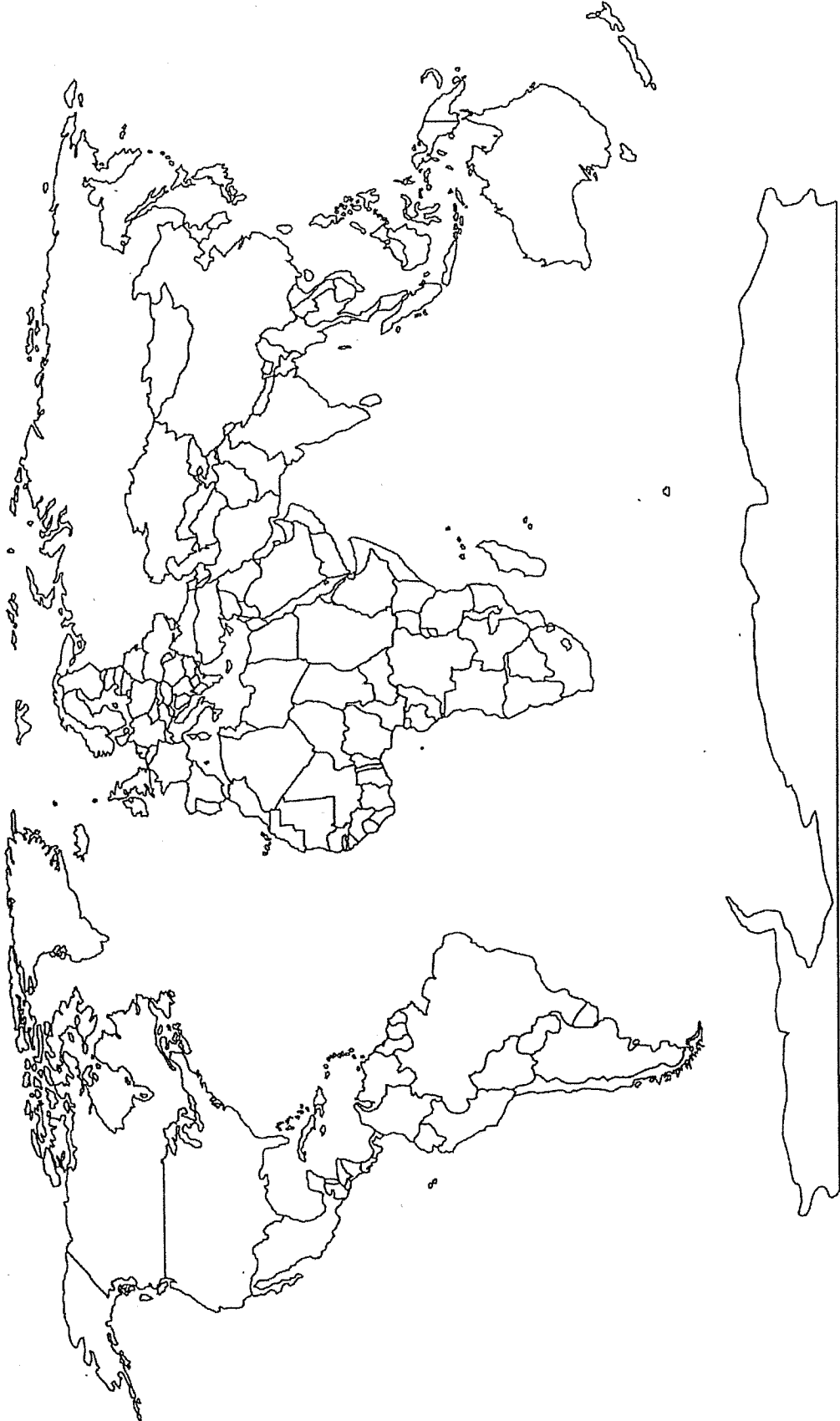


New Year's Traditions from Around the World



We will be studying different countries and their customs as it relates to celebrating the New Year.

World Map



History and General Knowledge of the Many New Year Celebrations

Today you will study the history of the holiday. Please read the following section. You will need to annotate each section.

A History of the New Year: A move from March to January

The celebration of the new year on January 1st is a relatively new phenomenon. The earliest recording of a new year celebration is believed to have been in Mesopotamia, c. 2000 B.C. and was celebrated around the time of the vernal equinox, in mid-March. A variety of other dates tied to the seasons were also used by various ancient cultures. The Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Persians began their new year with the fall equinox, and the Greeks celebrated it on the winter solstice.

Early Roman Calendar: March 1st Rings in the New Year

The early Roman calendar designated March 1 as the new year. The calendar had just ten months, beginning with March. That the new year once began with the month of March is reflected in some of the names of the months. September through December, our ninth through twelfth months, were originally positioned as the seventh through tenth months (septem is Latin for "seven," octo is "eight," novem is "nine," and decem is "ten.")

January Joins the Calendar

The first time the new year was celebrated on January 1st was in Rome in 153 B.C. (In fact, the month of January did not even exist until around 700 B.C., when the second king of Rome, Numa Pontilius, added the months of January and February.) The new year was moved from March to January because that was the beginning of the civil year, the month that the two newly elected Roman consuls—the highest officials in the Roman republic—began their one-year tenure. But this new year date was not always strictly and widely observed, and the new year was not observed until sometimes celebrated on March 1.

Julian Calendar: January 1st Officially Instituted as the New Year

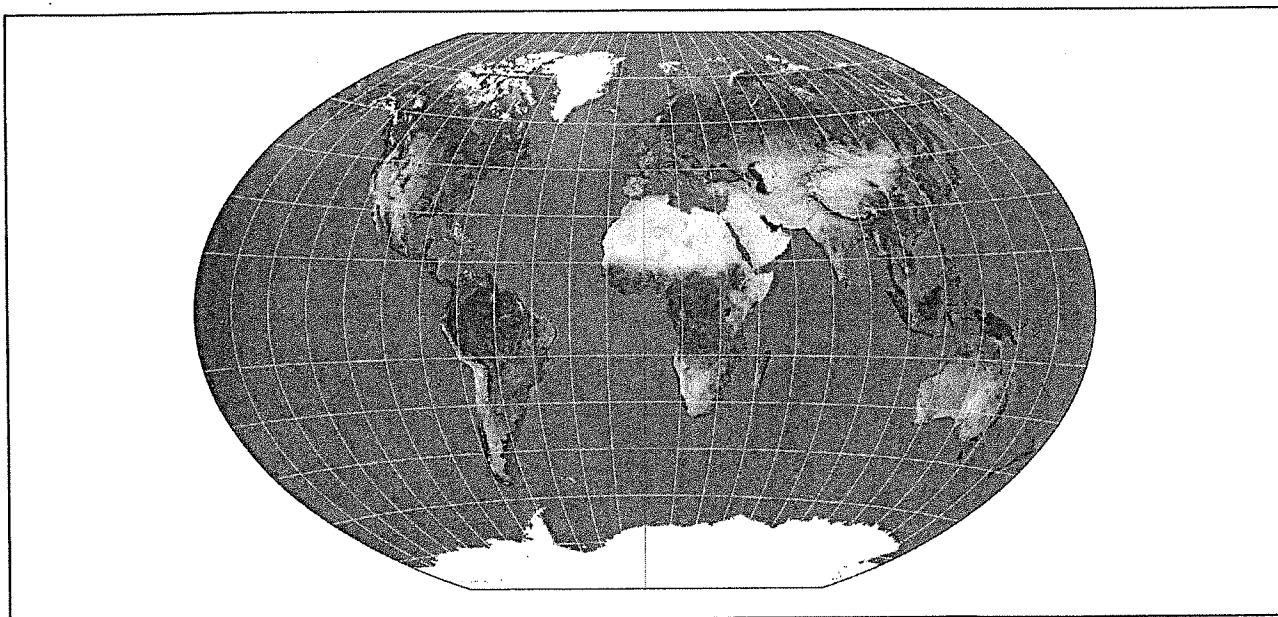
In 46 B.C. Julius Caesar introduced a new, solar-based calendar that was a vast improvement on the ancient Roman calendar, which was a lunar system that had become wildly inaccurate over the years. The Julian calendar decreed that the new year would occur with January 1, and within the Roman world, January 1 became the consistently observed start of the new year.

Middle Ages: January 1st Abolished

In medieval Europe, however, the celebrations accompanying the new year were considered pagan and unchristian-like, and in 567 the Council of Tours abolished January 1 as the beginning of the year. At various times and in various places throughout medieval Christian Europe, the new year was celebrated on Dec. 25, the birth of Jesus; March 1; March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation; and Easter.

Gregorian Calendar: January 1st Restored

In 1582, the Gregorian calendar reform restored January 1 as new year's day. Although most Catholic countries adopted the Gregorian calendar almost immediately, it was only gradually adopted among Protestant countries. The British, for example, did not adopt the reformed calendar until 1752. Until then, the British Empire -and their American colonies- celebrated the new year in March.



New Year in America – Traditions and Customs

Gatherings and fun moments include watching championship football games in the stadiums. The streets are crowded with youth and elderly people dressed fashionably to welcome the new year with great joy.

Times Square in New York City hosts several events which are hosted by the television celebrity Dick Clark. Many people love watching these programs broadcasted on the television with all their family and friends. The streets are decorated with lanterns, flash lights and colored papers. Flags are also adorned to express happiness. Giant vibrant colored electric apples are lowered to the ground at the time when people start saying "Happy New Year".

American New Year customs are very colorful and entertaining events. You can have fun at the dance parties which is one of the major celebrations on New Year's Eve. At the stroke of midnight all the Americans share kisses and express their New Year greetings. This tradition came into existence from the masked ball which symbolizes evil spirits. It is believed that when you kiss it wipes off the evil spirits and purifies the new beginning.

With the change of celebrating ways people have altered this tradition. They honk car horns to express the announcement of New Year party time. People blow paper blowers and whistles which is a very exciting way of wishing happy new year!

Traditional American feast on the new year.

In the United States, it is believed that black-eyed beans are very lucky. It is an American custom on New Year to prepare special dinner with different cuisines to gather for family feasts.

A special soul food with rice which is popularly called Hoppin' John is consumed with black eyed beans. During the party people also have cakes and champagne which is considered very auspicious.

New Year In Argentina – Traditions and Customs

Argentina, the second largest country of South America, is considered to be a land where people prefer to strictly abide by the customs and traditions of the country, and more precisely the beliefs of Roman Catholicism. Argentina holds a long ancient history of passing on these traditions and customs from one generation to another.

Traditionally, New Year celebrations in Argentina involve a late dinner, with close friends and family members in attendance. Bursting firecrackers is another important part of it. There are few other popular, prominent, and interesting traditions usually followed by most of the people in Argentina.

One such out of the ordinary and unusual tradition asks to run around a house with a suitcase in hand, with a belief that doing so will ensure more traveling in the coming year.

There is one more tradition of eating beans on New Year, which is done with a belief that doing so will ensure safety to the present job, or will open up gates for new and better job in the coming year. There is another popular tradition of going swimming in private and public pools, rivers, and lakes.

This tradition is considered to be very close to the heart of the natives of Argentina. Turrón and pan dulce which are being served as the customary dishes on New Year is also a part of customs and traditions in Argentina.

New Year Celebrations in Argentina

New Year celebrations in Argentina witness people coming out of their houses to be a part of the street parties. As soon as the clock turns twelve, people sing, dance, and celebrate.

Bursting crackers is an intact part of celebrations of New Year in Argentina, and small children and people of young age leave no stone unturned to ensure that the grandest and most appealing of fireworks shows occur in their part as soon as the moment of New Year arrives. Usually, the entire family comes out of their houses to move to party places, and to be a part of the firework show. Fireworks usually go on until the dawn of the first day of the New Year, with people dancing, singing, eating, drinking, and celebrating during the whole night.

The majority of the population of Argentina is Roman Catholic. On the first dawn of the New Year, they prefer to go to Churches and Cathedrals to offer prayers to God for happiness, peace, and prosperity for the New Year. The afternoon time is usually booked for picnics, swimming, or family gatherings. Though it is not a stern tradition, out of their generosity and love, elderly people confer young kids of the family with gifts and goodies.

New Year in China – Traditions and Customs

New Year in China is completely different and unique from any of the New Year celebrations made in any part of the world. In China, New Year is also called 'Gung Hay Fat Choy' or 'The Spring Festival'. The day of New Year is celebrated on the first day of the Chinese calendar.

History of New Year in China

The New Year celebrations in China hold an entire history of its own. Once, there used to live a giant beast with the name of Nian, who used to swallow many human beings with a single bite. After some time the natives came to know that the beast is afraid of the red color and loud noises. Since then, they started burning firecrackers and using red color in order to keep the giant beast scared. Since they got themselves liberated from the giant beast's scare and conferred themselves with a new life, they started celebrating the day as GuNian (Pass over the Nian) or New Year day.

The Date of New Year in China

In China, there is no one fixed day of the New Year, and thus the date changes every year. It is celebrated in accordance with the Chinese calendar, which is a blend of the solar and lunar calendar. According to the Chinese calendar, the day of the second moon after the winter solstice is meant to be celebrated as New Year; it lasts about a month. Last day of Chinese New Year is celebrated as the Lantern Festival.

New Year Celebrations in China- Customs and Traditions

In the present day life, one hardly gets an entire month-long period to celebrate it. In Taiwan, the first five days of New Year are conferred as holidays, while Mainland China and Singapore have two to three days of holidays. It is only during that time, that one can precisely sense the New Year mood, enthusiasm, and celebration in China. Chinese people consider New Year as a mark to forget all the past troubles, and move ahead with an optimistic attitude.

People buy themselves new clothes (preferably red), get a haircut, and clean and decorate their houses with red colored banners. Doing so is considered to bring good luck for the New Year. All past financial dues are preferred to be cleared with the beginning of the New Year. Also, red envelopes with some money inside it are given as presents to young children, unmarried adults, and parents. Traditionally, the money should be new bills and an amount of an even number (excluding '4' in any form). Also, fireworks are planned and made on the New Year day, with a belief that doing so sways away all evil spirits and energies. Lighting up houses with fancy lights, and decorating it with symbols of peace, prosperity, and luck is also a common tradition followed in concord with New Year celebrations.

New Year in Austria – Traditions and Customs

Traditional celebrations of New Year in Austria involve preparing a punch with ingredients of cinnamon, sugar, and red wine, which then is dedicated and devoted to Saint Sylvester. There is another tradition of burning of mortars, which is believed to sway all the evil spirits and negative energies of the past, and ensure everything pleasant and positive for the coming New Year.

Dinner on New Year's Eve is another prominent tradition in Austria. These dinners are prominently planned and based on the core of pig, which is considered as a symbol of good luck. Apart from the special dish of suckling pig, various other food items and ingredients such as cookies, chocolates, maple sugar, fudge, marzipan, etc. are prepared in the shape of a pig. After the traditional course with core on pig, green peppermint ice cream is served in a four leaf clover.

The first morning of the year, i.e. on the morning of the New Year's Day, people gather at an intended place. Small children come out of their respective houses, and visit every door of the neighborhood while singing New Year carols. New Year also initiates a carnival called Fasching on New Year's Eve, which goes on until the time of Lent.

A lot of parties and balls are also thrown during the period. Social prayers are organized, where small children sing carols. A molten lead is poured in a bucket of water, and then predictions are made on the basis of the shapes formed out of the molten lead in the water. Sighting an old woman on the occasion is considered to be an inauspicious indication.

New Year Celebrations in Austria

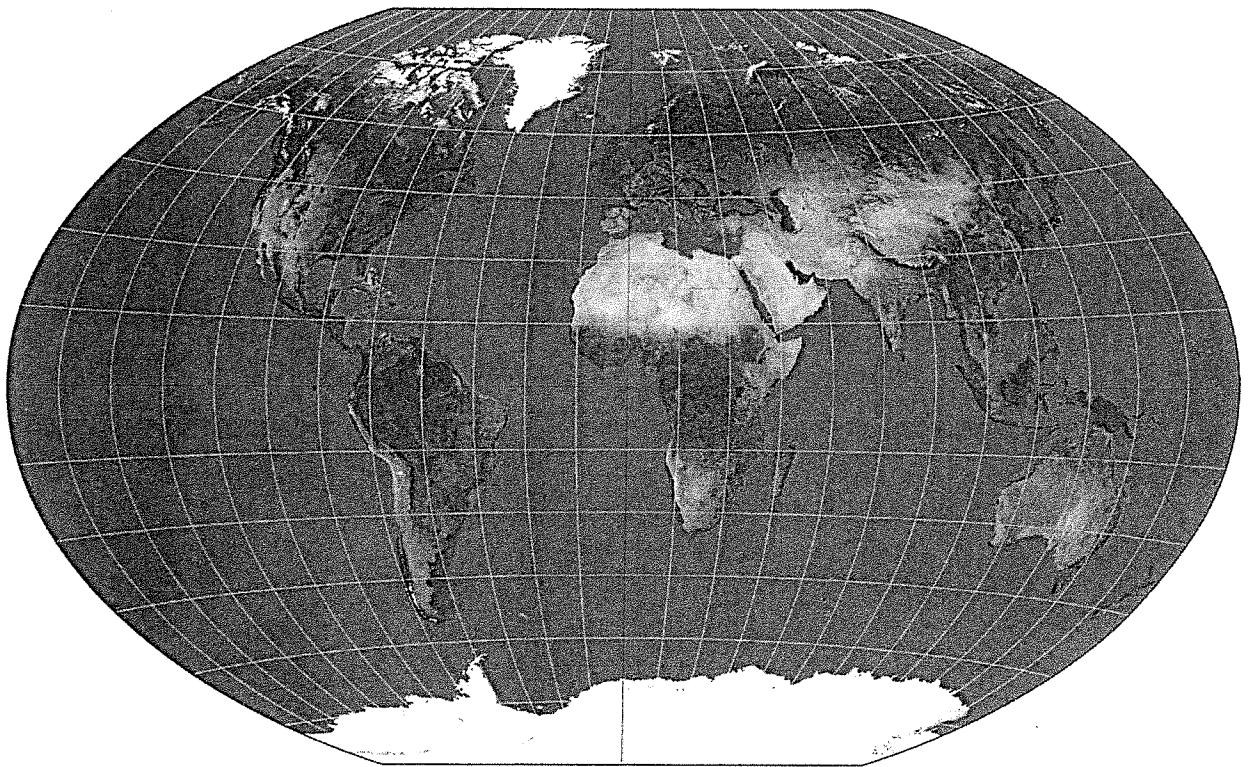
At twelve, wishes are exchanged with all those present around. Also churches and cathedrals ring twelve at that moment, and with that, all those present on the streets and in parties make noises, and blow trumpets and drums. Hugs and kisses are the most common way of showcasing one's greetings and wishes to others. People dance all through the night on the tunes of the eminent Blue Danube Waltz to celebrate. Some of the prominent cities of Austria also have firework shows.

Prominent New Year Celebrations in Austria

Vienna organizes 'Strauss operetta Die Fledermaus' in Vienna State Opera every year on New Year's Day and on New Year's Eve. It holds immense popularity all over the world, and sees throngs of people coming in from far off places. It is also accompanied by a performance of Vienna Philharmonic, who performs an all Strauss concert, with members of the Strauss family and contemporaries. The music being presented in the show is not only dynamic, but also wistful at the same time. In other prominent happenings on New Year in Austria, the old town of Innsbruck has brass band parades and evening fanfares.

Your Turn: Choose Your Own Country's New Year Celebrations

You may choose any country that we have not already learned about in class to create a page just like the others in this packet. Make sure to include traditions/customs, food, and celebrations.



Project Time

It is now time for you to create a project of your own. You are only limited by your own imagination. Pick one aspect of New Year's festivities around the world and develop/devise/generate/invent some type of "thing"

- 1) You may want to recreate a mathematically accurate scaled down replica of the ball dropping in Times Square. Then take it a step further and demonstrate it to the class.
- 2) You may want to create an international cookbook of New Year's recipes. Then take it a step further and cook one to share.
- 3) Research an aspect similar to "Hogmanay" and film yourself, your family or your friends recreating the custom.
- 4) Any idea of your choosing subject to teacher approval, then take it a step further