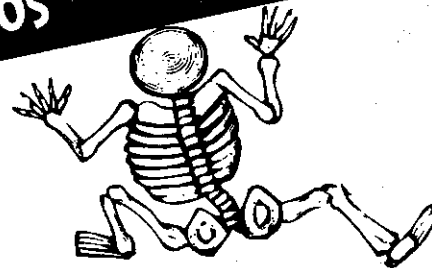


La historia de "El Día de los Muertos"



El Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, is a traditional Mexican holiday honoring the dead; it has been celebrated in Mexico, as in other Latin countries. This is a very special and beautiful ritual, since it is the day in which Mexicans remember their loved relatives. The celebration is called *Los Días de los Muertos* because two important days are recognized. November 1st, "All Saints' Day", is devoted to *los angelitos*, and November 2nd, "All Souls' Day", to the adults.

relatives in the cemetery, and end on November 2nd.

At home members of the family decorate an "*Altar de la Ofrenda*" in honor of deceased families and friends, adorning it with *papel picado*, candles, flowers of the dead "*Cempasúchil*", "*copal*", an incense from a fragrant resin grown in a tree found in Mexico photos of the deceased ancestors, fruits, drinks, foods, and candies.

The Spanish conquerors succumbed to the pre-Hispanic civilizations and they imposed their customs, their language and their Catholic religion. The natives accepted these new cultural elements but they adapted to their own culture and added influences from the Aztec people of Mexico.

Skeletons and skulls are found everywhere. The skull masks are used to honor the dead. Handmade skeleton figurines, called "*calacas*", are especially popular because they show the meaning of the dead for everyone. Mexican artist José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913) is a famous symbol of the Day of the Dead with his skeletal woman called "*La Catrina*", dressed in a fanciful floral bonnet.



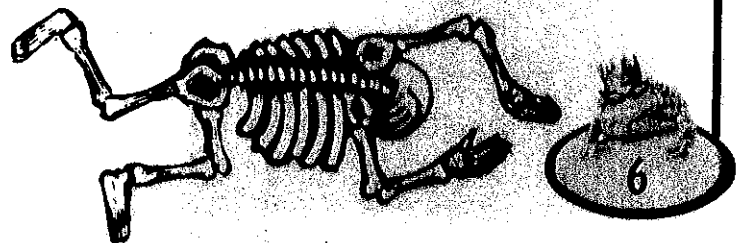
"La Catrina" by José Guadalupe Posada

El Día de los Muertos is celebrated by decorating windows, cleaning the graves of their loved ones, decorating the cemetery with colorful flowers, bread, fruits and candles. Some families spend the entire night in the cemetery playing the guitar, singing songs or listening to the radio; creating special paper flowers, making small and large figurines featuring the *calaveras* and by installing *tianguis*, an open air market to sell the items for the *ofrendas*, cooking special meals such as *Buñuelos*, *Tamales*, *Flan*, *Mole*, *Pan de Muerto*, and *Calaveras de Azúcar*.

During *El Día de los Muertos*, Mexico is literally covered with *papel picado*; it is the

mexican art of cut paper, made especially for the Day of the Dead to decorate homes, altars, and different places. Designs can portray animals, flowers, and skeletal figures. Individual banners are strung together to create colorful decorations for the celebration.

The preparation for this important celebration begins on October 31st when everybody is ready for a great feast after a visit to friends and



El Día de los Muertos

Llenamos los platones
con tamales,
frutiras,
sonrientes, calaveras de azúcar,
tronquitos de caña.

Caminamos entre las tumbas
donde esperan los muertos,
por senderos
dorados de flores
de zempazúchil.

Dejamos nuestras ofrendas
y regresamos a casa
entre las tumbas,
por senderos
dorados de zempazúchil.

Glossary of Terms -

compasúchil -- a type of marigold. Its bright orange color and aromatic fragrance are used to attract the deceased.

copal -- a type of incense from the resin of certain tropical trees.

D.E.P. -- found on tombstones, acronym for "descanse en paz" (one also sees the "R.I.P." from the Latin, "requiescat in pacem").

hojaldra - "pan de muertos"; a sweet bread made with eggs and decorated with the form of crossed bones on top.

fallecer -- a synonym for "morir", used frequently on tombstones.

nubes -- a small white flower often used with the compasúchil and pata de león. It is seen especially on ofrendas in memory of deceased children.

ofrenda -- literally means "offering" but in this context it refers to everything that is put out to welcome/honor the deceased.

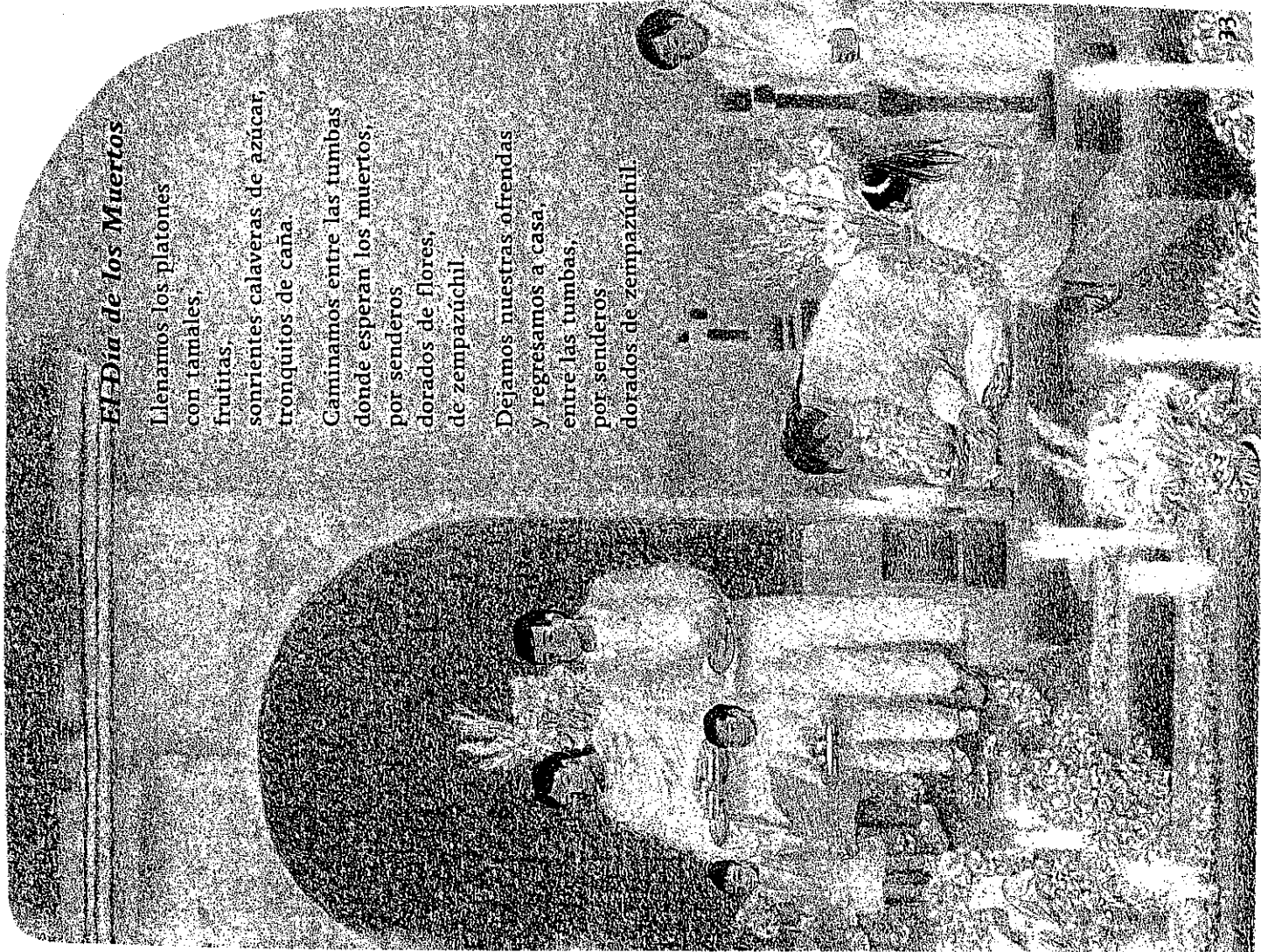
panteón -- a cemetery. The term seems to be used, in Tlaxcala at least, more commonly than "cementerio", the cognate. Also used with some frequency is "campo santo".

papel picado -- rectangular sheets of tissue paper with designs punched or cut (similar to the snowflakes many of us learned to cut in grade school). Frequently the designs are of skulls, or skeletons or angels. These are also now seen in plastic.

pata de león (also mano de león) -- a magenta colored flower used to decorate the ofrendas. It is a variety of "cockscorn".

sahumerio -- the incense burner found on nearly all ofrendas that is used to burn the "copal".

calavera -- literally, a skull, but the term refers also to epitaphs written during this time to satirize famous living people.



Nombre _____ Fecha _____

El Día de los Muertos

1. What is the official name of this holiday?
En inglés _____
En español _____
2. What item is basic to the celebration? _____
3. What are some of the typical items used with this basic item? Name at least three. _____

4. Where does Antonio go to conduct his study? _____
5. Where does he go first? _____
6. What are the names of the three most important flowers used in decorating ofrendas and gravesites? _____

7. What are the skulls made of? _____
8. Who is the little boy waiting for? _____
9. What are the four main items of the first ofrenda in the casa de cultura? _____
10. To whom is the ofrenda dedicated? _____
11. What is the name of the restaurant where Antonio eats? _____
12. What time is it according to the clock tower? _____

13. To whom is the ofrenda dedicated in the poor home? _____
14. Are the dogs cute? _____
15. What is the radio advertising in the middle class home? _____
16. How old was the lady who died at the accident site?
Who placed the memorial? _____
17. To whom is the first ofrenda dedicated that Antonio admires when he goes to the plaza in the evening? _____
18. What does Antonio give the two kids? _____
19. What is the couple doing in the plaza? _____
20. What are people decorating the tombs with? _____
21. Why is the man singing? _____
22. What does "descanse en paz" mean? _____
23. What guards Sra. Tomasina's body?(en español, if you can) _____
24. Who guards her soul?(en español, if you can) _____
25. Who guards her memory?(en español, if you can) _____