

Sugar Skulls



Dia de Muertos, or Day of the Dead, is a Mexican holiday celebrated on November 1st and 2nd. Día de los Muertos originated in ancient Mesoamerica (Mexico and northern Central America) where indigenous groups, including Aztec, Maya and Toltec, had specific times when they remembered and honored their loved ones who had died. After the arrival of the Spanish, this ritual of commemorating the dead was intertwined with two Spanish holidays: All Saints Day (Nov. 1) and All Soul's Day (Nov. 2). Día de los Muertos is often celebrated on November 1 as a day to remember children who have passed away, and on November 2 adults who have passed are remembered.

While the name, Day of the Dead, sounds like it is about death it is actually a time to celebrate the lives of the family and friends that have passed. One of the ways that families honor the dead is with an **ofrenda** or temporary altar. The ofrenda may include pictures of the deceased along with

items that were important to the person and items that are a reminder of their lives. Every ofrenda also includes the four elements: water, wind, earth and fire. A pitcher of water is left so the spirits can quench their thirst. **Papel picado**, or traditional paper banners, represent the wind. Earth is represented by food, especially bread, or **pan**. Candles are usually left in the form of a cross to represent the cardinal directions, so the spirits can find their way.

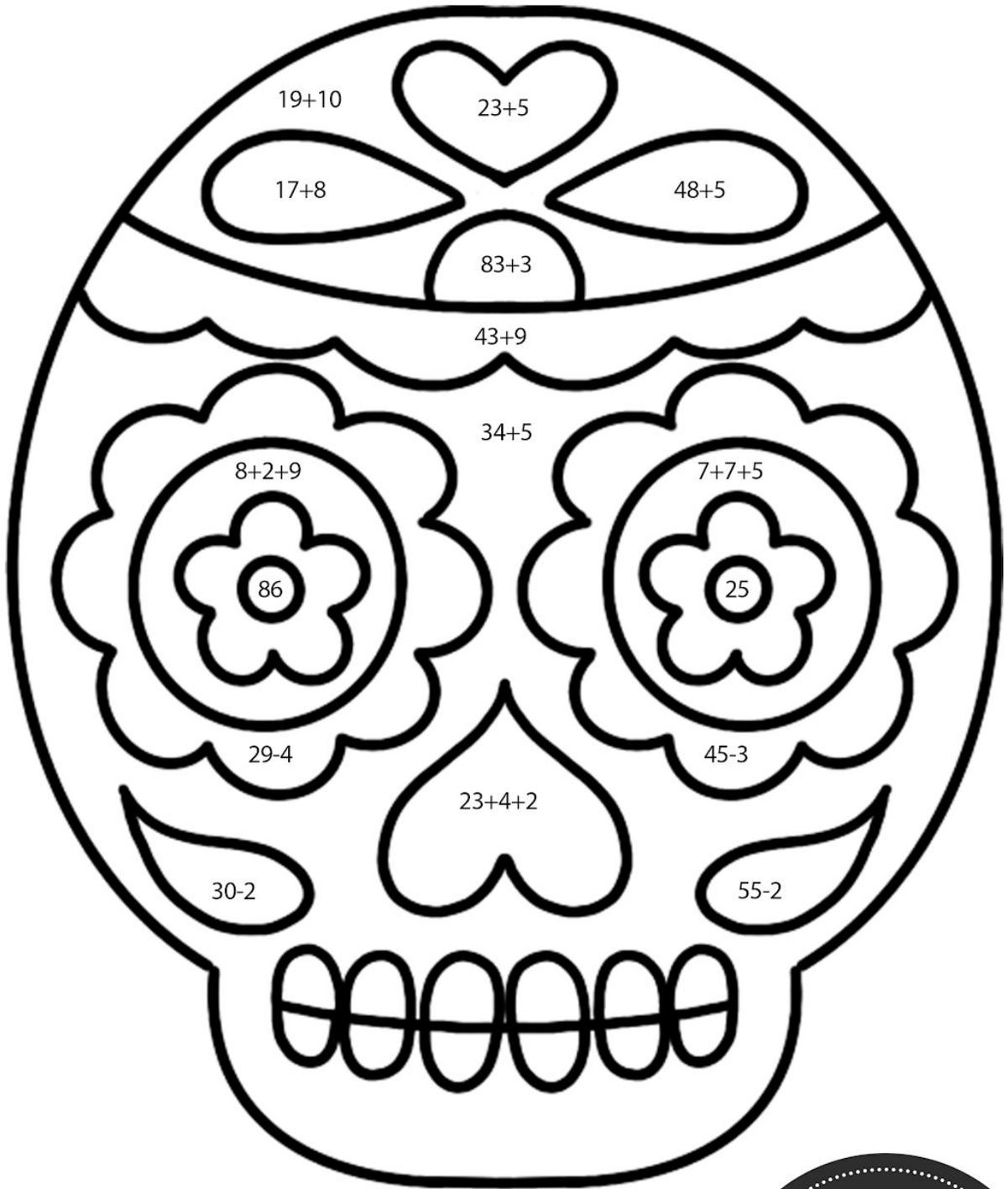
Flowers, butterflies and skulls are typically used as symbols on the ofrenda. **Calaveritas de azucar**, or sugar skulls, along with toys, are left on the altars for children who have passed. The skull is not supposed to be scary or morbid but instead it is a whimsical reminder of the cyclicity of life. Sugar skulls are decorated with bright colors to show their whimsy and joy.

On another piece of paper answer the following questions:

1. When is Dia de Muertos celebrated?
2. Why do families celebrate the Day of the Dead?
3. What is an ofrenda?
4. An ofrenda includes the four elements. What are they?
5. What are the three symbols typically used on the ofrenda?
6. Why do you think the families include sugar skulls?

Print out the attached pages and decorate your own sugar skulls.





Solve each equation and then color by number.





