

Coco

Тайна Коко



Creator: Pixar Animation Studios
Walt Disney Pictures

Year: 2017

Duration: 105 min



Our Remarks:

Family! Family! Family! This is an unforgettable hymn to the family! AND - Villainy will not go unpunished! The film won two Academy Awards for Best Animated Feature and Best Original Song ("[Remember Me](#)").

Семья! Семья! Незабываемый гимн семье! И - Подлость и злодейство не останутся безнаказанными! Два Оскара в 2017 году - лучший анимационный фильм и лучшая оригинальная песня.

Be sure to read – article below.

Обязательно ПРОЧИТАТЬ - [Тайна Коко \(Coco\)](#) - Что надо знать и понимать: День Смерти (Day of the Dead), Земля мёртвых (The Land of the Dead), Офренда (Ofrenda) и т.д.

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9 Hidden Facts You Should Know Before Watching Pixar's Coco

Disney/Pixar's new movie *Coco* delves into the core of the tradition of the Day of the Dead by showing the story of Miguel and his adventure to the Underworld.

"The word death is not pronounced in New York, in Paris, in London, because it burns the lips. The Mexican, in contrast, is familiar with death... jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates it. It is one of his favorite toys and his most steadfast love. True, there is perhaps as much fear in his attitude as in that of others, but at least death is not hidden away [. . .]. Death [can be seen] as nostalgia, rather than as the fruition or end of life, [it] is death as origin. The ancient, original source is the grave, not a womb." -Octavio Paz-

This quote by Nobel Prize winner, and probably Mexico's most renowned author, couldn't be more accurate. As a Mexican, I lost count of how many times I've had to explain Day of the Dead and why we celebrate it. When I was living abroad and decided to place my *ofrenda*, I spent over two hours explaining to my roommate that I wasn't doing a satanic ritual. After this interesting cultural exchange, I realized something that's absolutely normal for me, and many other millions of Mexicans, might look strange for others outside the country. Even when the imagery has become quite popular internationally (you know, the sugar skulls), it's still quite hard to explain the nature of the festivity.

Disney/Pixar's new movie *Coco*, delves into the core of the tradition and makes it approachable for an international audience by showing the story of Miguel and his adventure to the world of the dead. The premiere of the movie, that took place during the last week of October in Mexico to match the Day of the Dead celebrations, has broken all the records in Mexico's box office despite the huge controversy and discontent the production created four years ago. It took six years for the creators to make the movie, and it was absolutely worth it: each frame is so detailed that even after watching it at least 10 times to get a tiny percentage of all the references and imagery that's used. The plot, the visual quality, the music, the characters so honestly portrayed, all of that makes the movie so relatable that becomes a way to honor a great country and its culture.

In 2013, Mexican media was filled with the news of Disney wanting to register the Day of the Dead for an upcoming project that intended to take that name as the title and that turned out to be *Coco*. People were extremely disgusted with the attempt of a foreign company appropriating one of their biggest traditions as well as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity. A petition in Change.org was created, gathering thousands of signatures. Besides forcing Disney to back off from their intentions, it made the movie's creators realize this was a tradition they couldn't take so lightly, and therefore they had to embrace and fully understand it, so it wouldn't end being just a stereotypical portrayal of a culture.

And to be honest they did a great job. The team made several long trips throughout many towns and cities in the country, spending some days at the homes of different families to really grasp their family interactions, and even had to have a Mexican expert on culture to make sure everything was portrayed in a realistic, respectful, and honest way. The result is a beautiful homage to an ancient tradition and a country so rich and so badly portrayed internationally in recent times. So, as you can imagine, there are some things that, without spoiling anything, you should know before watching the movie.

The *Ofrenda*



This is basically one of the key elements of the festivity, and naturally of the movie. The *Ofrenda*, or altar becomes some sort of bridge between the World of the Dead and ours. It's the place where the dead arrive to spend time with their living relatives. The elements that form the altar vary according to each state of the country. However, there are some that appear in every one of them, and the ones in the movie follow this idea. Adorned with cempasuchil flowers, the altar is centered on the photographs of the deceased relatives (which is an essential element of the movie). Besides these, we add a symbolic object that represents the person you're honoring. It could be their favorite food or drink, or even a small item that belonged to them. In some regions the iconic cut-tissue paper is used only for decorative purposes, but in others they're put cautiously so that the sound it makes with the wind can also help guide the spirits. Finally, some candles are arranged throughout the ofrenda to make it more visible, so they can find faster the *ofrenda* that belongs to their family.

Xoloitzcuintle



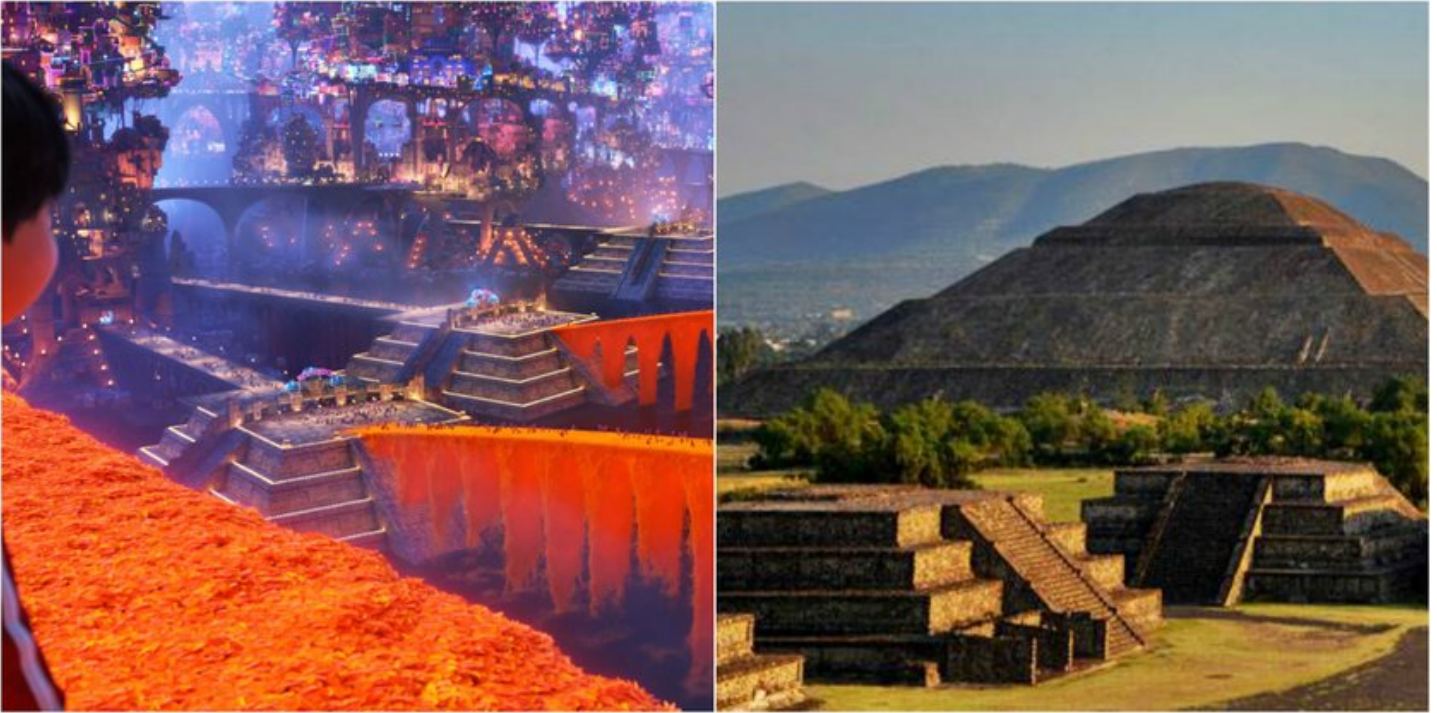
One of the cutest and funniest characters of the movie is Dante, a street xoloitzcuintle dog that Miguel befriends. The character was included very late in the production, once the creators understood the importance of this particular breed in the tradition. In pre-Columbian times, the xolo was thought to be a sacred animal sent by the gods to guide people to the Underworld (*Mictlan*) in the afterlife. Many traditional ofrendas include a small figurine representing the xolo so that the deceased can return safe to their world. Here in the movie, both the breed and the name are very straightforward on the dog's purpose, and as you might have seen in the trailer, this is the only living being that accompanies Miguel in his journey to the land of the dead.

Music



Although it's not a musical and Pixar movies aren't characterized by the use of musical segments in their films, here it plays an important role in the plot. Miguel dreams to become a great musician like his idol, Ernesto de la Cruz, considered the best Mexican musician of all times. Now, as part of their huge research, the creators decided to incorporate many of the traditional music genres of the country. Starting with the famous Mariachi, you can also listen to some huapango, ranchera, son jarocho, and the classic ballads inspired by the Golden Era of Mexican cinema. The soundtrack includes original songs written for the movie, as well as traditional folk pieces from the Mexican collective heritage.

Entrance to the Land of the Dead

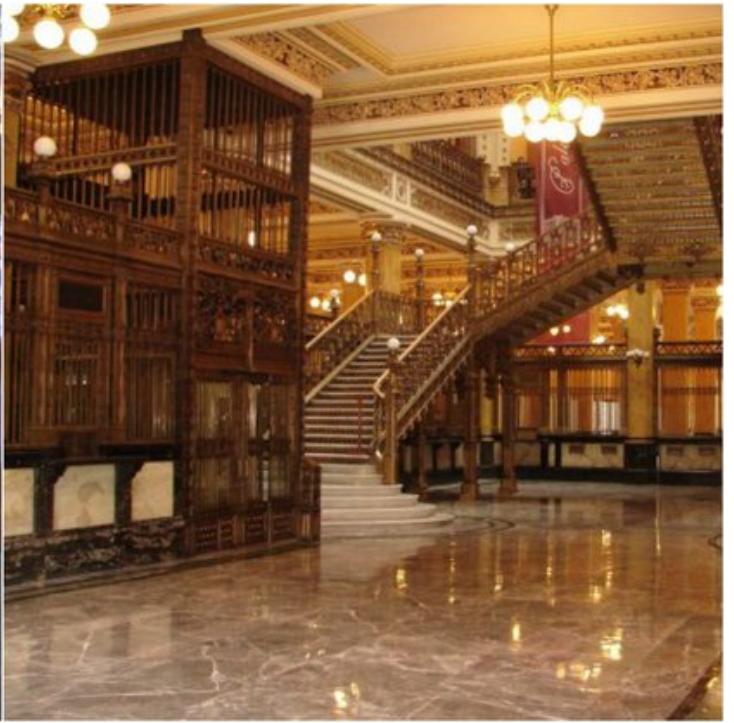


Also portrayed on the trailer, we can see that right next to the cemetery where the main celebrations take place, there are several bridges made entirely of cempasuchil petals. Naturally these can only be seen by the dead. The cempasuchil flower, also known in English as the Aztec marigold, has two purposes: its natural color works as a light that, together with its scent, guides the spirits to the *ofrenda*. In that way, these giant bridges connect with the petal road each family creates so they can reach their own *ofrenda*.

The Land of the Dead



Based on the idea that people die all the time, the land of the dead is in constant transformation. It's all based on towers that keep growing with the passing of time, so naturally, you can see some pyramids on the base, then some colonial architecture, and finally, on the top, more modern buildings. The whole land was inspired by the intricate streets of the colonial city of Guanajuato while many of the edifications resemble iconic buildings, like the pyramids from Teotihuacan, the Great Theatre of Mexico, Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts), and Palacio de Correos de Mexico (Postal Palace of Mexico City).



Church on Pyramids



At one point in the movie, we see a stage that represents all the history of Mexico, or at least the three main periods. As I previously said about the architecture of the Underworld, here you can see a great pyramid at the bottom and a huge colonial church at the top. The stairs of the pyramid and later the church are actually electric stairs representing modernity. Impressive isn't it? This isn't only a way to show the important periods of history, but also a way to represent how there are many churches all over the country that were actually built over pyramids. With the Conquest, the Spanish forced their religion into the indigenous population, and since they saw they used pyramids as sacred edifications, they decided to put Catholic churches at the top or right next to them.

Historical Characters



The movie is filled with historical reference to Mexican culture, and naturally, there are many cameos of historical characters. To start with, the character of Miguel's idol, Ernesto de la Cruz, was conceived as a musician of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. He was inspired by Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete, two of the most iconic actors and singers of the time, who by the way also appear in the movie with an awesome skeleton characterization.



The list of figures that appear is very extensive and probably not everyone will notice every one of them, at least until the DVD is released and you can pause it in every single frame. However, the most popular besides these two actors belonging to that age of Mexican cinema, are Cantinflas (comedian), actress María Félix, Dolores del Río, Agustín Lara, and the great Santo (the masked luchador). As for historical figures, you can see the leaders of the revolution Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa. Finally, there's a stellar apparition of the most iconic couple of artists, Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, the former having a great and brilliant scene.

Alebrijes



The Land of the Dead is filled with these characters called alebrijes. These have become icons of Mexico's folk art, and in the movie they play an important role as the spiritual guides of the deceased. They were originally created by a sculptor from Mexico City. After having a terrible fever and hallucinating with these colorful hybrid animals, he started creating sculptures resembling these creatures with paper mache.

Miguel's hometown, Santa Cecilia



Finally, we have to talk about the hometown of the Rivera family, also the birthplace of Ernesto de la Cruz. Inspired by many towns in the country, the name isn't just a random one. It was actually wittily selected after Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians. As we mentioned, music is crucial to the plot, and this wink adds to the wonderful symbology of music in the film.

The movie is a great *ofrenda* to many of our colorful and richest traditions. It's definitely an honest portrayal of Mexico and its culture, but also becomes a great guide for foreigners to understand the traditions and mindset of this country.
