

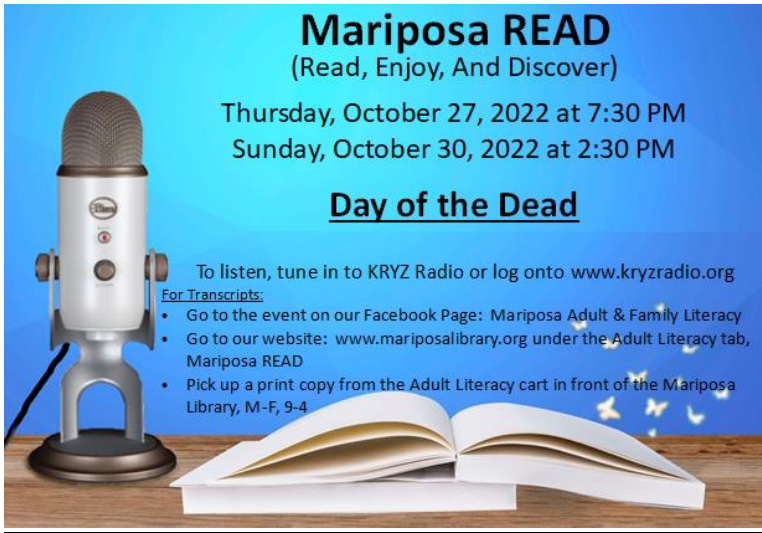
Mariposa READ
(Read, Enjoy, And Discover)

Thursday, October 27, 2022 at 7:30 PM
Sunday, October 30, 2022 at 2:30 PM

Day of the Dead

To listen, tune in to KRYZ Radio or log onto www.kryzradio.org
For Transcripts:

- Go to the event on our Facebook Page: Mariposa Adult & Family Literacy
- Go to our website: www.mariposalibrary.org under the Adult Literacy tab, Mariposa READ
- Pick up a print copy from the Adult Literacy cart in front of the Mariposa Library, M-F, 9-4



Mariposa Adult & Family Literacy Program



Day of the Dead



Day of the Dead

Megan McQuillan

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Day of the Dead is a Mexican holiday.



It is a time when people prepare for the dead to come home.



Many people make an altar.



The altar may have pictures of the dead.



The altar may have food they liked a lot.



It may have "bread of the dead" too.



These things help the dead find their way home.



Some people go to the grave of a loved one.



They buy flowers for the grave.



See the orange flowers.



See the red, yellow and purple flowers too.



See how the flowers make the graves pretty.



Some people stay at night.



They eat and have a party.



Some people dress up to look like the dead.



They may paint their faces.



They may dress in a happy color.



They know that death is part of life.



Day of the Dead is a time when families think of loved ones.



It is a happy time when the dead come home to visit their families.

The Day of the Dead / Día de los Muertos

Day of the Dead or Día de los Muertos is a holiday that originated in Mexico. It is traditionally celebrated on November 1st and 2nd. While many compare it to Halloween or All Souls' Day that is celebrated in the United States, the celebrations of The Day of the Dead are joyful celebrations and not days of mourning or scary creatures. It is a two-day celebration where family and friends gather to pay their respects and to remember friends and family members who have died.

Food is often an important part of any huge celebration. A Mexican favorite for Day of the Dead is the tamale. They are prepared to be eaten by living people and given to the spirits of their departed ancestors as “ofrendas” or offerings. The drinks that they share will often be the favorite drink of their deceased ancestors. Hibiscus tea is a common favorite as is atole, which is a drink made from corn flour.

A common symbol of the holiday is the skull or “calavera” in Spanish. The sugar skull is a colorfully decorated sweet that can be given as a gift to the living or the dead. The colorful designs represent the vitality and individual personality of the departed. Often the name of the one to receive the gift is written on the skull's forehead. Sometimes the skulls are made of chocolate. Another holiday treat is “pan de muerto” or bread of the dead. It is a sweet bread made into the shapes of skulls or bones and topped with sugar or decorated with white frosting. There is a lot of decorating with the Aztec marigold flowers, called “flor de muerto” in Mexico. These flowers are thought to attract the souls of the dead to their offerings. It is also believed that the bright petals and their strong scent can guide the souls from cemeteries to their family homes. They may use real flowers or make them from paper. These bright orange flowers are placed on altars or graves to honor the dead.

The altars are called “ofrendas” in Spanish. It is a tradition to build altars in homes full of favorite food and drinks, as well as photos and memorabilia, of the departed. There are a lot of small wax candles called “veladoras” on the altars to honor the dead. Christian families will also place a cross, statues, or pictures of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the altars. The hope is that the souls of the departed will visit and hear the prayers and the words of the living that are

directed to their passed loved ones. The ofrendas are most often in homes but they may be found in schools, libraries, and in cemeteries next to the tombs or graves of the departed. Traditionally families will spend some time around the altar praying and telling fun stories about the deceased.

During the two-day celebration, families usually clean and decorate the graves of their deceased loved ones. Toys are brought for dead children and bottles of tequila for adults. Families may offer trinkets or the deceased's favorite candies on the grave. Pillows and blankets are left out so the deceased can rest after their long journey from the after-life in some areas, while other areas it is the tradition to wear shells to wake up their ancestors. In some towns, people spend all night beside the graves of their relatives or hold picnics by the gravesites.

Some will dress up as the deceased. Some will wear colorful costumes and skull-shaped masks or devil masks. Many will paint their faces to look like a skull. There may be dancing in the town square or perhaps a parade or "all souls procession" to celebrate.

The celebration is not only focused on the dead. It is also common to give gifts to friends such as the candy sugar skulls. Many share the traditional pan de muerto with family and friends. There are light-hearted writings known as "calaveras literarias". These may be poems, verses, or mock epitaphs and are meant to be fun or funny and are dedicated to the living.

There is much debate over whether this celebration has its roots in the native people in the area that is now known as Mexico or if it was brought over by the early European conquistadores. There are mixed traditions to this celebration that could come from either ancient culture. No matter its origin, the festivity of Día de los Muertos has become a national symbol in Mexico.