

New Year Throughout the World

People of many nationalities and religions observe New Year. The beginning of a new year marks a time for celebration, reflection, and relaxation in many countries. Learn how other cultures celebrate this festive holiday.

Did You Know?

January was named for the Roman god, Janus, who had two faces so he could look back at the last year and forward at the year to come at the same time.

The image of the New Year as a baby probably came from the ancient Greeks. The Greeks celebrated the New Year in the spring and honored Dionysus, the god of the vine, who, portrayed as a baby, symbolized the renewal of life in spring.

Some cultures celebrate the new year in the spring or fall, as their calendars are based on the moon's cycles and not on the Earth's position in relation to the sun, like the western calendar.



Literature Selections

Happy New Year by Emery Bernhard: Lodestar Books, 1996. (Informative book, 32 pg.) An in-depth look at how people all over the world, in ancient times, and in the present, celebrate the New Year.

First Night by Harriet Ziefert: Putnam Publishing Group, 1999. (Picture book, 32 pg.) A little girl gets to lead the New Year parade at a First Night celebration.

Dumpling Soup by Jama Kim Rattigan: Little Brown & Co., 1998. (Picture book, 32 pg.) A girl in Hawaii gets to help make the New Year dumplings as she celebrates the holiday with her culturally diverse family.

Create a Whole New Year

In many cultures, displaying a new calendar is an important part of the New Year. Students can make their own New Year calendars. Give each child 12 copies of the calendar grid (page 6). Block out the month name and artwork by taping plain white paper over it before copying. Help children bind the pages together with a spiral book binding machine or by punching three holes along the top and threading yarn through each hole. Let students write each month name at the top of each page. Use a calendar to determine on what day January 1 will fall. Have each student fill in the date on the January page and use the number of days in each month to determine the rest of the calendar. Each student can draw a picture related to each month on the back of the previous month's grid. Draw a picture on a separate sheet of paper for January, then design a cover for the calendar on the other side of that sheet.



New Year In The United States

Did You Know?

- People in the United States celebrate the New Year with parties, noisemakers, and a ceremonial countdown to midnight. Many people watch a large, lighted ball drop at midnight in Times Square in New York city.
- The tradition of the Tournament of Roses parade in California, followed by a sporting event, dates back to the late 1800s.
- Traditional good luck foods eaten on New Year's Day vary from region to region and include collard greens and black eyed peas, or pork and sauerkraut.

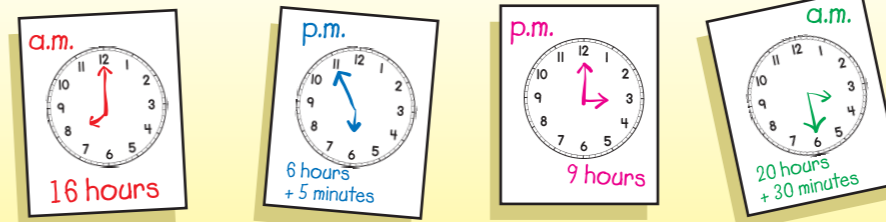
Be a Reporter

In the United States, people celebrate New Year's Eve in different ways. Some people go to parties and others stay home and watch television reports about celebrations in other places. Have students imagine they are newspaper or TV reporters. Their assignment is to cover a New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square, their house, or another place. First, let students share celebrations they have seen. Talk about all the people, the parties, the music, etc. Then, have students write out their reports and post them on a bulletin board. If desired, let students act out television broadcasts of their New Year's Eve reports.



Countdown to Midnight 3, 2, 1...

Watching the clock and counting down to midnight is a popular New Year tradition. To get ready for New Year's Eve, have students practice telling how long it is until midnight. Give each student a clock pattern (page 35) and ask her to draw the hands on the clock to show any time she wishes. Be sure to write a.m. or p.m. on the clock. Display the clocks on a wall or bulletin board and number them. Then, have students number their papers and calculate how long it would take for each clock to reach midnight. Challenge older students to calculate each amount in hours and minutes.



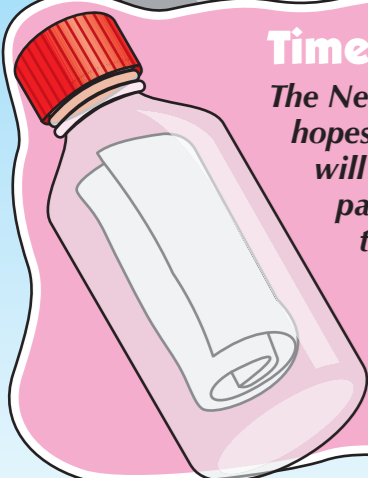


If a Year Could Talk

People often represent the New Year with the image of a baby and the old year as an old man with a long white beard. Have students imagine what might be said between Baby New Year and old Father Time when they meet on New Year's Eve and write a dialog of the conversation. Cut out the Baby New Year and Father Time patterns (page 34), color, and tape unsharpened pencils or craft sticks to the backs to make puppets. Let each child act out his dialog using his puppets.

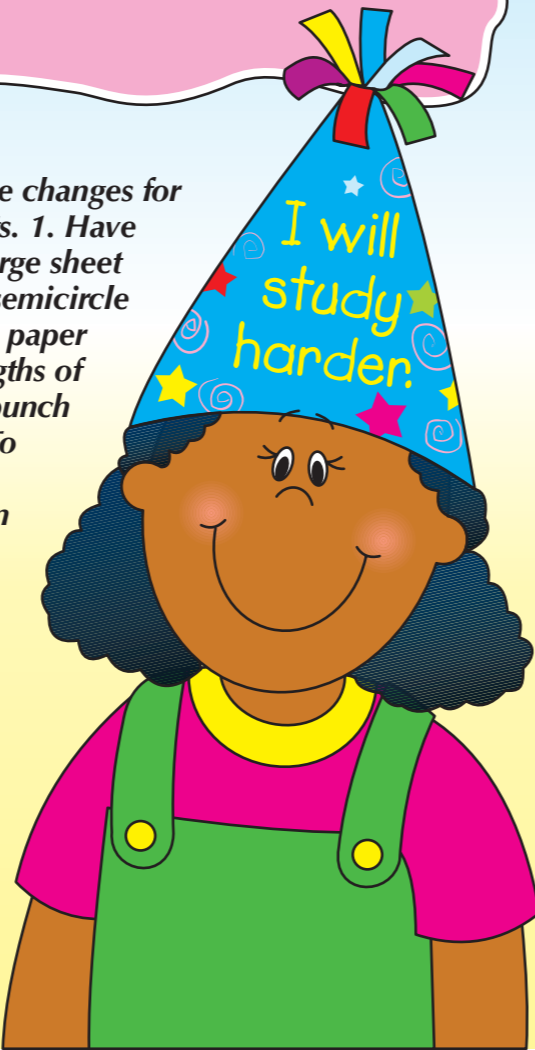
Time Capsules

The New Year is a time for thinking about the future. Let students imagine their hopes and dreams for the coming year. Have each child write something he hopes will happen at school, at home, with friends, etc., in the new year on notebook paper. Roll the paper into a tube, slide it into a clean dry plastic soda bottle, tighten the cap on the bottle and put some glue around the cap. Keep the bottles sealed inside the time capsule bottles until the end of the school year (or send home for students to open over the summer) then cut them open and see if students' hopes and dreams came true.



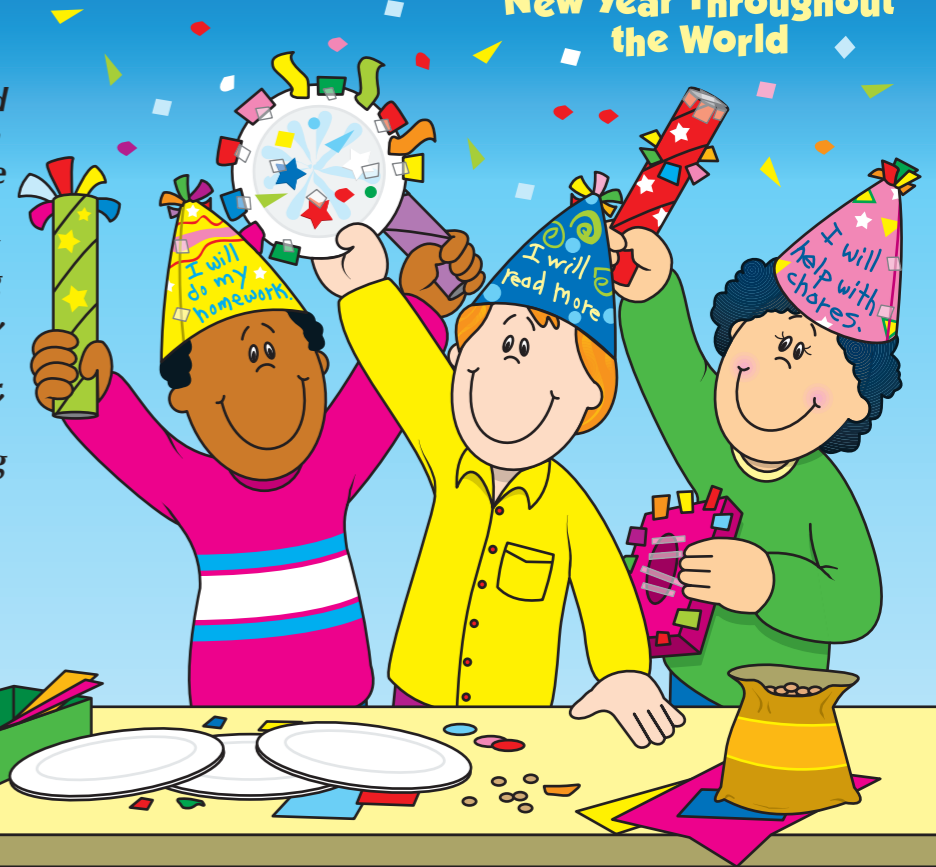
Promising Party Hats

The New Year is a time for making resolutions, or promising to make changes for the better. Help students make New Year's resolutions into party hats. 1. Have each student decide what his New Year's resolution will be, cut a large sheet of construction paper into a semicircle, write his resolution on the semicircle and decorate it with markers and glitter. 2. Have each child curl his paper into a cone shape and staple the seams. 3. Gather several short lengths of curling ribbon and tie at one end to form a bunch. Push the ribbon bunch through the hole in the top of the hat and tape inside to secure. 4. To make a chin strap, punch a hole in either side of the hat at the base and tie elastic cord between the holes. Let students wear their resolution hats during Make Some Noise (page 23), then staple the hats to a bulletin board for display.



Make Some Noise

The U.S., like many other countries around the world, welcomes the New Year with lots of noise. It was once thought that the noise would scare away bad luck and spirits to allow for good luck in the new year. Let children get creative in making their own noisemakers from paper plates, cups, cardboard tubes, or empty tissue boxes. Decorate the container with paper, glitter, sequins, etc., and fill with beans, rice, etc. Seal each noisemaker by taping paper over the openings. Celebrate the new year in class at noon, instead of midnight. Let students count down and use their noisemakers to welcome the New Year.



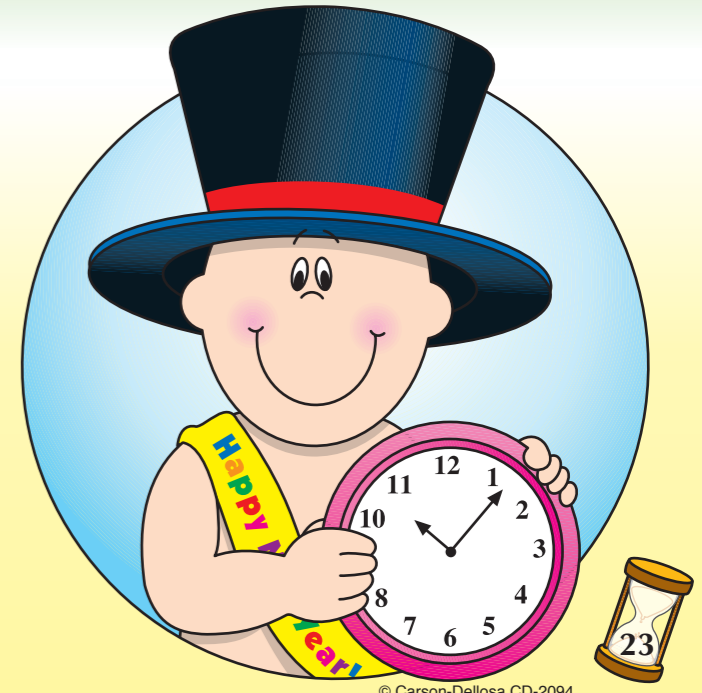
Confetti Art

Many people in the U.S. throw confetti into the air at midnight on New Year's Eve. Let each student draw a picture of a New Year's Eve scene on construction paper. They may wish to include a clock striking midnight, the ball dropping, or a party scene. Provide confetti, or allow students to cut up bits of paper, or use a hole punch to make their own confetti. Paint a thin layer of watered down glue over the picture and lightly sprinkle with confetti, being careful not to completely cover the picture. Let the glue dry and display the New Year's Eve scenes around the room.



What Time Is It, Baby New Year?

Let students take turns being Baby New Year in this New Year tag game. Choose one student to be Baby New Year and stand with his back turned to the class. Have the other students stand behind a taped-off or drawn line on the opposite side of the classroom. Students ask, "What time is it, Baby New Year?" and Baby New Year responds with a time on the hour, such as "six o' clock." Students can take six steps (one step for each hour) toward Baby New Year. This continues, with each student trying to touch Baby New Year and become the new Baby New Year. If Baby New Year says that it is midnight, he can turn around and chase the other students back to the line. If he catches someone, she becomes the new Baby New Year, if not, play continues.



New Year In China

Did You Know?

- Chinese New Year, also called the Spring Festival, is celebrated on the second new moon following the winter solstice and usually falls in late January or early February. It lasts for fifteen days.
- The Chinese New Year greeting is Gung Hey Fat Choy, pronounced phonetically, which means May you prosper.
- The holiday centers around happiness and good luck for friends and family. There are many traditions for ensuring good luck in the new year, such as cleaning houses to sweep away bad luck, paying off all debts, buying new clothes, decorating with the color red (a symbol of luck), and placing flowers around the house to symbolize growth.
- Parades with fireworks, paper lanterns, and dancers dressed as lions and dragons are a major part of the celebration.

Literature Selections

Celebrating Chinese New Year by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith: Holiday House, 1998. (Picture book, 32 pg.) Color photographs accompany a thorough description of the activity surrounding the Chinese New Year celebrations.

Sam and the Lucky Money by Karen Chinn: Lee & Low Books, 1997 (Picture book, 32 pg.) A little boy decides to give his lucky New Year money packets to a homeless man.

The Dancing Dragon by Marcia K. Vaughan: Mondo Publishing, 1996 (Picture book, 24 pg.) Describes the preparations for and celebration of Chinese New Year. Includes a fold-out Chinese dragon.

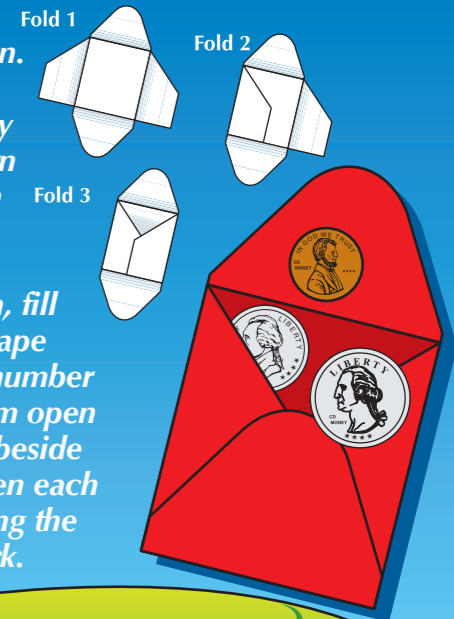
Animal Personality

The Chinese calendar is organized in a twelve year cycle, in which each year is named for an animal. Chinese legend tells of twelve animals that came to honor Buddha (a figure worshiped in the Buddhist religion). Buddha rewarded the animals by naming a year after each in the order in which they arrived: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat (or Ram), Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Boar. (The year of a certain animal will have those characteristics as well.) Tell students that the year 2000 is the year of the Dragon and that the years progress forward in a clockwise direction. Give each child a Chinese zodiac pattern (page 35) and have her determine in which animal year she was born. Let each student compare his personality with the animal characteristics and write a paragraph on a separate sheet of paper telling if the description is accurate. If it is not, have him tell which animal is more like him and why.



Lucky Money Packet

It is a Chinese New Year tradition for adults to give money to children. Wrapped in red envelopes and decorated with good luck messages, this money is considered lucky. Teach money skills with lucky money packets. Let each student cut out and fold a lucky money packet pattern (page 34) copied on red construction paper. Glue the flaps as shown (right) to form small packets, and write good luck messages on them, such as May you prosper in the New Year, May you accomplish everything you want this year, etc. Collect the packets, number them, fill each with a different combination of coin manipulatives (page 35), tape them to secure the flap, and redistribute to students. Have students number a sheet of paper with the number of packets that were made. Let them open each packet, count the coins, and write the amount on their papers beside the corresponding numbers. Pass the packets until each child has seen each packet. Make students feel lucky by giving them a treat for completing the activity. Count the money as a class to help students check their work.



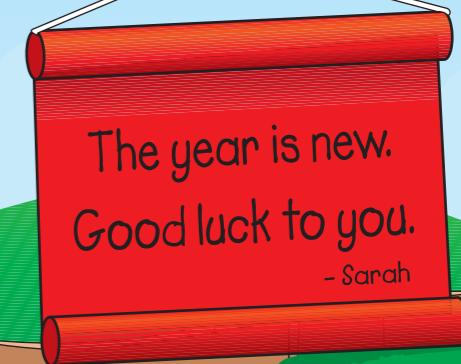
Firecrackers

Fireworks are an essential part of a Chinese New Year celebration. A Chinese legend tells about a fierce beast, Nian (NEE•an), which also means year in Chinese, that terrorized people at the New Year. It was discovered that the beast was afraid of loud noises and the color red, so every new year, people set off fireworks and display red decorations to scare away Nian and any other evil and bad luck. In many places, the fireworks and red decorations have become combined, and people display red firecracker decorations that hang from a string. Students can make their own homemade firecracker decorations. Roll several 4" x 4" squares of red construction paper into small tubes and tape to secure. Punch a hole in one end of each tube and tie a short piece of red yarn in the hole. Make a tassel by knotting several pieces of yarn together. Tie the tassel to the end of a long piece of yarn. Tie a loop at the top of the yarn and tie each of the tubes along the length of the yarn. Hang the "firecrackers" around the room for good luck.



Scroll Poems

In many homes, scrolls of red paper on which good wishes are written are hung during Chinese New Year. Often the good luck messages are written in couplets, a type of poetry that has two lines that usually rhyme and have the same rhythm. Have each child write a good luck couplet on a red paper scroll. Roll each end of a 12" x 18" piece of red construction paper around a long cardboard tube and tape to secure. Roll the paper so it just covers the tube, leaving about six inches of paper in between the rolls. Have each student write a good luck message couplet in the space between the rolls, thread a length of yarn through the top tube, and tie for hanging.



New Year In China (Cont.)

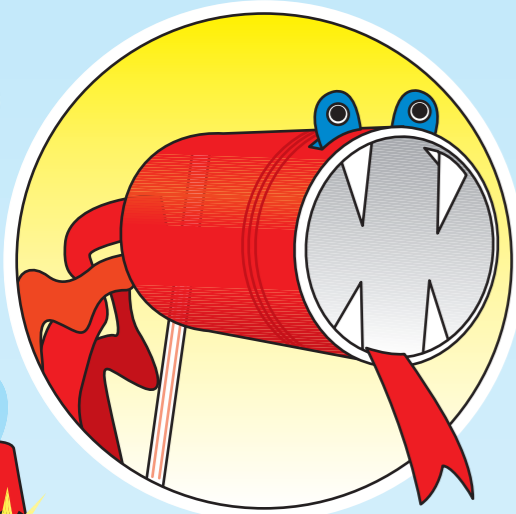
Paper Pictures

Many Chinese families decorate their homes with elaborate cut paper pictures during New Year. Students can explore symmetry while making their own paper pictures. Let each student fold a sheet of white paper in half and draw a design that extends from the fold. Cut out the design and open the paper to reveal a symmetrical picture. Glue the cut paper to red construction paper to show off the design, and display around the classroom.



Dancing Dragons

In China, dragons are symbols of strength and prosperity. Traditionally, on the last day of Chinese New Year, a large dancing dragon leads a special lantern parade. Each child can make his own dancing dragon from a small paper cup, a straw, red and white construction paper, red crepe paper streamers, glue, and markers. Have students cut out a red paper tongue and glue it inside the cup so that most of it "hangs" out. Next, have children cut small triangle-shaped "teeth" from white paper and glue them to the inside rims of the cups so they stick out from the cups. Then, allow students to cut out and glue eyes on the outsides of the cups. Glue crepe paper streamers to the back of each cup so they "flow" behind the dragon. Last, tape a straw to the bottom of the cup. Students can hold the straws and wave the dragons, letting the streamers trail behind.



Lion Masks

The Lion Dance is a main feature of Chinese New Year parades. Martial artists dress in lion costumes and dance through the streets. They can make the lions' eyes blink and light up with levers inside the lion heads. The lions, in addition to the dragon, serve to scare away bad luck. The lion costumes are decorated with bright colors, feathers, pom-poms, and intricate designs. Let students design their own Chinese lion masks from paper bags. Cut a small slit along the side folds of a paper grocery bag. Place the bag over a child's head and draw circles on the front where the eyes should be cut out. Let each student cut out the eye holes and decorate his lion head with feathers, felt, pom-poms, buttons, paint, and other craft supplies. Challenge students to make up lion dances to perform while wearing their masks.



New Year In Japan

New Year Throughout the World

Did You Know?

- 🇯🇵 Gantan (GAHN•tahn) is the name for the Japanese New Year, celebrated on January 1. It means first day of the first month.
- 🇯🇵 There are many things the Japanese do to ensure good luck in the new year. They clean their homes, pay off debts, buy new clothes, and decorate with kadomatsu (KAH•doh•mat•su), or bamboo and pine branches, which are symbols of honesty and consistency.
- 🇯🇵 Rice cakes, or mochi (MO•chee), are offered on a special altar to ancestors and are also eaten for breakfast in a soup called ozoni (o•ZO•nee).
- 🇯🇵 It is considered bad luck to cut soba (SO•ba), or buckwheat noodles, when eating them during New Year. For good luck, many children try to eat a whole noodle without chewing it.

Shimenawa

A shimenawa (shi•ME•nah•wah) is a rope of braided rice straw decorated with small white paper fans or cloth. It is placed above the entrance of homes to keep evil out of the house during New Year. Have students make shimenawas using raffia. Knot six pieces of raffia (each about 12" in length) at one end. Place a piece of tape across the knot and attach it to a desk or other flat surface. Group the strands into three sections and show the children how to braid the pieces together. Knot the other end to secure the braid. Accordion fold 3" x 3" pieces of white paper to make small fans. Dot glue on the ends of the fans and tuck into the braiding of the shimenawa. Hang all the shimenawas around the door and windows to decorate the classroom in the New Year.



Daruma

A daruma (dar•OO•mah) is a wishing doll that is given to someone at the start of a new venture, for example, on a birthday or when celebrating the New Year. A daruma is balanced so that it can not be knocked over, which symbolizes recovery from misfortune. A daruma's eyes are not painted on when the doll is bought. The owner makes a wish as she paints on one eye and if the wish comes true, she paints on the other eye. Let students make their own darumas and make wishes for the New Year. Fill a small round balloon with rice, beans, or sand and blow it up. Each student can place the "doll" on a table, knot end up, and tap it lightly. The doll will stand back up. Decorate the balloon with permanent markers to look like a doll, but do not draw eyes. Then, ask each student to make a New Year wish and draw one eye on her daruma. The other eye can be drawn when her wish comes true!



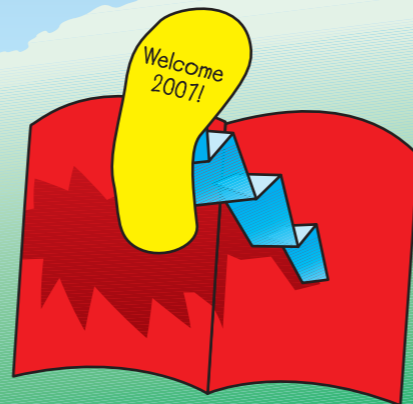
New Year In Scotland

Did You Know?

- ✦ In Scotland, New Year is called Hogmanay (hog•man•AY). The traditional New Year song, Auld Lang Syne, is from Scotland.
- ✦ The most famous New Year tradition in Scotland is called first footing. The first person to set foot over your threshold on New Year's Day brings you good luck or bad luck. Men, who are considered to be good luck, go from house to house, crossing thresholds, bringing good luck and a small gift, in the past a lump of coal for the fire, but now usually a cake.
- ✦ Bonfires are set to burn up the old year. Sometimes a straw figure, representing the old year, is burned in the fire.

New Year Cards

Make first footing greetings to give to friends and relatives. At midnight in Scotland, it is tradition for someone in the house to rush to open the door and let the old year out and the new year in. Have students trace one foot on construction paper and cut out. Provide another piece of construction paper and have students fold the paper in half, like a card. Draw a picture of a door on the outside and write Good-bye (current year)! Write Welcome (upcoming year) on the foot cut-out. Accordion-fold a strip of paper and glue the foot cut-out to one end. Glue the other end to the inside of the card, so that when the card is opened, the New Year will "jump" through the door.



Shortbread and Gingerwine

During New Year, Scottish children enjoy eating shortbread and drinking gingerwine, which is nonalcoholic and similar to gingerale. Enjoy shortbread and gingerale with students and sing Auld Lang Syne to celebrate the New Year.

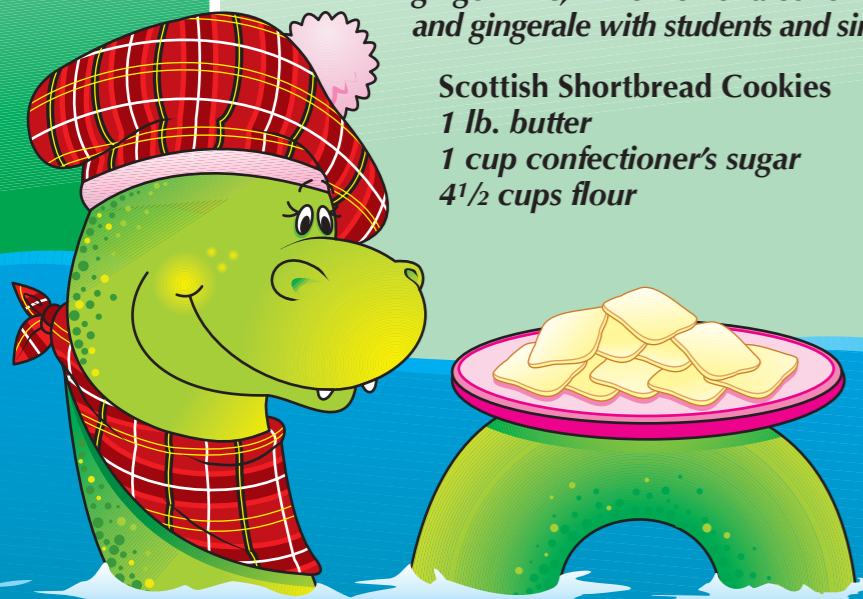
Scottish Shortbread Cookies
1 lb. butter
1 cup confectioner's sugar
4½ cups flour

Mix butter and sugar well. Add flour. Mix well. Flour hands and knead dough. Press into a 9" x 13" pan and slice into squares. Prick each cookie with a fork. Bake at 300° for 1 hour. Run a knife through the cut lines while warm. Makes approximately 32 cookies.

Welcome the New Year!

Sing the traditional New Year song, Auld Lang Syne which means for old time's sake.

Auld Lang Syne
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And days of auld lang syne?



New Year In Russia

New Year Throughout the World

Did You Know?

- ✦ In Russia, the New Year is celebrated with a winter festival that starts on January 1 and lasts for several days. During the festival, there are many parties with music, dancing, and children playing in the snow.
- ✦ Many Russian New Year traditions are similar to Christmas traditions. This is because many years ago, all Christian holidays were outlawed in Russia, so people transferred their Christmas traditions to New Year to disguise their celebration of that Christian holiday. Today in Russia, people can celebrate Christmas and other Christian holidays, but they still celebrate New Year with "Christmas" traditions.
- ✦ People exchange gifts around a New Year fir tree, called a yolochka (yol•OCH•kah), which is decorated with ornaments and lights.
- ✦ Grandfather Frost, a character similar to Santa, and his helper, Snow Girl, ride a troika (TROY•kah), which is a sleigh pulled by a team of three horses, to bring gifts to Russian children at New Year.

Russian Nesting Dolls

A traditional gift given to Russian children at New Year is a set of nesting dolls. If possible, share real nesting dolls or show a picture of them to students and ask why they think they are called "nesting" dolls. Students can make their own nesting dolls with plastic foam cups. Gather two each of three different sized plastic foam cups, small (8 oz.), medium (14 oz.), and large (18 oz.), for each student. Cut off the rims of the two smallest cups. Glue or tape the cups together, one on top of the other, placing the edges together. Then, cut the rim off of one of the medium cups and push it inside the other medium cup. Place the large cups on top of each other, rims together. Allow students to decorate the cups as dolls with a variety of materials, such as paint, wiggly eyes, markers, etc. When complete, place the smallest doll in the bottom of the medium doll and cover with the top, then place the medium doll (with the small doll inside) in the bottom of the large doll and cover with the top. Now each student has her own set of nesting dolls!



Grandfather Frost Treat Bags

In Russia, Grandfather Frost brings decorated bags filled with fruit and sweets to people on New Year's Day, along with wishes for a Happy New Year. Let students decorate plain white or brown paper lunch bags in hopes that Grandfather Frost will fill them with goodies. Collect the bags and fill them with fruit, such as apples or oranges and sweets like candy or cookies. Add a note from Grandfather Frost, wishing students a Happy New Year. Place the bags on a table and let students find their bags and enjoy the treats!



New Year In Austria

Did You Know?

- ≡ Saint Sylvester, a former Pope, is honored on New Year's Eve in Austria, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland.
- ≡ In many areas of Austria, parades are held in which people, called Sylvesterklause, wear detailed masks and large bells in honor of Saint Sylvester.
- ≡ At midnight, church bells ring and trumpets blare. People set off firecrackers, blow horns, and shake noisemakers.
- ≡ Church is attended on New Year's Day and a dinner of roast suckling pig is served in the afternoon. Pig is served because pigs cannot walk backward. The hope is that the New Year will progress forward.
- ≡ Austrians buy many good luck charms in anticipation of the New Year. These charms include figures of chimney sweeps, pigs with curly tails, four leaf clovers, horseshoes, and mushrooms.

Good Luck Tokens

Every year in Austria, a special New Year token, or glucksmuenze (GLICKS•mint•she), is minted from silver or gold with lucky symbols on one side and New Year's wishes on the other. Give each child a large circle cut from oaktag to make her own New Year token. Draw traditional Austrian good luck symbols, including clovers, mushrooms, pigs, and horseshoes on one side, and write a New Year's message on the back. Paint or color the coin and decorate the edges with silver and gold glitter. If desired, punch a hole in the top and hang with a piece of string.

Lucky Pig

Pigs are considered to be a symbol of good luck in the New Year in Austria. In addition to roast pig for dinner on New Year's Day, people eat pig-shaped candy called glucksweinchen (glick•SHVINE•shen), and buy good luck charms shaped like pigs. Let students create pig cupcakes and enjoy the good luck when eating them. Frost cupcakes with pink frosting and let students place two chocolate candy kisses at the tops for pointed ears, two mini chocolate chips pointed down for eyes, marshmallows in the middle for the snouts with two red cinnamon candies stuck on with frosting for nostrils.



New Year In Brazil

Did You Know?

- 🇧🇷 During New Year in Brazil, towns are decorated with brightly colored streamers and flowers. Fireworks, bells, and sirens ring in the New Year.
- 🇧🇷 Feliz Ano Novo (feh•LEES•AH•no NOH•voh) means Happy New Year in Portuguese, the language spoken in Brazil.
- 🇧🇷 Families celebrate together over a traditional New Year's Eve dinner at midnight that includes lentils, a symbol of wealth for the New Year. A dessert called rabanada (rah•bah•NAH•dah), which is similar to French toast, is eaten. After the meal, children go to bed and adults go to parties and elegant balls.

The Queen of the Sea

A beautiful ceremony of African origin is held New Year's Eve on the beaches in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. People dress in white, place lighted candles in the sand, and wade into the water to throw flowers and gifts to the Queen of the Sea. Have students use their imaginations to write a biography of the Queen of the Sea. Have them tell who she is, what she looks like, where she lives, and what she does. Have each child draw a picture of the Sea Queen and glue it to a piece of construction paper. If desired, have students add sand and draw candles to sprinkle with glitter so they glow. Cut flowers from colorful paper and glue around the picture, creating a frame of flowers. Let each student share his biography. Display the framed pictures on a bulletin board.



Rabanada

Follow the recipe to treat students to a snack that is similar to rabanada.

Ingredients

6 eggs	butter
2 cups milk	cinnamon
12 slices of bread	sugar

Beat the eggs in a large bowl. Add the milk and mix well. Heat a frying pan over medium heat and melt 1 tbsp. butter in the pan. Dip a slice of bread in the egg and milk mixture and place in the hot pan. Cook until golden brown, flip to other side, and cook until brown. Add more butter for each additional piece. Serve warm with a sprinkle of cinnamon and sugar. Serves 12.

