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Activity Idea

Papel Picado

Pecked Paper

Recommended for Ages 8 – 12

This traditional Mexican craft is generally displayed for celebrations and holidays. Common themes include birds, floral designs, and skeletons. Papel picados are commonly displayed for both national and religious occasions, such as Easter, Christmas, the Day of the Dead, as well as during weddings, quinceañeras, baptisms, and christenings. In Mexico, papel picados are often incorporated into the altars (ofrendas) during the Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) and are hung throughout the streets during holidays

Image from Wikimedia commons

Supplies

- Sheets of paper in bright colors (Tissue paper works best, but regular printer paper can work as well)
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Scissors
- String
- Tape

Designing Your Own
Start by making a thin fold along the long edge of the paper, approximately a ½ in (1 cm) wide. Use a ruler to make your folds neat. This will be the string fold. It makes space for the string.

Then, fold your piece of paper in half. Draw a design with a pencil on one half. Designs can be pictures or patterns, like flowers or swirls, lightning bolts, or hearts. Remember that your design will be reversed on the other half of the paper. If you want to make a design along the fold, draw half of the design so when you open it up, it will reveal the full design. Leave enough space between cut-out shapes to keep the paper strong. If there are too many designs too close together, you run the risk of accidently cutting apart your designs. You can shape the edges of the paper, too.

Keep the paper folded and cut out the shapes and then unfold your paper. Repeat to make many papel picado. Try different designs or shapes on the new paper. Create as many new papel picado as you would like.

Lay your paper in a line. Cut a long piece of string. Tuck the string in the string fold at the top of the paper. Tape the fold down. Repeat with the other finished papers to create a garland. Hang your papel picado to celebrate a special day!

Online Resources
Make Papel Picado by Conni Medina
https://tinyurl.com/yazhd42x
Do you have something to celebrate? You can celebrate by making papel picado! Featuring vibrant step-by-step photo instructions, this nonfiction book helps introduce children to another culture through craft-making and designs.

Día de Los Muertos by Roseanne Greenfield Thong and Carles Ballesteros
https://tinyurl.com/y9urqu6w
It is Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) and children throughout the pueblo, or town, are getting ready to celebrate! They decorate with colored streamers, calaveras, or sugar skulls, and pan de Muertos, or bread of the dead. There are altars draped in cloth and covered in marigolds and twinkling candles. Music fills the streets. Join the fun and festivities, learn about a different cultural tradition, and brush up on your Spanish vocabulary, as the town honors their dearly departed in a traditional, time-honored style.

The Piñata That the Farm Maiden Hung by Samantha R. Vamos and Sebastia Serra
https://tinyurl.com/yd7puc36
This is the bilingual story of the farm maiden and her cadre of animals who crafted a festive piñata for a surprise birthday party. A beautiful and lively companion to the award-winning *The Cazuela That the Farm Maiden Stirred*.