Día de los Reyes Magos
el 6 de enero
Prácticas, Productos, Perspectivas
Three Kings’ Day...

- is celebrated January 6th
- celebrates the arrival in Bethlehem of the Three Kings who followed a special star for 12 days.
• This day is referred to as the **Epiphany**.
  
  – The epiphany commemorates the **kings’ journey** from the east to **Bethlehem** to see a **newborn king**.
Ancient tradition and writings state that the kings brought three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

According to traditions taught in the Spanish-speaking world, on this day the Three Kings revealed Jesus to the world as King.
The Spaniards brought the tradition with them to the New World in the 7th century.

The kings’ names are:
- MELCHOR (Melchior)
- GASPAR
- BALTASAR (Balthazar)
The word “Mago” comes from the Persian word magu, meaning magician.

– The Magi were members of a priestly caste of ancient Medes and Persians.
El Rey Melchor

• Melchor, the oldest Magi, was the Sultan of Arabia.

• He had a long, white beard.

• His gift was GOLD.
ORO
¿Por qué el oro?

- GOLD was used a great deal by the Hebrews in Temple worship.
- GOLD was an article of commerce.
- GOLD symbolized royal status.
El Rey Baltasar

• Baltasar was a Nubian (Ethiopian) King.
• He dressed in exquisite robes.
• His gift was MYRRH.
MYRRH is a precious and aromatic resin from the bark of thorny African trees.

Extracting MYRRH was a painful ordeal.

MYRRH symbolized suffering.
la MIRRA
la MIRRA
El Rey Gaspar

- Gaspar was Emperor of the Orient.
- His clothes were gilded in gold.
- His gift was FRANKINCENSE.
INCIENSO (frankincense)
Frankincense is...

• an exceedingly **aromatic gum**.

• a sacred incense for **Temple worship**.

• a priceless gift that symbolizes **prayer**.

¿Por qué el incienso?
INCIENSO
INCIENSO
When do the festivities begin?

This annual celebration surrounding the arrival of the Three Kings begins on the evening of January 5 for the Three Kings’ Parade.
el DESFILE
• The Cabalgata (desfile) de los Reyes Magos begins on January 5 and continues on January 6 with the celebration of the Epiphany.
• People liven up the streets with **festive lights**.

• **Nativity scenes** are set up in various locations.

• **Holiday music** helps maintain the festive atmosphere.
• The kings ride upon horses or elaborate floats and throw candies down to the children lining the street.
• The children ask the kings for presents.
Children, families and entire cities throughout Spain and the Spanish-speaking world celebrate this major holiday.

The tradition is older and more celebrated in the Spanish world than Santa’s visit on Christmas Eve.
• After Christmas a statue of a Rey is placed as a centerpiece on the dining room table.

• The kids cut grass or greenery on January 5th and put it in a box under their bed.

• The next morning a small gift from Los Reyes is found in the box.
Los Reyes Magos is a deeply held tradition.

Their image is highly treasured and is prevalent in the art of the island...
The Catholic Church declared the Magi Saints. Each was given his own Day of Feast.
On the days after the Epiphany the Octavas and Octavitas are celebrated. There are 8 days (Octavas) then 8 more days (Octavitas) of religious celebrations. The celebrations end late January.
• The children write letters to the Three Kings and ask for gifts.

• They attach their letters to colorful balloons and release them.
en México...
• On January 5\textsuperscript{th} (the eve), figurines of the Three Kings are added to nativity scenes.

• Children place shoes under their beds so the Three Kings will leave gifts for them.
Grass or hay and a bucket of water are left outside for the Three Kings’ camels.

Cookies and milk are left for the kings.
en México...
la Rosca de Reyes
Three Kings’ Bread

Oval sweetbread with candied fruit
Datos Importantes
The ancient writings from the Old and New Testaments do not...

• name the kings or tell how many

• tell who gave what gift

• tell the time it actually took to travel from the far east to Bethlehem. (Speculation is 2 yrs.)
Bible scholars believe there may have been an army that accompanied the kings. Why?

- The journey was long and perilous. An army would protect them.
- King Herod the Great (Herod 1) of Judea, a vicious king, did not harm the kings.
• Herod was a pro-Roman king.

• He was called “great” not for his kindness; rather for his massive building programs in Jerusalem (he re-built the Jewish Temple) and made magnificent the port city of Caesarea.

• He murdered many. (Including two sons)