

Day of the Dead

1. Name some objects on the *ofrenda*, other than food and drink, that are for the spirits of loved ones to enjoy when they return.

2. Who may have enjoyed these things?

3. What kind of Aztec structure does the shape of the *ofrenda* resemble?

4. What role did these structures have in Aztec life?

5. *Dia de los Muertos* is a blend of two religious traditions: Catholic Christianity from Spain and the original belief system of the Aztecs. In the chart below, list two objects each on the *ofrenda* that are from the Aztec religious tradition and the Spanish Catholic tradition.

Aztec Religious Objects

Spanish Religious Objects

6. Name an object that shows a blend of these religious traditions and explain the combination.

7. People all over the world have different beliefs about death and different practices for honoring the dead. Describe one from your culture or those you see around you.



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1. Name some objects on the *ofrenda*, other than food and drink, that are for the spirits of loved ones to enjoy when they return.

See below

2. Who may have enjoyed these things?

Pet dogs: black stuffed animal dog chew-toy, dog bone

Pet cats: 2 stuffed mice cat-toys (purple & white, red & white)

Children: blue toy car, wrestling action figure, wooden top w/string

Adults: purple & green onyx egg collectibles, folding fan

Anyone: 4-leaf clover good-luck charm, card game

3. What kind of Aztec structure does the shape of the *ofrenda* resemble?

*A pyramid. And further, the shape of the pyramid itself represents an Aztec sacred mountain - or *tepetl* - in the Aztec Nahuatl language.*

4. What role did these structures have in Aztec life?

*Pyramids were buildings for the whole community to see. They were places for Aztec religious events and had temples on the top to Aztec gods where offerings were made. Pyramids were homes for gods and the burial places of rulers. It makes sense that the smaller household *ofrendas* were shaped like the larger architectural buildings.*

5. *Dia de los Muertos* is a blend of two religious traditions: Catholic Christianity from Spain and the original belief system of the Aztecs. In the chart below, list two objects each on the *ofrenda* that are from the Aztec religious tradition and the Spanish Catholic tradition.

Aztec Religious Objects

Paper flowers (cempasuchil) = marigolds

Skulls/Skeletons

Papel Picado (punched paper banners on step)

Spanish Religious Objects

Candles

Catholic symbols (angels, devils, crosses)

*Catholic figures (red velvet Jesus, Virgin Mary
votive candles)*

6. Name an object that shows a blend of these religious traditions and explain the combination.

a. Skull with crown of flowers at the top center step - Skulls are Aztec "life-essence containers" and a symbol of rebirth. With the sacrifice comes a new day and new life for all. The crown references the Catholic "Kingdom of Heaven" or Christ's crown of thorns.

b. Two ceramic candelabras against the back wall - Candelabras hold candles, which symbolize the soul of a person that prayers are offered for in Spanish Catholic churches. This candelabra is shaped like the "tree of life", an important symbol in Aztec cosmivision and was also used by early Catholic priests to explain the biblical story of creation. These candelabras also have Aztec elements: skulls, skeletons, and cempasuchil.

7. People all over the world have different beliefs about death and different practices for honoring the dead. Describe one from your culture or those you see around you.

