

Dead of Winter: a Teen Zombie Program

By Sarah Howison

Supplies:

- Knock-off Barbie dolls (Hobby Lobby: \$2.99 each)
- Barbie clothes (donated or purchased at Goodwill)
- Tempera paints
 - All colors, but especially green, black, white, and red.
- 1 brain ice-cube mold (from thinkgeek)
- 1 brain Jell-o mold (also from thinkgeek)
- 2-3 packets of lime Jell-o
- 1 gallon Hawaiian Punch
- 1 2-liter pink lemonade
- Tacky glue
- Construction paper
- Model Magic or Play-Doh for accessories
- Butcher paper or plastic cloth to protect tables.
- Pipe cleaners
- Random craft supplies from your cabinet—in case inspiration strikes!

Approximate cost: \$70

What? A craft program dedicated to all things zombie!

Who? Teens and tweens in Bethel—ages 12-18. Total signed up: 11. Total arrived: 12!

- I picked a lucky day. The high school was having Spirit Week before their Winter Homecoming, and my program occurred on "occupation day," where you dress as what you want to grow up to be. Half of the group showed up *dressed as zombies*, complete with "stitches" drawn in eyeliner and fake blood on their clothes.

Why? Zombies are everywhere!

- Movies: *Zombieland*, *Shaun of the Dead*
- TV Shows: *The Walking Dead* (based on a graphic novel series)
- Books: *Rot and Ruin*, *Forest of Hands and Teeth*, *Bad Taste in Boys*, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, *The Zombie Survival Guide*
- Graphic Novels: *The Walking Dead*

Decorations: I put out a display of the library's zombie books for the teens to browse while their zombies were drying. The most popular one in the group was *Zombie Cupcakes*, and I got a number of requests to do a zombie dessert program!

Preparations: one day before the program.

- Cook up a double batch of lime Jell-o (using the jigglers instructions) and fill the brain mold. Refrigerate overnight.
- Fill the brain ice-cube molds with pink lemonade and freeze.
 - If the ice cubes want to stick in the mold, run warm water over the bottom of the mold.

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On the day of the program:

- Cover the working surface with butcher paper or a plastic tablecloth—zombies are messy creatures!
- Remove Jell-o brain from mold and place onto a large plate.
- Take pink brain ice-cubes and float them in a punch bowl or carafe of Hawaiian Punch.
 - Do this right before the program so that the brains don't melt before they can be seen!

Set up a few guidelines before you begin. For example, one of our rules is that all zombies must be decent. Their clothes can be ragged, or made out of construction paper, but they still have to be *clothed*. The other rules are all pretty basic: no running, be careful with the scissors, etc.

I found that teens need very little guidance when making zombies—they're far more creative (and gruesome) than I expected! Pipe cleaners are helpful for holding dismembered parts together, and a braided segment of red yarn makes excellent entrails.

We used Styrofoam bowls to mix our paints—most people preferred a green mixed with some black and white for a nice rotten olive tone. Pure white made great bone and teeth accents. (A dot of white in an otherwise black eye gives your zombie a terrifying thousand-yard stare.)

Be warned! Giving zombies a suitably ratty haircut is *messy*—have the teens give Barbie a trim over a trash can, rather than at the table. (Nobody wants Barbie hair in their zombie paint.)

Once the zombies are done and the paint is drying, it's time for snacks! Be sure to get a few pictures as the teens demolish the Jell-o brain.

During snacktime, you can work in a little zombie survival guidance, including the importance of establishing a Zombie Preparedness Plan. Some questions may include—

- Where will you go when the zombies take over? (Grocery stores, malls, and office buildings all have good and bad points)
- What is your preferred anti-zombie weapon? (Omit if you don't want to know just how much teens know about assault weapons.)
- Fast vs. slow zombies and survival tactics for each
 - Slow zombies: Run, hide, fight.
 - Fast zombies: Scream, pray.
- Favorite zombie books or movies
 - Now's your chance to sneak in a quick booktalk or two!

Follow up

- If possible, keep the zombie books displayed for a while after the program. Teens that have their hands full at the end of the program might come back for the books.

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Braains!



Did someone say "brains"?



Brain juice



Eat your brains!



You're Next!



Sarah's Sample Zombie