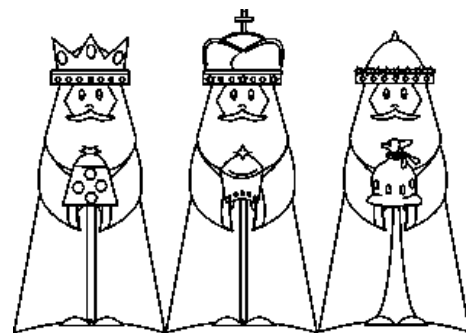


Name: _____

Día de Reyes

Twelfth Night and Three Kings Day

Today, January 6th, is the last of the 12 days of Christmas and marks the end of the holiday season. In Mexico, Spain and parts of Italy, it is a special day—known as Three Kings Day (El Día de Reyes).



The day commemorates the three kings who are said to have traveled from distant lands in the east to bring gifts to the infant Jesus. According to tradition, they made their way to Bethlehem riding on camels and following a bright star that moved across the sky.

A special cake, called *Rosca de Reyes* (King's Cake) is eaten on the holiday. It is filled with custard, or fruit and nuts, and is formed in the shape of a wreath to look like a crown.

In countries where Three Kings Day is celebrated, January 6—not Christmas—is the primary day for gift giving. On the night before the holiday, called Twelfth Night, children in Mexico set out shoes or baskets (made from shoe boxes) filled with grass for the kings' camels. In the morning, the grass has been replaced with gifts left by the kings.

In Italy, the gifts are brought, not by the Three Kings, but by an old woman wearing a black shawl, torn shoes, and ragged clothes. Her name is Befana, and some say she is a witch.



On Twelfth Night, Befana travels through Italy on her broomstick, visiting the homes of children while they sleep. She brings sweets and small presents to the good ones and leaves a lump of coal for those who have been bad. Before leaving, she sweeps the house with her broom.

In recognition of Three Kings Day, we are going to read an Italian folktale that explains why Befana rides on a broom to deliver gifts to children on Twelfth Night.