

Unit 1 New Year Celebration



Introduction

All over the world, people welcome the New Year for it is one of the oldest holidays. Most New Year celebrations focus on family and friends. It is a time to reflect on the past and envision a bright future. In different countries, the ways that people celebrate the New Year are somehow not the same; and even in the same country, adults and children may have many different ways of welcoming the New Year. In this unit, you will know more about the New Year traditions in different countries, and learn about the differences and similarities between different cultures.

Aims

In this unit you will learn:

- ★ to acquire more information about the New Year traditions in different countries;
- ★ to use proper pronouns in your description;
- ★ to talk about the unique New Year traditions in your hometown;
- ★ to do some traditional culture research together with your group;
- ★ to discuss the differences and similarities between different cultures.

Whatever your feelings are, do some warming-up exercises first.
Let's move!



Starting Steps

Brainstorming

Can you list some significant festivals in China?
What do you and your family usually do on these festivals?
Among these festivals, which do you like best? Why?
Are there any unique New Year traditions in your hometown?

Situational Response

Do you know the following foods for festivals?



Try to tell your partner something you know about the traditional foods for festivals from the above pictures. If you know none of them, try to ask the questions about them. Now follow me.


Can you list some traditional food for festivals in China?
What do you and your family usually have for dinner in the New Year?
Among these foods, which do you like best? Why?
Are there any unique foods in your hometown?



Information Input

Information

Ancient New Years

 The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4,000 years ago. In the years around 2,000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has neither astronomical nor agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Babylonian New Year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison.



The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but various emperors continually tampered with their calendar so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

Questions

Talk about these questions.

1. When and where was the celebration of the New Year first observed?
2. Why do people make January 1 to be the New Year? Does it have any astronomical or agricultural significance?
3. When was the Julian Calendar established?

Pair Work

From the passage above you've acquired some information about why and when the Europeans celebrated the New Year in ancient times. Do you know anything about the history of the New Year in China? Now work with your partner to talk about this topic.

If you don't have any idea about the history of the New Year in China, you may talk about the history of other Chinese traditional festivals as well.

Follow this:

Foreigner: Can you tell me something about the history of the Chinese New Year?

Chinese: Yes. In ancient China, people believed a kind of horrible monster called "Nian" would come out at the beginning of each spring.

Foreigner: Really? It's terrible. How do you celebrate the New Year then?

Chinese: We usually have four days off, so we would meet friends and go home to stay with our family members.

Foreigner: What do you have for dinner?

Chinese: In northern China, people will have dumplings. In southern China, family members will gather together and have a good dinner. We will prepare many kinds of delicious foods.

Foreigner: It makes my mouth water. I'd like to have a chance to join you.

Chinese: You are welcome.

Group Work

In this part you have to share the information with your classmates. If you lack this information, you should ask your classmates for them or consult the books concerned or these web pages:

<http://www.theholidayspot.com/newyear/>

<http://wilstar.com>

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/features/festivals/>



Tips for Learning

In this part, you are required to speak more freely by applying the tips provided.

Tip 1

As we know, the more you talk, the more progress you will make. By the way, you have to make sure that you must seize the very chance to increase your understanding of active uses of vocabulary that can help you express your ideas more precisely and effectively.

Word Power Tips

1. If you come up with a new word while reading a passage, do not stop instantly to check the dictionary. Try to guess its meanings from the context first.
2. If you cannot find out the meanings of the words and expressions in your dictionaries, never forget that the Internet is always a powerful tool to look for what you want.

Apply Tip 1

Now let's get to learn more about the New Year celebrations in different countries. Read, speak, and practice! Read the following passage and pay great attention to the active use of vocabulary. Before you read, go over the "Word Power Tips" above.

New Year Traditions in Some Other Asian Countries

In Korea the first day of the lunar new year is called Sol-nal. This is for families to renew¹ ties and prepare for the new year. On New Year's Eve, people place rakes² or sieves³ on their doors and walls to protect their families from evil spirits in the new year. Everyone dresses in new clothes the following morning, symbolizing a fresh beginning, and gathers at the home of the eldest male family member. Ancestral memorial rites are held, then the younger generation bows⁴ to elders in the family. They wish them good health and prosperity in the coming year. The elders often then give newly minted⁵ money or gifts afterwards. New Year's Day food includes a bowl of rice cake soup ttokkuk. Koreans believe eating this soup will add an extra year of age to their life. Korean age is actually calculated at the New Year. Everyone becomes a year older on New Year's Day!

Celebration of the Japanese New Year (Oshogatsu) occurs on January 1, as with Western nations. However, the Japanese people also observe some beliefs from their religion, called Shinto⁶. For happiness and good luck, Japanese people hang a rope of straw across the front of their homes. They believe it keeps the evil spirits away. Japanese people begin to laugh the moment the New Year begins, so they will have good luck the whole year.

The Thai New Year festival is called Songkran and lasts for three days from 13 to 15 April according to the Gregorian calendar. The customs are many such as people throw water over one another, under the guise of that it will bring good rains in the coming year and all the Buddha⁷ statues or images are washed. They visit the monastery⁸ to pray and offer gifts of rice, fruit, sweets and other foods for the monks. Another custom to bring good luck is to release birds from their cages or fish from their bowls. They carry a fish bowl to the river to release their fish all at the same time.

Ⓐ *Define the following words and phrases.*

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. renew | 5. mint (<i>vt.</i>) |
| 2. rake | 6. Shinto |
| 3. sieve | 7. Buddha |
| 4. bow (<i>vi.</i>) | 8. monastery |

Ⓑ *Group discussion (4-5 students).*

1. Tell your group members about the traditional New Year celebration in your hometown. Don't forget to use proper pronouns in your description.
2. If you know more about the New Year celebrations around the world, please share the information with your group.
3. Make a simple cultural research on festivals based on what you've discussed.

You may use the blank sheet below to help you organize your research:

<p>Cultural Research on Traditional Festivals</p> <p>Class _____ Group _____ Name _____ Date _____</p> <p>My group includes _____ people.</p> <p>I come from _____ (your hometown). In my hometown, people usually do _____ to celebrate the New Year, and my favorite food/ song/ activity for the New Year is _____.</p> <p>Besides the new year, I think the way that people in my home town to celebrate _____ (a festival) is also unique. On that day people usually _____, and the traditional foods for that special day are _____.</p> <p>My group member, _____ (name), comes from _____ (his/her hometown). He/She told us that...</p> <p>From the discussion, we've learnt that the traditional New Year celebrations are not the same in different regions. And I find the most interesting differences are: _____. And there are also some similarities: _____.</p>

If you haven't got a clear idea on how to gather information for your research, you may skip this part and do the following part first.

 **Tip 2**

Tips for Asking Questions

1. Try to state your questions briefly and clearly in your oral English.
Complicated long sentences are not suggested to use.
2. When other people are answering your questions, listen patiently and take some notes to help you get the main points of their answers.

Apply Tip 2

Now you may use these tips to work with your group members and do your cultural research. Don't forget to use proper pronouns in your questions and answers.



Creative Activities

Structure

Ⓐ Give different forms of the following pronouns.

I you he she it they

e.g. : I/ my/ mine/ me/ myself/..

Ⓑ Read these sentences. Pay attention to the pronouns used in the sentences.

1. My favorite food for the New Year is dumpling.
2. What do you and your family usually do on Christmas?
3. I like to dress myself in red.
4. That red packet is for your sister, and this is yours.

Expression Focus

New Year Recipe

Form a New Year recipe by listing your family members' favorite food for the New Year. Use proper pronouns in your sentences. e. g.

My favorite food is _____, and my Dad likes it too. But it is too sweet for my Mom, and I think _____ would go with her stomach. ...

Answer the following questions in oral English and then write them down.

1. When does the Chinese New Year begin?
2. Why do Chinese people clean their home before the New Year?
3. Why do Chinese people stay up late in the eve of the New Year?



Extension

In this part of the text, you are required to extend your study by all kinds of the activities.

A *Work in groups.*

1. If you haven't finished your cultural research, challenge yourself and try to finish it in time.
2. Make a 3-minute speech to tell your group members what you've learnt in your cultural research.

B *Read the following passage and then answer the follow-up questions.*

For Luck in the New Year

Traditionally, it was thought that one could affect the luck they would have throughout the coming year by what they did or ate on the first day of the year. For that reason, it has become common for folks to celebrate the first few minutes of a brand new year in the company of family and friends. Parties often last into the middle of the night after the ringing in of a new year. It was once believed that the first visitor on New Year's Day would bring either good luck or bad luck the rest of the year. It was particularly lucky if that visitor happened to be a tall dark-haired man.

Traditional New Year foods are also thought to bring luck. Many cultures believe that anything in the shape of a ring is good luck, because it symbolizes “coming full circle”, completing a year’s cycle. For that reason, the Dutch believe that eating donuts on New Year’s Day will bring good fortune.



Many parts of the U.S. celebrate the new year by consuming black-eyed peas. These legumes are typically accompanied by either hog jowls or ham. Black-eyed peas and other legumes have been considered good luck in many cultures. The hog, and thus its meat, is considered lucky because it symbolizes prosperity. Cabbage is another “good luck” vegetable that is consumed on New Year’s Day by many. Cabbage leaves are also considered a sign of prosperity, being representative of paper currency. In some regions, rice is a lucky food that is eaten on New Year’s Day.

1. What kinds of traditional New Year foods are mentioned in the passage above?

2. What kinds of traditional New Year foods do you and your family eat during New Year’s time?

3. What is the shape of a donut? (You may draw a picture to show its shape roughly.)

4. Why are cabbage leaves considered a sign of prosperity?

③ Look at the questionnaire below. Help each other to fill in the blanks.

Questionnaire

☺ Can you list some Chinese local festivals?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

☺ Can you list some international festivals that are celebrated in more than one country?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

☺ What are your favorite New Year foods?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

④ *Public speaking.*

Challenge yourself. Make a 5-minute speech about the Spring Festival based on the following outlines:

- ☐ General information
- ☐ An important festival
- ☐ Main reasons
- ☐ Preparation
- ☐ Celebration

Tips for public speech:

At the heart of every speech is a message. Your job as a public speaker is to pass that message to your audience and in doing so, convey a theme, evoke an emotion or elicit a response — be it emotional.



Work Sheet

Activity 1 Small group discussion

Based on what you've learnt in this unit, discuss the differences and similarities of the New Year Celebrations in different regions.

Activity 2 Presentation

Share the information you've gathered from your cultural research with your class. Use your research paper to help you organize your speech.

Activity 3 Description

Now suppose you are given a 7-day holiday for the coming New Year, make a plan for your holiday and tell your partner how you wanna spend these days to celebrate the New Year.

Jot down your partner's good sentences or expressions here:



Evaluation

A *On a scale of ★★★★★, circle one, two or all of them and rate how well you have mastered the goals set at the beginning of the unit.*

★★★★★ to acquire more information about the New Year traditions in different countries

★★★★★ to use proper pronouns in your description

★★★★★ to talk about the unique New Year traditions in your hometown

★★★★★ to do some traditional culture research together with your group

★★★★★ to discuss the differences and similarities between different cultures

If you've given yourself ★★★ or fewer on any of these goals,

ask your partner for help,

talk to your teacher with your difficulties,

practice more and reflect on what you have learnt in this unit,

find out more information by consulting the reference,

ask the elders in your family for help to get more information about how the New Year is celebrated in the traditional way in your hometown.

B *Answer the following questions: Put a “✓” in the square.*

◆ Do you find the topic of this unit interesting? Yes No

◆ Can you complete the work set in the unit? Yes No

◆ Do you find the materials in this unit useful? Yes No

◆ Do you think your traditional cultural research is successful? Yes No

◆ Do you think you have made progress after learning this unit? Yes No