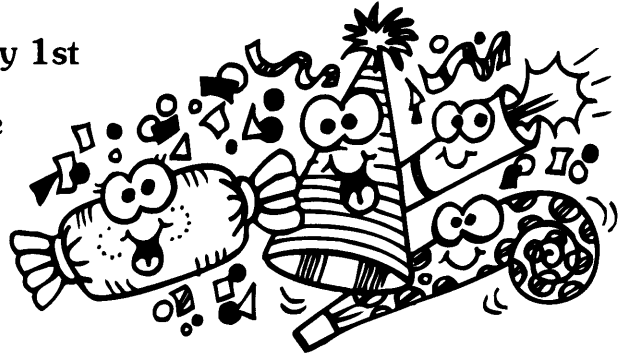


New Year's Day - January 1st!

The custom of celebrating the New Year on January 1st began over 2,000 years ago in Rome, Italy. The Romans had previously celebrated March 25th, the vernal equinox, as the beginning of the New Year. Government officials were elected in December and assumed their new positions on the day before January 1st. Gradually, citizens began celebrating this first day as the beginning of the New Year. This change, however, created confusion in the Roman calendar. The months of September, October, November and December, (which refer to the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth months of the year) were now the ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth month. By changing the New Year to January, these month's names had little meaning.



In 45 B.C., Roman emperor Julius Caesar selected the name "January" for the first month of the year. This name was chosen to honor the Roman god Janus. It was believed that this god had two faces each looking in opposite directions. In his right hand he held a key to unlock the door to the future and guard the door to the past. In his left hand he held a scepter as a symbol of authority. The Senate of Rome awarded Julius Caesar a month of his own for his successful transfer of the New Year and his improvement on the Roman Calendar. We now call this month "July."

Today, people of different countries celebrate New Year's Day in a variety of ways.

GERMANY - The people of Germany enjoy a custom called "lead pouring." On New Year's Day, youngsters drop hot drops of melted lead into containers of cold water. As the lead cools and hardens, unusual shapes appear. The children have fun telling their fortunes by the shapes of the lead. According to custom, if the lead shape resembles a coin, they might look forward to obtaining money.

ROSH HASHANA - The Jewish New Year provides a quiet time for meditation and prayer. This is a holy date to the Jewish people, considered the birthday of the world. Each person asks forgiveness from God and vows to live a better life. Rosh Hashana is celebrated on the first day of the Jewish calendar, in September or October.

SWEDEN - The Swedish people celebrate the New Year with parties and family gatherings on the last night of the year. There is much food and merrymaking and friendship and good wishes are expressed to one and all.

AUSTRIA - Ever since 1936, the Austrian government has commemorated the New Year with the minting of good luck tokens called "Gluecksmenze." New Year wishes are engraved on one side of the coin and good luck symbols on the other. Austrians also enjoy eating New Year's candies in the shape of good-luck pigs.

NIGERIA - The people of northern Nigeria celebrate the New Year at the beginning of fishing season, usually the first part of February. Thousands of people gather along the banks of the Sokoto River with fish nets in hand. At a given signal, everyone jumps in the water, startling the fish into the nets. The fisherman with the largest fish wins a prize.

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SOUTHERN UNITED STATES - It is a Southern tradition to serve black-eyed peas on New Year's Day for good luck! Prepare the peas the night before by soaking them in a pot of water. In the morning, rinse the peas and place them in a Crock-Pot® covered with water. Add a chopped onion, salt pork and some salt and pepper. Set the pot to cook on high all day in the classroom. When the peas are tender, serve a portion to each student.

SEMINOLE NEW YEAR - For four days during the month of July, the Seminole Indians of Florida celebrate the harvest of new corn as the beginning of the New Year. On the first day, they play games, feast and dance. On the second day, the men of the tribe begin a fast. Everyone dances the Green Corn Dance on the third evening and gives prayers of thanks for the good harvest. Finally, on the last day, the men break their fast and eat the new corn of the New Year.

UNITED STATES - In our country, the old year is symbolized by an old man, Father Time, and the New Year is represented by a baby in diapers. In the southern states, it is customary to eat certain foods on New Year's Day in hopes of bringing prosperity through the coming year. Black-eyed peas symbolize pennies and greens represent dollar bills. Making New Year's resolutions is a relatively new custom based on the idea of improving the New Year in the hope that it will be better than the last.

New Year's Day Word Find!

ACTIVITY 4

FIND THESE NEW YEAR WORDS IN THE PUZZLE BELOW: JANUARY, NEW YEAR, BELLS, CELEBRATE, MIDNIGHT, FATHER TIME, RESOLUTION, CONFETTI, BALLOONS, CUSTOM, FRIENDS.

