

December Multicultural Connection

December is Human Rights month. What better way to celebrate human rights than by recognizing the traditions and special multicultural holiday celebrations that take place this time of year? Learning about these special celebrations can be beneficial to both teachers and students. Teachers are validating the cultural customs celebrated by their students and incorporating multicultural materials and information into the curriculum, as students process the information and use it to practice research skills and FCAT reading and writing skills. Here are some ideas:

- Using graphic organizers, have students compare and contrast the holiday customs listed below.
- Print the information listed below on separate cards. Have students practice finding the main ideas and supporting details.
- Ask students to prepare book talks based on one of the events listed below.
- Invite students to write about their own special holiday tradition.
- Ask students to make cross-cultural connections (Examples: luminarios, Advent calendars, poinsettias).
- Ask students to locate stories and books about different celebrations. Read aloud or share within reading circles.

For additional information:

<http://www.newberry.k12.sc.us/InstructionalLinks/Holidays/DecemberCelebrations.htm>

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/lessonplans/profbooks/decceleb.htm>

<http://www.holidays.net/chanukah>

December 7th – Pearl Harbor Day Observance



The Providence Journal, 12/7/41.

It was early morning, December 7, 1941. As the sun was just beginning to rise in Oahu, Hawaii, a fleet of Japanese naval air forces was taking off from aircraft carriers in various locations in the Pacific Ocean. Just as many of the islanders were waking up for breakfast, it happened. The Japanese air fleet had arrived with a vengeance. No one was prepared for what was occurring. Pearl Harbor, the United States' center for military action in the Pacific Ocean, was almost completely destroyed. Anger toward the Japanese spread quickly throughout the entire country, and this anger led to the United States' entry into World War II.

December 20th – 28th – Chanukah

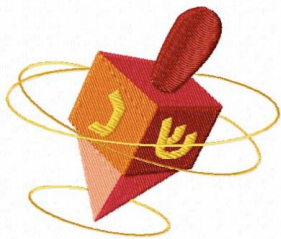
Chanukah is the Jewish Festival of Lights celebrated in countries all over the world. Every year between the end of November and the end of December, Jewish people around the world celebrate the holiday of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. Chanukah begins on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, but the starting date on the western calendar varies from year to year. The holiday celebrates the events that took place over 2,300 years ago in the land of Judea, which is now Israel.



In 165 B.C. there was a great battle between the Maccabees and the Syrians. The Jews won the battle and when they went to their temple, they found that the Syrians had allowed their sacred light to go out. They only had oil for one day. The oil lamp was filled and lit. Then a miracle occurred as the tiny amount of oil stayed lit not for one day, but for eight days.

Jews celebrate Chanukah to mark the victory over the Syrians and the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple. The Festival of the Lights, Chanukah, lasts for eight days to commemorate the miracle of the oil. The word Chanukah means rededication.

In America, families celebrate Chanukah at home. They give and receive gifts, decorate the house, entertain friends and family and eat special foods. Families gather around a special candleholder called a menorah. There are nine candles in the menorah. One of the candles is used to light the other eight candles, which stand for the eight days that the oil kept burning.



Chanukah Fun: The Dreidel Game

Students create dreidels, traditional Chanukah toys, from common materials and play the dreidel game!

- Tell students that they will create their own dreidels and learn to play the dreidel game.
- Print directions for making paper dreidels; directions are available online. You might also let students make dreidels from milk cartons or boxes.
- After students create their dreidels, have students learn the rules for the dreidel game, using teacher-selected resources or printouts
- Organize students into small groups to play the dreidel game.



December 22 - Winter Solstice

The Winter Solstice is the day when the distance between the Tropic of Capricorn and the sun is the shortest. Because of the earth's tilt, the Northern Hemisphere is leaning farther away from the sun than at any other time during the year. This makes the Winter Solstice the shortest day in the Northern Hemisphere where it marks the beginning of winter.

Because ancient cultures were unaware of the changes in the Earth's position, they feared that the sunlight would never return. To bring it back, they engaged in many celebrations and ceremonies. Hundreds of years ago, a Roman culture celebrated its major festival on the Winter Solstice. When Julius Caesar instituted a new calendar in Rome, the festival fell on December 25, a date that was retained for many years. About 1600 years ago, Pope Julius I chose this date for Christmas in order to replace the pagan tradition with a Christian one.

December 25 – Christmas



Christmas is celebrated in many different ways around the world. Christmas is a popular secular holiday that focuses upon the many versions of St. Nicholas and other traditions such as Christmas carols, mistletoe, Christmas cards, and gift giving. Children write letters to Santa Claus and tell him what they'd like to receive for Christmas. With help from his elves, Santa prepares the gifts and then, on Christmas Eve, he leaves the North Pole in his reindeer guided sleigh. Rudolph leads the reindeer across the sky and onto each housetop. Santa carries the gifts down the chimney at each home and places them under the Christmas tree. Usually, the children of the house leave cookies and milk for Santa.

Santa Claus is known by other names in different parts of the world. For example, in Germany, he is known as Kris Kringle while the French call him Pere Noel.

Many people celebrate Christmas with elements of both the religious observances and the secular rituals.



How Many Ways Can You Say Merry Christmas?

Students create a multicultural holiday bulletin board map using research. Students study saying Merry Christmas in different languages. Students correctly locate the countries on a world map.

Materials Needed - World map, bulletin board art supplies, 3-inch by 5-inch index cards (or colored paper cut to size).

- Prior to lesson: Cover a bulletin board with a world map, or use a projector to project a world map on the bulletin board and trace the outline.
- Gather enough index cards for each student in the class to have one. Write the names of languages and their corresponding countries on the cards, one language and country per card. Put the cards in a bag or a box.

For younger students:

- Begin the lesson by telling students how to say Merry Christmas in Spanish (Feliz Navidad). Point out on a world map some of the countries where people say Merry Christmas in Spanish.
- Tell students that they will learn to say Merry Christmas in other languages. Provide each student with a card.
- Organize students into groups of three to four.
- Ask each student to find Merry Christmas in the language on his or her card. Students will write the phrases on the cards.
- When everyone has finished, help students say their phrases and locate the countries on a map or globe. Let students put their finished cards around the bulletin board to create learning "border." Each student might run a length of yarn between his or her card and the country on the map.

For older students:

- Assign each student three or four languages. Give students cards with just the name of a language. Have students identify the country of the language and write the country's name on the card. Let students work individually to find the Merry Christmas phrases in their assigned language and locate the countries on a world map.



December 26 – Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a holiday celebrated by many African-Americans. It is held December 26th through January 1st. It was started in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Professor at the California State University, Long Beach, California. A non-religious holiday, Kwanzaa celebrates African-American heritage, pride, community, family, and culture. The seven-day festival begins the day after Christmas and ends on New Year's Day. Before the Kwanzaa celebration begins, a straw mat (Mkeka) is placed on a table. A Kinara (seven-candle candle holder) and Mshumaa (candles) is made up of a single black candle and 3 red and 3 green candles and are placed on the Mkeka along with Muhindi (ears of corn) and the Kikombe Cha Umoja (unity cup). The seven candles represent the seven principles of how to live a good life. The black candle in the middle represents the African-American people, the red candles represent their struggles, and the green ones represent their vision for the future. Each day of Kwanzaa focuses upon one of the seven principles. After a candle-lighting ceremony, participants discuss what the principle means to them. Gifts are also exchanged during this time. A Karamu (feast) featuring traditional food, a ceremony honoring ancestors, music, and dancing is held on December 31.



There is one principle for each of the seven days of Kwanzaa in the following order:

- Umoja (unity)-to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.
- Kujichagulia- (self-determination) to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.
- Ujima- (collective work and responsibility) to build and maintain our community together and make our sister's and brother's problems our problems and to solve them together.
- Ujamaa- (cooperative economics) to build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses together.
- Nia- (purpose) to make our collective vocation the building of our community to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
- Kuumba- (creativity) to do as much as we can to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.
- Imani- (faith) to believe with our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

Definitions

Harambee (Let us all work together)
Nguzo Saba (seven principles)
Tambiko (libation from the Unity Cup)
Umoja (unity, the black center candle)
Vibunzi (ear of corn)
Zawadi (gifts)

Mishumaa Saba (seven candles)
Mkeka (mat, usually straw)
Mazao (fruits, nuts, vegetables)
Kinara (candle holder)
Kikombe Cha Umoja (unity cup)
Karamu (the feast)

December 31 - New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve is the last day of the calendar year, or December 31 in the Gregorian calendar. Since most of the world uses this calendar, New Year's Eve is celebrated around the globe. Celebrations on this night typically include going to parties or gathering in public places. One of the most famous gatherings occurs at Times Square in New York City. At 11:59:00 p.m., a six-foot shimmering ball (actually an apple) is lowered 70 feet in sixty seconds. When the apple reaches its destination at midnight, bells ring, confetti is tossed, and everyone shouts "Happy New Year!" This tradition began in 1907 after New York City outlawed firecrackers for New Year's Eve. The singing of *Auld Lang Syne* and drinking a toast to the New Year follow the lowering of the ball.



FOR SECONDARY STUDNETS

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS? HUMAN RIGHTS DEFINED

While some dictionaries define the word right as “a privilege,” when used in the context of “human rights,” we are talking about something more basic.*

Every person is entitled to certain fundamental rights, simply by the fact of being human. These are called “human rights” rather than a privilege (which can be taken away at someone’s whim).

They are “rights” because they are things you are allowed to be, to do or to have. These rights are there for your protection against people who might want to harm or hurt you. They are also there to help us get along with each other and live in peace.

Many people know something about their rights. Generally they know they have the right to food and a safe place to stay. They know they have a right to be paid for the work they do. But there are many other rights.

When human rights are not well known by people, abuses such as discrimination, intolerance, injustice, oppression and slavery can arise.

Born out of the atrocities and enormous loss of life during World War II, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948 to provide a common understanding of what everyone’s rights are. It forms the basis for a world built on freedom, justice and peace.

For additional information:

<http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/?source=gaw&qclid=CJaA0ZvDxqUCFQu87Qodgn67ZA>

