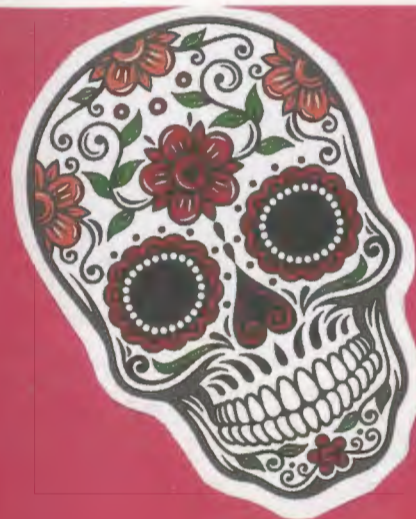


Character Details

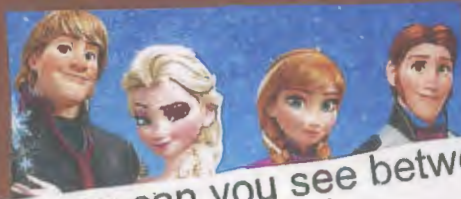
There are certain aspects of the design and clothing of the characters that are incredibly specific to the Mexican culture. Presented in *Coco* as spirit animals, *alebrijes*, fantastical creatures made out of paper mache or carved from wood, are not typically associated with Dia de Muertos in Mexican Culture. The creators of the film decided to use them in that context due to their vibrant colors, worldly nature, and their Mexican origins. Today, *alebrijes* are made by artisans in different regions of Mexico and sold as art in street markets.



Strong family values are portrayed through their very close knit dynamic. Their house is full of hermanos, tias, tios, and primos, which is something many latino family households have in common. "What helped make *Coco* resonate among Mexican audiences, I reckon, is the way Mexicans see themselves in its characters. Mexico, a country of migrants, is full of families like the Riveras, where mothers heroically head the household. In many cases, Mexican abuelitas are powerhouses of resiliency, fighting to make ends meet. Molina (co-director) acknowledges that this family dynamic- absent men, hard working women- is no coincidence in the movies narrative. *Coco* was able to portray this in an unflinching, tender way.



Liz Stewart



What differences can you see between these Disney/Pixar movie characters...

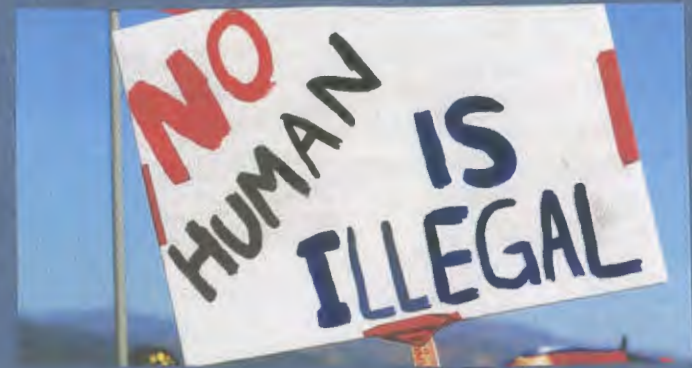


...as opposed to these movie characters?




History

Historically, Latino individuals often face oppression in society due to predetermined labels and stereotypes. Their long history as labor migrants destined to jobs at the bottom of the economic hierarchy has created a distinct racial opinion amongst the public sphere. With the current rhetoric in mainstream media about illegal immigrants, and the history with the war on drugs, these individuals are often criminalized. For Latinos, concepts of identity and race are complex and varied. The United States government's efforts to count these people and their own characteristics, has played a significant role in how Mexicans identify and view themselves in society. Due to the criminalization and ambiguity surrounding these individuals, they are often seen as **strangers** in society. If an individual is misunderstood, or doesn't fit in with the **white racial frame**, they are automatically excluded, and seen as a threat. Because of this **zero point epistemology**, or one way of knowing, and the fragility of whiteness in America, it has led many Mexican American individuals to question their identity and sense of belonging in society.



Due to the mainstream media, including movie production, Mexican culture is often represented in a negative way, if at all. A report on the state of Latinos in U.S. media found that while there are more than 50 million Latinos make up 17% of the population, there were no leading roles for Latino actors among the top 10 movies and network TV shows in all of 2013. News stories on Latinos constitute less than 1% of news media coverage, and majority of these stories feature lawbreakers. Latino participation in front, and behind camera is extraordinarily low, which has helped create and continue this false narrative. *Coco* was so monumental for the Mexican culture because it helped contradict these false narratives, and gave voice to these underrepresented individuals.

Latinos in the US Today



**BUILD
THE WALL**

The importance of this movie goes beyond its colorful scenery, important moral lesson, and rich music. It adds an emotional texture to a light canvas to teach and redefine Mexico to a younger audience. The border between the living and the dead operates in a similar way to a customs department, and brings up inevitable problems regarding immigration laws. Recently following President Trump's election, and attempts to defame and deport Mexican immigrants, *Coco* was released to portray these innocent individuals in a new light. Since Mexican culture does not have a strong voice within mainstream media, this film and its success is monumental for Latino progress. The film came out a couple months after Trump had dismantled DACA (the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals immigration policy), a moment in which Latinos in America were being attacked, criminalized and questioned. The film *Coco* serves as bridging the cultural gap, educating people to respect and reverse misunderstandings.



Coco's Authenticity

The placing of countless references to specific practices and traditions is very deliberate in portraying Mexican culture. Mexicans usually appear in American cinema either as killers, bandits, migrants, or the help. *Coco* does something else entirely, a movie set in rural Mexico, rooted in popular Mexican culture in which not one single mention of crime or migration (other than the journey to the afterlife).

Coco's authenticity is immediately recognized by the way the characters speak. *Coco's* use of Spanglish, a hybrid language combining words from both English and Spanish, is evident throughout the film. Pixar picked locally famous singers and actors, which helped portray its Mexican accents organically, rather than a typical Hollywood studios ploy for the Hispanic audience.

Coco never needed to sell its authenticity to the viewer because the Mexico it represents feels as if it was created by people who understand and know the country. The town plaza, chaotic alleyways, dusty streets and bright orange of marigold show that the producers took time to get to know the country. It is very important to portray this country accurately because of the misconceptions many people have about Mexico.



Continued...

Another minor yet charming detail is Mexico's national soccer team jersey that one of the character wears throughout the film. This green adidas garment is immediately recognizable for most Mexicans and Latinos, regardless of how much interest one has in futbol. Pan dulce, a Mexican sweet bread is one of the few things that crosses all socioeconomic, geographical, and cultural boundaries in Mexico- it's found in street markets, fancy restaurants, from north to south.



Many Mexican icons appear during the Dia de los Muertos celebration in Coco, such as Frida Kahlo, a Mexican Artist who painted many portraits, inspired by the country's popular culture. El Santo, a famous *lucha libre* wrestler and movie star makes an appearance, as well as Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete and Maria Felix. These characters help represent the rich history of Mexico.



Importance and Timing of Coco

Pixar film makers are proud that their work has drawn such passionate reactions from Latinos and in Mexico, it has become the top-grossing movie of all time. The filmmakers goal was to ensure that Mexicans and Mexican Americans felt that their cultural traditions were respected. *Coco* provided a much needed cultural validation, and helped minimize prejudices. The power and impact of storytelling with regard to issues of race, ethnic groups, and communities of color has proved to push society to a place where policy has not reached.



Coco was released at a time where many Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans were not able and still are not able to travel to Mexico. Many of those individuals have not returned or visited in some time and start to forget details about their heritage. The timing is important not only to make these individuals feel empowered and proud at a time when they are being knocked down, but for perspectives to be changed.

Respecting Culture

Different cultures are not often shown on mainstream media because they are often misunderstood. *Coco* has many aspects that show Latin culture such as the **accents** and **language**. It is important to respect **spaces** such as an Ofrenda, the physical manifestation of the link between the living and the dead. These spaces allow individuals to express themselves the way they desire. This film helps **reappropriate** the Mexican culture in the United States. It is important not to question or create false identities for others based off of misunderstandings.

Mexican icons represented in *Coco*!



"A four-year-old kid, a five-year-old kid that is growing right now in the United States is growing up in a state of fear," said Garcia Bernal. "And this film will help for this kid to feel, you know, empower them. And make them feel like they have a much more complex culture."

Plot Synopsis and Reviews



The film's hero, twelve-year old Miguel Riviera lives in the small town of Santa Cecilia. He's a good hearted child who loves to play guitar and idolizes the greatest popular singer-songwriter of the 1920s and '30s, Ernesto de la Cruz, who was killed when a huge church bell fell on his head. But Miguel has to keep his love for music a secret because his family has banned its members from performing music ever since Miguel's great-great-grandfather left, abandoning his loved ones to selfishly pursue his dreams of stardom. At least that's the official story passed down through the generations. Despite his family's ban on music, young Miguel dreams of becoming an accomplished musician like his idol Ernesto de la Cruz. Desperate to prove his talent, Miguel finds himself in the stunning and colorful Land of the Dead. After meeting a charming trickster named Hector, the two new friends embark on an extraordinary journey to uncover the real story behind Miguel's family history.

"Pixar's Day-of-the-Dead gem pays loving tribute to Mexican culture with animation that brims over with visual pleasures, comic energy and emotional wallop." Peter Travers- Rolling Stone

"Enchanting and dazzling, *Coco* is a resplendent love letter to Mexico."
Claudia Puig- Reimexcla

Continued Reviews

"A love letter to Mexican traditions and Latino arts is welcome, innovative in using bits of Spanish without subtitles and, frankly, overdue." Colin Covert, Minneapolis Star Tribune

"Touching and heartfelt celebration of Mexican traditions and folklore"
Britton Peele, Dallas Morning News



"I'm Mexican, and all I can say is thank you Pixar. I just saw this movie and just remembered all my childhood with my grandparents. Mexico was represented beautifully: the music, the colors. This movie touched me in my soul and I cried a lot, I created an account just to say how good Pixar made everything, again gracias Pixar por tan hermosa película."

Reflection Questions:

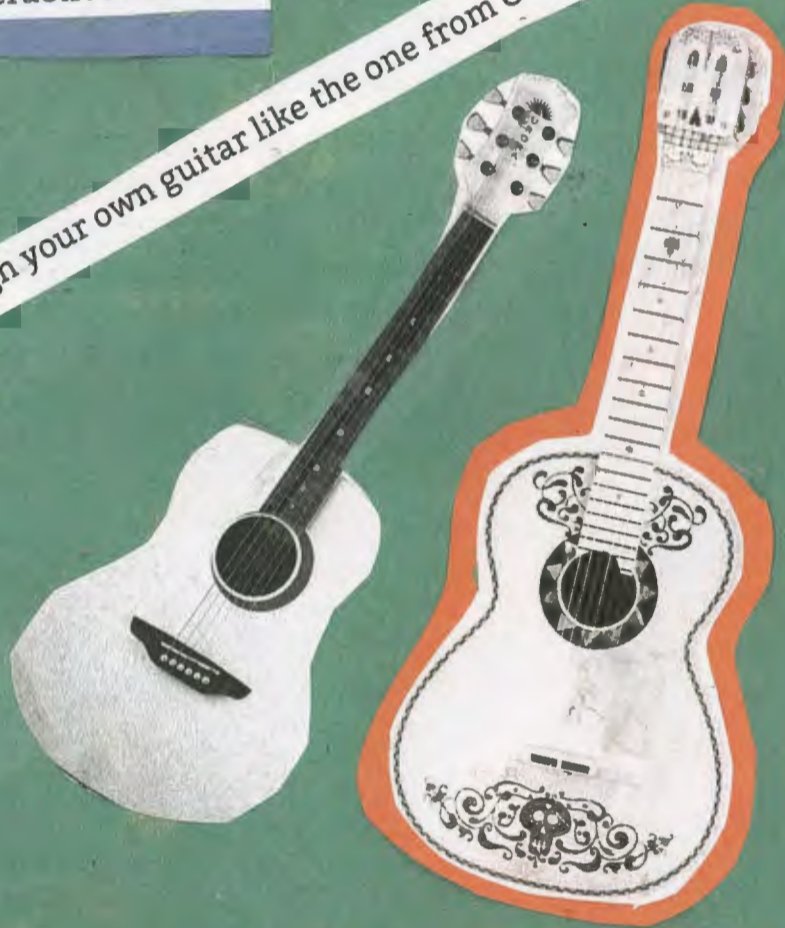
In what ways does the movie Coco help redefine and correct false narratives about other cultures?

What can you do specifically to help give voice to underrepresented individuals?



Interactive Section:

Design your own guitar like the one from Coco!



Awards and Cast

"Coco" garnered a variety of awards and nominations. Many of them for Best Animated Feature and Best Original Song. Coco received a combination of 70 nominations and awards. Here are only a few examples:

- National Board of Review- Best Animated Film 2017
- Academy Awards- Best Animated Feature, Best Original Song
- BAFTA- Best Animated Film
- Critics Choice Movie Award- Best Animated Feature, Best Song
- Annie Awards- Eleven Awards
- Producer Guild of America- Outstanding Producer (Animated)
- Visual Effects Society- Four Awards



All latino cast:

Anthony Gonzales as Miguel Rivera
Gael García Bernal as Héctor Rivera
Benjamin Bratt as Ernesto de la Cruz
Alanna Ubach as Mamá Imelda Rivera
Renée Victor as Elena Rivera
Ana Ofelia Murguía as Mamá Socorro "Coco"
Alfonso Arau as Papá Julio Rivera
Selene Luna as Tía Rosita Rivera,
Dyana Ortellí as Tía Victoria Rivera



Dia de los Muertos

Dia de los Muertos The Day of the Dead-is a holiday celebrated on November 1st, dedicated to the **remembrance** of ancestors. Although marked throughout Latin America, Dia de los Muertos is most strongly associated with Mexico, where the tradition originated. Spanish conquistadors brought Catholic influence to Latin America combined the holiday with the Catholic traditions. The holiday honors the dead with festivals and celebrations. Death is recognized as a natural part of the human experience, a continuum with birth, childhood, and growing up to become an impactful member of society. On November 1st and 2nd, the dead are also a part of the community, awakened from their eternal sleep to share these celebrations with their loved ones. On the first day, families remember children who have passed, and on the second, adults.

Dia de los Muertos celebrates the lives of the deceased with food, drink, parties, and activities that the dead enjoyed in life. The most familiar symbol of Dia de los Muertos are calaveras, the iconic skull that inspires the makeup and look of the holiday. Food, toys, favorite possessions and alcohol are set up at elaborate homemade altars called ofrendas.



Celebrations include live music, dancing and parades. Despite the morbid imagery, Dia de Los Muertos is about celebrating life, not mourning death. It is a joyous holiday, one that winks at death rather than crying over it.

Common Misconceptions about the Dia de los Muertos

- It's not a "Mexican" Halloween
- It's not a depressing or morbid holiday
- Wearing a calavera is not just a mask or decoration, it is a symbol of eternal cycle of life, death, and rebirth.
- It is celebrated not just in Mexico, but in all of Latin America
- It is not just a big party, it has spiritual and historical significance

"Día de Muertos," vs. "Día de los Muertos"

There is an ongoing debate over whether the correct name of the holiday is "Dia de Muertos" or "Dia de los Muertos." Usage seems to vary regionally. For example, in many Mexican media outlets and in Mexico City, it is commonly referred to as Dia de Muertos. In the United States and other parts of Mexico, the celebration is often called Dia de los Muertos, which is the literal translation of the English term "Day of the Dead". In order to reflect these variations and respect the fact that their are strong feelings on both sides.

