The Day of the Dead
Aztec Religion

- Polytheism
- Principal Gods: “Ometecutli” & “Omecíhuatl”.
They thought their deities had tried to create the earth five times but they failed every time.

Five years in the creation. (Suns)
Creation years

1. "Nahui Ocelot". "Tezcatlipoca" ruled. Once he got angry at "Quetzalcoatl", he transformed himself into a jaguar and devoured the earth. It lasted 676 years.

2. "Nahui Ehecatl". "Quetzalcoatl" ruled. "Tezcatlipoca" attempted to defeat him by using strong winds. The earth and sun were destroyed by means of hurricanes. It lasted 364 years.

3. "Nahui Quihuitl". "Tlaloc" ruled. The earth was destroyed by intense volcanic rain. Humans were transformed into dogs, birds & butterflies. It lasted 312 years.

4. "Nahui atl". "Chalchiuhlicue" ruled. Humanity was destroyed by floods and the sky fell apart. Humans were transformed into fish.

5. Present time. "Quetzalcoatl".
Creation years

3. "Nahui Quihuitl". "Tlaloc" ruled. The earth was destroyed by intense volcanic rain. Humans were transformed into dogs, birds & butterflies. It lasted 312 years.
Worlds

- **Horizontal:**
  - The four cardinal points.

- **Vertical:**
  - Thirteen skies
  - Nine netherworlds (hells)
1. **The first sky** is the closest to the earth. The moon walks there and the clouds are formed.

2. **The second sky** is where the stars are. There live “Citlalatónac”, “Mixcóatl” (the milky way), and “Citlalicue”, who are the night sky gods, and the goddess named “falda de estrellas”.

3. **In the third sky**, the sun walks.

4. **In the fourth sky**, lives “Huixtocíhuatl”, the goddess of salt.

5. **In the fifth sky** is where the fire, shooting stars, & comets are.

6. **The sixth sky** is a green color.

7. **The seventh sky** is blue and “Huitzilopochtli” lives there. His temple, the big pyramid in Mexico, is called “Ilhuicatl Xoxouqui”, which means “blue sky”.

8. **In the eighth sky**, it is said that the obsidian knives grind themselves.
9. **In the ninth sky**, which is white, “Quetzalcóatl” lives.

10. **The tenth sky** is yellow and “Tezcatlipoca” lives in it.

11. **The eleventh sky** is red.

12. **This is the highest and double sky.** Here live “Ometecuhtli” & “Omecíhuatl”, along with “Tloque Nahuaque”, the creation gods. This double sky was also the dwelling place of all those children who died before they developed logical thinking. It also generates the souls of men, which are fed with the milk-dripping tree, and they are waiting for the present human kind to be destroyed and brought back to a new life.
Thirteen skies

- **Who lived in the thirteen skies?**
  - The souls of warriors who died in battle
  - Women who died while giving birth
  - People who died because of lightning, illness or accidents caused by water.
  - Babies that died before having use of reason.
  - Sacrificed people.
Underworld. “Mictlán”

1. **First**, every soul had to cross an abundant river, “Chignahuapan”, and to guarantee that it was possible, relatives buried the corps along with a dead dog so that it would help him to safely cross the river.

2. The soul has to go through two mountains that collide.

3. In the third place the soul has to go through an obsidian mountain.

4. In the fourth place it has to go through a place where a cold wind blows, as if sharp obsidian knives cut your skin.

5. After that it has to go through a place where several flags float.

6. The sixth place is a place where they hunt with arrows.

7. In the seventh place there are heart-eating beasts.

8. In the eighth place, the soul goes through narrow places between rocks.
Underworld. (Mictlán)

9. In the ninth and last of the underworlds, “Chignauhmictlán”, the souls arrive to rest, but first they have to give away all the presents they were buried with to the deities. Afterwards the souls simply just wait for the next return to the earth.

In order to help the souls during the transition to the other life, people used to place in the coffin, along with the corps, a series of amulets to let him resist all the magical challenges.
Underworld. “Mictlán”

To “Mictlán” went souls of people that had died because of:

- Illness
- Accident
- Murder
- Old Age
A Pre-Hispanic Funeral

They bent the corps’ legs in a sitting position, they tied the arms and legs with ropes, and finally, in a just-woven panel, they set the corps up with a beautiful piece of jade in its mouth, symbolizing its heart that has to be given away on its way to “Mictlán”, the residence of the souls. After that, they rolled the corps in a woven panel and tied it on a woven palm rug, “petate”.
A prehispanic funeral

At a big square they prepared a funeral and set the corps up surrounded by his life possessions: his shield, sword, etc.

The widow, sister or mother used to cook “tortillas”, beans and drinks.
A Pre-Hispanic Funeral

- The high priest would make sure that nothing was missing during the ceremony. At the end, he lit fire to the corps, and while it was burning, family and relatives of the dead person waited until the corps was consumed by the fire, crying and chanting.

- The ashes would be set up in a wooden box along with the piece of jade.
Aztecs believed that they were immortal and that death was just another new way of life.
The altar “la ofrenda”

- TZOMPAMTLI
- They used to set up the altar in a pyramid shape, (three levels) covered in different colored papers.
- First level: Picture of the dead person.
- Second level: food, flowers, candles and the copal.
The altar “la ofrenda”

- The third level; candles and flowers on the ground, a foliage path was made which was decorated with flowers and candles on the edges.
- When the Spanish came down to the Americas, Catholicism obligated the altars to suffer severe changes. Because of this new religion, such items as saints, christs, crucifixes, and fruit that didn’t exist at that time in the Americas, were then introduced.
The altar “la ofrenda”

- Nowadays the altar is a combination of Mexican-European cultures.
- The three levels in the altar represent the three divine characters (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- Tzempazuchitl flower is the traditional one for the death. It’s color is yellow and symbolizes the strength of sunlight.
The altar “la ofrenda”

- Oranges or fruits with flags on top symbolize the freedom that death gives.
- Favorite food dishes and personal objects of the person were believed to be carried with the dead person on its way to the other life.
The altar “la ofrenda”

The color purple is used to mean pain for the dead person; the foliage path is meant to be walked by the soul of the dead person; candles are meant to light the place; copal scares away the evil spirits.