

## Cultures Intertwined: Halloween VS Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)

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Growing up along the border, in El Paso, Texas—a small town separating the United States and México—we lived with the Mexican and American cultures mixed. As kids, we traveled between United States and Mexico. The moment we left our *Mexico* to go to school in the United States, we entered our American culture, holidays and traditions, but at home we had our own language, cultures and traditions. Halloween and Day of the Dead (Day of the Dead) is a HUGE example of how our two worlds melted together. However, these two holidays are quite different.

Halloween is celebrated on October 31 and it's a day dedicated to dressing up, children and adults going out and receiving candy or a party. The images used to portray Halloween are somewhat morbid in that it's usually characterized by ghouls, ghosts, witches, devils, and the like.

Day of the Dead is a two day holiday celebrated on November 1 and 2. Day of the Dead was originally designed to celebrate life by honoring the memory of the departed. On these days, families go to the cemetery and place beautiful flowers on the graves of their lost relatives; singing usually takes place and sometimes mariachis show up to serenade the dearly departed. It is believed that on these days the gates of heaven open up and children who have passed on come to Earth to visit on November 1, called Día de los Angelitos—the day of little angels. On November 2, the gates open up again and adults come down to visit, this day is called All Soul's Day.

Setting up an altar is part of the tradition and customs of Day of the Dead. The altar will be created in a small corner of a room, probably the dining room. According to tradition, an altar can have candles, pictures of the deceased, flowers (usually marigolds), drinks and food. The belief is that any visiting souls may be hungry from their long journey and so the food and drink is for nourishment, in order to help them make their journey back. This is supposed to be a happy day, filled with eating, drinking and sitting around and telling stories of those being honored. We look forward to doing the following with our children:

- Creating a beautiful altar with lots of bright marigold flowers.
- Placing pictures of deceased loved ones on the altar.
- Placing candles on the altar.

Once all the preparations have been made, we can enjoy the evening by lighting the candles, and retelling stories of our deceased loved ones while we feast on mole drinks and pumpkin empanadas. We talked about the feast and all the stories we can't

wait to share with our children. We have agreed to introduce this holiday and tradition to our respective husbands and children. No year like the present to begin anew. We are both thrilled to educate our children about traditions that are part of our culture. She will take part in Day of the Dead with her two beautiful children and husband in Colorado and I with mine in California. We can't wait to share our mutual experiences, pictures and stories of the event.

Halloween has played a fun part in our families but now we are even more excited to introduce Day of the Dead on November 2 with our families. It will be a beautiful way to honor our ancestors and share it with our children and spouses. The frightful visions we have of death shouldn't be so morbid, they can in fact be, pleasant and joyful.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Halloween vs. Día de los Muertos

Introductory Paragraph

Thesis Statement:  
*helps control the idea*

Body Paragraph #  
Subject 1

Detail 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject 2

Detail 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Body Paragraph #  
Subject 1

Detail 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject 2

Detail 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion: Summarize the sub-points of your essay.

Summary of main points: \_\_\_\_\_

HALLOWEEN	DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS
Celebrated on October 31st.	Celebrated on November 1st and 2nd.
Origins: The old Irish, Gaelic Samhain (meaning summer's end), a time to store food supplies for the cold months ahead.	Origins: The Aztec festival dedicated to goddess Mictecacihuatl, Lady of the Dead.
Celebrates the end of summer and the coming of winter.	Celebrates the life and death of ancestors, friends, and family.
Harmful spirits warded off by frightening costumes and masks.	Encourages visits from spirits of those who have died and celebrates their memory.
Common symbol: The jack-o'-lantern.	Common symbol: The skull.
Images of evil, the occult, magic, and monsters.	Images of cheerfully decorated gravesites and home altars with flowers and traditional food.
Coincides with the Christian All Saint's Day on November 1st.	Coincides with the Catholic All Soul's Day on November 2nd.