

# Day of the Dead Comprehension Questions Answers

## 1. What is Day of the Dead?

Day of the Dead is a three day celebration in which the dead are remembered with festivities and prayers in Mexico.

## 2. When is Day of the Dead celebrated?

It is a three day celebration from October 31st to November 2nd. Students may mention the names of the different days in their answers.

## 3. Where does the Day of the Dead festivity originate from?

The Day of the Dead festivity originates from pre-Columbian times. It probably came from the Aztec festival for the goddess Mictecacihuatl.

## 4. Who is the 'Lady of the Dead'?

The original Lady of the Dead was the Aztec goddess Mictecacihuatl but the artist Posada also created La Calavera Caterina, who is a skeleton dressed in the clothes of an upper-class woman of 19th century Mexico which acted as a memento mori (remember you must die) to the people of Mexico.

## 5. Name three things that people do on Day of the Dead.

A variety of answers may appear here that may include: The decoration of graves and tombs, ofrendas or altars in the house, picnics by the graveside of loved ones and the telling of stories about their relatives.

## 6. What is an ofrenda?

This is a private altar, often set up at the graveside or in the home. It is used to offer up food and drink to the spirits of the ancestors – in other cultures a spirit house might be used.

## 7. What is papel picado and how is it used?

Papel picado is the folk art in which thin sheets of paper are perforated (cut) to create designs. These are strung up as banners for the celebrations.

## 8. What is Finados?

This is the Brazilian festival for the dead, celebrated at the same time as the Mexican one.

## 9. Where does the celebration of Halloween come from?

Halloween probably comes from the Celtic celebration of Samhain when it was believed that the dead walked the earth. People protected themselves by wearing masks, which led to the tradition of costume wearing on this day.

## 10. What other festivities are there that remember the dead? Name two.

Students might mention Oban, Memorial Day or Remembrance Day here.

**Extension:**

What similarities can you see between these traditions from around the world?

A variety of answers may exist here but the idea of prayer, creating an altar, trying to appease the dead are common themes from around the world. The celebration of one's own dead relatives rather than all dead is more common in the Latin American nations.

Find the countries mentioned in the text on a map. Why do you think similarities exist between the festivities?

Students might make the connection between similar festivals in countries that have some connection to one another (Spain and Mexico were heavily associated at one time, Brazil and Bolivia share the Latin American influence). Britain and America and the Commonwealth are all connected by colonisation and cross-cultural influences as well which may explain the similarities in celebrations of Halloween and Remembrance Day.

Does your family have a particular way of remembering loved ones who have died? Explain.

A variety of responses may be found here.