



**DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS**  
**TEACHER PACKET**

# Welcome Teachers and Parents

azcentral.com is proud to offer this education packet as part of our Dia de los Muertos site. Adults and children alike often get their first exposure to this important celebration through the colorful art, food and folk traditions of the holiday and its close association with the more common Halloween celebration.

Our goal is to educate and inform those seeking information on this celebration through articles, original art, and interactive projects like the ones that you will find in this packet. We hope that you use this information as well the pages found on the web site to enrich young minds as well as your own.



## Inside This Packet

- Word search game
- Mix and match puzzle
- 4 coloring pages
- Papel picado lesson plan, including an easy to use template for younger children.
- Calavera mask project
- Skeleton puppet project
- Bibliography

P A P E L P I C A D O C W  
 A L T R E P I Ñ A T A D M  
 N T Z A R A P E Í N X R A  
 D A Y O F T H E D E A D R  
 E R I F U L A L K U C L I  
 M E M R A R E V A L A C A  
 U S E E F S P Y L O S A C  
 E O R N G M O L E A M S H  
 R T W D E D K Q R H E C I  
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 O L Z B Q N C E R A S R Y  
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 G G E E Á O B S J W Q N K  
 R N P M K C O P A L U E L  
 M A R I G O L D M R E S N

## Word Search

Find these words  
 in the grid above.  
 Keep in mind that  
 the words may be  
 hidden vertically,  
 horizontally,  
 diagonally or  
 backwards.



1. ofrenda
2. papel picado
3. piñata
4. altar
5. day of the dead
6. calaca
7. zarape
8. copal
9. ceras
10. calavera
11. cascarones
12. candles
13. marigold
14. pan de muerto
15. Oaxaca
16. angelitos
17. mole
18. máscara
19. dulces
20. mariachis

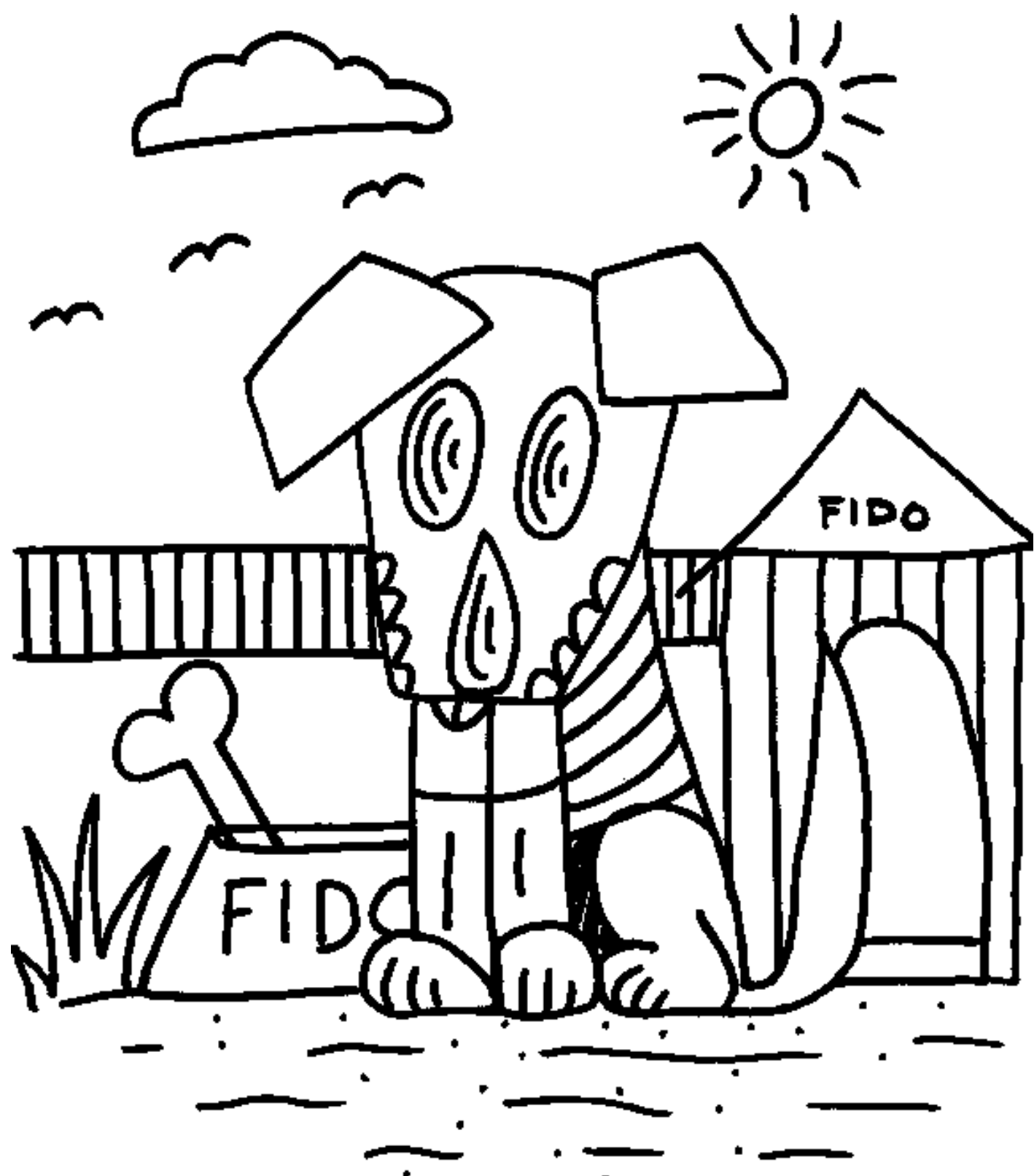


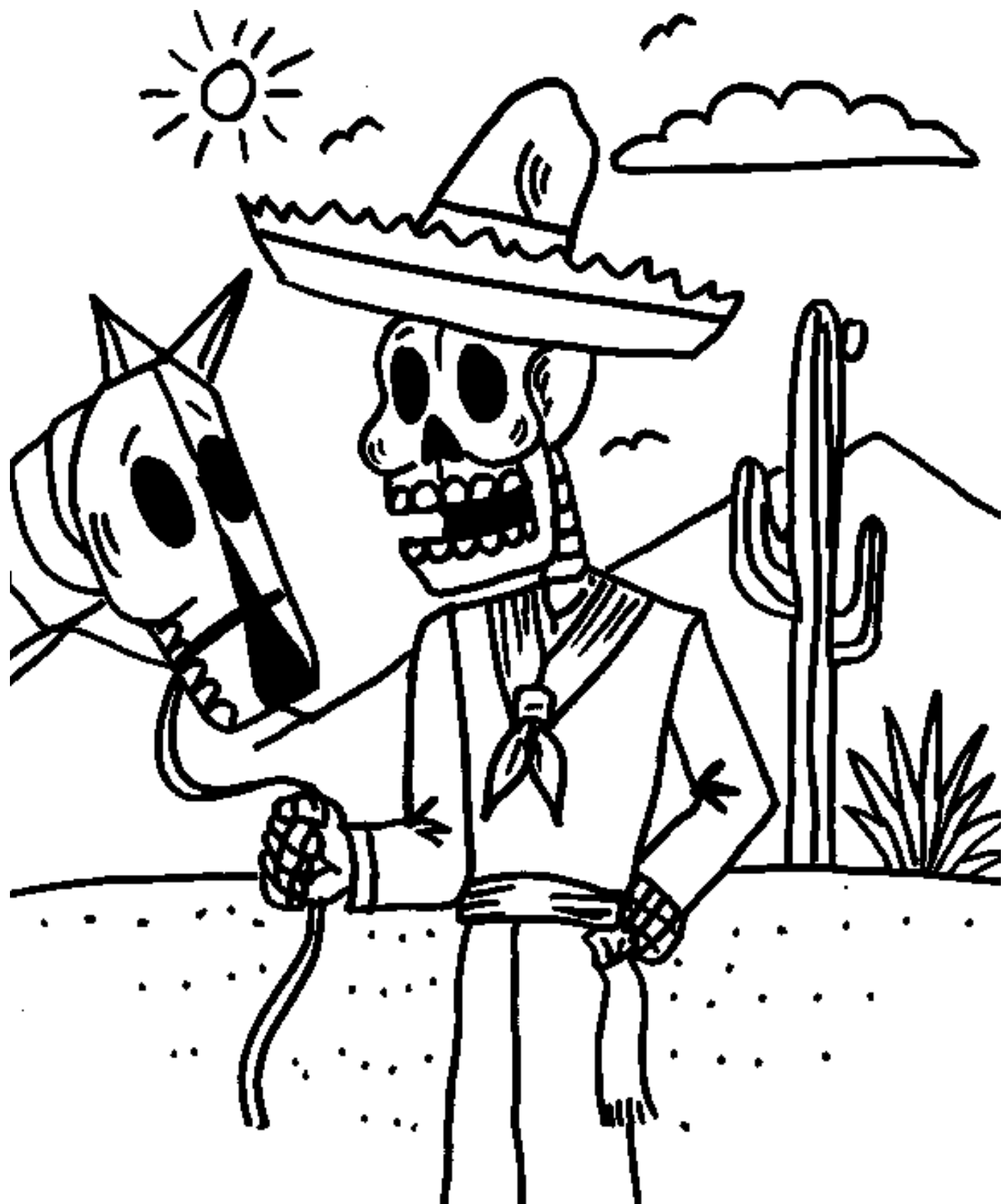
# Mix and Match

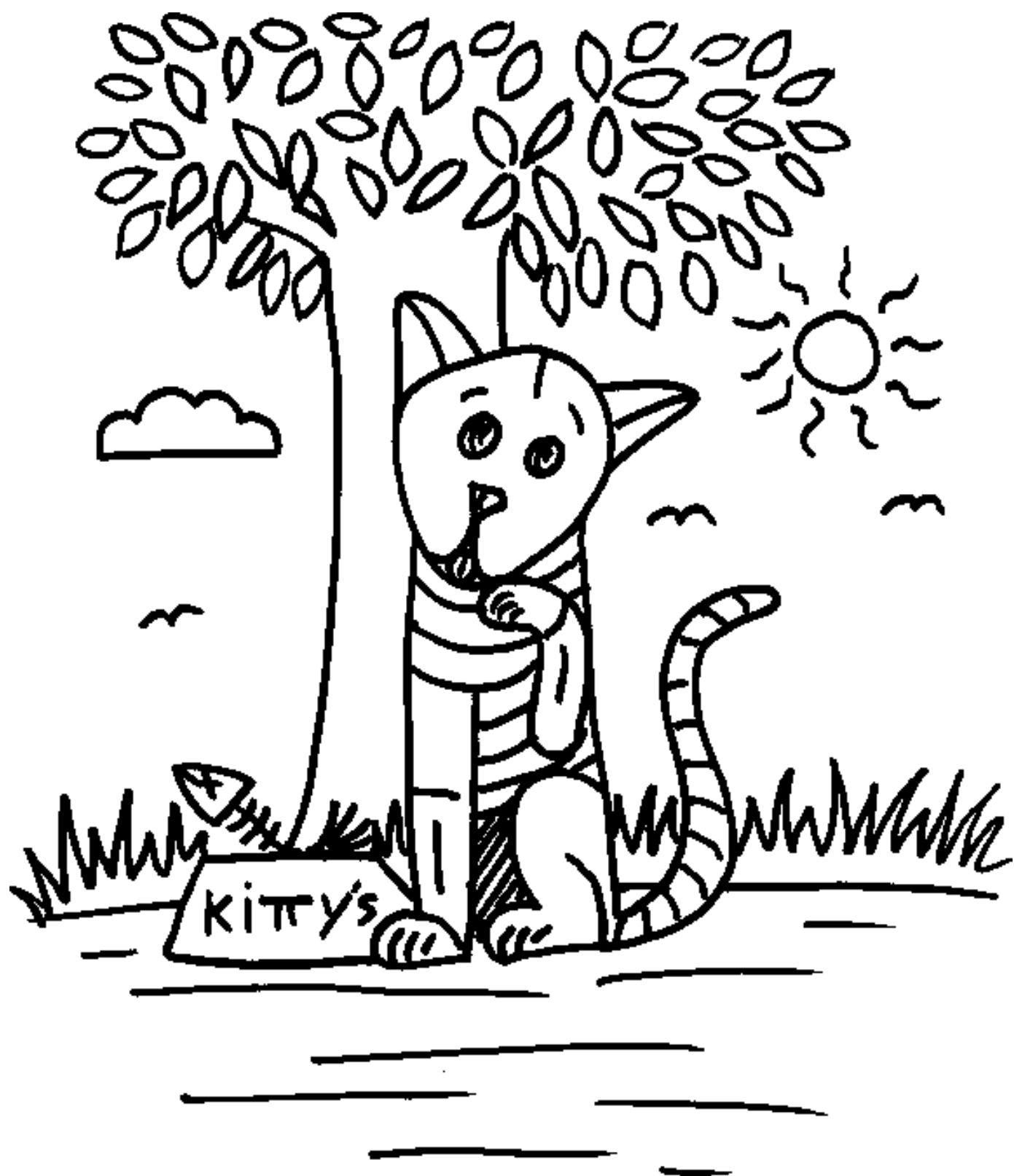
Match the following vocabulary words to their definitions.

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- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Ofrenda                | A. <i>Yellow marigolds that are symbols of death</i>  |
| 2. Pan de Muerto          | B. <i>The art of Mexican paper cutting</i>  |
| 3. Cempazuchitl           | C. <i>Burning incense left at altars</i>  |
| 4. Calaca                 | D. <i>Offerings to honor the dead</i>   |
| 5. Alfeniques             | E. <i>Day of the Dead</i>   |
| 6. Cascarones             | F. <i>Illustrator whose satirical drawing 'La Catrina' is one of the most recognizable figures of Day of the Dead</i> |
| 7. Papel Picado           | G. <i>Bread of the dead</i>   |
| 8. Copal                  | H. <i>Festive egg shells that are filled with confetti and trimmed in glitter</i>                                     |
| 9. Dia de los Muertos     | I. <i>Poems and songs written about the festival</i>  |
| 10. Angelitos             | J. <i>Whimsical skeleton figure that represents death</i>   |
| 11. Calaveras             | K. <i>Colorful iced sugar skulls</i>  |
| 12. Jose Guadalupe Posada | L. <i>Souls of children who have died</i>   |











# Papel Picado Lesson

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This lesson was developed for students in grades 3-12. The complexity of the lesson can be increased to accommodate different age levels.

## National Visual Arts Standards Addressed

- Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture
- Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
- Use knowledge of structures and functions
- Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

## Objectives for Students

- Understand the role of *papel picados* in the Days of the Dead celebration
- Recognize and identify *papel picados*
- Describe and analyze the visual qualities of *papel picados*
- Use positive and negative space to create a cut paper composition
- Use symmetry, repetition, and pattern in a cut paper composition

## Materials

- colored sheets of tissue paper 11" x 14" size (one per student)
- scissors
- string or yarn
- glue

## Vocabulary

- *amate* paper
- *fierritos*
- geometric shape
- negative space
- *Otomi*
- *papel picado*
- patron
- pattern
- positive space
- Puebla, Mexico
- repetition
- symmetry



## Introduction and Discussion

Display sample *papel picados*. Introduce the following information about *papel picados* to your students. Compare and contrast paper cutting techniques found in other cultures if time and resources permit.

## Papel Picado Background Information

Colorful paper banners, called *papel picado* (Spanish for "perforated paper") can be found hanging about the streets during any Mexican fiesta or celebration. Usually made of tissue paper but sometimes of more durable plastic, the cut banners are hung together like a string of flags. For the Days of the Dead, the designs feature skeletons, skulls, crosses, and tombstones. Some artists create intricate designs that take many hours to make. Because of their fragility and the time spent creating them, cut-paper banners are themselves symbols of the transitory quality of life.

The tradition of *papel picado* can be traced to pre-Columbian times when papermaking thrived throughout Mesoamerica. The bark of the *amate* tree, a type of fig tree, was used to make a rich colored brown or beige paper. Cut-paper figures used in ceremonies were created to represent any number of human and animal spirits. Today, a group of indigenous people, the Otomi from the village of San Pabilto, continue to make cut-paper figures from their handmade *amate* paper.

The festive *papel picado* banners created throughout Mexico today are usually made with tissue paper or plastic. Banners are cut with a hammer and sharp chisels called *fierritos*. As many as 50 layers of colored tissue paper can be cut at one time. To guide the cutting, a patron or pattern with a drawn design is placed on top of a stack of tissue paper. Some of the best *papel picado* is made in the small village of San Salvado Huixcolotla in Puebla, Mexico, where artists work to create paper and plastic decorations for the Days of the Dead, Mexican Independence Day (September 16th), and Christmas.

The tradition of making cut paper designs is practiced in many cultures throughout the world. Some of the more famous techniques are the German *scherschnitte*, Polish *wycinanki*, Chinese *hua yang*, Japanese *kirigami*, and French silhouettes.

## Demonstration

Introduce or review the concepts of positive and negative space, repetition, and pattern if needed. Check for your students understanding of the concepts. Demonstrate for your students how to cut a paper design with repetitive designs from one piece of tissue paper. Choose a colored tissue and place it on the table horizontally. Fold it accordion style from the bottom up making about 3-4 folds. Leave one inch at the top of the tissue paper to attach a string. Using a scissors, cut a series of repeating shapes from the folded edges of the tissue. Unfold the tissue paper to reveal the pattern. Flatten the tissue paper on the table. If possible, iron to remove the folds. To prepare for hanging, lay the end of a long piece of yarn or string horizontally across the top of the paper where you had previously



reserved one inch of paper. Fold the edge of the paper over the string to create a 1/2 inch flap. Glue the edge of the flap down with the string under the fold. Very little glue is needed to achieve a strong hold. Glue sticks can be used to avoid using too much glue. Discuss what would happen if you had cut too near to the edge of the tissue.

**IMPORTANT:** If you want each student to contribute a cut paper design to create a banner, cut your string long enough to hold all of their tissue cutouts. Plan to allow one inch between sheets of paper as you add them to the string. Leave several inches at both ends to hang the completed banner in the hallway or across the ceiling of your classroom. Hang the banner high enough to keep curious hands from damaging the finished work.

Check for your students understanding of the concepts. Distribute the materials and allow the remaining class period for making cutouts.

## Assessment

To plan the assessment of your students' learning, review the objectives of the lesson. Draw the content for the assessment from the objectives as they reflect the information, process, and skills presented in the lesson. Any number of strategies can be used to involve your students in assessment, including group discussions, verbal or written presentations, and games.

Based on the objectives of the cut-paper design lesson, the following content areas could be addressed in the assessment process:

- Demonstration of understanding of the role of the *papel picados* in the Days of the Dead celebration
- Recognition and identification of *papel picados*
- Description and analysis of the visual qualities of *papel picados*
- Description of the tools, materials, and techniques used to make the *papel picados*
- Identification of positive and negative space
- Use of symmetry

## Making Simple Papel Picado

Fold a rectangular piece of paper in half. In pencil, sketch one half of a design on one of the folded halves. Rulers may be used to divide the paper into grids or sections. Objects or designs must touch and connect to other areas of the paper as they form the positive shapes on the paper. Negative areas to be cut away may be shaded in pencil to aid in cutting.

Use scissors or a craft knife to carefully cut away negative areas of the design (cut over cardboard if using craft knives). Open slowly, flatten, and glue to a background paper. To create more complex designs, fold the paper more than once. Try using different kinds of paper: butcher paper, fadeless colored paper, origami paper, and colored tissue paper.



*Papel Picado* is the Mexican art of cut paper. Artists use a hammer and chisel to "punch designs out of stacks of layered tissue paper--up to 40 layers thick. Designs can portray people, animals, flowers and lettering. *Papel picado* made especially for the Day of the Dead include skeletal figures engaging in human activities of the living. Individual banners are strung together to create festive and colorful decorations for the celebration.

To make simple *papel picado* for the classroom, fold a rectangular sheet of tissue paper in half. Using a pencil, sketch one half of a design on the folded side of the tissue paper. Use rulers to divide the paper into sections. Designs must touch and connect to the other areas of the paper in order to form the shapes on the paper. Shade in the areas to be cut away.

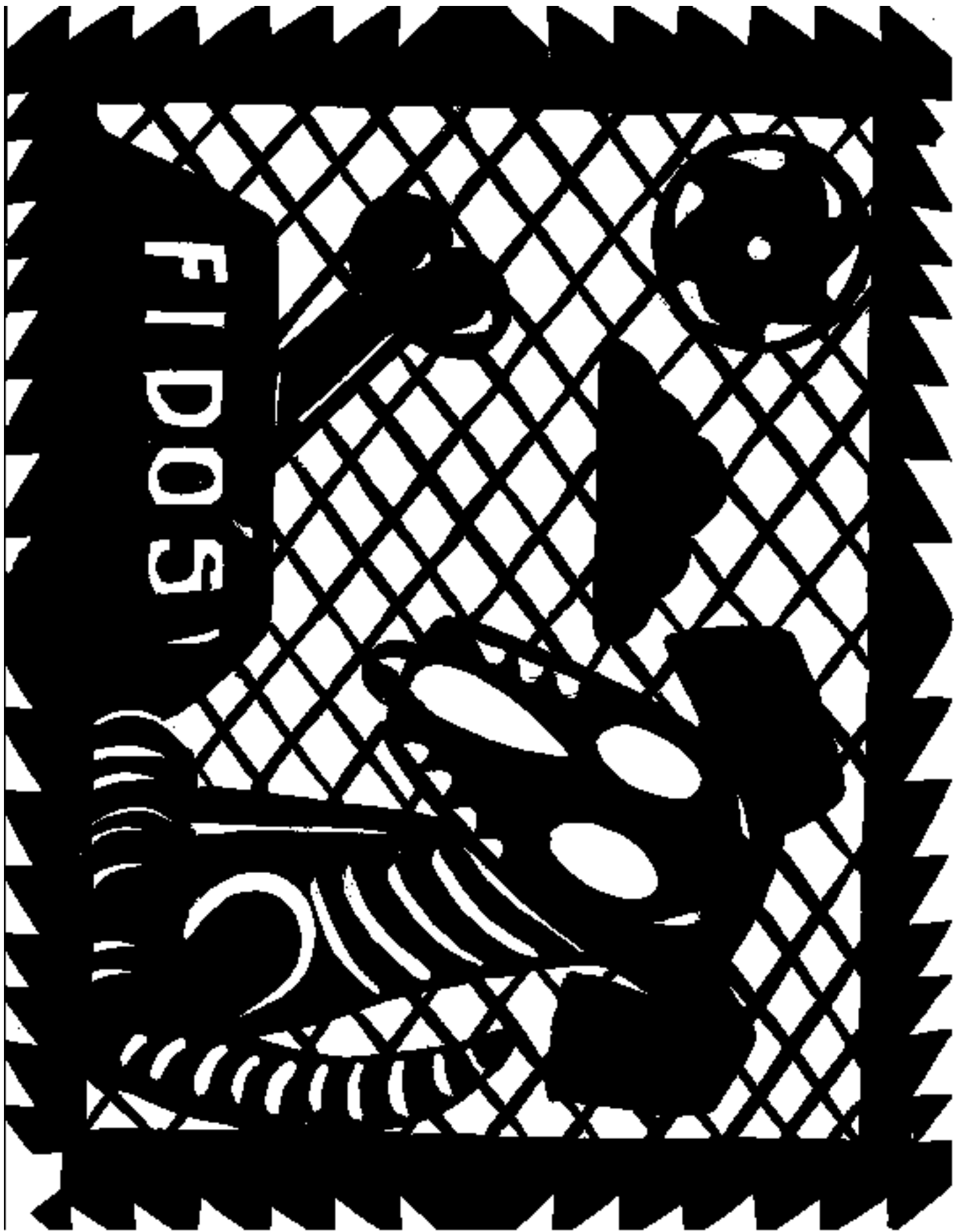
With scissors or a craft knife, carefully cut away the shaded areas of the design. Open the paper carefully.

For more complex designs, fold the paper several times.

Once several banners are made, measure the yard or string to extend beyond the length of the banners. Fold over the top of the banner over the string and glue or tape. Use the banners to decorate the *ofrenda*.

*Source: CRIZMAC Art and Cultural Education Materials (free resources)*





Instructions: Cut out white areas very carefully.

# Make Your Own Calavera Mask

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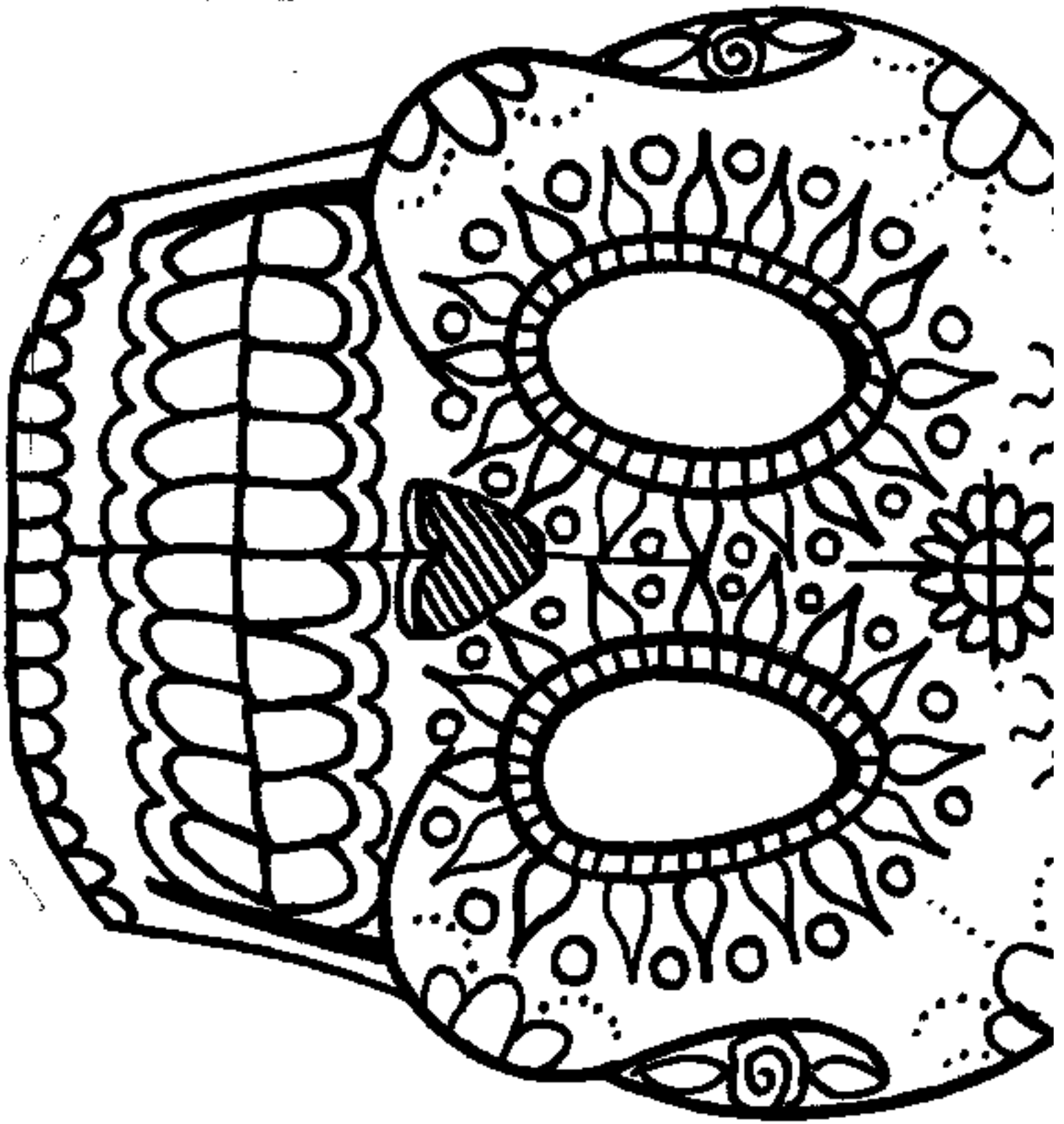
## Materials

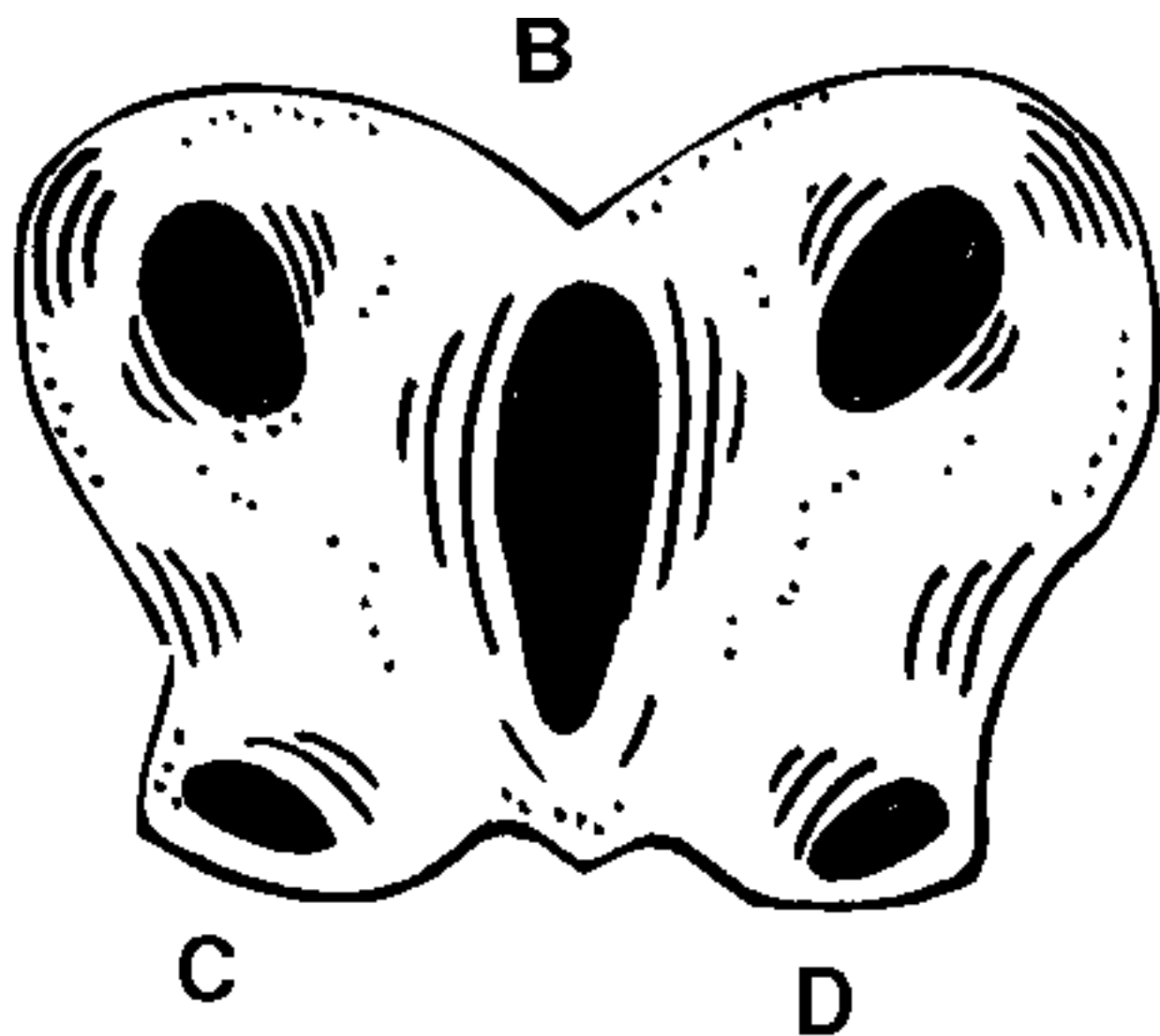
- crayons
- paint
- markers
- scissors
- string or yarn
- paper punch
- glue
- glitter, buttons, tissue paper, feathers etc.

## Instructions

Print out the calavera mask. Cut out the eyes. Color and decorate with glitter, paints, feathers etc. Let dry and punch two holes (one on either side of the skull above the cheek bone). Tie an 8"-12" piece of string or yarn through each hole.

Now you have a mask you can tie around your face, just above your ears.





### **Make A Skeleton Puppet**

#### **Materials**

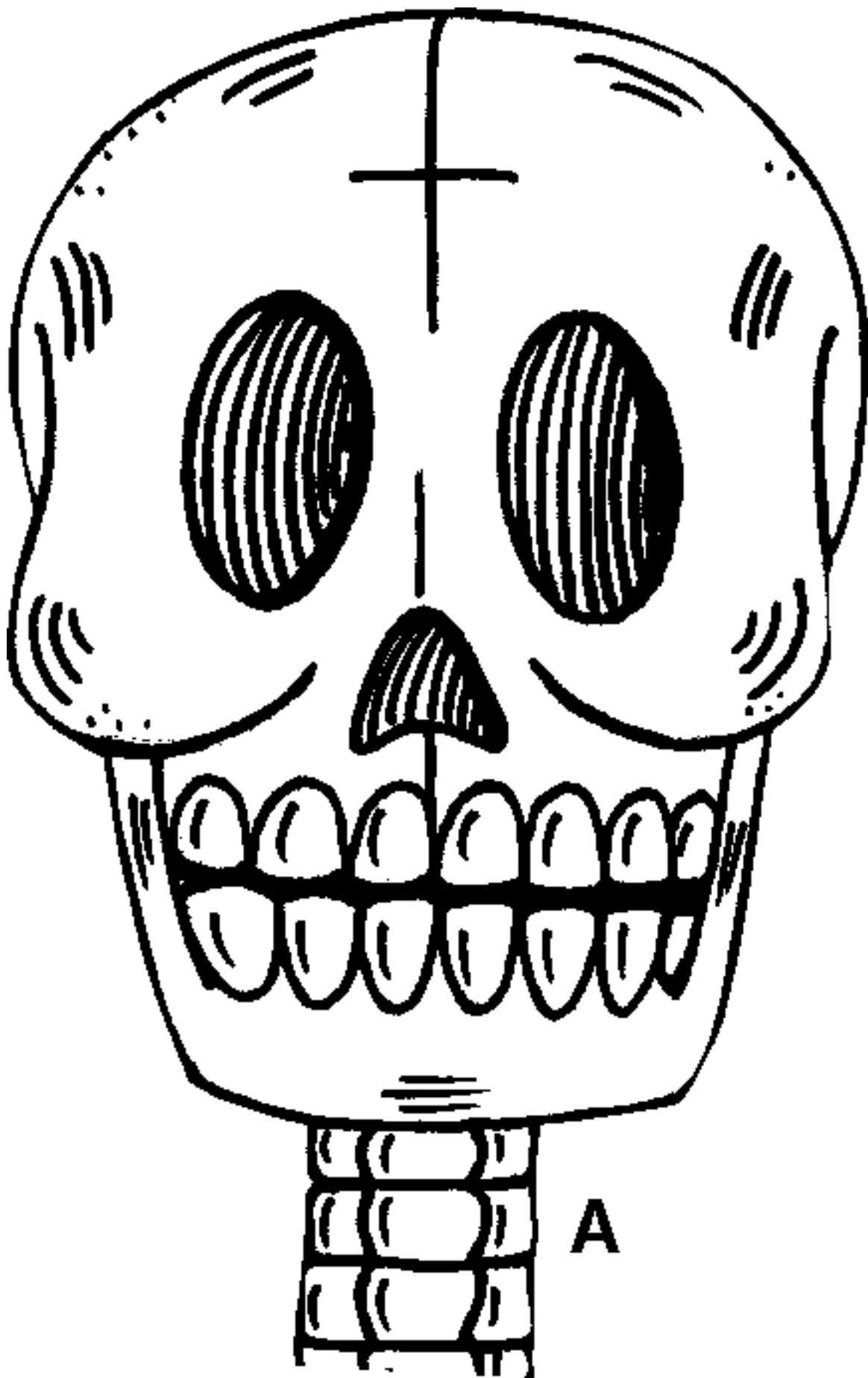
Crayons, paint, markers, scissors, string or yarn, paper punch, glue, glitter, buttons, tissue paper, feathers etc.

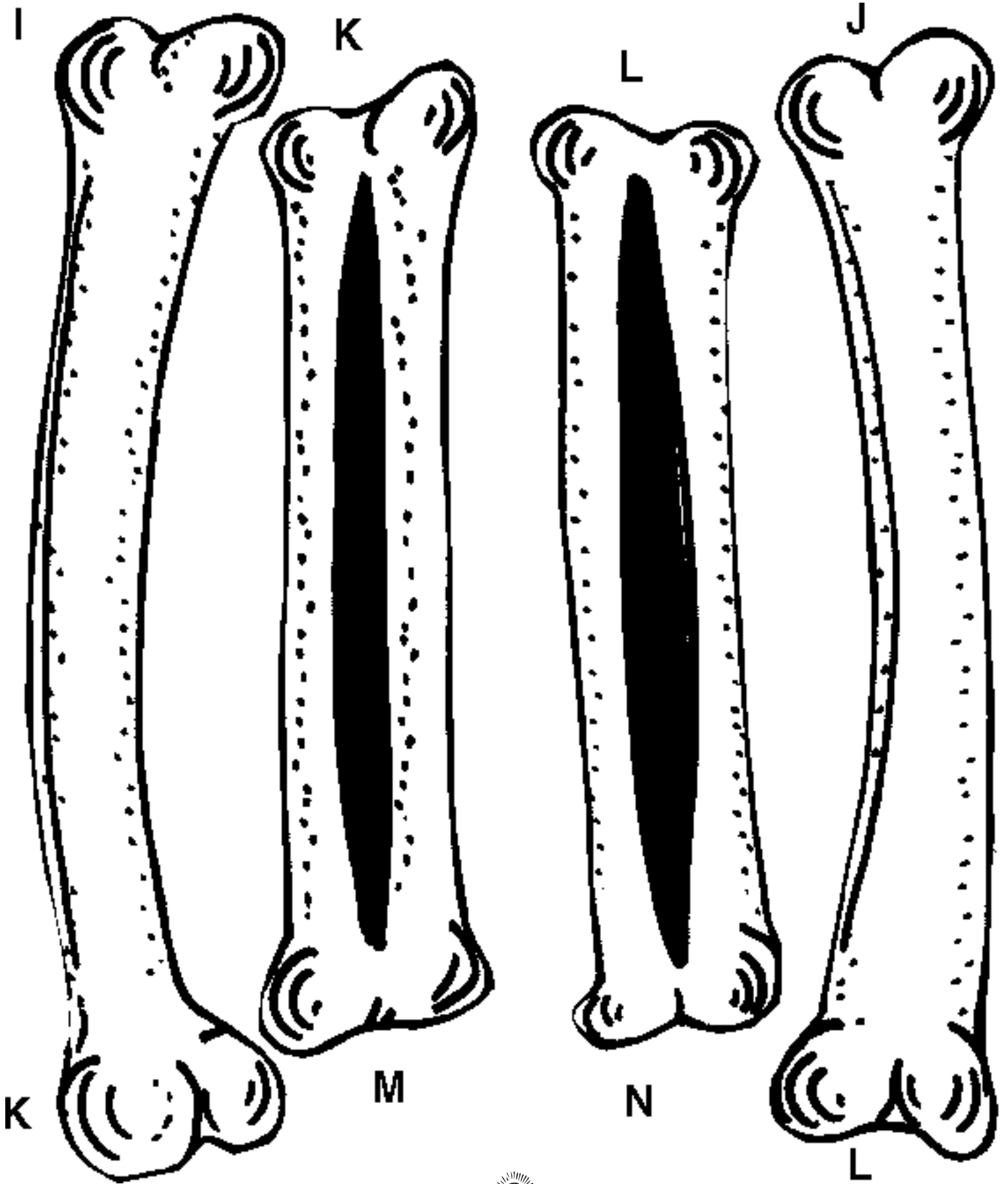
#### **Instructions**

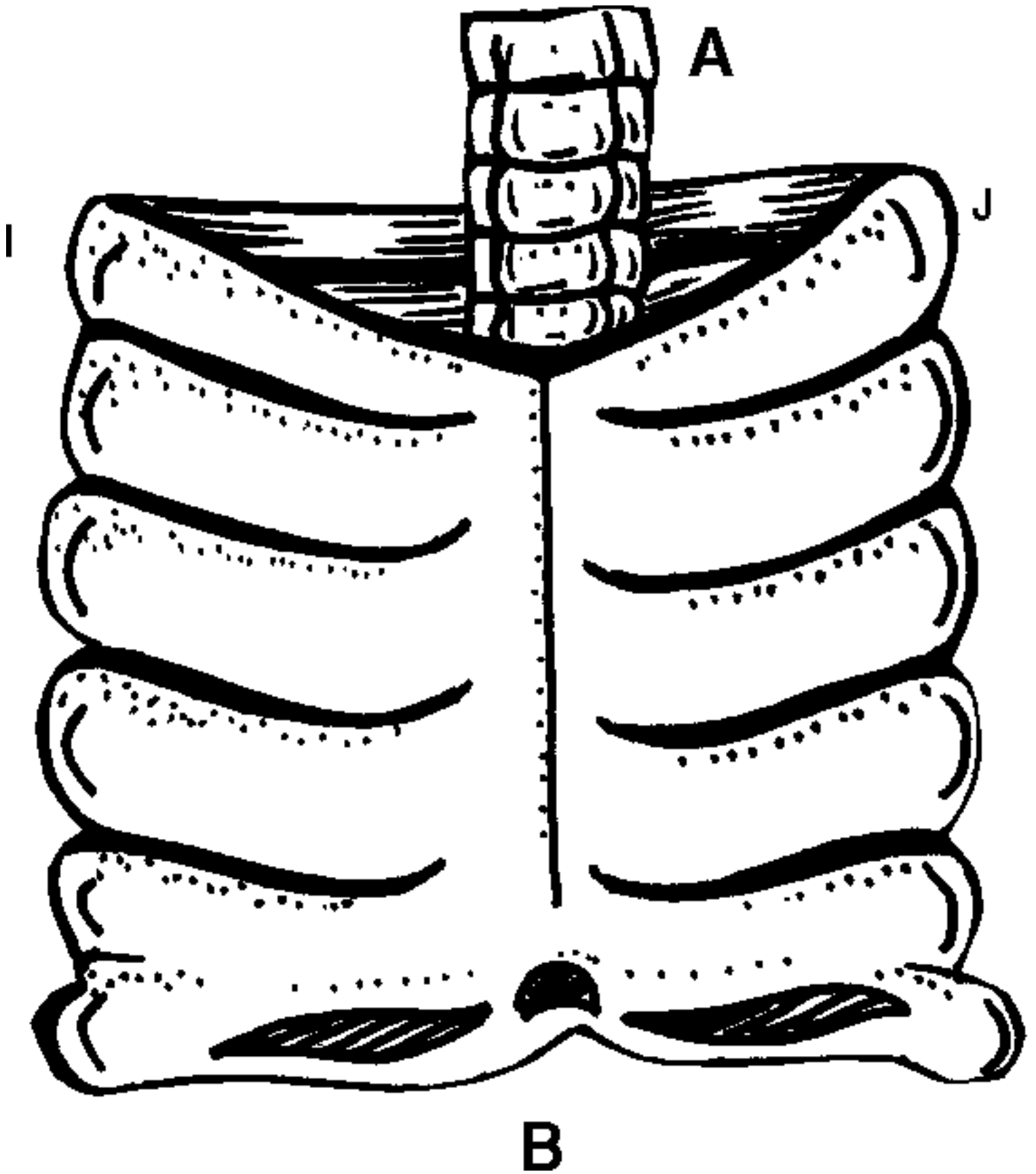
Print out the skeleton parts. Punch holes in the bones next to letters (each leg and arm bone will have a hole at either end, etc.). Cut out all of the parts. Color and decorate with glitter, paints, feathers etc. as you like. Let dry and tie bones together matching the letters (string will go through both B holes and both C holes, for example).

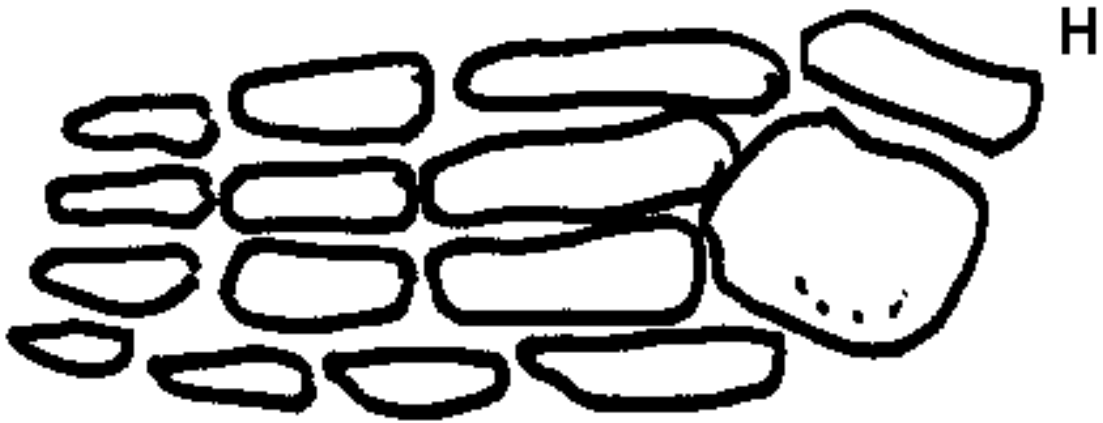
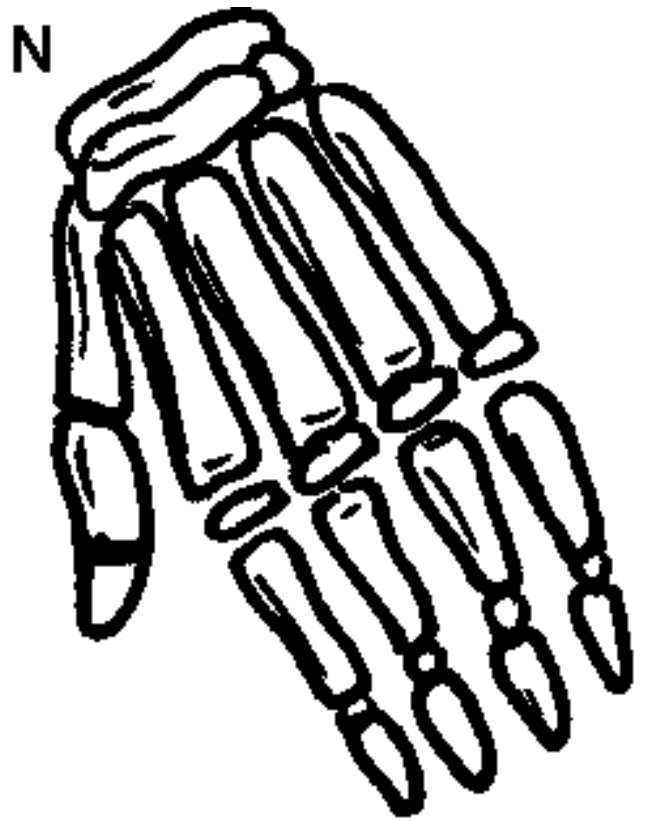
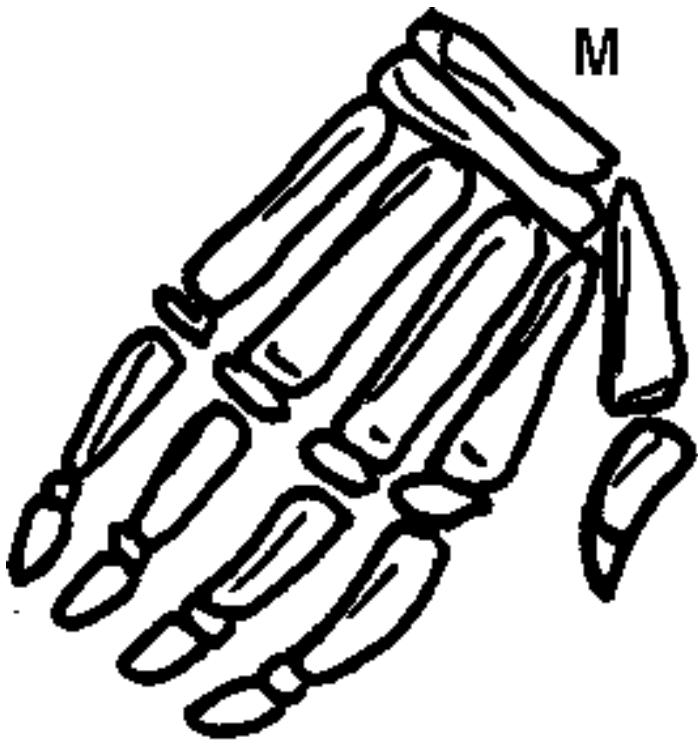
Once the skeleton is assembled, you can move him about as you like.

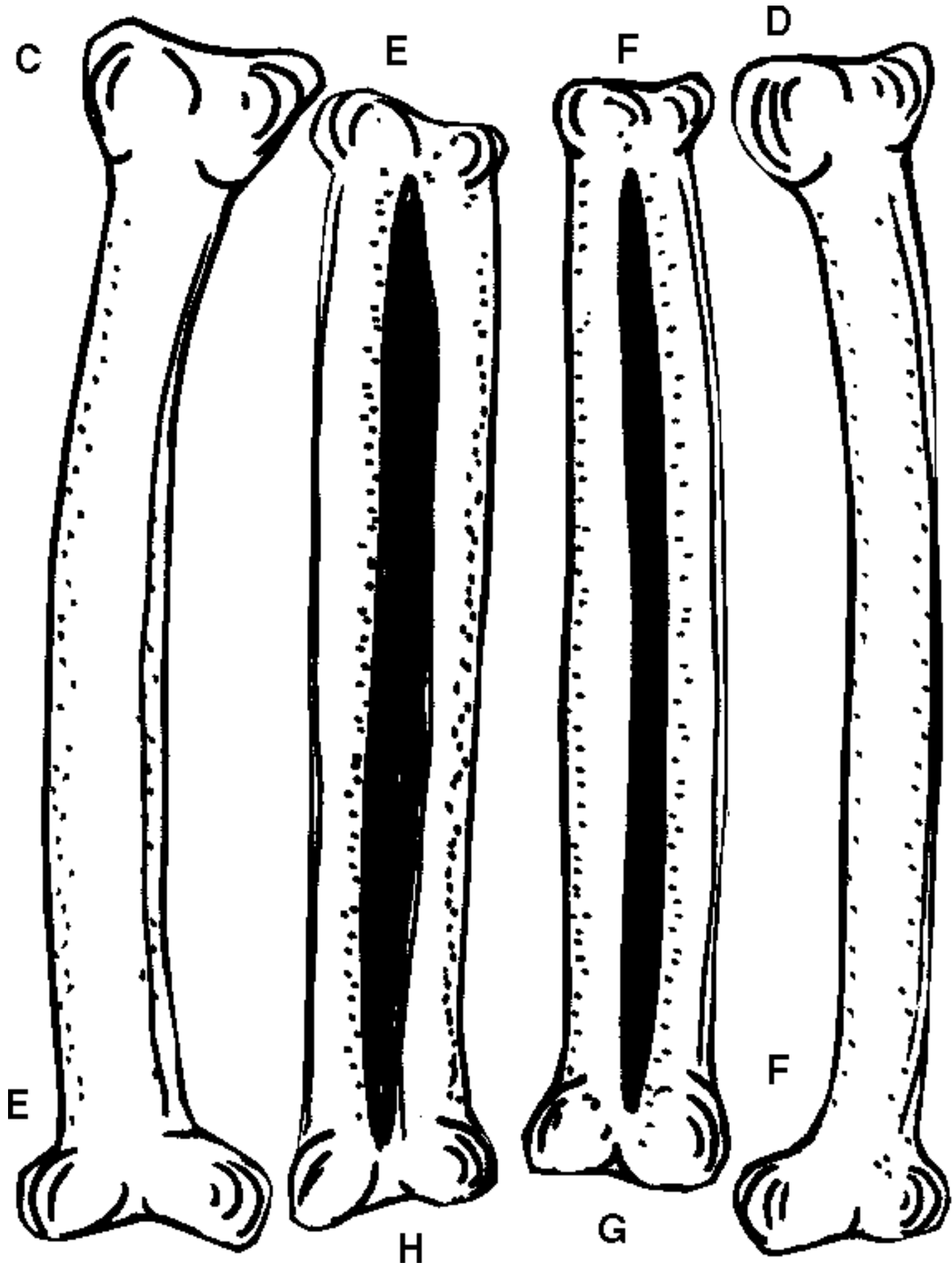












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