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Date _____

New Year Celebrations

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. Many cultures and countries celebrate New Year's Day on January 1st, but not all. January 1st is the first day of the year on the Gregorian calendar. This calendar was set by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. Not all cultures follow the Gregorian calendar though. Some Asian countries celebrate New Year's Day using the lunar calendar, which tracks the cycles of the moon. The lunar calendar and the Gregorian calendar start at different times and do not perfectly match up. That's why each year, the Lunar New Year falls on a different day on the Gregorian calendar. Some religious celebrations also fall at different times of year on the Gregorian calendar. For example, the Jewish New Year, called Rosh Hashanah, falls in September or October on the Gregorian calendar.

Notes

2. The earliest recorded New Year celebrations took place about 4,000 years ago in ancient Babylon. The Babylonians celebrated the new year in the spring. In 46 BCE, Julius Caesar worked with astronomers and mathematicians to introduce the Julian calendar. He made January 1st the first day of the year to honor Janus, the Roman god of beginnings. Janus had two faces, so he could look back to the past and ahead to the future. Ancient Romans celebrated by offering sacrifices to Janus and having big parties. The Julian calendar is very similar to the Gregorian calendar that is used today.

Notes

3. New Year's traditions are usually about bringing good luck in the new year. Eating special foods is an important tradition. In Italy, people eat lentils because they look like coins, so they represent good fortune. Eating greens also represents good fortune because the leaves resemble money. In some countries, pigs symbolize progress and prosperity, so people eat pork on New Year's Day. In Asian countries, eating noodles is said to guarantee a long life.

Notes

4. One important New Year's tradition is making resolutions. A resolution is a promise or goal you make for yourself. The start of a new year is a time when many people reflect on their lives. They may make resolutions to improve themselves or do something different next year. People might resolve to be nicer, to stop biting their nails, to get more exercise or to study harder.

Notes