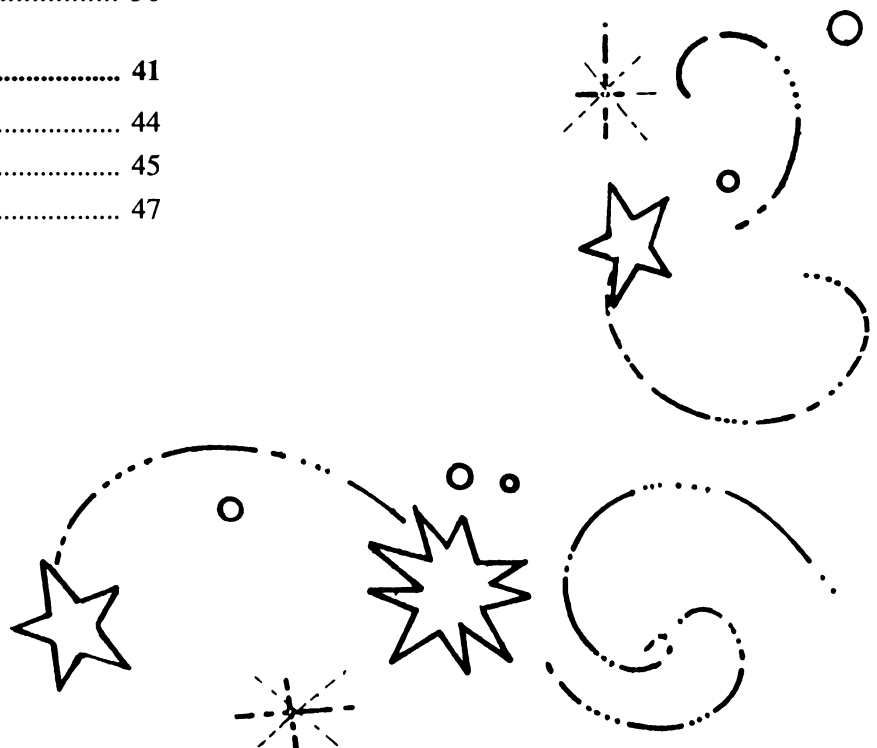


Table of Contents

Introduction	3	Spring Holidays	49
Kinds of Holidays	3	Jewish High Holy Days: Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur	52
Teaching Strategies	4	Halloween	54
Making it Work in Your Classroom	6	All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day	58
Student-to-Student Learning	6	Moveable and Personal Holidays	60
Summer Holidays	8	Different Calendars	61
Hanukkah or Chanukah, the Jewish Festival of Lights	11	Muslim Special Days	64
Bodhi Day or Buddha's Enlightenment	13	Ramadan, the Ninth Month or the Month of Fasting	65
Summer Solstice	15	Eid al-Fitr, the end of the Ramadan Fast	66
Christmas, the Birth of Jesus Christ	17	Eid al-Adha, the Festival of Sacrifice	67
New Year's Eve	20	Milad-an-Nabi, the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad	68
Pongal, the Indian Rice Harvest Festival	21	Celebrating the Historical Events of Islam	69
Sun Nin, the Chinese New Year	23	Personal Holidays	77
Nirvana Day or Buddha's Death	25	Culminating Activity	79
Autumn Holidays	27	Multicultural Fair	80
International Women's Day	30	Bibliography	84
Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ	32	Answer Key	85
Passover, the Jewish Festival of Freedom	36		
Vesak: Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment, and Death	38		
Winter Holidays	41		
Winter Solstice	44		
Bastille Day	45		
Hiroshima Day	47		



Introduction

In many countries throughout the world, one holiday follows quickly on the heels of another. This is especially true of countries with a rich cultural diversity. Individuals from all over the world bring their holidays, holy days, and celebrations with them. Some of these holidays stay the same and some change because they are being celebrated in a new place, but either way they remain important to the people who celebrate them.

It is fun to know from where the old, established holidays came, and it is interesting to learn about the new ones that are becoming part of the cultural mix. Understanding what people are celebrating and why is helpful to the big job of getting along with people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

The emphasis on cultural pluralism has always been an important theme of life in multicultural societies. In many countries throughout the world, people come together to form what has commonly been called a “melting pot.” However, the “melting pot” idea has become less and less acceptable as we approach the 21st century. The new way of looking at any cultural mix in a society is as a “salad bowl.” (The ingredients still mix but they retain their individual characteristics.) People new to a country want to preserve their cultural heritage. People who have been there for a long time may want to rediscover theirs. As educators, we need to

modify our approach, and the way in which we do this is becoming more important on a daily basis as tensions rise and tempers flare and respect for one another’s beliefs and attitudes becomes a legal and political necessity as well as a moral or ethical choice.

So, how—in the face of all of these needs and requirements—do we make this respect for cultural diversity happen?

An easy way to approach these issues is to concentrate on holidays, both new and old, familiar and unfamiliar. This has always been a natural and enjoyable method, and with a little more awareness and sensitivity, can be adapted to new and changing conditions. The recognition of cultural diversity through the celebration of holidays is particularly appropriate in school environments since more holidays are observed in school than anywhere else. So, if you teach in a classroom composed of many cultural groups, celebrate the holidays that will make each child feel welcome and validated. If you teach in a classroom in which all the students belong to the same cultural group, introduce them to multiculturalism through holiday celebrations that are unfamiliar to them. Additionally, give all students both the history and the cultural context of these holidays. You will enrich their lives as well as your own.

Kinds of Holidays

There are basically four different kinds of holidays: religious, political, heroic, and cultural. Holidays can start out in one of these categories and change to another as times and conditions change.

Holidays that began solely as religious, political, or heroic in one country have sometimes moved elsewhere with the people who celebrate them and have become traditional holidays enjoyed by all. Saint Patrick’s Day is one example of this kind of holiday.

Some holidays that citizens of one country are used to celebrating as traditional are becoming more culturally “true” as people place greater importance on recognizing their cultural heritage, particularly in places such as Australia where most people have an ancestry outside of the country. The recognition of Halloween as the Eve of All Saint’s Day is an example of this.

Many holidays that began as religious holidays and are still celebrated in great part as religious holidays, have

also moved over into the traditional classification. Such religious holidays include Easter, Passover, Christmas, and Hanukkah. (Interestingly, the word “holiday” itself started out as “holy day”!)

Political holidays are celebrated throughout the world. In Canada there is Canada Day, in Mexico there is Cinco de Mayo, and in France there is Bastille Day. Also, the birthdays of famous people are often celebrated as heroic holidays. In France, the birthday of Jean Baptiste Colbert is honored and in South America it is Simon Bolivar. These days are set aside for honor and remembrance.

There are many other ways of classifying holidays. For example, Sunday in many countries is a holiday recognized by common law. It is based on the religious idea of the sabbath as a day of rest after six days of work, and commemorates the biblical day that God rested after creation.

Kinds of Holidays *(cont.)*

Holidays depend on and are influenced by the calendar. (See pages 61-63.) The dates on which many holidays are celebrated are the result of correlating the solar calendar with the lunar calendar. Easter, for example, falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Passover and other Jewish holidays are celebrated at different times each year in accordance with the Jewish calendar. They, however, stay within the same general season. In contrast to this, the Muslim calendar, which consists of a 354-day lunar year, results in holidays that move right around the year. They have no connection whatsoever to the seasons and the same

holidays that occur in summer at one time will eventually occur in the middle of winter. For that reason, Muslim holidays are grouped together in this book in a special section beginning on page 64.

The ways people celebrate personal holidays, such as birthdays and graduations, are as different as the people themselves. And if people can't find enough reasons to celebrate, they will invent some new ones. Personal holidays and ideas for a culminating holiday activity are presented beginning on page 77.

Teaching Strategies

Teaching about the positive implications of cultural diversity can be difficult. Differences are often perceived as threatening and changes as stressful. But holidays are already understood, by children and adults alike, as times for fun and celebration. Using a holiday to bridge the gulf between one culture and another helps to bring us together.

Planning for Exceptions

Have an alternative plan in mind for meeting the needs of those students who are not allowed to celebrate holidays. You could substitute an art and literature experience related to the culture on which the holiday celebration is based. Or you could allow the students who cannot celebrate to present an activity to a class of younger students. These students and their parents will feel that their right to hold different beliefs has been acknowledged. In addition, if you act out of a belief that it is all right to be different, if you are absolutely matter-of-fact about the student who cannot celebrate holidays, the other students will learn that different is okay. This will make it easier to accept the inevitable occurrence of something different, and noticeable, about themselves.

Coping with Religious Holidays

Cultural diversity, of course, encompasses religious beliefs. What could be a better time than childhood to learn that the only appropriate response to unfamiliar beliefs is "How interesting!" Children can be helped to

know that their beliefs are not being questioned, nor are they questioning the beliefs of others. They are just learning interesting information about other cultures. And information about differences often replaces fear of differences.

Consult Your Resident Experts

You probably have children representing various cultural backgrounds in your classroom. If not, you can look for a representative in your school or community. (If no other option is available, appoint someone to be an expert.) These representatives are your resident experts. Ask them questions. Expect them to know. Give them the responsibility of finding out. They should not just inform; they should also interpret information for the class. Let their families know that they will be asking questions, not only for the purpose of informing the class but also to increase their own awareness of their cultural heritage. There will be huge self-esteem and peer-respect benefits from this process.

Consult Your Maps and Globes

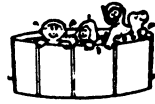
Maps and globes put cultural differences into the context of geography. It is very satisfying to know where you are in the world, and if you came from somewhere else, where that country is. It is also fun to know from where your parents and grandparents came. Keep up-to-date with the changes in names of countries and borders of countries. Your resident expert (see above) can also keep current on what is happening in his or her area of expertise.

Summer Holidays

December

Birthstone: Turquoise

Flower: Narcissus

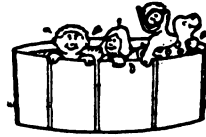


December was the tenth month of the Roman calendar. Its name comes from *decem* which is the Latin word for the number ten.

January

Birthstone: Garnet

Flower: Carnation

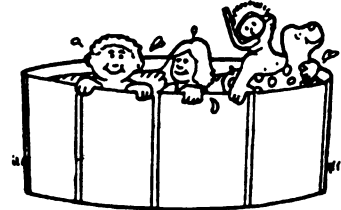


January was named for the Roman god Janus who has been pictured with two faces, one looking to the future and one to the past.

February

Birthstone: Amethyst

Flower: Violet



February was added to the Roman calendar about 700 B.C. It originally had 29 days, but the Emperor Augustus Caesar took one of its days to make August, his month, longer. Its name comes from a Latin word, *februare*, meaning “to purify.”

Summer officially begins on the 1st December. In the southern hemisphere the “summer solstice” occurs on or around the 21st December. When summer comes to the southern hemisphere winter arrives in the northern hemisphere. If you are far enough south—in the antarctic—during the weeks before and after the summer solstice, you will have 24 hours of daylight. The sun will not “set” at all!

People traditionally travel during the summer because that is the time when most of us take our annual holidays. We go to visit friends and relatives or just to look at interesting places and things. Some people always return to the same summer place, and others go to a different place every year.

Summer is the time for outdoor celebrations and entertainment. It is the time for community or arts festivals. Many of these celebrations include parades and contests and carnival games as well as opportunities to feast on special foods.