

***Courtesy of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History's Program of Latino History and Culture**

LESSON PLAN B

Dia de los Muertos: A Community Celebration

Objective:

To ask students what is “community” and how they can promote a community celebration, based on *Dia de los Muertos*, using imagery or portraiture from Smithsonian web sites and publications. This can serve as a civic exercise combined with an approach to topics of marketing, advertising, and how these are used in community celebrations.

Suggested grade levels: 6-8 (or adapted to serve higher level grades)

Subjects: Bilingual (English/Spanish) studies; Civics/Social Studies

National Standards: McREL Civics Grade 6-8¹

Standard 10. *Understands the roles of volunteerism and organized groups in American social and political life*

Benchmark for this standard:

Knows services that are provided by civics groups in the community

Background:

For this lesson, students will role-play as a volunteer group, advocating community-based celebrations, or as civic leaders. In groups (each of approx. 4 to 5), students will create an advertising or marketing campaign promoting a *Dia de los Muertos* celebration, using both art materials, computer printouts, and research drawn from numerous sources, with an emphasis on available online materials.

The students will also role play as civic leaders and choose which proposal(s) to use for a *Dia de los Muertos* community celebration.

This plan calls for students to research several aspects of community organizing and event planning.

Key elements to review with students: 1) identify whether or not there is a need for this type of celebration in the community; 2) whom to approach in county, city and/or state government and how to present the proposal for this celebration; and 3) how to draft a simple proposal for the community celebration of *Dia de los Muertos*.

¹ Standards language adapted from Kendall, J., Marzano R.J. (2004) Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education. 4th Edition. Available online at: www.mcrel.org

Materials:

- Computer with internet access and a printer
- Pen/pencil, paper
- Art materials such as pens, markers, colored pencils and posterboard
- Magazines or newspapers

Procedure:

1. Students should form into small groups and each group should assign itself a group facilitator or leader, as well as other roles such as researcher, recorder and presenter. One student should also serve as the public official to whom they are presenting their proposal. Each group will be assigned the task of developing a proposal to create a *Dia de los Muertos* community celebration.
2. Review with students some of the reasons and motivation for creating a community festival. Optionally, you may wish to read aloud to students the background information from Lesson Plan A (see Lesson Plan A.)
3. Ask students to compile background research on the *Dia de los Muertos* holiday using reference materials as well as resources on the internet. Each group should correctly address the topic of *Dia de los Muertos*; if there is a bilingual student present in the group, ask him/her to briefly translate any of the research and share his/her findings with the rest of the group. Students should also keep a log of important sites which feature illustrations focusing on the *Dia de los Muertos*, for use later in the lesson. Guiding questions may include:
 - A) What does the “*Dia de los Muertos*” mean in Spanish?
 - B) Is this holiday similar or different from other holidays or festivities that you know of? Can you describe how they are the same and different?
 - C) What are the important items or features are important to highlight?
 - D) How many participants would you like to attend your community celebration? Are there members of the community who you think this celebration will appeal to?
 - E) How many people do you think will attend the *Dia de los Muertos* events?
 - F) What kind of food, drinks and entertainment should be a part of this celebration?
 - G) Who in your local or state government should be contacted to promote this holiday?
 - H) What should the proposals include? Should it be more illustrations, and less writing, or vice-versa?
4. Ask each group of students to look over the magazines and newspapers and select an advertisement they think is one that grabs the most attention. Have students describe, either in a series of brief written statements or by answering out loud what makes this advertisement so appealing. Is it the colors? Or, is it the type of lettering or illustration(s)? Is it the subject matter?
5. Have each group decide which local leader their proposals should receive the proposal. Each group should also be responsible for correctly identifying how to address these

public officials. For example, if they decide to write a mayor or other local official, the term “Honorable” should be used; Review with students proper ways of greeting public officials with titles such as “Honorable”, “Governor”, etc.

6. Each group will then write their proposal or work plan for the community celebration on *Dia de los Muertos*. This document can range in length, from 2 to 3 pages, typewritten and illustrated. Based on the multiple factors discussed earlier in step 2, each proposal should include the following key elements: a) A Title or simple description for their proposal; b) a clear essay explaining why the *Dia de los Muertos* celebration should be created; c) who the audience for the celebration is; d) a simple outline of the types of foods and entertainment needed to for this event; and e) an estimated amount of money needed for this celebration.
7. Ask students to refer to their log of earlier internet search and print out photographs, drawings or other illustrations that are relevant to the theme of *Dia de los Muertos* and add to their proposal.
8. Have each group present their proposals to their respective government “official”. Each “official” should then explain why (or why not) the proposal should be implemented.
9. Take each proposal and distribute to other student groups. Discuss what they think about *Dia de los Muertos* and if after conducting this exercise, they would like to be a part of a community celebration such as this one.

Assessment: After conducting online research on the origins and imagery of *Dia de los Muertos*, each student group should draft a persuasive proposal to an elected official. Each proposal will outline and promote a community celebration; each proposal should use visual material (taken from the internet and print resources) in an effective and illustrative manner that relates to the *Dia de los Muertos*.



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