

DISCUSSION

1. Discussion Questions:

- *What is a skull? What is the purpose of a skull?*
- *Can you imagine a picture of a skull?*
- *What does it look like?*

2. Show your students images or outlines of skulls.

3. Continue discussion.

- *When you look at a skull, how does that make you feel? Why?*

4. Show them the outline of the skull provided in the pre-visit handout and ask the questions again to note if their answers have changed.

5. Then, show the class the image of the sugar skull in the Day of the Dead exhibition created by Señor Mondragón and ask them to describe it. For older children, they may also look at the paper mache work by Raul Lopez Reyes entitled, *Ecología* (Ecology).

- *Does this skull make you feel any different? Why?*



Calavera de azúcar, Alejandro Mondragon



Ecología, Raul Lopez Reyes

NOTE: Explain to the students that even though the sugar skull is a representation of death, it is not depicted in a scary or negative way. It is made in a colorful, cheerful, and positive manner. The sugar skull is one of the most popular treats during a special celebration in Mexico. Depending on the age group, you can also briefly explain the significance of the sugar skull and what *Día de muertos* is and why it is so unique in the way it views death.

ACTIVITY

1. Distribute the pre-visit student handout included and have students follow the directions to color and decorate the sugar skull. When the students visit the Museum's exhibition, they can have an opportunity to see live sugar skull demonstrations by the Mondragón family.

2. You may also have students mold small (3/4" long) skulls out of clay or Crayola model magic using a wooden stick to help sculpt the skulls. Before the clay dries, punch a hole through each skull using a needle or toothpick. After letting the skulls dry, paint them white and use black paint to create facial details (eyes, teeth, nose). All the skulls may be threaded with yarn, tying a knot at the end to secure the skull beads. Your students can then wear their necklaces on their field trip to the Museum.

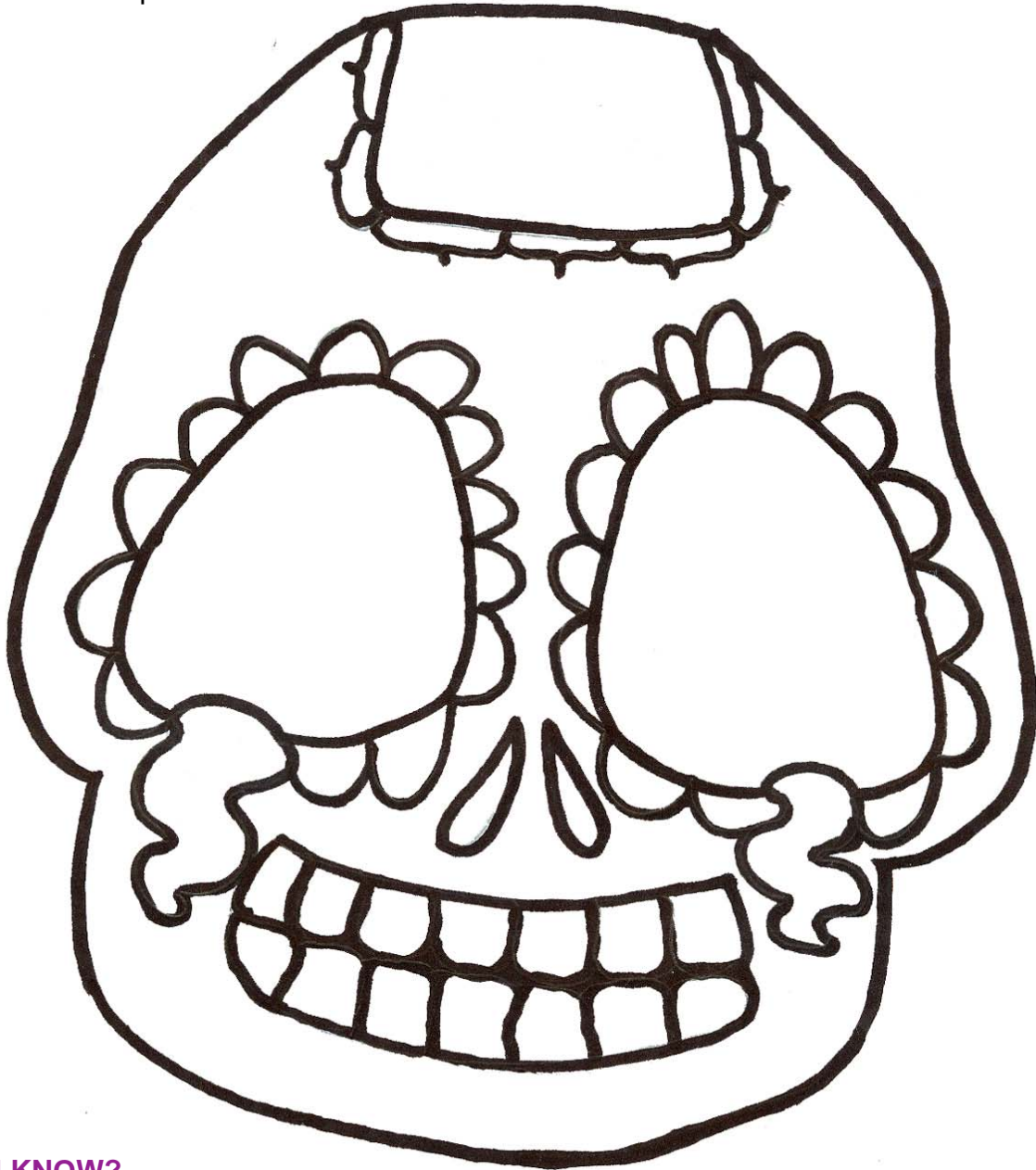


The cosmovision, or beliefs, of the ancient Mexicans towards the universe, and the relationship between supernatural powers (gods) and human beings, in terms of life and death, were closely linked and considered inseparable from one another. Archaeologists have uncovered jewelry from before the Spanish Conquest of Mexico (the pre-Conquest era), which were made out of fired clay, precious metals and stones, and with the image of death. Death was not feared; it was recognized as a part of the natural cycle of life. Today, as in ancient times, people continue to wear this type of jewelry, using the image of death as a reminder of the ephemeral quality of life.

STUDENT HANDOUT

Calaverita de azúcar (Sugar Skull)

Directions: Write the name of a person you would like to honor or remember on the square located on the sugar skull's forehead. Then, color, decorate, and cut out your sugar skull. You can mount it onto a poster board and use it as a mask.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

A great variety of traditional foods and sweets are especially prepared for the Day of the Dead celebrations. One popular sweet found in the many market places of Mexico is the *calaverita de azúcar* (sugar skull). Sugar skulls may be found in home altars or they may also be given to children as a treat.

SUGAR SKULL



Alejandro Mondragón

“Ecología”



Raul Lopez Reyes