



Lesson Title: Dia de los Muertos Wire and Clay Sculptures

Overview: Students will reflect on relationships they've had with people who have passed away while learning about the Mexican tradition of

Dia de los Muertos. Students will create sculptures, using traditional Dia de los Muertos elements, to commemorate a loved one or significant person in their lives who is no longer alive. Students will begin their unit on relationships by focusing on relationships of the past and the significance of those relationships in their lives.

Big Ideas and Essential Questions:

- How does the Mexican concept of death differ than what we are taught in America?
- Why is important to remember the relationship with loved one's who have passed?
- In what ways can you design your sculptures to commemorate your significant person?
- How will you allow traditional Mexican designs to show in your work?

National Core Art Standards or State Standards:

- VA:Cr1.2.HSII Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design
- VA:Cn11.1.HSII Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts.
- VA:Cn10.1.HSIII Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will, study the Mexican celebration of Dia de los Muertos.
- Students will, reflect on relationships they have had with people who have passed away.
- Students will, study contemporary artists, drawing inspiration from their work.
- Students will, create a figurative sculpture to commemorate a loved one.

Tools and Materials:

- clay
- clay tools
- adhesive
- paint and brushes
- colored sharpies
- string
- sculpture wire
- pliers
- various papers

Instruction:

- Traditional Mexican music will be playing as students walk into the room. Papel picado will be strung from the ceilings and images of Rob-O's sugar skull art will be displayed on the board.

Learning Activities:

Activity 1:

- Instruct students on the meaning of Dia de los Muertos. Show YouTube clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzaZidVrebA>) on a brief history of Dia de los Muertos by the Mexican Heritage Center.
- Have students work in small groups to read through the article found on: <http://www.mexicansugarskull.com/support/dodhistory.html>.
- Together in their small groups, student will fill out one worksheet per group. Worksheet provided in "References" on the Homepage.
- In a large group, go over answers to the worksheet and discuss Dia de los Muertos traditions, pointing out the visual elements. What colors, shapes, and images do you see repeated? What significance do those elements have in relation to the beliefs behind Dia de los Muertos? How does the Mexican culture look at death differently than we do?

Activity 2:

- Show powerpoint on project requirements (provided in "References" on the Homepage).
- Allow students to brainstorm ideas for their sculpture, while looking through the websites of the artists mentioned.
 - o Students will create a sculpture inspired by Dia de los Muertos traditional imagery. Their sculpture will be constructed by combining clay and metal wire in some way, and the surface design and details will be inspired by Dia de los Muertos imagery. Their sculptures will be made to commemorate someone they know who has passed away (family, friend, pet, well known figure).

- While brainstorming, students will need to think about who in their life will be the focus of their sculptures. In what ways can you show your relationship with that person, through your sculpture?
- Students will also need to think about how they can combine imagery from Dia de los Muertos into their clay and wire sculptures.
- Students will develop a plan and turn in a final sketch for approval.

Activity 3:

- Students will take multiple class periods to construct their sculptures. They will need to first construct their clay forms, leaving holes and gaps large enough for their wire. After forms are fired, wire and other items will be added.

Activity 4:

- Halfway through completion of their projects, students will participate in a PQP critique. In small groups, students will explain their artwork and the significance of the symbols, shapes, and colors they are using. Group members will then be able to offer them a praise, a question, and a proposal.
- After the PQP, students will choose to use the feedback they received and finalize their projects.
- Upon completion, students will submit a photo of their finished sculpture along with a reflective statement to the class Artsonia page.

Assessment:

Formative – Teacher observation: Are students engaged and participating in discussions, brainstorming, and artmaking activities?

Question students to check for understanding. How has your relationship with the person you chose, effected who you are today? How has your relationship with that person evolved over time? What did you learn from that relationship? How does the Mexican tradition of Dia de los Muertos honor the dead? How does your artwork show your relationship with the person you chose? How does your artwork reflect the practices of Dia de los Muertos?

Summative – Students will fill out the lesson rubric and reflective statements from Artsonia will be considered when evaluating work.

Artists or Artworks Studied:

- Rick Wolfe
- Elissa Farrow-Savos

- Rob-O

- Giorgio Cecchinato

References:

- See link in "Curriculum Resources" for a complete use of sources used for each lesson