper
- Brad fasteners
- extra decorative materials of choice
- glue
- scissors
- Bone reference packets
- ziplock bags

**Instructional Aides:**

- *Days of the Dead by Kathryn Lasky*
- Clips from Disney's "Coco"
- bone reference packets

**Vocabulary Review:**

- Dia Day los Muertos
- "Calavera" or skull
- Brad fastener
- tradition
- culture

**Art Activity: Cavalera Skeletons**

**Day 1:**

Introduce the lesson by asking students to define the words, "culture", "tradition" and some examples that we see around the year. Read selected pages from *Days of the Dead by Kathryn Lasky* that introduce what the holiday means to Hispanic culture.

Culture: *The beliefs, values, art, and traditions of a nation or group of people.*

Tradition: an idea, activity or belief that is passed down through generations

-Show the example of the calavera skeleton puppet and go through the first steps of tracing the 6 parts of the skeleton onto the black paper. Each table should get one bag with 6 labeled body parts for the skeleton.

## **Day 2**

-Show the clip from Disney's "Coco" of the families celebrating Dia de Los Muertos at the end of the movie. Review the words "culture" and "tradition".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gf59aOB1OI>

-Have students finish tracing their bones onto the black paper with pencil. Then pass out the bone reference packets to each table and have them start to draw the bones onto their traced pieces from the bag. (this step is where the skeletons should start to look unique!)

## **Day 3**

-Review the words "culture" and "tradition" and go back over the tracing steps.

-Finish drawing bones from the bone reference packet on the black paper.

-Give each table white paint to start carefully painting in their skeleton bones and set out to dry.

## **Day 4**

-Pass out sharpies and ziplock bags to keep their individual pieces in with their name.

-Cut out all the skeleton parts from the black paper.

-Explain how to use the brad fasteners at the joints. Students should lay out their "plan" for how they want their final skeleton body to look.

-Cut slits for the brad fasteners and apply. If there is time, start to bring out materials for decorating their calavera skulls. All additional pieces will be put into their individual baggy with their name.

## **Day 5**

- Show examples of real calavera skull decorations, and this clip from the movie “Coco” to inspire their designs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Nes-XI3-Ps>

- Students can add any tissue paper, jewels/decorations to the calavera skulls with glue! :)

## **Accommodations**

- Clarifying directions
- Modeling
- Adaptive scissors for cutting out
- White colored pencil to trace on black paper to see lines better
- Subtitles on videos

### Reflection/Assessment:

- How is it going?
- What can you do to help you improve your work?
- Are you excited about what you are making?
- Do you have any questions for me?

### Dia de Los Muertos Cavalera Skeletons

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

| CATEGORY           | 4   | 3   | 2   | 1  | Score |
|--------------------|---|---|---|--|-------|
| <b>Time/Effort</b> | Class time was used wisely. Much time and effort went into the planning and design of the project. It is clear the artist did their best.       | Class time was used wisely. The artist made a good effort.  | Class time was not always used wisely, but the project was completed.                   | Class time was not used wisely and the artist put in no additional effort.   |       |
| <b>Creativity</b>  | Artist has taken the technique being studied and applied it in a way that is totally his/her own. The Artist's personality/voice comes through. | Artist has taken the technique being studied and has used the materials as a starting place. The student's personality comes through in parts of the project. | Artist has copied some techniques from the source material. The assignment is complete. | Artist has not made much attempt to meet the requirements of the assignment. |       |

|                         |   |  |   |   |  |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Use of materials</b> | Artist keeps materials and areas clean and protected without reminders. The Artist shows great respect for the materials and their fellow students. | Artist cleans materials and work area at the end of the session without reminder, but the area may be messy during the work session. The artist shows respect for materials and fellow students. | Artist adequately cleans and takes care of materials if reminded. Shows some respect for materials and fellow students. | Artist deliberately misuses materials. Shows little respect for materials or fellow students. |  |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|