

Children's Literature Reviews

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Day of the Dead Crafts: More Than 24 Projects That Celebrate Dia de los Muertos

Kerry Arquette, Andrea Zocchi and Jerry Vigil
Cantata Books/Wiley Publishing, \$19.99. 2008

Reviews:**Gwynne Spencer (Children's Literature)**

Day of the Dead, celebrated in Mexico and many American communities each year on November 1st and 2nd, is a traditional way to honor the departed and beloved members of the family. It is a folk art extravaganza of homemade altars, handmade jewelry, artwork for walls, and even edible art. Some people believe that just possessing items from Dia de los Muertos can bring good luck. This first chapter provides a succinct history of the holiday, with an accompanying sidebar glossary. The remainder of the book is a treasure trove of items you can make. The stunning photographs and the clear directions make the reader hopeful that their folk art will be welcomed and honored, too. Two dozen art projects are divided into five chapters. "Ofrendas: Altars to Welcome Returning Souls" explains how to prepare an ofrenda and build a unique memorial. "Calaveras: Skeletons with Personality" contains ten projects with lists of supplies and helpful tips for the beginner. There is even a sidebar on "Dealing with Disasters of the Calavera Kind." The photos of finished Calaveras will make you laugh out loud! Then comes a nifty chapter about "Masks and Skulls: Decorative Pieces to Display or Wear." After suggesting that readers imagine decorating their homes with skulls, the book shows how to make stunning masks to wear or display, using a wide variety of materials and techniques. Some are even edible! In the chapter describing "Jewelry: Necklaces, Earrings and Bracelets," readers will be encouraged to try their hand at making jewelry that doesn't take itself too seriously. These projects are appropriate for all ages, with a wide range of materials and skill levels clearly outlined in the photos, patterns and templates. The chapter addressing "Home Décor: Stunning Decorations for your Home" to honor departed ancestors includes quirky accessories like a Grateful Dead clock, Papel Picado decorative paper banners and lampshades, and even projects with metal and puff paints. The whole book is a terrific resource for both beginning artists and accomplished crafters; it would be a great addition to a library collection for all ages, not just kids. 2008, Cantata Books/Wiley Publishing, \$19.99. Ages 10 to adult.

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