

New Year's around the World: A group activity

Directions for the teacher:

STEP 1 – Warm up by asking where and with whom the students welcomed the New Year. Note the common questions: *Where/How did you spend New Year's Eve?*

STEP 2 – Task A. Students will work in small groups to discuss an assigned tradition. One member will report to the class with their ideas. If time and technology allows, you may encourage research online.

Questions based on these sources:

Almanac.com <http://www.almanac.com/content/new-year-traditions-around-world>

Classroom.Synonym <http://classroom.synonym.com/new-year-good-luck-traditions-14289.html>

History.com <http://www.history.com/topics/holidays/chinese-new-year-traditions>

Life in Italy. <http://www.lifeinitaly.com/holiday-celebrations-customs-and-traditions>

NewYear.com <http://www.123newyear.com/newyear-traditions/>

NPR.org <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2012/12/26/168092673/green-grapes-and-red-underwear-a-spanish-new-years-eve>

Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-foot>

Notes:

1. The “first-footer” should be a male, and he should bring gifts for the kitchen.
2. The Spanish tradition is to eat 12 green grapes as the twelve chimes of the clock are heard. The grapes must all be eaten by the twelfth chime to have good fortune.
3. Fireworks, bells, and whistles are used around the world for the same reason.
4. Other countries also wear red, but in Latin America yellow is the color of good fortune. Some countries believe dressing in white is best on New Year's Eve.
5. The dragon represents prosperity and good luck. Also, the Chinese put money in red envelopes and give them to children and unmarried adults for good fortune.

STEP 3 – Have students complete Task B with a partner. Check the answers as a class.

Answers: 1. c. 2. d 3. a 4. e 5. b

Sources:

Epicurious <http://www.epicurious.com/articlesguides/holidays/newyearsday/luckyfoods>

Woman's Day <http://www.womansday.com/food-recipes/10-good-luck-foods-for-the-new-year-114348>

STEP 4 – Optional. Have students prepare either a one-minute oral report or one paragraph about their own New Year's traditions.

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[Task A.]

Read about the traditions. Prepare your answers to the questions.

1. In some European cultures, a lot of significance is given to the "first-foot." The first person to enter the house on New Year's Day can bring good or bad fortune.
 - What kind of person do you think brings good luck?
 - What do you think the "first-footer" should bring to the hosts? Should the hosts offer something, too?
 - Do you exchange gifts on New Year's Eve?

2. In Spain, there is a tradition of eating 12 grapes at midnight as the New Year starts.
 - Do you think green or red grapes are lucky?
 - What do you think the number 12 symbolizes?
 - Can you think of other lucky foods eaten at New Year's?

3. In ancient Thailand, people fired guns on New Year's to frighten off bad spirits.
 - What other ways do people make noise on New Year's Eve?
 - What decorations or games do people plan for New Year's celebrations?
 - Do you usually go to a party on New Year's Eve?

4. In Italy, people believe wearing red underwear on New Year's Eve will bring good fortune.
 - Do you know any other lucky colors to wear on December 31?
 - Do you dress any special way on New Year's Eve?
 - Can you think of other symbols of good fortune?

5. In China, dancing dragons are used in different celebrations, including the Chinese New Year.
 - What do you think a dragon either represents? Or what do you think a dragon is believed to do?
 - What music or dances do you associate with New Year's celebrations?
 - Also during the Chinese New Year celebrations, people make use of red envelopes. What do you think they put in the envelopes and who are these gifts given to?

[Task B.]

Match the meaning to the traditional New Year's foods.

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|---|-------|----------------------------------|
| 1. a whole fish | _____ | a. health and prosperity |
| 2. long noodles | _____ | b. progress |
| 3. pomegranates (of a strong red color) and their seeds | _____ | c. abundance (a good amount) |
| 4. green leafy vegetables | _____ | d. long life |
| 5. pork (meat from an animal that moves forward) | _____ | e. money, especially paper money |