

La Catrina - What does it mean? Where does the term come from?

We have seen the two images below in our novel episodes. The antique dealer showed Jamie and Carlos images of La Catrina (the two you see below). We also know that Jamie's great grandmother is referred to as La Catrina. When he showed Jamie the photograph of her great grandmother, the antique dealer said: ¿Quieren ver una Catrina de verdad? (una verdadera Catrina) - a real Catrina



Let's figure out what this is all about.

First of all, the term **La Catrina** is an old expression in Mexico referring to a **wealthy Mexican woman**. In fact, La Catrina is a take on the Spanish word "**caetrín**" which equates in English as someone who is elegantly or poshly dressed.

La Catrina is also an iconic image throughout the history of Mexican art

(two artists in particular: **José Posada** and **Diego Rivera**)



José Posada



Diego Rivera

First, let's talk about **José Posada** (1852-1913)

Since his death over a century ago, Jose Posada's work has steadily gained popularity with art lovers and **Día de los Muertos celebrators**. He is especially known for his **images of calaveras (skulls) and whimsical skeletons**.

During **Posada's time as an artist in Mexico, Porfirio Diaz was the dictator**.* Diaz's rule was NOT celebrated by the citizens.

Posada used his artistry (through engravings and illustrations) to demonstrate the **general disdain for Diaz's corrupt government**. Posada was instrumental in molding the negative public opinion of Porfirio Diaz.

Posada was regarded as the **voice of the common man**. He used his art to communicate the public's unhappiness and skepticism of the government.

Posada used the practice of **caricature**; he made **political figures resemble skeletons**. This was intended to be a satirical obituary. (mocking another's weaknesses; critical and often political)

*Remember: Porfirio Diaz was the dictator during the onset of the Mexican Revolution

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Grabados por José Posada



grabados = engravings
(a medium of artist presentation)



This is not only one of Posada's most famous works; it's also the most recognizable image of Día de los Muertos celebrations

La Catrina is an expression for a wealthy, high society Mexican woman. Posada made this image famous as a way to put down the wealthy (a satirical obituary). Remember - one of the problems in Mexican history during the time of the Revolution was that the rich kept getting richer and poor kept getting poorer.

The style and sentiment in Posada's art fueled an artistic movement in the years following his death in 1913.

Muralists **Diego Rivera** and José Clemente Orozco, who became leaders in the Mexican art community, **named Posada as a major influence on their work.**

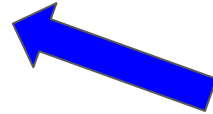
[Video - a must see for a quick explanation](#)
(1:36 min.)



DIEGO RIVERA

Famous Mexican artist influenced by José Posada. Diego Rivera was mostly known for his murals. And, he was married to Frida Kahlo.

A Dream of a Sunday Afternoon
in Alameda Park



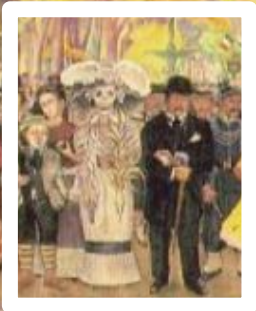
1947-48

This is one of his most famous murals.

Fresco

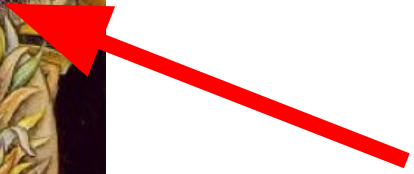
Museo Mural Diego Rivera, Mexico City

This mural is referenced in our novel, La Catrina





Yes, that's Frida Kahlo



Here is Posada's influence - the iconic Catrina image



This is Diego Rivera



This is a portion of that famous mural. It has become a popular poster. This is one of the photos that the antique dealer showed Jamie and Carlos as he was describing the term “La Catrina.”