



## Celebrate! Holidays and Festivals Around the World

### Overview

How are special days celebrated throughout the world? Every culture has its own special traditions and reasons for celebrating and, in this project, students will learn how holidays and festivals are celebrated all over the globe. Students will explore celebrations, traditions and symbols related to a holiday or festival from their home countries and then investigate those from other parts of the world. In a culminating activity, students will share their information and create symbolic representations of their researched holiday from across the globe.

This project is designed so that it can be done as a single classroom project with students collaborating in pairs or small groups and using various sources such as books, the internet and the ePals student forums for research, or, as a collaborative email-based project.



Email exchange suggestions are provided for each project element.

### Objectives

1. Students will understand that countries and cultures from around the world celebrate holidays with unique traditions, foods, clothing, and activities.
2. Students will gain an in-depth knowledge of a holiday celebration from another part of the world.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding that symbols have meaning and that they represent an idea, a person, a place, or an event.
4. Students will demonstrate an appreciation for a holiday that is celebrated by another country or culture by sharing what is learned about the holiday and creating unique symbols to represent the important components of the holiday.

### Essential Questions

1. Why do people celebrate?
2. What special traditions and rituals surround holidays and festivals?
3. What holidays and festivals are important parts of your culture?
4. What holidays and festivals are important in other cultures?
5. What do celebrations around the world have in common?
6. What is a symbol? How are symbols used in celebrations and holidays?

### Supporting Questions

1. What are some common symbols we see around us every day?
2. How do I research a new idea?
3. Why is it important to learn about holidays that other cultures and countries celebrate?

### Culminating Activity

Students will be researching and investigating a holiday celebration from another part of the world. As a culminating activity they will effectively represent their research in graphic organizers as well as create a symbol that they feel best represents their holiday.


## Project Elements

This project has six parts:

### 1. Activating Prior Knowledge about Holiday Celebrations


- Display books and other resources about celebrations around world in the classroom. Allow students to explore and interact with the materials to build excitement about the project. (see Related Resources list for suggested books)
- Conduct a class discussion about holidays, festivals and celebrations to elicit prior knowledge. Ask question such as: “What are the most popular holidays in our country?”, “What are your favorite holidays? Why?”, “What kinds of things do people do on holidays?”, “What are some common elements of holiday celebrations?” Guide students to the understanding that all holiday celebrations have things in common such as: special foods and feasts, traditions, activities, special clothing, and more.
- After a classroom discussion, have students write a journal entry or quick-write about their favorite holiday. Ask students to tell why that holiday is a favorite and to include descriptions of the sights, sounds, feelings, foods, and traditions of that holiday.  **Email Exchange:** Write to your ePal about holidays. Ask what his or her favorite holiday is and why. Ask about activities, foods, and traditions that are shared on that holiday. Share information about your favorite holiday and the traditions that surround it.

### 2. Holidays and Celebrations Around the World


- Choose one or more of the books in the National Geographic series *Holidays Around the World* (see Related Resources for specific titles). Read to the students or have students read the books in pairs.
- After reading about a holiday from another part of the world, ask students to identify what elements of the holiday are similar to holidays celebrated in their home countries or cultures. Guide students again to look at important elements of a holiday celebration: foods, traditions, clothing, etc. After examining similarities between holiday celebrations, ask students to identify any differences they might find between holidays at home and holidays abroad.
- As time allows, read about other holidays from other parts of the world and conduct discussions about similarities and differences.  **Email Exchange:** Write to your ePal about one of the holidays you read about from another part of the world. Maybe you can choose one from your ePals country or culture! Identify what elements of the holiday are similar to a holiday that you celebrate. Explain what is different from the holiday that you celebrate.

### 3. What is a symbol?


- In this lesson, students will learn about symbols and their relationships to holiday celebrations. Show students a variety of photos/illustrations, or actual symbolic objects for a variety of holidays. Ask students to identify the object and ask what holiday each one is connected to. Ask what they think the symbol represents. (This could even be presented as a game). Ask students to define the word “symbol”. Allow students to brainstorm different ideas and keywords until a working definition is established. The final definition should explain that symbols are signs or objects that show an idea, an event, a message, a person, or another thing.
- Invite students to look for examples of common symbols within the classroom. Help students identify things such as flags or picture symbols. Extend the discussion to other symbols in the world around us. What symbols might represent your school? What other symbols represent your country? What are the common symbols of your holiday celebrations?

- Read *Celebrations of Light: A Year of Holidays Around the World* by Nancy Luenn if available. Discuss the role that light, fire, candles, and lanterns play in many holidays. Would these items or pictures of these items be good symbols for these holidays? Why or why not?
- Direct students back to the favorite holiday they chose in the first lesson. In a Think-Pair-Share activity have them first think of a symbol to represent that holiday, pair with a partner and then share that symbol idea with the partner in preparation for a short writing activity—either an email to an ePal or a journal entry.  **Email Exchange:** Write to your ePal about common holiday symbols. Ask them what symbol they think of when they think of their favorite holidays. Share with your ePal the Think-Pair-Share activity you did regarding symbols and your favorite holiday. Explain what symbol you chose to represent that holiday and why.

#### 4. How do I research my topic?

- In this lesson, students, working in pairs, will choose the holiday that they will research and will begin the research process. Introduce the book *Celebrate! Connections Among Cultures* by Jan Reynolds, if available. Explain that while every culture has its traditions and history behind its celebrations, there are many commonalities. Have students conduct research on the holiday or festival of their choice, paying close attention to the following themes from the book and how they relate to their chosen holiday:
  - a. When we celebrate we eat and drink (food or drink);
  - b. When we celebrate we decorate ourselves (special clothing);
  - c. When we celebrate we play music (special music)
  - d. When we celebrate we dance (dance, pageants, events or parades)
  - e. When we celebrate we use fire (light and decorations)
- Provide each student pair with five large index cards (notebook paper or preprinted documents will work too) and instruct them to write the above topic titles, one on each card. Students will put the information that they find, and the sources, on these cards.
- As a whole class activity, brainstorm a list of possible sources for the holiday and festival research. Ask students to think about what kind of information they are going to need and where they can find it. The list might include: books, websites, magazines, videos, expert interviews, maps, etc. Accept all answers as this is a brainstorming session. Circle the best choices. See Related Resources for specific resources that will be helpful in this stage of the project.
- You may want to introduce ePals student forums as a source for first hand information from students who celebrate various festivals and holidays. Students with ePals access can post specific questions on the forums and, as ePals is a global community, students from around the world can answer their questions. ePals Student Talk Forums can be found here: <http://www.epals.com/forums/default.aspx?GroupID=52> Students will need to be logged in to post questions. The best forums for these type of questions are Culture, Homework Help, and Looking for Information on...
- Allow student pairs as much time as needed for research of their holiday or festivals, providing support as needed. As students find information they should record it on the appropriate index card along with its source.  **Email Exchange:** Share with your ePal what holiday or festival you have chosen to research and what avenues you plan to pursue to find your information. If your ePal lives in a country that celebrates this holiday or festival ask him/her for information about how it is celebrated.

## 5. Creating a Symbol as a Culminating Activity

- For the culminating activity students will share their learning with two items: 1. a web or mind map that effectively shows the information that they have gathered about their chosen holiday or festival and, 2. a symbol that represents their holiday or festival.
- Student pairs will transfer the information from their index cards to some sort of graphic organizer web or mind map. The web should state the holiday or festival in the center, have linking lines to the sub concepts, and include pictures or graphics to enhance the text. Students may want to use a graphic organizer web similar to this one seen here by [Houghton Mifflin](#) (reproducible for classroom use) or create an online mind map at [MindMeister](#) where they can add links and pictures. (For alternate activity, students can create a poster or [Glog](#) to represent the information gathered in research.)
- Students will also create a symbol to represent the holiday they've researched and construct that symbol in some way—on the computer, on paper, etc. Along with this construction they will need to explain, in a short paragraph what the symbol is and why it best represents their holiday.  **Email Exchange:** Share with your ePal what symbol you have chosen for your holiday or festival. Scan a copy of the picture and send it as an attachment if possible. Explain why you feel this symbol best represents this celebration.
- Have student pairs share with the class their research and symbols so that the whole group has an opportunity to learn about other holidays and festivals around the world, either in oral reports or in a museum-style display.

## 6. Reflect/Assess

- Teachers can use the [Culminating Activity Rubric](#) to evaluate student work.
- Teachers can use the [Email Rubric](#) to evaluate emails, if they were exchanged.
- Students can reflect in an email to their ePal or as a journal entry: Every culture in the world celebrates. How are the traditions and practices that surround your favorite holiday different from the holiday that you researched? How are they similar? What was the most fascinating or surprising thing that you learned while studying holidays and festivals?

## Celebrate! Holidays and Festivals Around the World Supporting Project Elements

**Academic Vocabulary** ancestors, celebrations, costume, culture, customs, decorations, feast, festival, generation, holiday, observance, pageant, parade, rituals, symbol, traditions, symbol,

### Materials/Handouts

Graphic Organizer Web [http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/cluster\\_web3.pdf](http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/cluster_web3.pdf)

Mind Mapping <http://www.mindmeister.com/>

Glogs <http://edu.glogster.com/>

Email Rubric [http://www.epals.com/projects/info.aspx?DivID=Email\\_Rubric2](http://www.epals.com/projects/info.aspx?DivID=Email_Rubric2)

Culminating Activity Rubric [http://www.epals.com/projects/info.aspx?](http://www.epals.com/projects/info.aspx?DivID=Culminating_rubric)

[DivID=Culminating\\_rubric](http://www.epals.com/projects/info.aspx?DivID=Culminating_rubric)

Sample of Holidays by Month <https://images.epals.com/holidays/Sample%20of%20Holidays%20by%20Month.pdf>

Related Resources

#### Books

*Celebrate! Connections Among Cultures* by Jan Reynolds

*Celebrations of Light: A Year of Holidays Around the World* by Nancy Luenn

*Celebrations! Festivals, Carnivals and Feast Days from around the World* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley

*A Calendar of Festivals: Celebrations from Around the World* by Cherry Gilchrist

*Around the World Through Holidays: CrossCurricular Readers Theatre* by Carol Petersen

*Celebrate! The Best Feasts and Festivals from Many Lands* by Lynda Jones

*Celebrate Chinese New Year with Fireworks, Dragons and Lanterns* by Carolyn Otto\*

*Celebrate Halloween with Pumpkins, Costumes and Candy* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Hanukkah with Light, Latkes and Dreidels* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Thanksgiving with Turkey, Family and Counting Blessings* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr with Praying, Fasting and Charity* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Christmas with Carols, Presents and Peace* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with Honey, Prayers and the Shofar* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Diwali with Sweets, Lights and Fireworks* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Cinco de Mayo with Fiestas, Music and Dance* by Carolyn Otto\*

*Celebrate Passover with Matzah, Maror and Memories* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Easter with Colored Eggs, Flowers and Prayer* by Deborah Heiligman\*

*Celebrate Kwanzaa with Candles, Community and the Fruits of the Harvest* by Carolyn Otto\*

\* from the National Geographic series Holidays Around the World

#### General Holiday Websites

World Almanac for Kids: Birthdays and Holidays (short articles on many holidays)

[http://www.worldalmanacforkids.com/WAKI-Chapter.aspx?chapter\\_id=2](http://www.worldalmanacforkids.com/WAKI-Chapter.aspx?chapter_id=2)

Kid's Turn Central: Holidays Around the World (short definition of each holiday with links to outside information sources for each holiday)

<http://www.kidsturncentral.com/holidays/glossary/holidaysgloss.htm>

Fact Monster: Festivals Around the World

<http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0909585.html>

Academic Kids Encyclopedia: Holidays (definition of holiday and links to many holidays)

<http://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Holidays>

National Geographic Kids Winter Celebrations article

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/stories/peopleplaces/winter-celebrations/>

National Geographic Holidays and Festivals Quiz

<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/holidays-festivals-quiz/>

Students Write About Holidays Around the World:

<http://www.zuzu.org/daze.html>

#### Websites for Specific Holidays

Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco, Celebration of the Chinese New Year

<http://www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture/festival/newyear/newyear.html>

Chinese New Year

[http://education2.uvic.ca/Faculty/mroth/438/CHINA/chinese\\_new\\_year.html](http://education2.uvic.ca/Faculty/mroth/438/CHINA/chinese_new_year.html)

Jewish Holiday for Kids

<http://www.akhlah.com/holidays/jewishholidays.php>

Hogmanay

<http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/ho/Hogmanay>

A Traditional Hogmanay

<http://www.visitscotland.com/guide/inspirational/features/very-scottish/hogmanay>

New Year in Thailand: Songkran

<http://kids.asiasociety.org/explore/new-year-thailand-songkran>  
Children's Day in Japan: Kodomo no-hi  
<http://kids.asiasociety.org/explore/childrens-day-japan-kodomo-no-hi>  
Plimoth Plantation: Thanksgiving  
<http://www.plimoth.org/kids/homeworkHelp/thanksgiving.php>  
The First Thanksgiving  
[http://www.scholastic.com/scholastic\\_thanksgiving/](http://www.scholastic.com/scholastic_thanksgiving/)  
Kwanzaa, A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture  
<http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/index.shtml>  
Halloween Information  
<http://www.littleclickers.com/halloween1006.html>

#### Websites for Independent Research

Encyclopedia.com  
<http://www.encyclopedia.com/>  
Printable World Atlas/Maps  
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/>  
Merriam Webster's Word Central Dictionary  
<http://wordcentral.com/>  
Ask Kids  
<http://www.askkids.com/>  
Fact Monster  
<http://www.factmonster.com/>  
Yahoo Kids Encyclopedia  
<http://kids.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia>

#### **Extended Learning**

- Have students take photographs of traditional holiday foods, decorations, dances, etc. and share them with ePals around the world in the [ePals Featured Photo Gallery](#).
- Choose one or more holidays and extend learning by making food, playing games and creating crafts associated with that holiday.
- Find a collaborating class from a different country using ePals.com and exchange holiday cards, postcards or small gifts. Consider using Skype or other video conferencing tool to share holiday traditions.
- Invite an expert to the classroom to share information about holidays and festivals—invite a parent, someone from a cultural center or local university to come to the classroom to speak about a holiday or festival that they celebrate.
- Keep a holiday calendar throughout the school year and discuss holidays as they come up. [Earth Calendar](#) or [Enchanted Learning](#) may be a good resource for this activity.
- Complete an ePals/National Geographic project. Units are available about [Digital Storytelling](#), [The Way We Are](#), [Habitats](#), [Water](#), [Weather](#), [Natural Disasters](#), [Global Warming](#) and [Maps](#).
- Create a [We Are ePals](#) video about your Holiday Traditions