



THE TINY
LATINX

PRESERVATION TOOLKIT

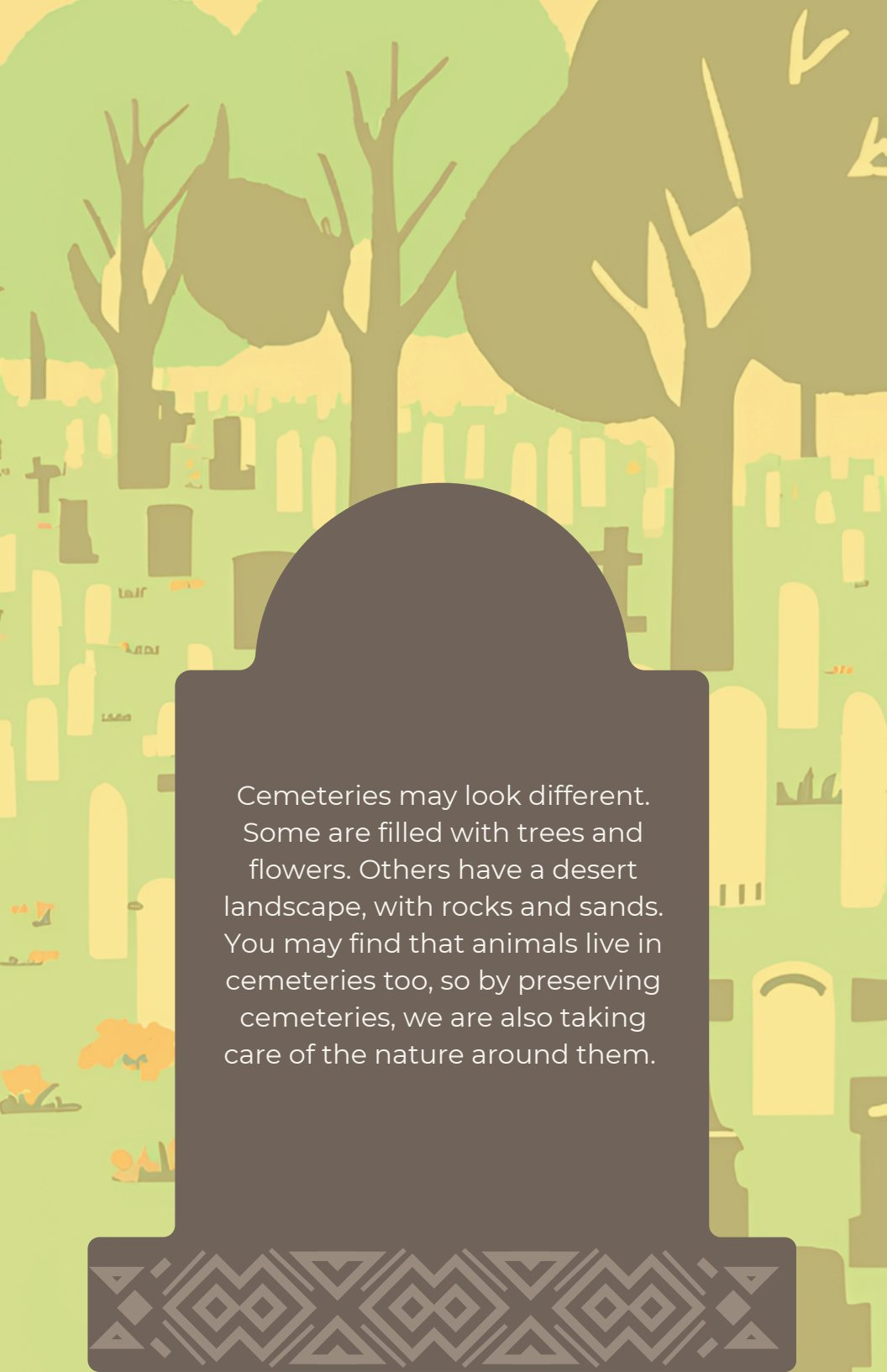
Cemetery Conservation Edition



WHY DO WE PRESERVE CEMETERIES?

Cemeteries are a place where bodies are laid to rest. They are like outdoor history books.

When we visit them, we can learn about people who lived long ago and what life was like back then. It's a way to make history come alive! When we help care for cemeteries, we show respect for those who have passed away. It's a way of saying, "We remember you," and that can help us feel connected to our families and community.



Cemeteries may look different. Some are filled with trees and flowers. Others have a desert landscape, with rocks and sands. You may find that animals live in cemeteries too, so by preserving cemeteries, we are also taking care of the nature around them.

Multiple types of gatherings can occur in cemeteries. Community may gather as a symbol of remembrance, resistance, or even as a part of a celebration to honor the life of a deceased loved one. So, you might see a lot of different feelings being shown in cemeteries: happy, sad, anger, even laughter! It is also okay if it is a mix of these emotions.





Depending on the cemetery, it may have statues, tombstones, and other interesting art. Through these features, we may get to learn the stories of the people who are buried there.



LATINXS AND CEMETERIES



Different cultures have unique and meaningful ways of preserving cemeteries that blend traditions, rituals, and honor their ancestors. Some friends may honor their loved ones quietly, others may host respectful and colorful gatherings in the cemetery! We are all a little different.

Does your family have a special way they honor burial sites? If so, write about it here:

Families in **Mexico and Central America**

celebrate *el Día de Muertos* by visiting cemeteries to honor, clean, and decorate the graves with flowers, alters, candles, and pictures.



In **Puerto Rico**, families visit cemeteries often to tidy up graves and bring fresh flowers.



In **Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras**, people celebrate *El Día de los Santos* by going to cemeteries, cleaning the graves, and decorating them.



In **Argentina and Chile**, families plant flowers and clean headstones all year.



PEOPLE ARE BURIED IN A LOT OF DIFFERENT WAYS..

Before a person dies, they might request a specific way to be laid to rest. Their request may be a way to honor their beliefs or culture.

Each of these ways shows how different cultures and families honor the people they love.

Burial in the ground

Is when someone is placed in a coffin and buried underground.

Traditional Cremation

is when the body is turned into ashes by fire.

Water Cremation

is when water and chemicals gently turn the body into liquid.

During a **sky burial**, the body is placed in a high place, like a mountain, for birds to take.

During **Mummification** the body is wrapped and preserved, like in ancient Egypt.

Crypts are a small room underground where a body is placed for protection.



Tombs

are special rooms above ground where bodies are placed.

A **burial at home** is when the body is buried in a special place on family land.

During a **gentle water burial** the body is placed in water with low heat, turning it into a liquid.

During **freeze-drying**, the body is frozen and turned into small particles.

In a **tree burial** the body is put in a special pod under a tree, to help a tree grow.

Leaving the body to nature is when the body is placed outside where nature can take care of it.

During a **burial at sea** the body is placed in a special cloth or heavy coffin, to rest under the water.

A natural burial in the ground uses earth-friendly materials without chemicals.

Whether it's in the ground, at sea, or even in space, the way we say goodbye is very special.



PRESERVING ABANDONED CEMETERIES

An abandoned cemetery is one that has not been taken care of for a long time.

Grass grows wild, headstones might fall over, and there might not be anyone visiting or keeping the place safe and clean. This can happen for different reasons: people move away, time passes, there is no money for upkeep. All of this leads to the cemetery being forgotten, which feels like the people buried they're being forgotten as well.

Even if a cemetery has been abandoned, it is still a very special place because it holds the memories of people who helped build their communities. But some people, like preservationists or families, try to help clean and restore these cemeteries to show respect for those who came before us.



OLD CEDAR CREEK MEXICAN CEMETERY

In 2021, a woman, named Pat Cunningham, found flowers near her home that led her to discover gravestones. This special cemetery in Cedar Creek, Texas, holds the graves of people who lived there over 100 years old, with many having Spanish last names.

When Mrs. Cunningham learned that developers wanted to build over the land, she worked hard to protect it by marking the cemetery's borders and building a fence around it.

Mrs. Cunningham has worked really hard for the cemetery to be recognized as a historical site to make sure it's safe. Now, she's waiting for approval from the Texas Historical Commission. By saving the cemetery, Mrs. Cunningham and the community are keeping the history and memories of the people buried there alive.



TINY HANDS, BIG IMPACT

Each cemetery is unique and special to the community it serves, and you can help make sure the cemeteries in your area stay beautiful and cared for.

Here are some ways you can get involved in preserving cemeteries:

Learn About History

Start by learning the stories of the people buried in the cemetery. Ask your favorite adults to help learn about the history of the cemetery.

Add to Digital Cemeteries

When visiting a cemetery, ask for permission to photograph gravesites to add to a digital cemetery. A digital cemetery is a collection of online records and photos of graves, helping people learn about history and find information about their ancestors easily.



Clean-Up Days

Some preservation groups organize "clean-up" days they help pick up trash, pull weeds, and make sure the cemetery looks nice. You can ask them how to be part of the team!

Plant Flowers

Plant flowers around the gravestones to make the cemetery look peaceful and welcoming. This also helps show respect for those who are buried there.

Help Raise Awareness

Talk to your friends, family, or school about why the cemetery is important. Maybe you can start a project to get more people involved.

Participate in Memorial Events

Some communities have special days where people come together to remember those buried in the cemetery. Participate by attending or even placing flowers or flags on the graves.

Big or small, you can make a difference!



