

## Skull T-shirts

1. Get a skull pattern and piece of white cloth with Wonder-Under already ironed onto the back.
2. Put fabric side down over pattern, and trace using a pencil. Trace the eyes, nose and mouth too. Do not peel off the paper backing.
3. Cut out your skull. To cut out eyes, fold the fabric and make a snip in the middle. Slip your scissors in and carefully cut around the inside of the eye. Leave nose, unless you want it to be black. Leave teeth, unless you want an empty, black mouth. Cut small slits if you want the fabric to look like teeth. Keep cut scraps to test markers on.
4. Use your paper pattern to sketch in pencil what you want to draw or paint on your skull OR sketch on the paper backing so you can see the design through the fabric.
5. Put skull, fabric side up on top of paper towels. Use stencils and paint to dab shapes onto skull. Wipe paint off stencil when done so others can use them. OR, if using fabric markers, test on cloth scraps to see how much they will "bleed" when you draw, and plan for that spread of color.
6. Snack while paint and markers dry. Look at Day of the Dead books.
7. To find the center of your t-shirt, fold your t-shirt exactly in half (shoulder to shoulder) and press down to make a crease, or mark with a pin.
9. Place t-shirt, front side up, on the ironing board. Peel the paper backing off of your skull to reveal the glue. Make sure that you have the skull FABRIC DESIGN SIDE UP, glue side toward shirt. Use your mark to center the skull. Cover with ironing cloth and iron all sections for 5 to 7 seconds on dry, cotton setting.
10. Your skull shirt can be washed and dried, just turn it inside out while washing. If any edges come up, they can be reglued using an iron.

## About the Skull T-Shirt program:

My description was: Bring in a dark-colored t-shirt, and iron on a skull to celebrate Halloween or the Day of the Dead. Make your skull look tough, or more like a fancy Mexican sugar skull by adding stencils. Grades 4 and up, please register. I tried to make my sample look gender neutral, not too gory, and not too frilly.

This was an excellent way to slip a little cultural education about Mexican folk art into a tween/teen program, because who doesn't love a holiday called "Day of the Dead"? Can't beat sugar skulls either, and decorations are easy to find at Michaels too. I made skull sugar cookies for the snack. There is a great new picture book biography out to use with this program: *Funny Bones: Posada and His Day of the Dead Calaveras* by Duncan Tonatiuh. Even if you can't read the whole thing during the program, synopsise, and use one of the thought-provoking questions illustrated in part 2 that tell about Posada's political cartoons using skeletons. If you don't have this book, find out a little about the traditions of the Day of the Dead and talk about why the Mexicans decorate skulls in such bright, happy colors. If you want to throw in some STEM, you could also talk about symmetry in the designs. Participants should have the choice to decorate their skulls any way they want, they don't have to be in the Mexican style... some kids will still want lightning bolts or something gory, and they're the ones who will have to wear the shirt!

### Supplies:

- Pellon brand Wonder-Under Fusible Web – Heavy Duty (Pellon makes a number of iron-on products for sewing – make sure you get the right one) This is available at JoAnn's and Walmart. If each skull is about 8.5 x 11, you'll have to do the math to know how many yards you need. The ironing instructions come with the Pellon, and can also be found online. Iron the rough side of the Pellon onto the white fabric ahead of time, and cut each student an 8.5 x 11 piece. Leave the paper backing on until right before ironing onto their t-shirt. (If it lifts off by itself while they are designing, quickly iron it where it belongs, paper side up).
- White cotton fabric, like a bed sheet, not stretchy like t-shirts. You'll need an 8.5 x 11 piece for each skull (plus a couple of extra in case of disasters).
- Fabric scissors, not safety scissors! Consider pre-cutting the skulls if you have a lot of kids coming and don't have a lot of sharp scissors.
- Acrylic paint, brushes, water, paint cups
- Stencils and paper towels to wipe paint off stencils
- OR Fabric markers (the tweens preferred these). I found that Sharpies bleed out through the fabric too much, but test on your fabric if you want).
- Pressing cloth, like an old pillowcase, or parchment paper – these will protect your iron from getting glue on it by accident.
- Iron & Ironing board (more than one if you have a crowd)
- Print-outs of some simple sugar skull designs in black and white (there are some coloring book skulls online)
- A simple skull pattern for students to trace. Draw your own, or pick one online that is very wide – more room to decorate than more realistic skulls.

Make a sample ahead of time!

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