

# Día de los Muertos

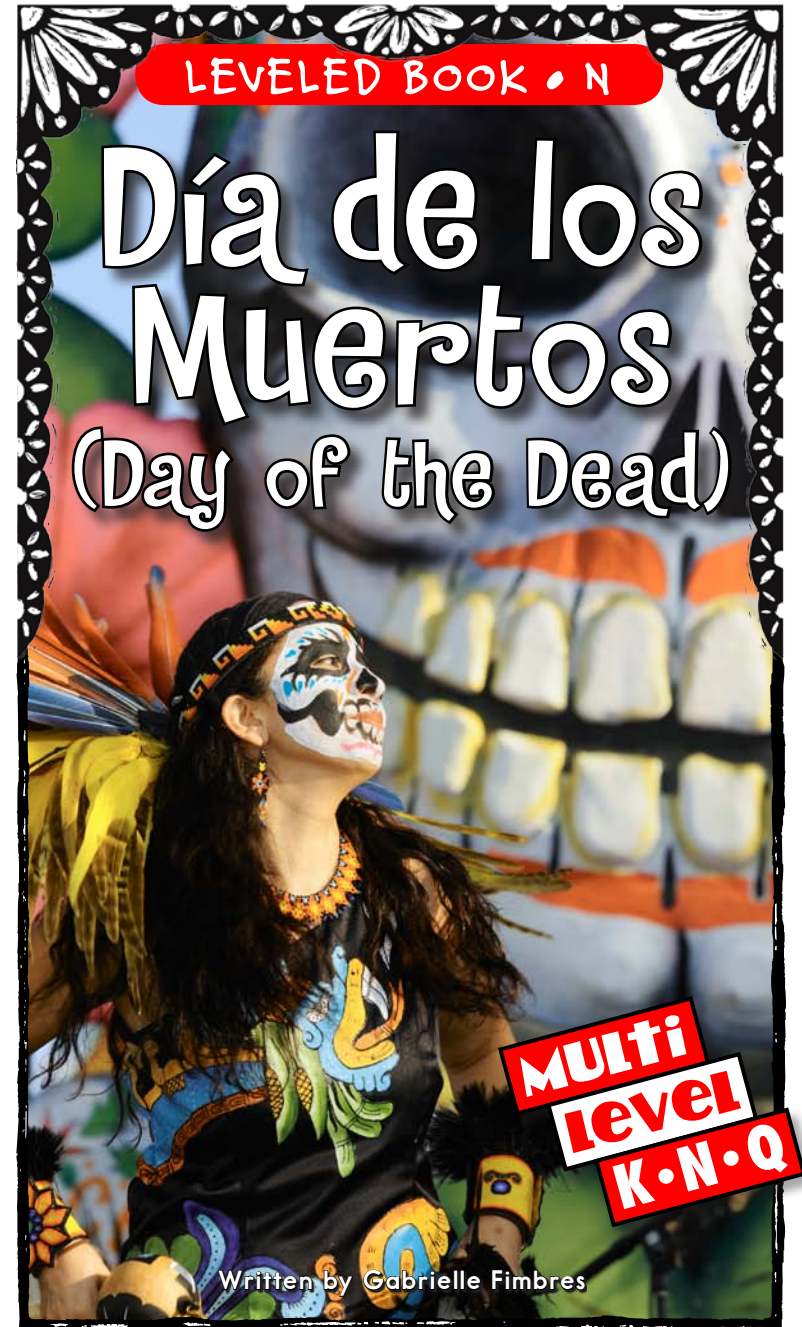
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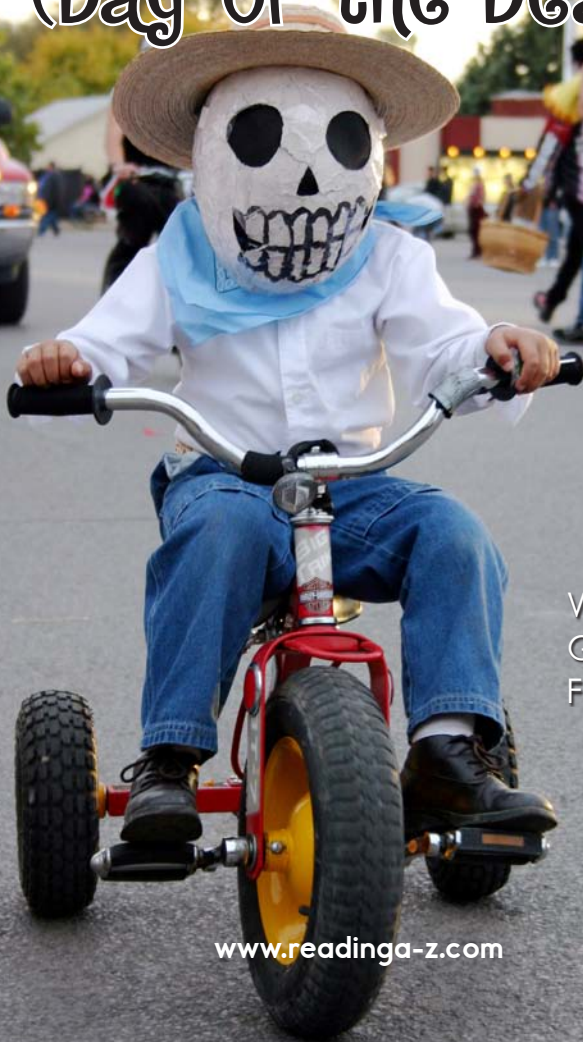
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# Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)



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Written by Gabrielle Fimbres

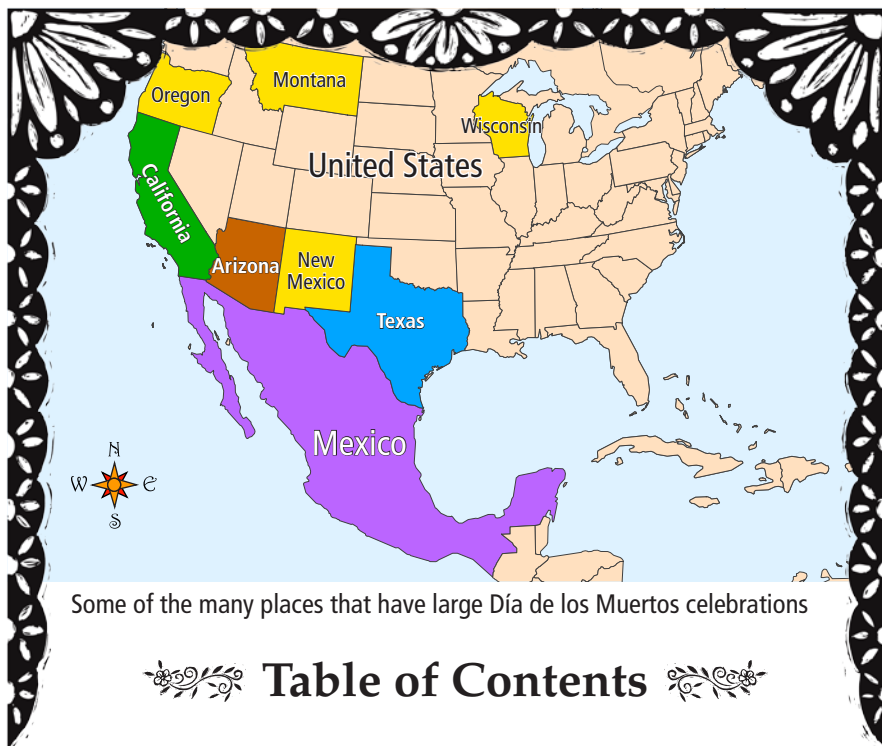
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#### Correlation

##### LEVEL N

Fountas & Pinnell	M
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Some of the many places that have large Día de los Muertos celebrations

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People walk in a Day of the Dead parade in San Jose, California.

## Introduction

Up ahead, skull puppets float in the air, and skeletons dance in the street. Drummers march, and children wear masks and cardboard wings. You ask a woman with a painted face what's happening. She tells you it's a parade that **honors** friends and family who have died. It's a *Día de los Muertos* parade.

## When and Where?

People in many parts of the world celebrate Día de los Muertos, or “Day of the Dead.” People in Mexico have celebrated holidays like Día de los Muertos for thousands of years. All over the United States, people hold Day of the Dead parades and celebrations. These celebrations usually take place around November 1 and 2.



A boy performs a traditional “scissors dance” for Día de los Muertos in Lima, Peru.



A family visits and decorates the grave of a loved one for Día de los Muertos in Mexico.

## Is It Halloween?

Día de los Muertos might seem like Halloween, but the two holidays are different. Halloween is often about scaring people. Día de los Muertos is a time of happiness and joy. Some people in certain **cultures** believe the **spirits** of loved ones come home to visit. People **remember**, honor, and celebrate those who have died.

In San Francisco, California, about 15,000 people carry candles and photos of loved ones who have died. Austin, Texas, has a large parade and costume contest to celebrate Day of the Dead. In Tucson (TOO-sawn), Arizona, more than 30,000 people march in a parade.



People walk in the Day of the Dead parade in San Francisco, California.



A band plays in a cemetery for Día de los Muertos in Mexico.

### ❁ Lidia's Día de los Muertos ❁

Growing up in Mexico, Lidia Terán-Cooper celebrated Día de los Muertos. Lidia and her family spent every November 2 at the **cemetery**. The family brought flowers and a picnic. They told stories about those who had died. Bands played special songs in honor of the dead. Lidia and the other children danced and played all day at the cemetery.

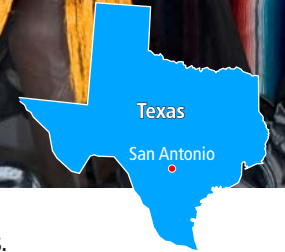
Día de los Muertos was always a happy day for Lidia. She spent it remembering those she loved. Lidia lives in the United States now. She and her family march in the parade in Tucson every year. Walking in the parade reminds her of celebrating Día de los Muertos when she was a little girl.



One of the many puppets in the Tucson, Arizona, parade stands above the crowd.



These dancers show off their painted skull masks at the Day of the Dead parade in San Antonio, Texas.



In the days before the parade, Lidia makes masks. She shreds newspaper and soaks it in water. She mixes the wet newspaper with flour and glue. Lidia turns the mixture into masks. When the masks are dry, children and adults paint them and wear them in the parade.

## Day of the Dead for Children

Some cities have a Day of the Dead celebration for children. Children **decorate** cardboard wings to wear in their special parade. They make loud noisemakers and learn tricks. They paint their faces and put on costumes.



Children wear different costumes as they walk in their special parade in Tucson, Arizona.



An altar decorated for a loved one in a family member's home

## Altars

Día de los Muertos has many other **traditions**. Some people build **altars** in their homes to welcome the spirits of loved ones. The altars are covered with cloth and decorated with photos of the person who has died. They might include a favorite item or piece of clothing of the loved one.



An altar decorated with *pan de muertos* and other foods

The family lights candles around the altars. They also make bread called *pan de muertos*, or “bread of the dead,” for the altars. A family may also leave a favorite juice or other drink. Orange and yellow marigolds or other flowers, skeleton toys, and dolls also decorate the altars.

### Do You Know?

Some believe that marigolds help the spirits of loved ones find their way home. This is why they are often placed on altars. People will sometimes scatter marigold petals from their loved ones’ graves to the family’s front door.



Handmade sugar skulls are displayed at a market in Mexico.

### 🌿 Sugar Skulls and Art 🌿

Some people who celebrate Día de los Muertos make sugar skulls. People decorate the sugar skulls with colorful frosting. Children in Mexico and the United States love eating the sweet skulls.



Some artists paint colorful pictures in honor of Día de los Muertos. The paintings show skeletons dancing, playing music, and celebrating. The art is a way to celebrate friends and family members who have died.



## Full of Life

Día de los Muertos helps people to feel better after losing someone they love. Marching in a parade or decorating altars can help them remember that special person. No other holiday is so full of fun, costumes, life, masks, joy, memories, and love.



Children perform at a special Day of the Dead festival in Los Angeles, California.

## Glossary

**altars** (*n.*)



tables or other raised surfaces that are used for religious or spiritual purposes (p. 12)

**celebrate** (*v.*)

to do something special to honor an event (p. 5)

**cemetery** (*n.*)

a place where dead people are buried (p. 8)

**cultures** (*n.*)

the ideas and customs of certain groups of people (p. 6)

**decorate** (*v.*)

to make something more attractive by adding color or an ornament to it (p. 11)

**honors** (*v.*)

shows respect or thinks well of (p. 4)

**remember** (*v.*)

to think of something again; to not forget (p. 6)

**spirits** (*n.*)

souls or essences in some belief systems (p. 6)

**traditions** (*n.*)

beliefs or customs that are passed down (p. 12)

