

ARTICLES & ACTIVITIES

GRADES
2-5

History of the New Year and the Modern Calendar

How do you celebrate the first day of the new year? Do you stay up until midnight and celebrate by making loud noises? Have you ever wondered when the tradition of celebrating the new year started?

New Year's celebrations have a long and varied history. Most modern cultures celebrate New Year's Day on January 1 each year, but this was not always the case. Even today, some cultures celebrate a different start to the new year.

Ancient New Year Celebrations

Different cultures have celebrated the new year on different dates. Some cultures based their celebrations on the movement of the moon, while others based their celebrations on the position of the sun.



The earliest known reference to the new year celebration dates back to 2000 BC when early Mesopotamian cultures marked the beginning of the year with a festival called Akitu. Akitu was a 12-day religious ceremony in mid-March. In ancient Babylon, the new year began when the first crops started growing.

Other cultures also marked the new year based on observable events. The ancient Egyptians marked the start of the year when the Nile River flooded.

During the early Roman Empire, people celebrated the new year on March 1 (or possibly March 3 or 25). Around this time, farmers would sow seeds and prepare the land for crops. The Roman calendar was also influenced by the Roman calendar, which was based on the Roman calendar.

New Year Celebrations Around the World

The Gregorian calendar, the most commonly used calendar in the world, celebrates New Year's Day on January 1st. However, different cultures have different new year celebrations and may even celebrate the new year on a different date altogether!

New Year Around the World

The Chinese New Year begins in late January or early February and is celebrated for a month. The festival is filled with parades, fireworks, and special foods. Many families gather to celebrate and believe the new year is a time for renewal and luck.



In Iran, New Year's Day is in March on the first day of spring. People spend the day visiting friends and family, sharing sweets, and wishing each other well. In Iran, the new year is also celebrated with a special meal called Sadeh.

In Judaism, the new year is celebrated in the fall. It is a very important religious holiday known as Rosh Hashanah or the Jewish New Year. It is a time of reflection on the past year and thinking about the new year. Many people observe the holiday by attending religious services and gatherings with friends and family.

The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar (moon) cycle. The new year starts at the same time as the month of Muharram, which can begin in autumn, summer, spring, or winter. Many Muslims gather with family and friends for special meals and celebrations of their faith.

In many cultures, the new year is a time for reflection and looking forward to the future. People often make resolutions and set goals for the new year. The new year is also a time for family and friends to gather and celebrate together.

HISTORY OF THE NEW YEAR



KEEP SCROLLING TO SEE
WHAT'S INSIDE!

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

 **Vocabulary Cards** with key terms

 **Posters** that define the holiday

 **Reading Passage**

 **QR Codes** for extended research

 **Graphic Organizers** for note-taking

 **Comprehension Activities**

 **Fact Sort**

 **Discussion Questions**

 **Writing Page**

 **Answer Key**



a long-
established way
of doing
something
passed on from
generation to
generation



marking a date
with an
enjoyable event

tradition

celebration

VOCABULARY CARDS

Name: _____

New Year's Vocabulary Activity

Cut out the words and definitions. Match them with the pictures.

Picture	Word	Definition
		
		
		
		

Name: _____

New Year's Vocabulary A

Cut out the words and definitions. Match them with the pictures.

tradition	celebration	a promise you make to yourself
resolution	reflection	a person in charge of an empire, like a king
emperor	observable	the calendar created by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.
Julian Calendar	Gregorian Calendar	a long-established way of doing something passed on from generation to generation

Name: _____

New Year's Vocabulary Activity

Fill in the matrix for each word.

tradition

Definition	Characteristics
Examples	Non-Examples

celebration

Definition	Characteristics
Examples	Non-Examples

**VOCABULARY
ACTIVITIES**

- History of the New Year and the Modern Calendar
- New Year Celebrations Around the World

While You're Reading

Mark with Symbols

! when you find something interesting

? when you are unsure or confused by something

* when you find something important that you want to remember

Highlight with Colors

yellow vocabulary words or key words

green key phrases or definitions

Make Your Own Notations

symbol or color	meaning

New Year's Day



New Year's Day is a holiday celebrated on January 1.

New Year's Eve is on December 31.

In many countries, people stay up until midnight to celebrate the transition from one year to the next.

**CLOSE READING
BOOKMARK PAGE**

History of the New Year and the Modern Calendar

How do you celebrate the first day of the new year? Do you stay up until midnight and celebrate by making loud noises? Have you ever wondered when the tradition of celebrating the new year started?

New Year's celebrations have a long and varied history. Most modern cultures celebrate New Year's Day on January 1 each year, but this was not always the case. Even today, some cultures celebrate a different start to the new year.

Ancient New Year Celebrations

Different cultures have celebrated the new year on different dates because they used different calendars. Some cultures based their calendars on the movement of the moon. Other cultures based their calendars on the position of the sun.



The earliest known new year celebration was in 2000 BC when ancient cultures marked the new year with a festival. In ancient Egypt, the new year was a 12-day festival that began in March. In ancient Rome, the new year began when the crops were growing.

Other cultures based their new year on the shortest day of the year. In ancient Egypt, the new year was based on the shortest day of the year. In ancient Rome, the new year was based on the shortest day of the year.

The Roman Calendar

During the Roman Empire, the new year was celebrated on January 1. This was the first day of the Roman new year. The Romans started to celebrate their New Year's Day on January 1.

The Middle Ages

The early Catholic Church in Europe did not approve of new year celebrations. They said these festivities were against Christian tradition. In 567 AD, January 1 was no longer considered the beginning of the year.

People throughout Europe began celebrating the new year on different dates important to the Catholic church. New Year celebrations occurred on Christmas, March 1, March 25, or Easter. Many people believed that beginning each new year with a time of reflection would help them better prepare for Easter and the coming of spring.

A New Calendar: The Gregorian Calendar

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII had a new calendar made that would better reflect the length of each year. This new calendar was called the Gregorian Calendar, and it is still in use all over the world today. In this calendar, New Year's Day is celebrated on January 1.

Most Catholic countries began using the Gregorian calendar. However, the Protestant countries were slower to use the new calendar. January 1 has only been celebrated as the new year in western nations for about 400 years.

Germany began using the new calendar in 1700, and other countries soon followed. Britain started using it in 1752, Sweden in 1753, Japan in 1873, and China in 1912. Eastern European nations didn't use the new calendar until 1924 and Russia changed its calendar twice after trying out its own calendars for a time. It finally accepted the new calendar in 1924. Only 100 years ago, Russia used a different calendar than today!



**INFORMATIONAL
ARTICLE**

WEBSITES



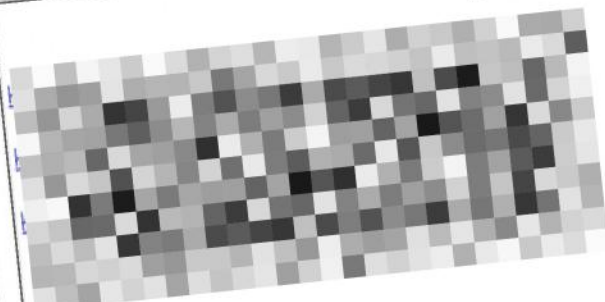
History of the New Year and the Modern Calendar Websites

If you find any links that do not work, please email me and I will fix it promptly. Videos are from a variety of websites, including YouTube (via SafeShare or SafeTube). There are two pages of QR Codes. One page has the YouTube links and the other page has the Safe Video links. Make sure you can access YouTube at your school. Also be sure to preview the websites and videos before allowing students to access them.

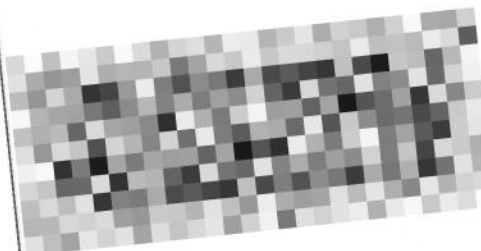
Websites



YouTube

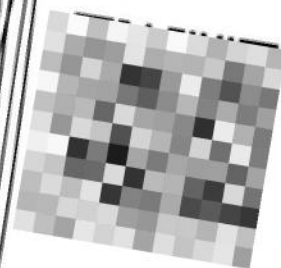


VideoLink

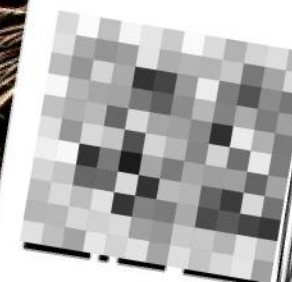


New Year Traditions Around the World

Web Sites



Videos



History of the New Year Note Taking Sheet

Three Other Facts

History of the New Year Note Taking Sheet

Ancient Celebrations

The Roman Empire

The Middle Ages

The Gregorian Calendar

Note Taking Sheet

Why did early people celebrate the new year on different dates?

Describe when some early cultures celebrated the new year:

Write three facts about the history of New Year's Day and the calendar:

Fact	Fact	Fact

What is something new that you learned or something you enjoyed?

Other Information:

What I Remember About the History of New Year's Day

1. What is the most commonly used calendar in the world? When and who created it?

2. When did people celebrate the new year in the Roman Empire? How did this change over time?

3. Describe when some ancient civilizations celebrated the new year.

4. Tell about something new you learned.

Sequence

Cut out the significant parts in the History of New Year Celebrations and glue them in order.

1 → 2 → 3

4 → 5

6 → 7 → 8

In the early Roman Empire, people celebrated the new year on March 1, 15, or 25th.	Eastern European nations didn't use the new calendar until 1924 and 1927.	In 46 BC, Julius Caesar created the Julian Calendar. He made January 1 the first day of the Roman new year.	Other cultures also marked the new year based on observable events.
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NOTE TAKING SHEETS

COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

Directions: Cut apart the labels and facts. Sort the facts into the best category or do an open sort and create your own categories.

**New Years
Around the World**

**Good Luck
Traditions**

**Making
Resolutions**

For a more advanced sort, do an open sort and make up your own categories.

Different cultures have different new year celebrations and may even celebrate the new year on a different date altogether!

Many cultures have new year traditions that focus on good luck.

In Judaism, the new year is celebrated in the fall. It is a very important religious holiday known as Rosh Hashanah or the Jewish New Year.

Resolutions can be a great way to improve your life. Remember that they should be enjoyable too.

Many people see New Year's Day as a time to make a fresh start.

Many people observe the holiday by attending religious services or gatherings with family and friends.

People clean their homes so that the new year is filled with parades, fireworks, and special foods.

Many families gather to celebrate the Chinese New Year and believe the Chinese zodiac is a time for renewal.

The new year is based on the lunar cycle. The new year is the same time as the month of Muharram, which can begin in autumn, summer, spring, or winter.

Many people make New Year's resolutions.

People spend the day visiting with friends and family, sharing sweets, and wishing one another well.

People eat honey during Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, as a sign of hope for a sweet year ahead.

In Japan, the New Year is a time for families to gather at their local Shinto shrines and pray for peace and good fortune in the coming year.

There are no rules for making resolutions, but many people try to come up with goals they feel they can achieve.

In Brazil, many people wear white and jump over seven waves, and neighbors break plates on each other's doorsteps for good luck in the new year.

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**FACT
SORT**

SAMPLE PROJECT FOR FACT SORT

Environment

where it lives

Ladybugs live in meadows,
forests, and gardens.

Ladybugs live for about one to two years.

The changes a ladybug goes through is called metamorphosis.

Actions

does, can

Female ladybugs lay eggs on the underside of leaves.

If food is not available, ladybugs will eat each other.

Ladybugs are helpful because they eat plant-sucking insects such as aphids.

An adult ladybug may eat up to 75 aphids each day

Ladybug larvae eat hundreds of aphids during this stage.

Attributes

looks, has, is

Ladybugs have six legs and a body, which looks like a tiny dome.

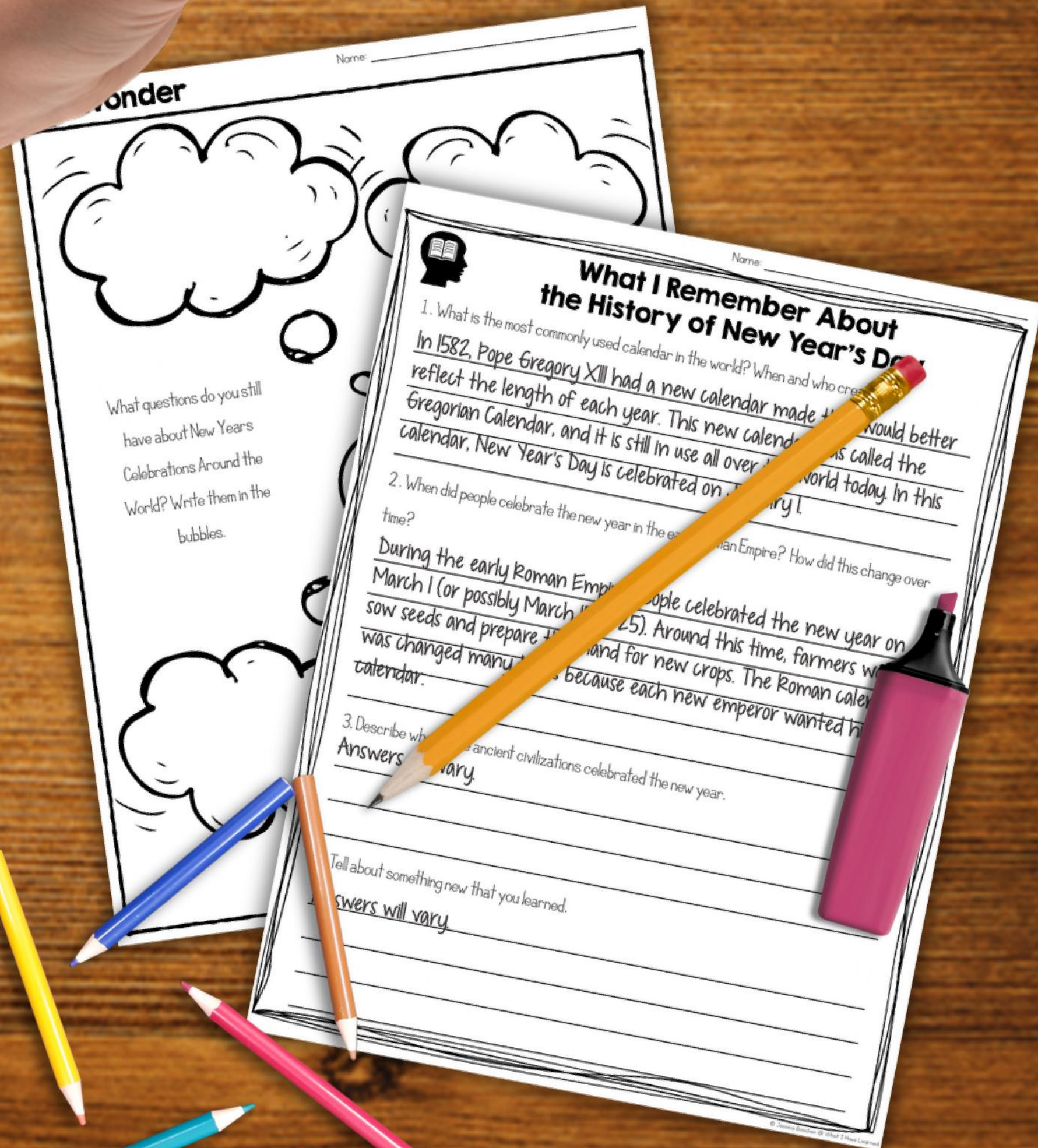
Ladybugs have four wings. The front two wings are wing covers to protect the back two.

Ladybugs are brightly colored to let predators know they are poisonous.

Ladybugs can be red, yellow or orange with small dots.

While this is for a different theme activity, it gives you an idea of how students can do the fact sort.

WAYS TO USE IN THE CLASSROOM



Morning Reading – holiday-themed warm-up texts



Whole-Group Lessons – read and discuss passages



Small Group Practice – vocabulary cards and organizers



Independent Work – comprehension questions and fact sort



Research Extension – QR codes and videos



Homework – writing page or discussion prompts

YOU WILL LOVE THIS BECAUSE



Rich Cultural Learning

Blends social studies content with ELA skills, helping students build background knowledge while practicing essential nonfiction reading strategies.



High Student Engagement

Global traditions, real-world history, and interactive activities keep students curious, motivated, and actively involved in their learning.



Ready-to-Use

Everything is print-and-go, saving teachers time while still delivering meaningful, standards-based instruction during a busy January return.

TEACHERS LOVE IT!



I used this resource when we were talking about how different countries celebrate New Year's Around the World.

Jennifer L.



My students and I enjoyed this resource so much and it really benefitted our students' learning.

Kristy P.



My passion is making learning accessible to all students. I love scaffolding learning, breaking down the concepts and building them up so that students can see the connections. I love figuring out the small components that build up to the big ideas and helping students see it all.



What I have **LEARNED**