Make a Day of the Dead skull

The annual Mexican festival *Dia de los Muertos*, or "Day of the Dead", takes place on 1 and 2 November. It combines All Souls' Day (a Christian tradition brought to Mexico by Spanish invaders) with an ancient Aztec custom of celebrating ancestors. The Aztecs were a group of people who ruled much of Mexico before the Spanish arrived.

It might sound gloomy but actually Day of the Dead is a colourful, joyful occasion, where people remember relatives who have died and have parties at their graves. People believe that the gates of heaven open at midnight on 31 October and the spirits of children can rejoin their families for 24 hours. The spirits of adults do the same on 2 November.

This activity is inspired by two Day of the Dead traditions. Decorated sugar skulls, or *calaveras*, are put on people's graves and *papel picado* are strung out – paper banners with cut-out designs.

FAVOURED FEAST
During Day of the Dead, people make their relatives' favourite food, in case they get hungry travelling from heaven.

What you need

- Plastic carton with a lid
- Paints
- Sponge
- Scissors
- Black/coloured paper
- Glue
- Paintbrushes
- A small paper plate or bowl
- Sticky tape
- Coloured tissue paper

1 Remove the label and lid from a plastic carton and rinse the inside. Paint the carton white with a sponge and leave to dry.

2 Cut out some eyes, a nose and thin strips for the teeth from black paper and glue them onto the carton.

3 Cut a 7cm x 30cm coloured paper strip, fold it in half, in half again, and once again, then cut out small shapes across the folds.

4 Carefully open out the strip, lightly brush with glue and then stick it so it wraps around the carton.

5 Decorate the face with painted patterns and small cut-out paper shapes. Paint a small cardboard plate for a hat then leave to dry.

6 Cut a hole in the hat the size of the lid. Fit it around the carton neck and tape shut. Add the lid. Make and glue on tissue paper flowers.

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