

GRADES K-1: Play Dough Catrina Sculptures

Celebrating Día de los Muertos Through Art | © This Month™ | month.thence.us

Time: 20-30 minutes | **Materials:** Play dough/Model Magic, rolling pin, craft sticks, paper plate, optional googly eyes

Learning Objectives: Develop fine motor skills through rolling, pinching, and shaping • Explore 3D forms and basic sculpture • Learn about Día de los Muertos • Practice following multi-step directions

Standards: Common Core ELA K (collaborative conversations about diverse cultures) • Visual Arts K-1 (create art depicting stories) • Fine Motor Development

Safety: Use only non-toxic, child-safe materials. Supervise to prevent mouthing small parts. No small items for children under 3.

Instructions:

1. Show La Catrina pictures. Explain Día de los Muertos celebrates loved ones with colorful decorations and happy memories.
2. Roll play dough into thick "snake" for body (4 inches long).
3. Roll ball for head. Press gently onto body.
4. Roll two thin snakes for arms. Attach to body sides.
5. Use craft stick to make patterns or add googly eyes (age-appropriate).

Teacher Tip: Keep it playful! Process matters more than product. Celebrate all attempts and focus on creating with hands.

Extensions: Ask students to describe sculpture using color/shape words • Read Día de los Muertos picture book

GRADES 2-3: Model Magic Catrina with Pipe Cleaner Armature

Time: Two 45-min sessions (Day 1: Build; Day 2: Decorate) | **Materials:** Model Magic/air-dry clay, 2-3 pipe cleaners, cardboard base (3x3"), markers/crayons, glue stick, fabric/ribbon/tissue, scissors, optional sequins/buttons/yarn

Learning Objectives: Create 3D sculpture using armature technique • Understand Día de los Muertos honors ancestors • Develop planning and problem-solving in art • Practice measuring, cutting, assembling safely • Apply decorative patterns from Mexican folk art

Standards: Common Core ELA 2-3 (recount diverse culture stories) • Visual Arts 2-3 (create artwork from cultural traditions) • Math 2.MD.1 (measure lengths) • Social Studies (compare cultural celebrations)

Safety: Supervise scissors. Pre-cut materials for students needing support. Use washable, non-toxic supplies only.

Day 1 - Build: 1) Share La Catrina images. Discuss how Día de los Muertos celebrates life and remembers loved ones with joy. 2) Roll clay into cone for dress/body. Press onto cardboard. 3) Roll golf ball-sized ball for head. Attach to cone top. 4) Twist two pipe cleaners together. Insert through "shoulders." Cover with clay if desired. 5) Dry 24 hours.

Day 2 - Decorate: 6) Draw eyes, nose, smile with markers. 7) Glue fabric pieces for dress or draw patterns. 8) Add tissue flowers, ribbon trim, folk art patterns.

Teacher Tip: Display visual examples and step-by-step photos. Each sculpture will be unique—no "wrong" way!

Extensions: Write 2-3 sentences about who to honor • Measure sculpture heights, create class bar graph • Compare Día de los Muertos with other ancestor-honoring celebrations

GRADES 4-5: Papier-Mâché Catrina with Armature

Time: Three 45-min sessions (Day 1: Armature; Day 2: Papier-mâché; Day 3: Paint) |

Materials: Aluminum foil/newspaper, 4-5 pipe cleaners/wire (12"), cardboard base (4x4"), newspaper strips (1"x6"), flour paste/diluted glue, acrylic paint, brushes, lace/ribbon/fabric/sequins/beads, hot glue (teacher)/tacky glue, scissors, ruler, pencil

Learning Objectives: Create complex 3D sculpture using armature and papier-mâché • Understand La Catrina and José Guadalupe Posada's historical significance • Apply planning, measuring, engineering for balanced structure • Incorporate authentic Mexican folk art elements • Demonstrate craftsmanship and detail

Standards: Common Core ELA 4-5 (analyze cultural work themes) • Visual Arts 4-5 (combine art forms, describe cultural representation) • Math 4.MD.3 & 5.MD.3 (measurement/geometry for real-world problems) • Social Studies (culture shapes artistic expression) • NGSS 3-5-ETS1-2 (generate/compare solutions)

Safety: Teacher operates hot glue only. Ensure ventilation with paints/adhesives. Demonstrate safe scissor and wire handling.

Day 1: 1) Teach Posada's La Calavera Catrina etching (1910s), Rivera's popularization, satirical origins. 2) Students sketch design noting height, pose, decorations. 3) Form foil/newspaper into 6-8" cone. Secure to base with tape. 4) Crumple 2-3" ball for head. Attach with wire/tape. 5) Twist 2-3 pipe cleaners per arm. Insert into shoulders. Bend into pose ensuring balance. 6) Test stability. Adjust weight distribution.

Day 2: 7) Mix flour/water (1:1) or dilute glue. 8) Dip newspaper strips in paste, squeeze excess. Apply 2-3 layers, smoothing. 9) Add extra layers for clothing texture, facial features. 10) Dry 24-48 hours.

Day 3: 11) Apply white acrylic primer. Dry. 12) Paint vibrant dress, face, traditional folk art motifs (flowers, geometric). 13) Glue lace hem, ribbon sash, fabric shawl, sequins, beads. 14) Create cardboard hat or paper flower crown.

Teacher Tip: Display National Watercolor Museum gallery images. Emphasize cartonería as respected art form. Research regional Día de los Muertos styles.

Extensions: Research Posada's influence report • Venn diagram comparing celebrations • Artist statement on design choices • Class exhibition with informational placards • Engineering discussion: stability, weight distribution, pose balance

Assessment: Technical Skills • Cultural Understanding • Creativity (unique + culturally authentic) • Craftsmanship • Problem-Solving