

My Waldorf Year

Planning Guide & Workbook

by Kristie Burns

My Waldorf Year Planning Guide was created to use with The Waldorf Enrichment School Curriculum & Lesson Plans at www.earthschooling.com. However, it can also be used to help you create your own curriculum or to "plug in" various curriculums that you are using. This guide took 4 years to create and has received great feedback from all types of homeschoolers.

What is this guide?

This guide is what I use to plan my classes each year. I started with schooling my own children using Waldorf. Next I started a co-op with a friend and later I ran a Waldorf Enrichment School with over 40 families. At the same time I was still responsible for cooking, cleaning and all those other parenting chores we all share! So after a few months of planning I realized that if I wanted to accomplish all of the goals we had that I would have to make a plan.

This is NOT a schedule. This could be used to plan a schedule but it is not that. This is an outline of the basic spiritual goals, Waldorf goals, and other goals we planned for the year. This is also a list of important holidays and events that we celebrate each year. By using this as a guide and by posting this near our schooling area, I can easily "see ahead" to what is coming and plan accordingly. I also use this guide as a pattern for my lesson plans. For me, this is like a "fill in the blanks" Waldorf Enrichment Plan.

When I first started creating my lesson plans online I used this planner as my guide so all my lesson plans online are organized according to this guide. As I add to the lesson plans I also keep this guide in mind. It makes adding to the year easy. By using a pre-set outline I know that I am not repeating lessons at the wrong time or doing too much or not enough of one thing. I can also be confident that I am covering what the children need to be learning at each stage of our homeschooling journey.

For example, I have assigned a few months a year to candle making. This ensures that I will cover the art of candle making and we will explore it, but that I won't be doing it all year and ignoring other important handwork. Another example would be with how I organize and choose verses each month. By assigning THEMES to each month I can easily add stories and verses to the appropriate month without worrying about duplicating my work.

In this guide you will find my charts for daily rhythm, weekly rhythm, monthly rhythm and yearly cycles. I have included an index so you can reference this and find what you need easily and quickly. I recommend printing this out and keeping it in a planning binder and/or posting some of the pages near your homeschooling work space.

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Inner Meanings

The Spiritual Base

This is the first thing you need to plan before you plan your daily, weekly and yearly schedules. Exposure to nature and natural materials. All toys in the toy room and crafts are made from natural materials. Candles are made from beeswax and not paraffin, tablecloths are cotton and not plastic. Cups are ceramic and not plastic, dress-up costumes are silk, wool and cotton and not package.

Reverence for Nature: This is done by taking nature walks and pointing out things in nature a child may not see. So far this year we have used the branches of a banyan as a swing, we have used a fallen truck as a jungle gym and have watched a line of ants (meters long!) storing food for the winter. Children are welcome to add objects to the nature table and the nature table is designed by the teacher to reflect what is happening in the outside world around them in that season.

Rhythm: The classes are structured on a rhythm and the rhythm flows. There is not a time-set schedule but a motion of “in” and “out” movements. We go from active to quiet and from community to inner play. This teaches the child rhythm on a daily basis. Seasonal activities and world holidays emphasize rhythm on a yearly basis.

Music: music awakens the brain in the younger child. Math abilities, language abilities and more have been shown by researchers and many studies are awakened by exposure to music at a young age. I also integrate education into the music itself by following a formula of learning skills in each month’s verse selection. I include: one math song, one movement (coordination and left brain, right brain coordination) song, one language song in Spanish, sign-language, and songs having to do with the season or holiday that month. Some songs include information about nature.

Respect & ritual: Shaping bread at the beginning of the day and eating it for snack help teach the child that food is work and deserves respect. So do other things in life. Real cloth and ceramic utensils are used to teach a child to be careful with the breakable items. Candles are lit and grace is said to nurture the child with ritual and respect.

Useful & purposeful work: Crafts done by mothers and children alike can all be used for a purpose. Crafts are always done by the children or mother and are not pre-prepared or done for the purpose of “hanging on the wall.” Each craft has a deeper purpose. Items like kites, candles, necklaces and pots are formed by the children. Toys and clothing are sewn or knitted by the mothers. Even the painting experiences are done for the purpose of color therapy, learning and coordination. Children learn the beauty of having a skill that they can use to create purposeful and useful things.

Creative Play: Toys and activities are designed so the children can use their imagination and creativity. Stories are told and not usually read from a book. This gives the child more room to imagine and even if props are used the child can later manipulate these own props to re-create the story. Dress-up clothes are usually plain and leave room for creative usage. A piece of silk could be a skirt, a dress, or a pouch. It could be many things! Creative toys are used and electronic toys or toys that only do one thing are discouraged. Even using stones and shells and nuts as toys is encouraged.

Parent-Child interaction: The child learns by what the parent does and not by what the parent says. In the early years (before age 3) the parent is encouraged to let their child see them and participate with them in meaningful tasks such as washing up, cooking, creating things, planting a garden, doing a mother-child Waldorf program, doing laundry, reading and much more. Parents are encouraged to be role models and not playmates or entertainers for their children.

Spirituality: Waldorf does not promote a religion but it does encourage reverence of “god” or the “universe” or “Nature” in a spiritual way by telling stories of saints, saying grace before a meal, and other things. All expressions of spirituality are encouraged and a child is never told to “be quiet” about it. If they have different beliefs than the other children they are encouraged to explain or share. The traditional Waldorf birthday story tells the story of each child as they come down from heaven where they lived with the angels to be with their mother and father.

Art: Much learning in the Waldorf school is done through the art of plays, storytelling, crafts and painting. Learning is integrated INTO these activities to make for a more holistic learning experience. The alphabet is learned through art in the grades.

Diversity: World languages, myths, stories, holidays and much more are explored in the Waldorf schools. Additionally, children are evaluated and “typed” by the teacher (silently – not out loud) and directed in the best ways of learning for their type. They are also encouraged to accept all types that are like them and not like them in ways of thinking. They are encouraged to learn respect for diversity of personality.

Movement: Eurhythmy or Yoga is learned in all the classes as a tool for each person to grow and heal psychically and mentally their entire life. Yoga and Eurhythmy also help the brain to develop and a person to remain more centered and balanced. The alphabet is also learned through movement in the grades.

These same themes are continued through the entire schooling of the child. However, as the child gets older these themes are acted out on different “stages.” While three year olds may do clay sculpture, older children will knit and weave. Three year olds may paint with one or two colors, but the older kids will paint with the entire palette and perhaps even paint scenes from mythology. Three year olds shape bread but older children may make a community soup or cook something more complex. Kindergarteners may play with drums, but the older child will learn recorder and eventually violin. See the list below for more specifics on how the program grows with your child.

The Meaning Behind Waldorf

Once you have your spiritual base established you need to understand WHY you have decided to follow a certain method of schooling. In my case I was Waldorf focused so I wrote down some of the reasons behind what I was doing. This was mostly for the parents attending my program, but it was also helpful for me in my reflections because I need to focus on what the inner meaning is behind what I am doing so that when I plan this inner meaning comes through.

For example, a person walking into a Waldorf classroom might think that Waldorf kids play with wooden toys so they will go to Target and buy some wooden toys and start their co-op with these. But if you know the MEANING behind the wooden toys then you know that the point of the wooden toys is for children to use something HANDMADE (not manufactured) and natural. I always take some time every month to reflect on some of the inner meanings in my program.

I have provided some of the meaning behind Waldorf below. However, if you follow a mixture of Waldorf and other methods of schooling you may want to make your own list or add some items to this list below.

Shaping Bread: “Breathing in.” This is the beginning of EVERY Waldorf day. The children are allowed to slowly ease into the day and focus their energies on the shaping of the dough and start conversations. This is a time of transition, an analogy to the shaping of the day, a way the children can feel involved in the creation of the school and a wonderful ritual they enjoy eating later.

Nature Walk/ Table: “Breathing out.” The nature walk allows the child to notice the weather of the day, of the season and where they are, thus becoming in touch with the environment around them and centering them and connecting them with the universe around them. Objects are placed on the table as an ever-changing display that keeps the classroom in touch with the outside world so children do not become isolated in an artificial environment.

Circle Time. Breathing in.” This is a time for teaching both songs and finger rhymes of a Waldorf nature. Usually rhymes that are seasonal and dealing with nature are used. There are many books filled with rhymes and songs. Usually 3-5 songs/ finger plays are used for each circle time. The parents usually perform with the child and this is a time for the child to use their outward energy and draw “out” of themselves into the group. Sometimes children will want to play instead of doing the songs and that is OK. Some children take a few times to get used to the idea and will eventually join in. As always parents are expected to make sure their children are either participating or at least not disrupting. As a rule, in Waldorf, a child’s talking and whispering and playing alone quietly or with soft noises are ALWAYS accepted. However, shouting, running, pushing or any behavior that brings attention to them instead of the group should be stopped by the parent with a gentle reminder and re-routing of the child’s attention. In some cases a child must be removed from the room by a parent.

Story time: “Breathing in.” At the end of circle time children then change from sitting in a circle and instead sit facing the “storyteller” demonstrating visually and mentally that now is the time to sit and listen and not to play. Instead of sitting in a circle for the story, children are sat in front of the “storyteller” in rows. From ages 1-4 stories are never read but only “told” using finger puppets, wooden figures or hand motions or other natural tools.

Snack Time: “Breathing out” Children are called to snack and during this time the parents discuss topics. One parent or teacher usually set up the snack so the snack is ready and the table is set when people come to the table. The table is ALWAYS set nicely with cloth napkins and cups and bowls made of natural ceramic or wood. There is always a candle lit and a prayer before every meal.

CRAFT: Children Free Play in the Waldorf toy room while parents do a short craft or work on a continuing project.... “Breathing in.” Like a knitting project. Usually the parents agree on a project to do and work a little on it each week. This can be knitting a bunny, Hand sewing a felt shape, making a felt animal, making a doll, making a small quilt or any handwork at all. Older children are sometimes interested in “helping” and they are allowed to do so. This is a good time to teach the older children a craft while the young kids play.

Clean up time: We all sing a clean up song and clean up, inviting the children to participate. Remember, as in all Early childhood education we are simply “modeling” behavior and should not expect the children to fully participate yet. Just picking up one toy is a good start. Toys should always be put in the same place, on a shelf or in a basket, with respect and never thrown or tossed or buried in a toy box.

Mother’s Helping: Children play better and are happier when they see the mother doing meaningful work (I have an article on this that I will pass out when I get it in the mail from my friend who is making photocopies) so it is encouraged for mothers to participate in the program through helping with set-up and clean-up and doing the knitting or other craft project assigned to mothers.

Age Specific Milestones

This is the last stage before you are ready to start planning your rhythms. You need to know at which level your child or children will be working at. I have provided a summary of what each grade focuses on in the Waldorf curriculum. I created a chart of how I interpreted this focus in terms of music, poetry and art. If you combine other methods with Waldorf you may need to add to the chart or revise it.

First Grade

All children are carefully assessed as to whether they are ready to embark on this journey. Are they ready to learn to write and later read and do arithmetic without thwarting some other part of their development? Are the growth forces all still needed for growing and playing or are some growth forces freed so that they can be used for their next tasks? The children around about seven years should have the concentration to build their own vivid inner pictures when being told a story, and through such imagery will continue learning in the following years.

Fairy tales are told by the teacher then retold and dramatized by members of the class. This cultivates the children's imagination. Starting with simple artwork the children learn to draw forms, which lead to letters and numbers. The four basic mathematic processes are introduced: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Nature stories provide an imaginative introduction to the natural world. These stories provide the basis for drawing, writing and the beginnings of reading and science. Elementary German and Spanish are introduced through songs and games.

Even simple numbers come to life by the way they are presented. A triangle has a neat quality of "threeness" that is qualitatively different from a square's blocky "fourness." Numbers become more than simply abstractions in sequence.

Second Grade

Second graders are at the age when they begin to have strong likes and dislikes. Eight year olds react strongly to imagery in the fables and in stories of saints. They hear fables and stories of legendary characters such as saints. These stories teach of human fallibility and present a model for overcoming adversity. Reading opens a new world of words, and the children begin to master the multiplication tables. Second graders continue to paint and explore Nature, and present their first dramatic play. They learn to crochet and play the pentatonic flute.

Third Grade

By the third grade, children are beginning to comprehend the difference between self and other and wonder where in the scheme of things they belong. To fortify their growing personal identity, they read creation and Old Testament stories. Around the age of nine comes a very important psychological change. The child has a stronger experience of its own individuality or identity (ego) and therefore begins to question adult authority. It may feel isolated from family and friends and therefore need more sympathy and firmness from teachers and parents. Again, the subjects given to Class Three are carefully chosen and timed to relate to this inner psychological change.

The Hebrew Old Testament stories give the nine-year-old an inner picture of the security of a God who looks after His chosen people. The Old Testament story of the Fall from Paradise is a vivid image of what the nine-year-old is experiencing in its soul. (Other religious traditions may also wish to add things here). In handwork the children crochet a hat, a visible form of something protecting them. In the main lesson they learn about occupations such as house building, farming and traditional crafts. How do farmers provide our food. Unforgettable is an early morning visit to a cowshed with its characteristic sounds and smells, seeing the cows milked, feeling their warm breath, tasting the fresh milk! Farming, housing, building, measurement, and mastery of the multiplication tables and four arithmetic processes provide a practical foundation for scientific study and help ground the children. They go away together to spend a week on a farm. The study of grammar helps them to develop rational thinking. Each child takes up a stringed instrument: violin, viola or cello.

Fourth Grade

From Class Four children have developed to a point where they can be led into the history and geography of their locality. Tumultuous stories of Norse mythology teach about character and individuality in a complex world. Children begin to learn about their place in the surrounding environment with the study of local geography and map making. They write their own compositions and increase math skills by learning fractions and long division. In music they must hold their own in playing or singing a round.

Fifth Grade

Fifth graders begin to come to grips with the history of humanity with the study of ancient cultures from India, Persia, Egypt and Greece. They connect history lessons with their growing athletic prowess in a Greek-style Olympics in the spring. In geography they expand out to the United States and North America. In science they study plant life with botany. The math curriculum now includes decimals, percentages, and practical business math skills, as well as the introduction of geometry. Music, handwork and foreign language study become increasingly challenging.

The study of history brings the child into him or herself by beginning in ancient times and working up to the present day. Geography brings the child into the world by starting locally and expanding to the whole planet.

Sixth Grade

Children at this age are gaining a firmer relationship with the world they inhabit and want a more solid grasp on reality. At twelve, the child experiences another change. At this age the thinking begins to change from the picture building of the child to the intellectual (logical or cause and effect thinking) of the adult. However, it is only beginning, and science makes a memorable gateway to the awakening intellect for the child in pre-puberty. They study geology and begin physics with the exploration of optics and acoustics and the properties of heat, magnetism and electricity. In mathematics they learn to apply the basic processes to practical situations. They study ratios and begin algebra. English covers the writing of business and personal letters. Geography covers Central and South America. Sixth graders learn about the structural basis of modern society with the study of Roman law.

My Waldorf Year for the Norther Hemisphere: August 2019 – July 2020: Version 1.1

TOPIC	M/Ch 2 & 3	M/Ch 4 & 5	KG/1 st	2nd	3rd
Language	<i>Exposure to languages with simple songs</i>	<i>Start one the basics of one language through songs</i>	Continue language via dialogue and songs	Continue dialogue and songs in language	Dialogue & songs in 1st language. Start 2 nd language
Poetry	Short Poems	Longer Poems	Complex Poem	<i>Story Poems</i>	<i>Two Voices</i>
Watercolor Painting	One Color	One & Two Colors	Two & Three Colors	All Colors	Advanced Watercolor
Drawing	Beeswax Crayons – Explore color	Beeswax Crayons - Technique	<i>Basic Form Drawing</i>	Form Drawing & Mandalas	Advanced Form Drawing Celtic/Arabic
Math	Hand Rhymes – Numbers & <i>beanbag counting</i>	Beanbag counting, Days of the Week, Fingers, Math Rhymes	Math Verses & Lummi Sticks Add, Subtract, Divide & Multiply	Number Pattern Circles, Magic Squares and Leaf Times Tables.	Weights & Measures – Geometry
Paper Skills	Drawing on Paper	Paper Cutting	Simple Paper Folding	Origami	Advanced Origami
Cooking	Orange Juice, Butter, Bread	Basics like Catsup	Mixes and Soups	Salads and Soups	Meals
Spiritual Art	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	Art with a Spiritual Purpose such as Mandalas
Grinding Grain	Grind for Birds	Grind for Cashew Butter	Grind for Muffins	Grind for Bread	
Yarn/ Handwork	Watch mother knit	Watch String pictures & stories	String Games Finger-knitting French Spool	Simple Projects with Needle Knitting	Adv. Projects w/ Crochet & Knitting
Felt Work	Play with felt toys	Make a felt ball	Sewing felt toys	Felt Boarding	Advanced sewing
Instruments	Simple Rhythm	Simple Rhythm	Recorder (1 st)	Recorder/Zither	Zither or Harp
Stories	Repetitive - Puppet Shows Real life stories	Fables – Puppet Shows	Fairytales & Nature Stories	Fables & Heroes, Legends, Nature Stories	Experience of the Self and the Individual.
Grammar & Language	Storytelling Making	Storytelling Letters &	Alphabet in Nature/ Form:	Writing & Reading	Writing & Reading
Finger Rhymes, Rounds and Singing Games	Fun verses & clapping songs	Learning verses using more complex clapping	Circle games	Rounds & complex circle games	4-part rounds and complex circle games
Science	Nature Walks	Nature Walks & Science stories	The Fairyland of Science by Arabella B. Buckley		

Seventh Grade

By seventh grade the young adolescent is beginning to consider larger issues that will shape the course of adult life. Seventh graders study the major changes in civilization of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which are coordinated with principles of science of those times such as mechanics, astronomy and physiology. Geography lessons also focus on Europe. Math covers more advanced algebra. In English the students writing requires deeper levels of thought and personal self-expression. They play on the school's boys and girls basketball teams. The arts--painting, drawing, singing and instrumental music--as well as drama, handwork and movement stay with the children through to eighth grade growing ever more complex and demanding along the way.

Eighth Grade

By eighth grade students are ready to assert themselves more in the world. They study the American and French Revolutions and the Industrial Revolution and their consequences. They are encouraged to form more of their own opinions. They learn about the lives of key figures of the 20th Century and write a research paper. Science and math touch on such diverse fields as organic chemistry, meteorology, ecology, aerodynamics, solid geometry and algebra. At the end of the year, the whole class goes on a field trip to a distant destination. By the time young people have finished all eight grades at a Waldorf school, they understand something about many aspects of the world they inhabit. Words, numbers, and a cross-section of the sciences have been covered. Many subjects have been coordinated with one another so that the student comprehends how different aspects of the world fit together. Most have been introduced through the arts, so that he or she knows them on a feeling as well as purely intellectual level. The young person is prepared, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to face young adulthood with enthusiasm and confidence.

Grades Nine and Ten

The kindergarten teacher represents to the children that "the world is good," the lower schoolteacher that "the world is beautiful." As one metamorphoses into the next, so too there comes another change in the Upper School. Here the guiding principle is to lead the pupil through the specific nature of the curriculum to the understanding: "the world is true." One urges the pupil through a sense of reverence and responsibility for the world around; a living knowledge, a training of the feeling life through the artistic method, and the strengthening of will impulses towards moral action. It is not in the philosophy of the Rudolf Steiner schools to pressure children to hurry through childhood, but to bring those youthful qualities into adulthood that characterize the human being as a creative individual.

The Four Rhythms

The Daily Rhythm

This was my schedule for the classes I ran as a teacher. My schedule with my own children varies and yours might too. But this gives you a good idea of the thought I put into the rhythm of the day. It helps children if your daily rhythm is very similar every day!

8:30 – Arrival, free play and settle in

8:45 – Bread shaping (Verse: Call to the Bread Table)

9:00 Movement and Circle Time (Verse: Call to the Circle)

(Songs, Yoga or Eurhythmy to break up circle, then back to the circle for music time)

9:30 – Set the table and snack time (Verse: Snack time Prayer)

9:45 – Nature Walk (Verse: Let's Walk)

10:00 – Story time (Verse: Fairies of the Story Time)

10:15 – Craft time for Children (Verse: Come Join our Craft)

10:40 – Mother's Time/ Free-Play for children in the Waldorf Room

11:00 – Class ends (Verse: Clean-up Fairies)

The Weekly Rhythm

As well as having a different activity assigned to each day, I also had a different theme I would meditate on as a teacher each day. Sometimes I would share this theme with the children and sometimes I would just focus on finding ways to enrich that theme through the day.

Weekly Awareness Plan

I would call this a meditation plan but the truth is that sometimes I would just think briefly about the topic of the day and would be inspired by that brief thought the rest of the day. Other days I would sit and reflect on the topic in more detail and depth. Keep in mind that these were themes for ME, the teacher to reflect on each day and this list came from MY ideas of what I wanted to bring to the children and what I felt was important to them. You need to make your own awareness plan or you can use mine to start out with.

From "The Seven Laws of Spiritual Parenting" By Deepak Chopra

Monday: We are all here for a reason – finding ways we are special and unique

Tuesday: There is potential in everything – find ways nature shows potential

Wednesday: Giving – the more you give the more you receive

Thursday: You can change the future – show ways that choices you made have helped

Friday: Work can be fun – don't fight life

Saturday: Intention and wishing can be powerful tools

Sunday: Enjoy life – detach in some ways and feel balanced about the good and bad.

Monday: Harmony & Developing Balance

Tuesday: Mindfulness

Wednesday: Being of Service

Thursday: Fostering Self-Reliance Friday: Appreciating Beauty

Saturday: Nourishing Compassion

Sunday: Creating Joy

Weekly “Special Days”

There are some things that you don’t need or even want to do every day. When this is the case, it is best to put these things on a weekly rotation so there is still a sense of rhythm, in the child’s life. Here is a sample from my old school:

Monday: Introduce our new story or stories

Tuesday: Make a special bread (the rest of the week we make plain bread)

Wednesday: Spanish lesson

Thursday: Cook lunch together

Friday: Field trip or longer nature walk

You can also create rhythms like this for the classroom or house itself so that you – the teacher, can stay on schedule! Here is an example of mine:

Monday: Shopping for home & class & business

Tuesday: Clean pet cages

Wednesday: Clean the bathrooms

Thursday: Sweep the floors & Scrub

Friday: Organizing day

The Monthly Rhythm

Every month we had a rhythm as well as a weekly and daily rhythm. As you look over my lesson plan guides and the vast amount of material I have provided or that you have yourself, you can use a monthly rhythm block to help you focus each week. Some things you will want to focus on or a week and other things you may want to focus on for 4-6 weeks. These are called “lesson blocks.” The E-books I sell about woodworking, knitting and other topics are meant to be used as lesson blocks. Various units of study in my lesson plans or in your own lesson plans can be used as lesson blocks too.

Here is an example of how lesson blocks can work in the month:

Craft Blocks for the Month:

Week One: Beeswax Block Crayon Art Technique (Progressive)

Week Two: Waldorf Watercolor Painting (Various Techniques and Color Skills)

Week Three: Felt work Craft

Week Four: Craft

Week Five: Craft

Story Blocks for the Month:

Week One: *Tell* a Story (same story both days)

Week Two: Do a Play

Week Three: Puppet Show Story

Week Four: A Story POEM

Week Five: Read a Book

Science Blocks for the Month:

Week One – Four: The water cycle

Math Blocks for the Month:

Week One – Four: Basic Math Concepts: Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division

The Yearly Cycle [2019-2020]

There are some activities I scheduled over the year based on seasonal or holiday themes. You may want to add or subtract from this list. I indicated which items are traditional Waldorf and which holidays are “extras.” We had a very international student body so, as Steiner recommends, I included celebrations that “honored all members of our community” – that is why I have so many extra holidays listed. I have left them here for you, because you may also find yourself working with or befriending families of different cultures.

August [2019]

Themes

Crops & Harvest
Prepare for Fall
Prepare for School

Other Holidays

Islamic New Year 1st – 31st
Neil Armstrong’s Birthday 5th
Hiroshima/Nagasaki Anniversary 6th – 9th 1945
Eid al-Adha 10th – 11th
Opening of Panama Canal anniversary 15th 1914
Amelia Earhart complete her legendary flight this month in 1932

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Week 1: Nature Games
Week 2: Woodworking Projects
Week 3: Cooking
Week 4: Organizing

September [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Autumn Equinox 23rd

Michaelmas 29th

Other Holidays

Tomie dePaola's Birthday 15th

Mexican Independence Day 16th

Respect for the Aged Day 17th

Harvest Day 24th

Shel Silverstein's Birthday 25th

Johnny Appleseed's Birthday 26th

Caravaggio's Birthday 28th

Native American Day 28th

Hippocrates' Birthday was this month in 460 BCE

Themes

Angels

Dragons

Leaves & Apples

Bees & Honey

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Introduction to Waldorf Watercolor Painting

Introduction to Finger-Knitting and Knitting

Parent's Craft for this Month

Knit a Nature Bag

October [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi 4th

Halloween 31st

Additional Themes and Holidays

Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday 2nd

Indigenous People's Day 8th

Thanksgiving in Canada 14th

UN Day 24th

Pablo Picasso's Birthday 25th

Statue of Liberty Dedicated 28th

Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize this month in 1979

Themes

Halloween

Saint Francis

Harvest

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Watercolor Painting

Spool and French Knitting

November [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Martinmas 11th

Thanksgiving 28th

Other Holidays

Georgia O'Keeffe's Birthday 15th

Suez Canal was opened in Egypt 17th 1869

Mark Twain's Birthday 30th

Themes

Peace

Giving Thanks

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Embroidery and Cross-Stitch

Parent's Craft for this Month

Weave a Placemat for Thanksgiving

December [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Advent 1st – 24th

Saint Nicholas' Day 6th

Saint Lucy's Day 13th

Winter Solstice 21st

Christmas 25th

Additional Holidays

Hanukkah 22nd – 30th

Kwanzaa 26th – 1st

Johannes Kepler's Birthday 27th

Henri Matisse's Birthday 31st

Themes

Snow & Ice (Western World)

Heroes & Saints

Fairies & Gnomes

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Grinding Grains Sewing Basics

Parent's Craft for this Month

Knit slippers for the winter months!

January [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Western Calendar New Year 1st

Three Kings Day 6th

Other Holidays

Martin Luther King Day 20th

Chinese Lunar New Year (Year of the Rat) 25th

Mozart's Birthday 25th

Themes

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Moon

Lunar & Solar Calendars

Snow & Ice (Western World)

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candle Basics

Parent's Craft for this Month

Make a Doll

February [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Candlemas 2nd

Valentine's Day 14th

Mardi Gras 25th

Other Holidays

Saint Brigid's Day 1st

Groundhog Day 2nd

Setsubun 3rd

Copernicus' Birthday 19th

Losar 24th – 26th

Themes

Love

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candles Part Two

Paper

Felt Basics

Parent's Craft for this Month

Felt Animals

March [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Saint Patrick's Day 17th

Spring Equinox 19th

Other Holidays

Hinamatsuri 3rd

International Women's Day 8th

Ides of March 15th

Nowruz 19th

Robert Frost's Birthday 26th

Houdini's Birthday 24th

Van Gogh's Birthday 30th

Themes

Wind

The Irish

Picnics

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candles Part Three

Herb Basics

Felt Part Two

Parent's Craft for this Month

Make Butterfly Wings for Child

April [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Easter 12th

Earth Day 22nd

May Eve 30th

Other Holidays

April Fools' Day 1st

Thomas Jefferson's Birthday 13th

Leonardo Da Vinci's Birthday 15th

Joan Miró's Birthday 20th

Ramadan starts on the 23rd

John James Audubon's Birthday 26th

Themes

Recycling

The Earth

Water & Mud

Growth & Growing/Renewal

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Herbs Part Two

Sewing Part Two Woodworking

Parent's Craft for this Month

Knit Rabbits or Felt Chickens

May [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

May Day 1st

Other Holidays

Cinco de Mayo 5th

Mother's Day 10th

Ramadan ends on the 23rd

Themes

Song & Dance

Mothers & Mentors

Joy & Dancing Flowers

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Crochet

Drawing

May Baskets & Maypole Weaving

Sewing Part Three

Soap & Handcrafts with Flowers

Embroidery Part Two

Parent's Craft for this Month

Felt Dolls

June [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Summer Solstice 20th

Other Holidays

Father's Day 21st

Peter Paul Rubens' Birthday 28th

Themes

The Sun

“Summer Camp” Lesson Blocks for this Month

Week 1: Rocks

Week 2: Movement

Week 3: Carving

Week 4: Sand

July [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Aphelion Day 4th

Other Holidays

U.S. Independence Day 4th

Bastille Day 14th

Rembrandt's Birthday 15th

First moon landing anniversary 16th 1969

Pioneer Day 24th

Themes

Campfires & Camping

Travel & Saying Goodbye

Good Friends

“Summer Camp” Lesson Blocks for this Month

Week 1: Weaving

Week 2: Survival Skills

Week 3: Making Games

Week 4: Publishing (handmade books)

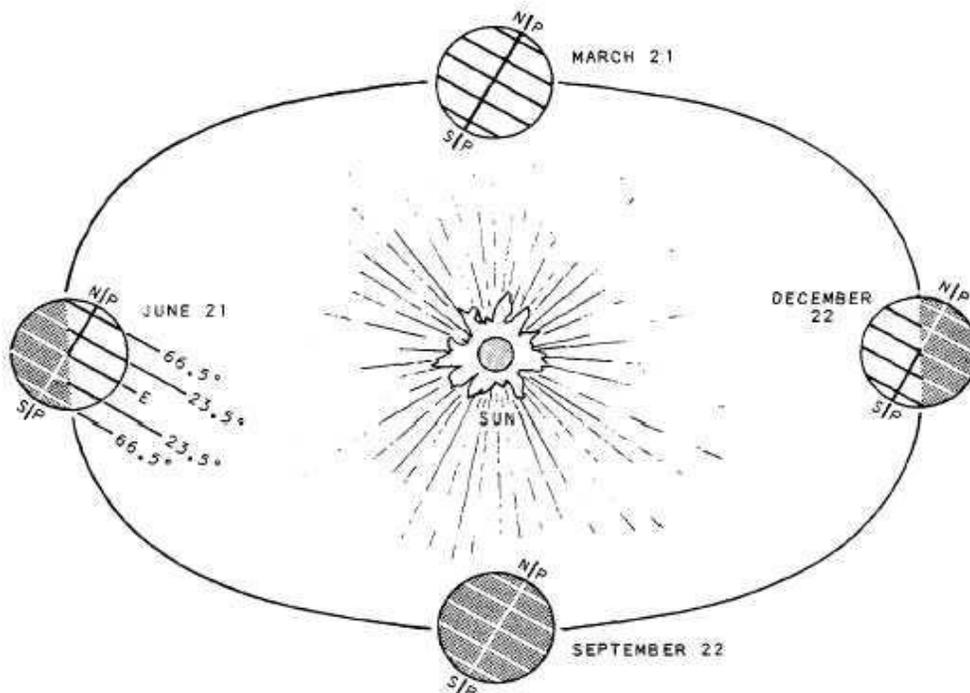
Holiday Details [2019-2020]

Eid Al-Adha – August 10th, 2019 to August 11th, 2019

Eid Al-Adha signals the end of the Hajj time and the beginning of the Islamic New Year. Everyone is expected to have an animal slaughtered – usually a sheep – and distribute the meat to the poor. Families get together to share meals, the children get coins and money and everyone wears new clothes. The Hajj was ten days where Muslims visit Mecca and do a number of rituals to honor Abraham and his second wife, Hajar and their establishment of the concept of “one God” in a nation previously ruled by the concept of “many gods.” Pilgrimage is done every year to illustrate the universal concept and unity people have under one God. For this reason many Muslims come from around the globe to meet at Mecca – millions every year. Hajj is also the fifth pillar of Islam. The five pillars of Islam are duties every Muslim has.

Autumn Equinox – September 23rd, 2019

Scientifically known as the AUTUMNAL EQUI-NOX, when Earth’s axis is again perpendicular to the Sun’s rays. This date marks the beginning of fall in the Northern Hemisphere and spring in the Southern Hemisphere. It is also the date, along with March 21, when the Sun reaches its highest position (zenith) directly over the equator.



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Marks the completion of the harvest. Day and Night are equal. This is a time for thanksgiving and meditation. Traditional foods for this day are corn bread cakes, wheat products, breads, nuts, vegetables, apples, cider, carrots, onions, potatoes and pomegranates. Traditional scents for this day are benzoin, myrrh and sage. Traditional gemstones for this day are carnelian, lapis lazuli, sapphire, and yellow agate.

Michaelmas – September 29th, 2019

In the Christian tradition, Michaelmas Day, perhaps more formally known as the Feast of St Michael the Archangel, was one of the most important days of the year. Although not quite so highly regarded as Christmas Day or Easter Sunday, it ranked alongside Shrove Tuesday, Martinmas Day, Rogation Sunday and others of similar status. Falling on 29 September, Michaelmas differs from most of the other saints' days in that it honors a spirit and not a human being. This St Michael is mentioned in the Bible on several occasions where he and his band of angels fight the dragon, which symbolizes the eternal fight of good versus evil. Highly popular in the middle ages, he was depicted in art as a winged and handsome young man clad either in white garments, or in armor and carrying either a lance or a shield. He is the patron saint of knights, grocers and of Normandy in France. Regarded as the leader of all the angels, it is this St Michael who will sound the trumpet to command the dead to arise on the Last Day.

Saint Francis' Day – October 4th, 2019

Christian recognition of service to people and appreciation of the natural world, as practiced by St Francis and the Franciscan Monastic Order which he founded. This is one story of Saint Francis that is a favorite in the Waldorf traditions...Father Francis and his companions were making a trip through the Spoleto Valley near the town of Bevagna. Suddenly, Francis spotted a great number of birds of all varieties. There were doves, crows and all sorts of birds. Swept up in the moment, Francis left his friends in the road and ran after the birds, who patiently waited for him. He greeted them in his usual way, expecting them to scurry off into the air as he spoke. But they moved not.

Filled with awe, he asked them if they would stay awhile and listen to the Word of God. He said to them: "My brother and sister birds, you should praise your Creator and always love him: He gave you feathers for clothes, wings to fly and all other things that you need. It is God who made you noble among all creatures, making your home in thin, pure air. Without sowing or reaping, you receive God's guidance and protection." At this the birds began to spread their wings, stretch their necks and gaze at Francis, rejoicing and praising God in a wonderful way according to their nature. Francis then walked right through the middle of them, turned around and came back, touching their heads and bodies with his tunic.

Then he gave them his blessing, making the sign of the cross over them. At that they flew off and Francis, rejoicing and giving thanks to God, went on his way. Later, Francis wondered aloud to his companions why he had never preached to birds before. And from that day on, Francis made it his habit to solicitously invoke all birds, all animals and reptiles to praise and love their Creator. And many times during Francis' life there were remarkable events of Francis speaking to the animals. There was even a time when St. Francis quieted a flock of noisy birds that were interrupting a religious ceremony! Much to the wonder of all present, the birds remained quiet until Francis' sermon was complete.

Halloween – October 31st, 2019

Halloween is one of the oldest holidays with origins going back thousands of years. The holiday we know as Halloween has had many influences from many cultures over the centuries. From the Roman's Pomona Day, to the Celtic festival of Samhain, to the Christian holidays of All Saints and All Souls Days.

Hundreds of years ago in what is now Great Britain and Northern France, lived the Celts. The Celts worshipped nature and had many gods, with the sun god as their favorite. It was "he" who commanded their work and their rest times, and who made the earth beautiful and the crops grow. The Celts celebrated their New Year on November 1st. It was celebrated every year with a festival and marked the end of the "season of the sun" and the beginning of "the season of darkness and cold."

On October 31st after the crops were all harvested and stored for the long winter the cooking fires in the homes would be extinguished. The Druids, the Celtic priests, would meet in the hilltop in the dark oak forest (oak trees were considered sacred). The Druids would light new fires and offer sacrifices of crops and animals. As they danced around the fires, the season of the sun passed and the season of darkness would begin.

When the morning arrived the Druids would give an ember from their fires to each family who would then take them home to start new cooking fires. These fires would keep the homes warm and free from evil spirits.

The November 1st festival was called Samhain (pronounced "sow-en"). The festival would last for 3 days. Many people would parade in costumes made from the skins and heads of their animals. This festival would become the first Halloween.

During the first century the Romans invaded Britain. They brought with them many of their festivals and customs. One of these was the festival know as Pomona Day, named for their goddess of fruits and gardens. It was also celebrated around the 1st of November. After hundreds of years of Roman rule the customs of the Celtic's Samhain festival and the Roman Pomona Day mixed becoming 1 major fall holiday.

The next influence came with the spread of the new Christian religion throughout Europe and Britain. In the year 835 AD the Roman Catholic Church would make November 1st a church holiday to honor all the saints. This day was called All Saint's Day, or Hallowmas, or All Hallows. Years later the Church would make November 2nd a holy day. It was called All Souls Day and was to honor the dead. It was celebrated with big bonfires, parades, and people, dressing up as saints, angels and devils.

But the spread of Christianity did not make people forget their early customs. On the eve of All Hallows, Oct. 31, people continued to celebrate the festivals of Samhain and Pomona Day. Over the years the customs from all these holidays mixed. October 31st became known as All Hallow Even, eventually All Hallow's Eve and then Halloween.

The Halloween we celebrate today includes all of these influences, Pomona Day's apples, nuts, and harvest, the Festival of Samhain's black cats, magic, evil spirits and death, and the ghosts, skeletons and skulls from All Saint's Day and All Soul's Day.

Martinmas – November 11th, 2019

According to the most famous story of the saint, Martin was a Roman soldier who was traveling one cold winter night when he saw a beggar in the streets. Even though Martin felt frozen to his toes, he was compelled to cut his cloak in two and give one of the halves to the beggar. That night, in a dream, he saw Christ clothed in the piece of the cloak he'd given the beggar. Afterward, Martin was less interested in the business of battle. When Martin finally left the service with an honorable discharge, he founded a number of monasteries and was elected Bishop of Tours in 371. According to the legend, Martin did not want to be elected, and tried to escape by hiding in a barn full of geese. However, the geese gave him away! *Ergo*, it's tradition to eat roast goose on St. Martin's feast day. Here's a more in-depth blog entry about St. Martin and his feast day (called Martinmas).

Thanksgiving – November 28th, 2019

Throughout history mankind has celebrated the bountiful harvest with Thanksgiving ceremonies. Before the establishment of formal religions many ancient farmers believed that their crops contained spirits which caused the crops to grow and die. Many believed that these spirits would be released when the crops were harvested and they had to be destroyed or they would take revenge on the farmers who harvested them. Some of the harvest festivals celebrated the defeat of these spirits. Harvest festivals and thanksgiving celebrations were held by the ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Hebrews, the Chinese, and the Egyptians.

The Greeks: The ancient Greeks worshipped many gods and goddesses. Their goddess of corn (actually all grains) was *Demeter* who was honored at the festival of *Thesmophoria* held each autumn. On the first day of the festival married women (possibility connecting childbearing and the raising of crops) would build leafy shelters and furnish them with couches made with plants. On the second day they fasted. On the third day a feast was held and offerings to the goddess Demeter were made - gifts of seed corn, cakes, fruit, and pigs. It was hoped that Demeter's gratitude would grant them a good harvest.

The Romans: The Romans also celebrated a harvest festival called *Cerealia*, which honored *Ceres* their goddess of corn (from which the word cereal comes). The festival was held each year on October 4th and offerings of the first fruits of the harvest and pigs were offered to Ceres. Their celebration included music, parades, games and sports and a thanksgiving feast.

The Chinese: The ancient Chinese celebrated their harvest festival, *Chung Ch'ui*, with the full moon that fell on the 15th day of the 8th month. This day was considered the birthday of the moon and special "moon cakes," round and yellow like the moon, would be baked. Each cake was stamped with the picture of a rabbit, as it was a rabbit, not a man, which the Chinese saw on the face of the moon.

The Egyptians: The ancient Egyptians celebrated their harvest festival in honor of *Min*, their god of vegetation and fertility. The festival was held in the springtime, the Egyptian's harvest season. The festival of Min featured a parade in which the Pharaoh took part. After the parade a great feast was held. Music, dancing, and sports were also part of the celebration. When the Egyptian farmers harvested their corn, they wept and pretended to be grief-stricken. This was to deceive the spirit which they believed lived in the corn. They feared the spirit would become angry when the farmers cut down the corn where it lived.

The United States: In 1621, after a hard and devastating first year in the New World the Pilgrim's fall harvest was very successful and plentiful. There was corn, fruits, vegetables, along with fish which was packed in salt, and meat that was smoke cured over fires. They found they had enough food to put away for the winter. The Pilgrims had beaten the odds. They built homes in the wilderness, they raised enough crops to keep them alive during the long coming winter, and they were at peace with their Indian neighbors.

Advent – December 1st, 2019 to December 24th, 2019

Christian time of preparation for observing the birth of Jesus Christ. Advent begins on the Sunday nearest November 30 and is the beginning of the Christian worship year. Advent is observed with the lighting of advent candles, display of wreaths, and special ceremonies. Advent also anticipates the coming again to earth of Jesus Christ. The season continues through December 24.

Advent traditionally celebrates the miracle of Jesus birth. The Waldorf schools celebrate with an Advent Spiral every year. The Advent Spiral, like the winter festivals of many cultures, is about finding light in the darkness. Families enter a room which is dark and filled with a mood of wonder and quiet anticipation. A large spiral path of evergreen boughs adorned with rocks, plants and flowers is laid on the floor. In the center of the spiral is put a central candle. Golden stars are interspersed along the edges of the green spiral path. Each child walks a simple spiral path to the center candle, lights another candle, and returns to the outside. The graceful path carries the image that every human being must make; a journey to an inner place; where we can find a light to carry back into the world to help us in our own journey. Additional information on the Advent celebration may be found at: Advent is the season preceding Christmas during which Christians await the arrival of the Christ child. It is a time of quiet introspection, meditative searching, and joyful anticipation. In other traditions as well, this season of shortening days and lengthening nights is a time for reflecting on and honoring the past, looking to the future, and searching for inner light in a period of outer darkness. The Advent Spiral is being used by many churches today as well as Waldorf schools.

What are the origins of the Advent Spiral?

This quote pretty much sums it all up: "As a universal symbol the Spiral/Labyrinth appears throughout history dating some 4,500 years and appears cross-culturally over the face of our world throughout our known history."

The meaning usually associated with the advent spiral today is more specific, however. In some Waldorf schools it symbolizes finding light in the darkness. In other schools and churches walking the spiral as an individual carries the image that every human being must make; a journey to an inner place; where we can find a light to carry back into the world to help us in our own journey. The labyrinth is said to be nondenominational because it can be related to many different religions and cultures and because it represents man's journey on his own spiritual path within his religion, rather than the path of one specific religion. There are many different kinds of spiral walks. The simplest is the spiral, however, some spirals are modified in to different or more intricate shapes. Some of the earliest forms of modified spirals, also known as labyrinths, are found in Greece, dating back to 2500-2000 B.C.E. This labyrinth is called the Cretan labyrinth or classical seven-circuit labyrinth. So much a part of the fabric of this early society was the labyrinth, that it was embossed on coins and pottery. Early Christian labyrinths date back to 4th century, a basilica in Algeria.

Saint Nicholas' Day – December 6th, 2019

Christian celebration of the birth of Saint Nicolas, patron saint of children and role model for gift giving. Many churches named for this saint who is also the Dutch version of Santa Claus.

Saint Lucy's Day – December 13th, 2019

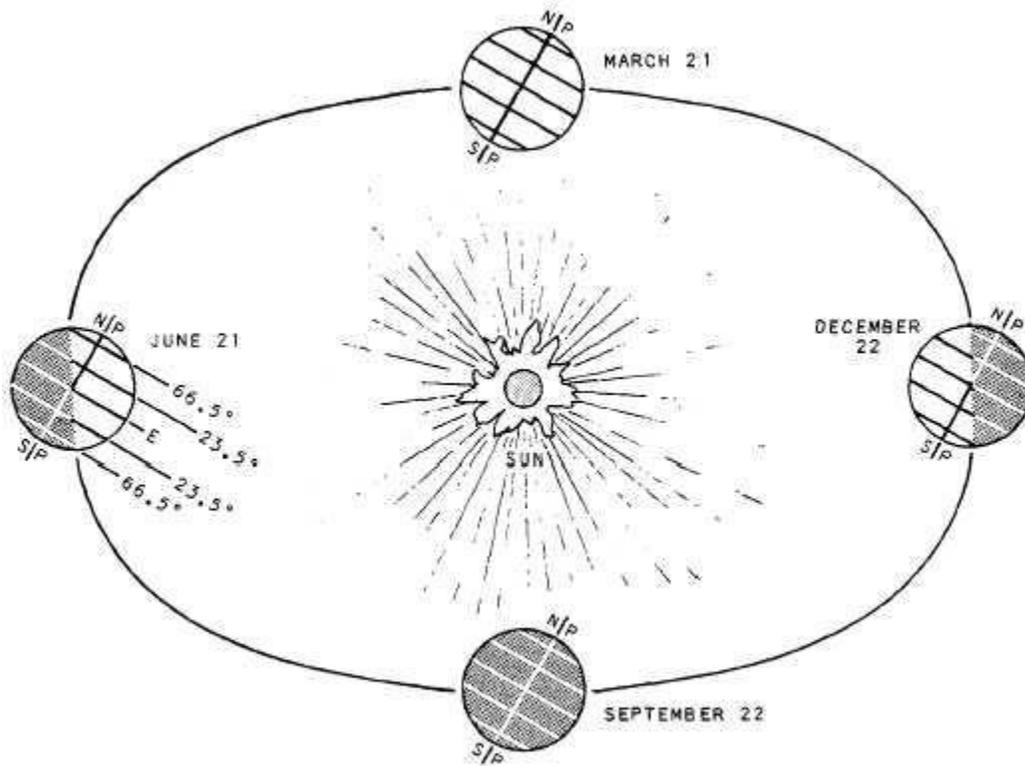
According to legend, Lucia was a medieval saint who carried food and drink to hungry folk in the province of Värmland during a period of famine. She was seen across Lake Vänern with her white gown and crown of lights. Today's costume has the same gown and crown. The Lucia legend is said to have originated in Syracuse on the island of Sicily. A young girl, about to be a bride, gave her entire dowry to the poor of her village and admitted that she had become a Christian. She was accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake on December 13, 304 A.D.

Much later in history, the early Church made a saint out of her - Santa (Saint) Lucia. Italian artists sometimes picture her as a blind girl holding a lamp. She is a patron saint for Italian fishermen and she is said to help guide them home through the rough seas during a storm. There are many legends about her and in each one Lucia stands as a symbol of light and hope to all mankind. Santa Lucia's coming begins the feasting, merriment, singing and the spirit of friendliness and goodwill that lasts all through the holidays.

In 1927, a prominent newspaper arranged for a Lucia competition and that is when the tradition started becoming more widespread and popular. This is how each "town" Lucia and the "Country's" Lucia are chosen. The "crowning" of the "town" Lucia takes place on the First Sunday of Advent after the raising of the Christmas tree in the center of the town square. This is also the first "Christmas Decoration Sunday." This means that all of the stores decorate for Christmas in their store front windows. Mostly all of the town's population gathers downtown for this event and they walk up and down the streets checking out the new decorations in the storefront windows. The "town" Lucia spreads a lot of joy by visiting all of the hospitals and all of the senior citizens' homes from the first of Advent until Christmas, making sure nobody is left out. Lucia brings a message of lighter times to come during the darkest time of the year. It is a very festive atmosphere, full of good feelings, hope, and expectations.

Winter Solstice – December 21st, 2019

Scientifically known as the WINTER SOLSTICE, when the Sun has reached its southernmost zenith position at the Tropic of Capricorn. It marks the beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere and the beginning of summer in the Southern Hemisphere.



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The shortest day of the year and the longest night. Traditional foods on this day are: roasted turkey, nuts, and eggnog. Traditional scents are bayberry, cedar, pine and rosemary. The traditional gemstones for this day are cat's eye and ruby.

Hanukah – December 22nd, 2019 to December 30th, 2019

Every year between the end of November and the end of December, Jewish people around the world celebrate the holiday of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. Chanukah begins on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, but the starting date on the western calendar varies from year to year. The holiday celebrates the events which took place over 2,300 years ago in the land of Judea, which is now Israel. The story goes like this...

Long ago in the land of Judea there was a Syrian king, Antiochus. The king ordered the Jewish people to reject their G-d, their religion, their customs and their beliefs and to worship the Greek gods. There were some who did as they were told, but many refused. One who refused was Judah Macabee.

Judah and his four brothers formed an army and chose as their name the word "Maccabee," which means hammer. After three years of fighting, the Maccabees were finally successful in driving the Syrians out of Israel and reclaimed the Temple in Jerusalem. The Maccabees wanted to clean the building and to remove the hated Greek symbols and statues. On the 25th day of the month of Kislev, the job was finished and the temple was rededicated. When Judah and his followers finished cleaning the temple, they wanted to light the eternal light, known as the N'er Tamid, which is present in every Jewish house of worship. Once lit, the oil lamp should never be extinguished. Only a tiny jug of oil was found with only enough for a single day. The oil lamp was filled and lit. Then a miracle occurred as the tiny amount of oil stayed lit not for one day, but for eight days.

Christmas – December 25th, 2019

Christian celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. It is observed with worship, candle lighting, manger scenes and festive meals.

Kwanza – December 26th, 2019 to January 1st, 2020

An African American and Pan-African holiday celebrating family, community and culture, Kwanzaa is a secular observance with some religious participation.. Seven life virtues are presented. The dates are always December 26 - January 1.

Each evening a family member, usually the youngest child, lights candles in a special candleholder and discusses one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. On the sixth day, which falls on New Year's Eve, family and friends get together to enjoy a large feast and to celebrate their history, culture, and the upcoming New Year.

The holiday of Kwanzaa was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966, during the period of US history in which African Americans were involved in struggles for their civil rights. This was the period of Martin Luther King, the Civil Rights movement, and Black Power.

Western Calendar New Year – January 1st, 2020

Three King's Day – January 6th, 2020

Three Kings Day is celebrated on January 6th, twelve days after Christmas. It is often viewed as the last day of the Christmas season (the end of the 12 days of Christmas).

Also known as The Epiphany, Three Kings Day (Día de los Reyes) is a Christian celebration that commemorates the Biblical story of the three kings who followed the star of Bethlehem to bring gifts to the Christ child. According to the Biblical story, the Three Kings – named Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar – presented the Baby Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Three Kings Day was the gift-giving time, rather than Christmas day. Just as it is common for children to leave cookies for Santa in the U.S., in some regions, it was customary for children to leave their shoes out on the night of January 5, often filling them with hay for the camels, in hopes that the Three Kings would be generous. Children would awake on January 6 to find their shoes filled with toys and gifts.

Chinese Lunar New Year – January 25th, 2020 [Rat]

The origin of the Chinese New Year is itself centuries old - in fact, too old to actually be traced. It is popularly recognized as the Spring Festival and celebrations last 15 days. Preparations tend to begin a month from the date of the Chinese New Year (similar to a Western Christmas), when people start buying presents, decoration materials, food and clothing. A huge clean-up gets underway days before the New Year, when Chinese houses are cleaned from top to bottom, to sweep away any traces of bad luck, and doors and windowpanes are given a new coat of paint, usually red. The doors and windows are then decorated with paper cuts and couplets with themes such as happiness, wealth and longevity printed on them.

The eve of the New Year is perhaps the most exciting part of the event, as anticipation creeps in.

Here, traditions and rituals are very carefully observed in everything from food to clothing. Dinner is usually a feast of seafood and dumplings, signifying different good wishes. Delicacies include prawns, for liveliness and happiness, dried oysters (or ho xi), for all things good, raw fish salad or yu sheng to bring good luck and prosperity, Fai-hai (Angel Hair), an edible hair-like seaweed to bring prosperity, and dumplings boiled in water (Jiaozi) signifying a long-lost good wish for a family. It's usual to wear something red as this color is meant to ward off evil spirits - but black and white are out, as these are associated with mourning. At midnight, the sky is lit up by fireworks. On the day itself, an ancient custom called Hong Bao, meaning Red Packet, takes place. This involves married couples giving children and unmarried adults money in red envelopes. Then the family begins to say greetings from door to door, first to their relatives and then their neighbors. Like the Western saying "let bygones be bygones," at Chinese New Year, grudges are very easily cast aside. The end of the New Year is marked by the Festival of Lanterns, which is a celebration with singing, dancing and lantern shows.

Candlemas – February 2nd, 2020

This day started in ancient Rome as a day to honor the mother of the great god, Mars. Candles and torches were carried in the streets. Later, when Christianity became an important religion in Rome, Candlemas Day became a day to honor Mary and it celebrated the presentation of the Lord in the Temple. This day marks the end of the Christmas season. Because it falls in the middle of winter it was a time to begin thinking about spring.

American colonists and German settlers in Pennsylvania decided to keep the date of Candlemas Day but also added the custom of using animals that hibernate to predict the weather. Since the groundhog is the most common hibernating animal in Pennsylvania, "Punxsutawney Phil" sticks his head out of the ground each February 2nd!

Groundhog Day – February 2nd, 2020

Groundhog Day, February 2nd, is a popular tradition in the United States. It is also a legend that traverses centuries, its origins clouded in the mists of time with ethnic cultures and animals awakening on specific dates. Myths such as this tie our present to the distant past when nature did, indeed, influence our lives. It is the day that the Groundhog comes out of his hole after a long winter sleep to look for his shadow. If he sees it, he regards it as an omen of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his hole. The groundhog tradition stems from similar beliefs associated with Candlemas Day and the days of early Christians in Europe, and for centuries the custom was to have the clergy bless candles and distribute them to the people. Even then, it marked a milestone in the winter and the weather that day was important.

Setsubun in Japan – February 3rd, 2020

The day before the beginning of spring according to the lunisolar calendar. On the evening of this day, people open the door of their houses and drive the bad spirits (i.e. bad luck) out of their homes and gardens by throwing handfuls of beans and shouting "Bad Spirits out! Good luck in!" after this ceremony, people can eat beans. The number of beans is their age. (i.e. 20-year-old people can eat 20 beans).

Valentine's Day – February 14th, 2020

Valentine's Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honor Juno. Juno was the Queen of the Roman Gods and Goddesses. The Romans also knew her as the Goddess of women and marriage. The following day, February 15th, began the Feast of Lupercalia.

The lives of young boys and girls were strictly separate. However, one of the customs of the young people was name drawing. On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would draw a girl's name from the jar and would then be partners for the duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.

Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns. Claudius the Cruel was having a difficult time getting soldiers to join his military leagues. He believed that the reason was that roman men did not want to leave their loves or families. As a result, Claudius cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome. The good Saint Valentine was a priest at Rome in the days of Claudius II. He and Saint Marius aided the Christian martyrs and secretly married couples, and for this kind deed Saint Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who condemned him to be beaten to death with clubs and to have his head cut off. He suffered martyrdom on the 14th day of February, about the year 270.

The pastors of the early Christian Church in Rome endeavored to do away with the pagan element in these feasts by substituting the names of saints for those of maidens. And as the Lupercalia began about the middle of February, the pastors appear to have chosen Saint Valentine's Day for the celebration of this new feast. So it seems that the custom of young men choosing maidens for valentines, or saints as patrons for the coming year, arose in this way.

Losar – February 24th, 2020 to February 26th, 2020

Happy Losar (Tibetan New Year). Tibetans all over the world celebrated Tibetan New Year on Sunday, February 6th. The word *Losar* is a Tibetan word for New Year. *LO* means year and *SAR* means new. The celebration of Losar can be traced back to the pre-Buddhist period in Tibet. During the period when Tibetans practiced the Bon religion, every winter a spiritual ceremony was held, in which people offered large quantities of incense to appease the local spirits, deities and protectors. This religious festival later evolved into an annual Buddhist festival which is believed to have originated during the reign of Pude Gungyal, the ninth King of Tibet. The festival is said to have begun when an old woman named Belma introduced the measurement of time based on the phases of the moon.

This festival took place during the flowering of the apricot trees of the Lhokha Yarla Shampo region in autumn, and it may have been the first celebration of what has become the traditional farmers' festival. It was during this period that the arts of cultivation, irrigation, refining iron from ore and building bridges were first introduced in Tibet. The ceremonies which were instituted to celebrate these new capabilities can be recognized as precursors of the Losar festival. Later when the rudiments of the science of astrology, based on the five elements, were introduced in Tibet, this farmer's festival became what we now call the Losar or New Year's festival.

Lent/Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras – February 25th, 2020

Shrove Tuesday—*Mardi Gras* or Fat Tuesday in French—marks the final midwinter fling before Ash Wednesday, the first day of the Lenten fast. Traditionally, believers confessed and were absolved (shrived) of their sins before the fast, then they consumed the last of luxuries such as dairy foods and meat. In England and France people now use milk and eggs to make the traditional pancakes. In Finland, the Shrove Tuesday specialty is a *bun* filled with almond paste and whipped cream. In many Roman Catholic countries Shrove Tuesday is the culminating day of Carnival—a word deriving from the Latin words *carne vale*, "farewell to meat." Carnival parades and balls with masked dancers and costumed figures from popular myth are the annual highlight in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Venice, Italy, and New Orleans in the United States as well as many other Mediterranean, South American and Caribbean cities. *English pancakes* are also a popular dish.

Mardi Gras is Louisiana's most famous festival. The phrase "Mardi Gras" means Fat Tuesday in French. It refers to the final day of merry-making before Ash Wednesday dawns and Lent begins. This whole celebration lasts for two weeks. All through the two weeks are parades, which consist of marching bands and colorful floats. Mardi Gras began as an event to make up for lent. For two weeks about 40 days before lent was to begin many parties and elegant balls were held. They used to be by invitation only but now most parties are open to everybody. Mardi Gras colors are purple, green, and gold. Purple stands for justice, green stands for faith, and gold stands for power. Mardi Gras is known as Shrove Tuesday in Finland. People make special buns with almond paste and whipped cream. The tradition of having the Shrove Tuesday is that some people fast (abstaining from meat & meat products) 6 weeks before Easter. Shrove Tuesday was then meant to be a day when one eats as much as possible, especially fat food.

Hinamatsuri in Japan – March 3rd, 2020

March 3rd is called Hina-matsuri (Doll Festival) in Japan, and it's a celebration for young girls. (Japanese Boy's Day is May 5th.) People display a set of hina ningyo (dolls) and props in the house, wishing girls' healthy growth and happiness. Parents or grandparents of a newborn girl buy a set of gorgeous hina dolls unless they have special dolls, which are inherited from generation to generation. Hina dolls are dressed in Japanese ancient costumes and are displayed on the shelves of a stand covered with a red carpet from the end of February to March 3rd. It is believed that any hina doll display should be taken down soon after the festival day; otherwise girls might have to wait to get married.

Hina-matsuri is also called momo-no-sekku, which means a festival of peach blossoms. Peach blossoms, shiro-zake (white rice wine), and hishi-mochi (diamond shaped rice cakes) are placed on the stand with hina dolls. Hishi-mochi are colored in pink (implies peach flowers), white (implies snow), and green (implies new growth). The origin of hina-matsuri is said to be an ancient Chinese ceremony that people let paper dolls flow on a river to get rid of bad luck from their bodies. This practice was combined with girls' doll play and was established as hina-matsuri during Edo Period (1603-1867). Traditionally, girls invited their friends to a home party and had a good time. This festival is commonly celebrated as a school or community activity nowadays, and many people prepare a special meal for girls on this day. Here is a song to sing...

Japanese:

Akari o tsukemashou bonbori ni
Ohana o agemashou momo no hana
Go-nin bayashi no fue taiko
Kyo wa tanoshii Hinamatsuri

English:

Let's light the lanterns
Let's set peach flowers
Five court musicians are playing flutes and drums
Today is a joyful Dolls' Festival

Women's Day in China – March 8th, 2020

On March 8 China celebrates Women's day in honor of all females. All females have a day off and play or stay home and relax all day. The girls bring out special dolls to put on a stand with red clothing. These are special dolls only to be taken out once a year on Woman's Day. The men cook a feast for the women and do the chores. Some people go out to eat while others have family parties. After they eat the men give out presents to their wife and daughter. Then the special red dolls are stored away until next year for next Woman's Day.

The Ides of March – March 15th, 2020

The Ides of March are what Romans called March 15. There's no such thing as a single Ide. Every month has Ides. For example, April the 15th is the Ides of April. This is because the Romans did not count the days of the month from 1 through 30. Instead, three days in every month had names: Kalends fell on the 1st, Nones on the 5th or 7th, Ides on the 13th or 15th. When a Roman wanted to say, "March the 14th," she had to say: "the day before the Ides of March" March the 6th would be: "The day before the None of March." I imagine kids learned math quite naturally this way!

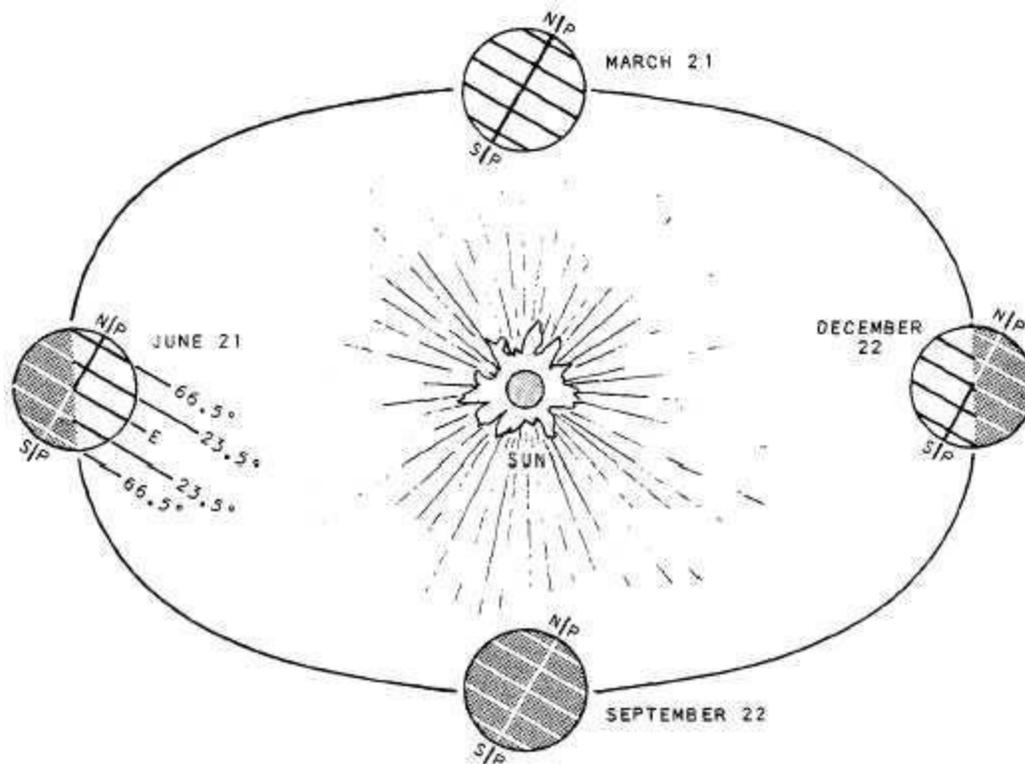
Saint Patrick's Day – March 17th, 2020

The person who was to become St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Wales about AD 385. His given name was Maewyn, and he almost didn't get the job of bishop of Ireland because he lacked the required scholarship. Far from being a saint, until he was 16, he considered himself a pagan. At that age, he was sold into slavery by a group of Irish marauders that raided his village. During his captivity, he became closer to God. He escaped from slavery after six years and went to Gaul where he studied in the monastery under St. Germain, bishop of Auxerre for a period of twelve years. During his training he became aware that his calling was to convert the pagans to Christianity.

His wishes were to return to Ireland, to convert the native pagans to Christianity. But his superiors instead appointed St. Palladius. But two years later, Palladius transferred to Scotland. Patrick, having adopted that Christian name earlier, was then appointed as second bishop to Ireland. Patrick was quite successful at winning converts. And this fact upset the Celtic Druids. Patrick was arrested several times, but escaped each time. He traveled throughout Ireland, establishing monasteries across the country. He also set up schools and churches which would aid him in his conversion of the Irish country to Christianity. His mission in Ireland lasted for thirty years. After that time, Patrick retired to County Down. He died on March 17 in AD 461. That day has been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day ever since. One traditional icon of the day is the shamrock. And this stems from a more bona fide Irish tale that tells how Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day. The St. Patrick's Day custom came to America in 1737. That was the first year St. Patrick's Day was publicly celebrated in this country, in Boston.

Spring Equinox – March 19th, 2020

Scientifically known as the VERNAL EQUINOX, when Earth's axis is perpendicular to the Sun's rays. Spring begins in the Northern Hemisphere and fall begins in the Southern Hemisphere.



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The Spring Equinox is also known as: Alban Eilir, Eostar, Eostre, Feast of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Festival of Trees, Lady Day, NawRuz, No Ruz, Ostara, Ostra, Rites of Spring, and the Vernal Equinox. This is a time of beginnings, of action, and of tending ritual gardens. The colors for the spring nature table are light green, lemon yellow and pale Traditional Foods for this day are hard boiled eggs, honey cakes and the 1st fruits of the season. Traditional Scents for this day are: African violet, jasmine, rose, sage and strawberry. Traditional gemstones for this day are amethyst, aquamarine, bloodstone and red jasper.

NoRuz – March 19th, 2020

No Ruz, (new day) or New Year as the Iranians call it, is a celebration of spring Equinox. It has been celebrated by all the major cultures of ancient Mesopotamia. Sumerians, 3000BC, Babylonians 2000 BC, the ancient kingdom of Elam in Southern Persia 2000BC, Akadians all have been celebrating it in one form or another. What we have today as No Ruz with its' uniquely Iranian characteristics has been celebrated for at least 3000 years and is deeply rooted in the traditions of Zoroastrian belief system.

This was the religion of Ancient Persia before the advent of Islam 1400 years ago. It is known as the mother religion in the area. The familiar concepts of Hell, Heaven, Resurrection, coming of the Messiah, individual and last judgment were for the first time incorporated into this belief system. They still exist in Judo-Christian and Islamic traditions. In order to understand No Ruz we have to know about Zoroastrians' cosmology.

These people believed in two primal forces. In their ancient text, Bundahishn foundation of creation, we read that The Lord of Wisdom residing in the eternal light was not God. He created all that was good and became God. The Hostile Spirit, Angra Mainyu (Ahriman), residing in the eternal darkness created all that was bad and became the Hostile Spirit (The word anger in English comes from the same origin).

Everything that produced life, protected and enriched it was regarded as good. This included all forces of nature beneficial to humans. Earth, waters, sky, animals, plants were all good. Justice, honesty, peace, health, beauty, joy and happiness were regarded as belonging to the good forces. All that threatened life and created disorder belonged to the hostile spirits.

The two worlds created did not have a material form but the essence of everything was present. The two existed side by side for three thousand years, but completely separate from each other. At the end of the third millennium the Hostile Spirit saw light, wanted it and attacked the good world. This was the beginning of all troubles we face now.

The Lord of Wisdom in order to protect his world created the material world "Gaeity," What we have today as No Ruz goes back to the Sassanid period. They were the last great Persian Empire before the advent of Islam 1400 years ago. Their celebrations would start five days prior to the New Year. They believed the guardian angels (Fourahars) would come down to earth within these five days to visit their human counter parts. A major spring-cleaning was carried out to welcome them with feasts and celebrations. Bon fires would be set on rooftops at night to indicate to the guardian angles that humans were ready to receive them. This was called Suri Festival.

Modern Iranians still carry out the spring-cleaning and celebrate Wednesday Suri. Bon fires are made and all people will jump over the fire on the last Tuesday of the year. This is a purification rite and Iranians believe by going over the fire they will get rid of all their illnesses and misfortunes. Wednesday Suri did not exist before Islam and very likely is a combination of more than one ritual to make it last.

The ancient Zoroastrians would also celebrate the first five days of No Ruz, but it was the sixth day that was the most important of all. This day was called the Great No Ruz (No Ruze bozorg) and is assumed to be the birthday of Zoroaster himself. Zoroastrians today still celebrate this day, but it has lost its significance for the rest of the Iranians. In Sassanid period the New Year would be celebrated for 21 days and on the 19th day there would be another major festival.

Modern Iranians celebrate New Year for 13 days only. The first few days are spent visiting older members of the family other relatives and friends. Gifts are exchanged; sweets and feasts will be consumed. At the last day, the 13th of the first month, all people will leave their homes to go to the parks or rural areas to spend a day in nature. Again this was not celebrated in this manner before and might be several rituals in one. A major part of the New Year rituals is setting a special table with seven specific items present, Haft Sin (Haft chin, seven crops before Islam). In the ancient times each of the items corresponded to one of the seven creations and the seven holy immortals protecting them.

Today they are changed and modified but some have kept their symbolism. All the seven items start with the letter S; this was not the order in ancient times. Wheat or barley representing new growth is still present. Fish the most easily obtainable animal and water are present. Lit candles are a symbol of fire. Mirrors are used today, origin unknown. These were expensive items in ancient times and were made from polished metal. It is unlikely that all households would have one. Zoroastrians today place the lit candle in front of the mirror. Wine was always present. Today it is replaced by vinegar since alcohol is banned in Islam.

Egg a universal symbol of fertility corresponding to the mother earth is still present. Garlic is used to warn off bad omen. This is a modern introduction. There is no evidence that it was used in that context before. However the ancient Iranians would grow seven different herbs for the New Year and garlic might have been one of those. Samano a thick brownish paste is present today. It is a nutritious meal and could have been part of the feasts. It is also possible that it has replaced Haoma.

Haoma is a sacred herbal mix known for its healing properties. It was a major cult on its own with many rituals and ceremonies. The cult is still performed by the Zoroastrians today, but is abandoned by the rest of the Iranians. Coins symbolizing wealth and prosperity, fruits and special meals are present as well.

Why this festival has survived? There have been major attempts by the Muslim rulers over the centuries to minimize it, ban it or get rid of it once and for all. The reasons for their failure should be sought in the spirit of this festival.

No Ruz is a celebration of life.

Easter – April 12th, 2020

Easter is observed by the churches of the West on the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or following the spring equinox (March 21st). So Easter became a "movable" feast which can occur as early as March 22 or as late as April 25. In Christian countries Easter is celebrated as the religious holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God. But celebrations of Easter also have many customs and legends that are pagan in origin and have nothing to do with Christianity.

Scholars, accepting the derivation proposed by the 8th-century English scholar St. Bede, believe the name Easter is thought to come from the Scandinavian "Ostra" and the Teutonic "Ostern" or "Eastre," both Goddesses of mythology signifying spring and fertility whose festival was celebrated on the day of the Vernal Equinox. Traditions associated with the festival survive in the Easter rabbit, a symbol of fertility, and in colored Easter-eggs painted with bright colors to represent the sunlight of spring, and used in Easter-egg rolling contests or given as gifts.

The Christian celebration of Easter embodies a number of converging traditions with emphasis on the relation of Easter to the Jewish festival of Passover, or Pesach, from which is derived Pasch, another name used by Europeans for Easter. Passover is an important feast in the Jewish calendar which is celebrated for 8 days and commemorates the flight and freedom of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The early Christians, many of whom were of Jewish origin, were brought up in the Hebrew tradition and regarded Easter as a new feature of the Passover festival, a commemoration of the advent of the Messiah as foretold by the prophets.

Earth Day – April 22nd, 2020

Gaia, Ancient earth day is May 11th. On April 22, 1970, the first Modern Earth Day was held. Earth Day uses one of humanity's great discoveries, the discovery of anniversaries by which, throughout time, human beings have kept their sorrows and their joys, their victories, their revelations and their obligations alive, for re-celebration and re-dedication another year, another decade, another century another eon. Earth Day reminds the people of the world of the need for continuing care which is vital to Earth's safety. Earth Day draws on astronomical phenomena in a new way; using the vernal equinox, the time when the Sun crosses the equator making night and day of equal length in all parts of the Earth. To this point in the annual calendar, Earth Day attaches no local or divisive set of symbols, no statement of the truth or superiority of one way of life over another. But the selection of the March equinox makes planetary observance of a shared event possible.

The vernal equinox calls on all mankind to recognize and respect Earth's beautiful systems of balance, between the presence of animals on land, the fish in the sea, birds in the air, mankind, water, air, and land. Most importantly there must always be awareness of the actions by people that can disturb this precious balance.

Ramadan – April 23rd, 2020 to May 23rd, 2020

The present tradition of Ramadan lanterns dates from the rule of Saladin. Lantern designs were copied from the Qanadil and Mishkat (lamps) of Mosques. However, according to the historian, Al-Maqrizi, in his book, "Kitab al-Mawa`iz wa al-'l`tibar Bidhikr al-Khitat wa al-'Athar" (page 265), alludes to an earlier tradition. According to him, it was originally a Coptic Christian festivity celebrated at Christmas time (Coptic version) where people used to parade with colorful candles. The competition was to "outdo" each other with more and more expensive candles until one day when hard times fell upon Egypt, the people were no longer able to afford to buy the very expensive candles and thus the tradition nearly died out.

However, as many of the Coptic population converted to Islam, the memory of the candle festivities never quite died out, and out of cheap tin, tinkers made lanterns equally beautiful to the original candles and hence the tradition was reborn. This time for Ramadan. Actually, the roots of this celebration of lights can be traced all the way back to the Ancient Egyptians who celebrated the Heliacal (visible after sunset) rising of the star "Sirius" (Shu`ayr).

The occasion was marked by a festival of lights in which the Ancient Egyptians walked through the streets carrying torches. The festivities lasted for five epagomenal days (special days dedicated to the Ancient Egyptian Deities). Each day celebrated, in turn, the birthdays of Osiris, his son Horus, his sister and wife Isis, his arch enemy and brother Seth, and Seth's wife Nephtys. This tradition of lights, which began with the torches of the Ancient Egyptians, continued with the candles of the Copts and finally ended up with the lanterns of Ramadan.

May Eve – April 30th, 2020

Almost everywhere in Sweden the 30th of April is one of the festive highlights of the Swedish year. People gather around huge bonfires to welcome the spring on "sista april" the Eve of May Day, Walpurgis Night. It is unknown when this tradition is grounded and though it was mentioned as early as 1711 it's believed that this ancient custom is much older than that. It's known that the peasants made a lot of noise and lit bonfires to keep the wild animals away from the cattle and sheep when they were let out to graze for the first time of year on the 1st May.

Nowadays fireworks make the noise. This evening marks the end of winter and the coming of spring. The bonfires are lit around 9pm and there is a lot of singing attached to this custom.

Along with the people gathered around the bonfires choirs sing old songs about the spring. Although Walpurgis is well celebrated it's not a real holiday in Sweden like Labor Day on the 1st May. The spring bonfires are seen almost everywhere except in the western parts of Sweden, where Easter bonfires are preferred.

May Day – May 1st, 2020

Mayfair

The official celebration of spring's arrival! Usually celebrated as a community event with dancing, singing, a Maypole and games.

Mother's Day – May 10th, 2020

The earliest Mother's Day celebrations can be traced back to the spring celebrations of ancient Greece in honor of Rhea, the Mother of the Gods. During the 1600's, England celebrated a day called "*Mothering Sunday*." Celebrated on the 4th Sunday of Lent (the 40 day period leading up to Easter*), "*Mothering Sunday*" honored the mothers of England.

During this time many of the England's poor worked as servants for the wealthy. As most jobs were located far from their homes, the servants would live at the houses of their employers. On Mothering Sunday the servants would have the day off and were encouraged to return home and spend the day with their mothers. A special cake, called the *mothering cake*, was often brought along to provide a festive touch. In the United States, Mother's Day was first suggested in 1872 by *Julia Ward Howe* (who wrote the words to the Battle hymn of the Republic) as a day dedicated to peace. Ms. Howe would hold organized Mother's Day meetings in Boston, Mass ever year.

In 1907 *Ana Jarvis*, from Philadelphia, began a campaign to establish a national Mother's Day. Ms. Jarvis and her supporters began to write to ministers, businessmen, and politicians in their quest to establish a national Mother's Day. It was successful as by 1911 Mother's Day was celebrated in almost every state. President Woodrow Wilson, in 1914, made the official announcement proclaiming Mother's Day as a national holiday that was to be held each year on the 2nd Sunday of May.

While many countries of the world celebrate their own Mother's Day at different times throughout the year, there are some countries such as Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, and Belgium which also celebrate Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May.

Cinco de Mayo – May 5th, 2020

Cinco de Mayo is a national holiday in Mexico. The Mexican armies won a big battle on May 5, 1862, against the French army. The French had been occupying Mexico at that time. The Mexican army was outnumbered and under armed. Many schools in Los Angeles and Orange County celebrate Cinco de Mayo at school.

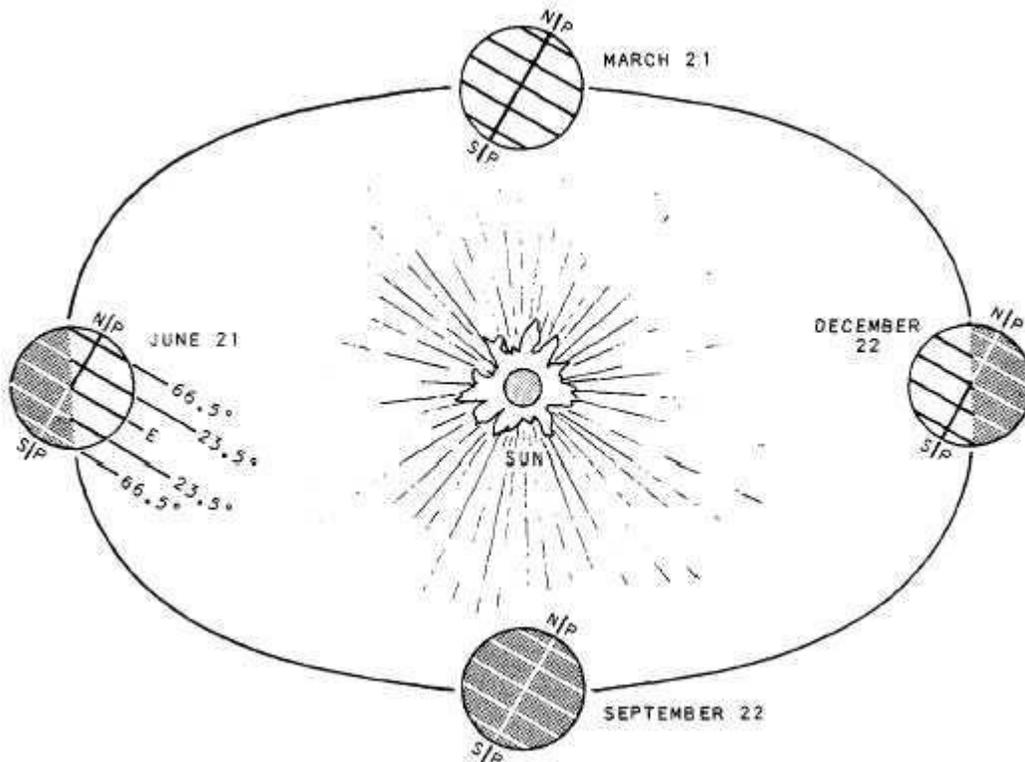
Father's Day – June 21st, 2020

Mrs. John B. Dodd, of Washington, first proposed the idea of a "Father's Day" in 1909. Mrs. Dodd wanted a special day to honor her father, William Smart. William Smart, a Civil War veteran, was widowed when his wife (Mrs. Dodd's mother) died in childbirth with their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in eastern Washington state. It was after Mrs. Dodd became an adult that she realized the strength and selflessness her father had shown in raising his children as a single parent.

The first Father's Day was observed on June 19, 1910 in Spokane Washington. At about the same time in various towns and cities across American other people were beginning to celebrate a "Father's Day." In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge supported the idea of a national Father's Day. Finally in 1966 President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the 3rd Sunday of June as Father's Day.

Summer Solstice – June 21st, 2020

Scientifically, this is when the earth's axis is inclined $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ toward the Sun and the Sun has reached its northernmost zenith at the Tropic of Cancer. Summer officially commences in the Northern Hemisphere; winter begins in the Southern Hemisphere.



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Also known as Midsummer's Day, it is believed that whatever is dreamt of on this night will come true for the dreamer. Traditional foods for this day are fresh vegetables, summer fruits, and pumpernickel bread. Traditional scents for this day are lemon, myrrh, pine, rose and wisteria. Traditional gemstones for this day are any green stones (ie: emerald and jade).

The third Saturday of June is celebrated as Midsummer Day by the Swedes who eat herring, drink schnapps and dance. This year it coincides with the actual solstice. Girls put seven flowers under their pillows to dream of their future husbands. Close friends and family have a celebratory feast on this date and give blessings to Mother Nature so that the balance between give and take is equal on both sides. It is our time to give back to Mother Nature. Celebration of the Solstice lasts for about three days. It begins on Midsummer Night and continues for two more days after that. It is Druidic in origin.

Independence Day (USA) – July 4th, 2020

Independence Day is the national holiday of the United States of America commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the time of the signing the US consisted of 13 colonies under the rule of England's King George III. There was growing unrest in the colonies concerning the taxes that had to be paid to England. This was commonly referred to as "Taxation without Representation" as the colonists did not have any representation in the English Parliament and had no say in what went on. As the unrest grew in the colonies, King George sent extra troops to help control any rebellion. In 1774 the 13 colonies sent delegates to Philadelphia Pennsylvania to form the First Continental Congress. The delegates were unhappy with England, but were not yet ready to declare war.

Aphelion – July 4th, 2020

This is the day the Earth is furthest from the sun. Today, the sun is 94.8 million miles from earth compared to 91.7 million miles in January. The earth is 4 degrees warmer today on average compared to January. This is because 40% of the northern hemisphere being covered by land masses compared to only 20% of the southern hemisphere being covered by land. So even though we are the farthest away from the sun today compared to any other day of the year, it is where our land masses are located and the and the tilt of the earth that play huge roles in our climate and seasons. Want more...the earth's orbital speed is 18.2 miles per second today or a bit slower compared to a speed of 18.8 miles per second in January.

Eid Al-Fitr – July 30th, 2020 to July 31st, 2020

Islamic event marking the close of Ramadan. It is a festival of thanksgiving to Allah for enjoying the month of Ramadan. It involves wearing finest clothing, saying prayers, and fostering understanding with other religions.



Lesson Plan Chart

Why Use a Chart

This is the same chart I used for my school. Because the ages of the children varied from semester to semester and during some periods I even used this chart for my own children (all two years apart) I always filled in this chart differently using the monthly guides I had made. The other benefit of using the chart was that if I found new material that month or another mother shared material with me for that month I could just add it to the chart with the outline I had already made. This chart is also flexible. It gave me the flexibility to “exchange” crafts if I didn’t have all the supplies one week or something...all I had to do was switch what I had written in the week for “crafts” with another week.

How to Use the Chart

1. I have provided you with four MAIN rows. These represent the weeks of the month.
2. I have provided you with three smaller sections within each row. These represent divisions in that week. You can divide the week in any way you wish. Some examples are: You have classes three days a week and you try to finish everything in one day. OR: You have classes five days a week and you stretch out the lessons to a more comfortable pace (some crafts need this extra time and you always want to give the children time to hear the stories again and to explore the crafts rather than just “finishing” them!) OR: You just fill in one of the sections for your once a week class. OR: You can fill in one section for one child and another section for another child’s age and so on. You can also modify this chart for your own needs.
3. There are four columns in this chart. One is so you can fill in the verses for that week. Since you already have verse sheets I have provided you printed out (and I also worked from these sheets) I usually use this column to add in any “new” songs I have discovered or any music related activities I may do with the children such as recorder or harp practice. The second column is to list the stories you will be telling and when. The third column is to list the crafts and the fourth column is for you to list the snacks you will be providing. If this is for a class you are teaching this is a way for you to monitor what you are serving and not repeat things. If this is a homeschool program you may want your children to fill in the blanks here and have them help you make the snack! I would also put my “bread of the week” in that column so I would remember to bake the Mardi Gras bread on Mardi Gras, etc. However, other than holidays I would always make the basic bread recipe as the children really enjoy that!

Month: _____				
Language	Songs & Music	Stories	Crafts	Math & Science

Waldorf Holidays:

Birthdays & Extra Holidays:

Themes:

Sample Lesson Plans

Instead of using a chart you may want to create something more complex for your classes or your children. This is a sample of the lesson plans I use for my monthly lesson plans. These lesson plans are intended to be used by multi-age children so the plans are organized by age. If you compare this sample to the lists above you will see that this plan for the month does follow the rhythm's mentioned above, it provides instruction in the areas that are needed for each age group, at the lesson's themes are usually on the topic of the theme or holiday of the month. You can take this lesson planner and modify it for your needs if you are not using my lesson plans.

Sample Lesson Plans for the Month of February

Members also receive: Lesson plans shared from other members, MP3s of verses, 2 member videos a month, sheet music, recipes, vintage E-books and more.

Contents

1. How to Start
2. How to Use These Plans
3. Themes for the Month
4. Resources for Everyone
 - a. Videos
 - b. Recipes
 - c. Bread recipe of the month
 - d. Basics for Everyone
 - e. Lessons and Stories for All
 - f. Opening Songs
 - g. Snack Ideas
5. Preschool (some materials also suitable for KG)
 - a. Verses (2-3 Years)
 - b. Verses (4-5 Years EXTRA this month only)
 - c. Stories
 - d. Crafts
 - e. Lessons
6. Kindergarten (some materials also suitable for First)
 - a. Verses
 - b. Stories
 - c. Crafts
 - d. Lessons
7. First Grade & Second Grade (with labels)
 - a. Verses
 - b. Stories
 - c. Crafts
 - d. Lessons
8. Third & Fourth Grade (with labels)
 - a. Verses
 - b. Stories
 - c. Crafts
 - d. Lessons

How to Start

You will need two resources at your disposal before you start. You do not need to completely read these resources but you will NEED them as you create your lesson plans and start to teach. Once you are enrolled as a member you can download these.

Waldorf Yearly Lesson Plan Guide

This is a “look-ahead” guide for the year as well as a resource for different ideas on how to plan your lessons, your day, your week, your month and your year. This guide also talks about rhythms and the “whys” of what we are doing. Additionally, there is a guide to the “grades and ages” in this packet so you know what is appropriate for each age.

Basic Waldorf Teacher Resources

These come in the form of downloadable handouts that you can read. These handouts include all the basics for the lessons such as “How to Tell a Waldorf Story,” “How to Knit,” “How to Finger-knit,” etc. All the basic bread recipes are found here as well.

PS = Preschool or Mother-child classes

KG = Kindergarten

F = First Grade

S = Second Grade

T = Third Grade

FR = Fourth Grade

Themes for the Month of February

Main Waldorf Holidays

Valentine’s Day

Themes

Love

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Other Holidays

Setsuban in Japan

Copernicus’ Birthday

President’s Day

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candles

Paper

Felt Basics

Resources for Everyone

Videos

You will find the videos for this month when they are ready. If you are a Year Member or Lifetime Member you will find all of your videos online on one page and you do not need to download them on a monthly basis. If you are using the online site to access your files you will also find your videos online at that site when they are ready.

Recipes

Feel free to add some of your own! Note: You are not required to use or add any extra recipes. This is an “extra” and the lessons are complete without these.

Bread of the Month: Peaceful Poppyseed Prune Bread - Vegan Recipe

This wonderful, homey bread evokes Eastern Europe, where dried fruit has been used for millennia to satisfy end-of-winter sweet cravings. This bread is especially welcome now, since it also includes nerve-soothing oats and nutrition-packed seeds. Humans have been baking bread for thousands of years, and somehow nothing evokes the safety and comfort of home like the smell of bread baking. Kneading is a time-honored way to reduce stress, and pausing to rest while the bread bakes is so soothing.

3 cups fruit juice
¼ cup vegetable oil
¼ cup honey
2 tablespoons molasses
2 teaspoons sea salt
3 cups rolled oats
1 cup sunflower seeds
½ cup poppy seeds
1 cup prunes, pitted and diced
½ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
8 to 9 cups whole wheat flour

Heat fruit juice and stir in oil, honey and molasses. Add salt and oats and let this starter sit while you toast the sunflower and poppy seeds in a dry skillet and dice the prunes. Add spices, seeds, and prunes to the starter and then gradually add the flour. Knead the resulting huge glob of dough (in two batches if one is too heavy) at least 300 times or until it stays together and can be shaped into a round. 2. Bake at 300 for 1 ½ hours or until firm-crust and deep brown.

Basics for Everyone

The first lesson plans for the year are in August and they contain a lot of cornerstone lessons for the year. If you have any trouble with any of these lessons please refer to the August plans to see if they can help you. Many people do not need these August basics but if you are new to Waldorf you might. All other months are complete within themselves, however and all months come with two important items:

My Waldorf Year: This packet/E-book helps you organize the year and gives you some basics about Waldorf.

Waldorf Basics: This E-book contains reference files on how to do Waldorf puppet shows, how to knit, how to sew and more. You may or may not need the files in this E-book. Be sure, however, to skim through it and read the files on storytelling. HOW you do the story in your lesson plans is as important as the story itself.

February Holiday Details

Candlemas – February 2nd, 2019

This day started in ancient Rome as a day to honor the mother of the great god, Mars. Candles and torches were carried in the streets. Later, when Christianity became an important religion in Rome, Candlemas Day became a day to honor Mary and it celebrated the presentation of the Lord in the Temple. This day marks the end of the Christmas season. Because it falls in the middle of winter it was a time to begin thinking about spring.

American colonists and German settlers in Pennsylvania decided to keep the date of Candlemas Day but also added the custom of using animals that hibernate to predict the weather. Since the groundhog is the most common hibernating animal in Pennsylvania, "Punxsutawney Phil" sticks his head out of the ground each February 2nd!

Groundhog Day – February 2nd, 2019

Groundhog Day, February 2nd, is a popular tradition in the United States. It is also a legend that traverses centuries, its origins clouded in the mists of time with ethnic cultures and animals awakening on specific dates. Myths such as this tie our present to the distant past when nature did, indeed, influence our lives. It is the day that the Groundhog comes out of his hole after a long winter sleep to look for his shadow. If he sees it, he regards it as an omen of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his hole. The groundhog tradition stems from similar beliefs associated with Candlemas Day and the days of early Christians in Europe, and for centuries the custom was to have the clergy bless candles and distribute them to the people. Even then, it marked a milestone in the winter and the weather that day was important.

Setsubun in Japan – February 3rd, 2019

The day before the beginning of spring according to the lunisolar calendar. On the evening of this day, people open the door of their houses and drive the bad spirits (i.e. bad luck) out of their homes and gardens by throwing handfuls of beans and shouting "Bad Spirits out! Good luck in!" after this ceremony, people can eat beans. The number of beans is their age. (i.e. 20-year-old people can eat 20 beans).

Chinese Lunar New Year – February 5th, 2019

The origin of the Chinese New Year is itself centuries old - in fact, too old to actually be traced. It is popularly recognized as the Spring Festival and celebrations last 15 days. Preparations tend to begin a month from the date of the Chinese New Year (similar to a Western Christmas), when people start buying presents, decoration materials, food and clothing. A huge clean-up gets underway days before the New Year, when Chinese houses are cleaned from top to bottom, to sweep away any traces of bad luck, and doors and windowpanes are given a new coat of paint, usually red. The doors and windows are then decorated with paper cuts and couplets with themes such as happiness, wealth and longevity printed on them.

The eve of the New Year is perhaps the most exciting part of the event, as anticipation creeps in.

Here, traditions and rituals are very carefully observed in everything from food to clothing. Dinner is usually a feast of seafood and dumplings, signifying different good wishes. Delicacies include prawns, for liveliness and happiness, dried oysters (or ho xi), for all things good, raw fish salad or yu sheng to bring good luck and prosperity, Fai-hai (Angel Hair), an edible hair-like seaweed to bring prosperity, and dumplings boiled in water (Jiaozi) signifying a long-lost good wish for a family. It's usual to wear something red as this color is meant to ward off evil spirits - but black and white are out, as these are associated with mourning. At midnight, the sky is lit up by fireworks. On the day itself, an ancient custom called Hong Bao, meaning Red Packet, takes place. This involves married couples giving children and unmarried adults money in red envelopes. Then the family begins to say greetings from door to door, first to their relatives and then their neighbors. Like the Western saying "let bygones be bygones," at Chinese New Year, grudges are very easily cast aside. The end of the New Year is marked by the Festival of Lanterns, which is a celebration with singing, dancing and lantern shows.

Losar – February 5th – 7th, 2019

Happy Losar (Tibetan New Year). Tibetans all over the world celebrated Tibetan New Year on Sunday, February 6th. The word *Losar* is a Tibetan word for New Year. *LO* means year and *SAR* means new. The celebration of Losar can be traced back to the pre-Buddhist period in Tibet. During the period when Tibetans practiced the Bon religion, every winter a spiritual ceremony was held, in which people offered large quantities of incense to appease the local spirits, deities and protectors. This religious festival later evolved into an annual Buddhist festival which is believed to have originated during the reign of Pude Gungyal, the ninth King of Tibet. The festival is said to have begun when an old woman named Belma introduced the measurement of time based on the phases of the moon.

This festival took place during the flowering of the apricot trees of the Lhokha Yarla Shampo region in autumn, and it may have been the first celebration of what has become the traditional farmers' festival. It was during this period that the arts of cultivation, irrigation, refining iron from ore and building bridges were first introduced in Tibet. The ceremonies which were instituted to celebrate these new capabilities can be recognized as precursors of the Losar festival. Later when the rudiments of the science of astrology, based on the five elements, were introduced in Tibet, this farmer's festival became what we now call the Losar or New Year's festival.

Valentine's Day – February 14th, 2019

Valentine's Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honor Juno. Juno was the Queen of the Roman Gods and Goddesses. The Romans also knew her as the Goddess of women and marriage. The following day, February 15th, began the Feast of Lupercalia.

The lives of young boys and girls were strictly separate. However, one of the customs of the young people was name drawing. On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would draw a girl's name from the jar and would then be partners for the duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.

Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns. Claudius the Cruel was having a difficult time getting soldiers to join his military leagues. He believed that the reason was that roman men did not want to leave their loves or families. As a result, Claudius cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome. The good Saint Valentine was a priest at Rome in the days of Claudius II. He and Saint Marius aided the Christian martyrs and secretly married couples, and for this kind deed Saint Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who condemned him to be beaten to death with clubs and to have his head cut off. He suffered martyrdom on the 14th day of February, about the year 270.

The pastors of the early Christian Church in Rome endeavored to do away with the pagan element in these feasts by substituting the names of saints for those of maidens. And as the Lupercalia began about the middle of February, the pastors appear to have chosen Saint Valentine's Day for the celebration of this new feast. So it seems that the custom of young men choosing maidens for valentines, or saints as patrons for the coming year, arose in this way.

Lessons & Stories for All Ages

Waldorf Math Story Poems

This article is the introduction to the book “Waldorf Story Poems” that is available to year and Lifetime members. It is also given to monthly members in the form of one number each month for grades one and up. Even if your child is not yet in 1st grade, this is a good summary to read so you can be “looking ahead.” If you are not a year or lifetime member and you want the entire book (instead of month by month) you can download it from www.TheWaldorfChannel.com.

In Waldorf education there are variations on how the times tables are taught. However, one constant remains – that we always work from the whole to the parts. But what does that mean and why do we do that? In Waldorf classrooms different teachers recite the times tables with their classes in different ways. In “The Waldorf Way” David Ruenzel describes his math lesson in this way:

The movement, then, is highly purposeful and characterized by a sort of choreographed fastidiousness. Auer's 1st graders stood rhythmically clapping their hands and stomping their feet as they chanted their multiplication tables: 9 is 3 x 3, 12 is 4 x 3, 15 is 5 x 3.

However, in a Waldorf school in Maine, the lesson sounds a little different. Their lesson is described like this;

There are recorders being played, verses being recited in unison, feet stomping, hands clapping. "Two times four is eight." (Clap.) "Three times four is 12." (Clap.) "Four times four is 16." (Clap.)" The 26 pupils in Sarah Van Fleet's fourth-grade class are standing in a circle reciting their multiplication tables, a timeless exercise in mathematical memorization, but one with a difference. While reciting, they clap out a rhythm and pass around orange beanbags.

In one case the whole is recited first, in the second case the parts are recited first. So if the parts can come before the whole in recitation what did Rudolph Steiner mean when he spoke about the parts coming before the whole in Waldorf education?

When one speaks of putting the “whole before the part,” the order in which the numbers are found in recitation is certainly one way to accomplish that. However, the concept is rooted in a much deeper methodology. The concept of putting the whole before the parts is based on HOW the child learns the basic concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, not in how they may recite these facts later after they already know them or are practicing them.

In teaching math it is important for the child to be able to view the whole of the concept before they break it into computational parts. Steiner believed that,

All teaching matter must be intimately connected with life. In counting, each different number should be connected with the child or what the child sees in the environment. Counting and stepping in rhythm. The body counts. The head looks on. Counting with fingers and toes is good (also writing with the feet). The ONE is the whole. Other numbers proceed from it. Building with bricks is against the child's nature, whose impulse is to proceed from whole to parts, as in medieval thinking. Contrast atomic theory. In real life we have first a basket of apples, a purse of coins. In teaching addition, proceed from the whole. In subtraction, start with minuend and remainder; in multiplication, with product and one factor.

He continues on to say,

Instead of offering, say, three apples, then four more, and finally another two, and asking the child to add them all together, we begin by offering a whole pile of apples, or whatever is convenient. This would begin the whole operation. Then one calls on two more children and says to the first, "Here you have a pile of apples. Give some to the other two children and keep some for yourself, but each of you must end up with the same number of apples." In this way you help children comprehend the idea of sharing by three. We begin with the total amount and lead to the principle of division. Following this method, children will respond and comprehend this process naturally. According to our picture of the human being, and in order to attune ourselves to the children's nature, we do not begin by adding but by dividing and subtracting. Then, retracing our steps and reversing the first two processes, we are led to multiplication and addition. Moving from the whole to the part, we follow the original experience of number, which was one of analyzing, or division, and not the contemporary method of synthesizing, or putting things together by adding.

It is interesting that using this method division is then seen to Waldorf students as simpler than multiplication. The way most people were taught division it was more complicated!

A good illustration of how looking at the whole, instead of the parts would work is an example of talking about "Rays of Light." When I was in science class we had a unit on "Rays of Light" and we learned about them as individual rays. It was a hard and abstract concept to grasp as a child. However, in Steiner's world you could replace that lesson with a photo of mountains reflected in a lake – this lesson would be much easier to grasp. You can break the reflection down into rays at a later time.

However, these story poems are not about learning math, they are about practicing the times tables. You will first be teaching your child the four mathematical processes in addition to reciting "math facts" (see E-book "Sixth Sense Math").

Once they have grasped the concept of the process they are able to move on to recitation and even more advanced – the recitation or “acting out” of story poems.

Because different teachers use different methods in their recitation of the math facts I have included TWO versions of these story poems below. In one version the product is first and in the other version the factor is first. You should use whichever set of poems synchronizes well with the other lessons your child is doing.

Reading and Writing in Waldorf Education

One of the most common questions I see in Waldorf education is how do children learn how to read? Parents are amazed that traditionally Waldorf educators start teaching letters in first grade and don't even start reading until second grade in some cases. Of course if a child is ready before then, a teacher can take their lead and gently provide them with additional resources. However, to force an artificial situation on the child is detrimental to their learning process. Children's minds are like a garden of roses. They will open and bloom with the right ingredients, but if you rip them open instead they will have to settle for their knowledge and understanding of the subject being partial, or being “glued back” together in some semblance of order. The same happens when children learn how to read. In the methods most common today children are taught the abstract before the understanding. This leaves a gap in their relationship with language so that even if they do learn how to read, they may never really have the love of reading and writing that they could. In some cases, other gaps may show up later like poor spelling ability or difficulty with composition.

To approach reading from the standpoint of Waldorf education one must also learn as a teacher to understand reading before thinking of it in the abstract. We talk about reading as if it was an abstract foreign concept. However, it is as natural as learning how to speak. As teachers, we need to see reading as something natural rather than abstract. We start from there. Keep this in mind as you read this information below. I am writing this to allow you, as the teacher, to enter into a different way of seeing reading and to provide you with some translation of ideas from mainstream to Waldorf.

Most of what you will read below is intended for the teacher. The only items that should be shared with the students are the lessons. What I (or you) did to create the lessons should be seen only with our adult minds – because it is abstract. So children should not be given lists of “Dolch words” and told to copy them or learn them with flash cards, they should not be given worksheets with phonics on them with the endings in big bold letters. Both of these methods alienate the child from the concept of reading. We can see these worksheets and lists and understand them. However, the child can better understand a lesson coming from them and not the lists themselves.

However, first, before we start the lessons we need to understand what reading is. So what is reading? Reading is a process by which we learn to associate symbols with meanings. To be good at this we need to have a skill for imagination, creation, and visualization.

Think of all the stories that exist about books coming alive and words coming off the page into pictures. These books have brought to life what is happening inside a child's head when they read. But how can this happen if a child is not allowed to cultivate their imagination and visualization skills?

Imagine a child who is asked to sit and look at a letter "R" at a young age. They are told this letter has a sound and if you put that with an "ED" it has another sound and it actually means the color red. You are asking a child to do abstract thinking when they are much too young for this kind of thought. In fact, most classes that are commonly known to involve abstract thinking (philosophy for one) are not even taught until High School or College.

Now imagine that you tell a child to look at an "R" and imagine all that this "R" can be. There is a story about the "R" and the "R" has adventures and the child is allowed to feel the "R" and be the "R" and identify with it as a character with personality. Stories are told about all the letters and they come alive in form, pictures and verse. Now, tell this child that this letter is going to transform itself into a word to mean "red." This is now in the realm of the imagination where anything is possible. Princesses can have hair as tall as a castle tower, birds can talk, swans can turn into boys and "R"s can turn into the word "red." Anything is possible. This is not abstract – it is imagination. So how can you cultivate this imagination and ability to see words in a different way? By reading, telling stories, telling many fairytales and allowing the child to slowly develop a relationship with the language.

The second most important change we need to make in our minds as teachers is to allow ourselves to believe that reading is natural. It was a natural progression of humankind to develop reading and writing, it is a natural progression in the human being themselves. Traditional methods approach reading as if it were unnatural. Reading is IMPOSED into a structure and into an environment as if it was "work" – it is put forth as "now we will do our reading now." We have language homework and language workbooks and even entire reading classes and programs. And many people argue that "they work" and are so happy when their 3-year-old is reading. But have they ever asked themselves HOW did it work? And is this going to have good long-term effects on my child? I have seen some children ready to read at early ages and approach it with joy and intuition. However, for so many children it is imposed upon them.

Think of reading as an extension of language. Telling stories to a child develops the ability to tell stories, just as speaking to a child develops their ability to converse. In the same way reading to a child and letting them become familiar with language develops their ability to read. When your child is just learning how to talk do you remove them from their daily life and say "ok, now we are going to practice talking now"? Not usually. We need to think of reading in the same way. Instead of removing the child from their life and saying "we are going to practice reading now" you can make it part of their life in the form of telling stories, reading them stories, doing activities with letters, reciting verses and simply enjoying language.

The Steps to Reading in Waldorf Education

There are traditional ways to approach language learning, however ultimately this happens differently with every child because every child is different. However, for the teacher, the same order is followed with each child although each child may progress at a different rate or skip steps altogether:

1. Children in pre-school and kindergarten are introduced to stories at an early age through many puppet shows and storytelling sessions. They are introduced to the beauty of language (and many phonics concepts...shhh....) through verses and poems and movement. By the time they reach 1st grade they have probably been exposed to more literature, words and language than the average American 3rd grader. My preschool enrichment program at www.earthschooling.com takes you through these steps with your child.
2. Children in First Grade take the next step into exploring each letter as a story, as a fairytale, as a shape through form drawing, as an expression. Each consonant and vowel is explored through movement, verse and pictures. My book, *Sixth Sense Language* at www.TheWaldorfChannel.com takes you through these steps with your child. These steps are also included in each month of the Earthschooling program at www.earthschooling.com.
3. Children in Second Grade start the process of reading and writing. Some children have already figured out how to read and write by this time. They have taken those skills of imagination, been able to apply them quite easily to the sounds they are hearing and can relate them to how the words look in a book. Remember – these children have not been focusing on phonics yet, but they have naturally been exposed to it through verse, activities, stories and more. They were not shown abstract pages that had phonics and Dolch words on it but they heard these words and concepts over and over in a natural way. Do you know what a Dolch word list is? It is a list of the most commonly occurring sight words in the English language. Many teachers miss the obvious here – if these are the most commonly occurring words and you have been exposing your children to numerous stories from age 3 to 7 then won't they have heard and seen these words hundreds of times by then? It is only when you impose reading early that a child does not have a chance to hear and see these words and concepts naturally.

By second grade their form drawing practice and letter picture practice have made them adept at creating these letters into words. These children jump straight into reading stories at their level. What level that is depends on the child. My first child started reading chapter books immediately as if she had been born reading. Two months before she had trouble sounding out how some letters went together. My son started out very cautiously reading shorter books in a very careful manner. My youngest learned to read earlier because she enjoyed trying to read the little words in the books we had around the house. She would “read” over my shoulder during bedtime story time. All children learn differently; however the average child is ready to know more about the alphabet in 1st grade.

However, despite the fact that once you think about it, it does not seem so strange that children can learn in this manner, it still amazes some people that with just a few simple steps and patience children will learn how to read.

Phonics in Waldorf Education?

So what about letter blends, digraphs, word families and site words? These do have a place. They naturally occur in lessons given to a child from the time they start circle time as a preschooler. They are also introduced after the letters, and sometimes merged in with the learning of the letters in various verses, poems and stories (which you will find below).

Children are not given “matching worksheets” and told to match a “cup to a pup” and children are not given long lists of words to memorize and copy. They are not given site word flash cards. Children get to know these word groups and site words by verse and by story. In some of the first stories they read and verses they recite or read, the word groups will be together. Site words will be integrated into the reading lesson and verses and introduced in the same way the letters were introduced – through story and verse and in a holistic way.

However, most likely you have already explored these word groups and site words in so many ways while learning the alphabet. This is more of a review for each child at this point, and allows the children whose minds work in different ways, to have another chance at grasping the concepts, another way of seeing them.

As teachers we must once again escape from the mentality that we are teaching word groups that are new and site words that are new – we are simply exploring words that this child has heard and seen hundreds of times since they were three. You are simply organizing these in a different way for them. The Phlegmatic and Melancholic children will benefit from this the most. The Sanguine and Choleric children may have already figured out how to read. However, there are exceptions to every “rule” and even if one hundred teachers taught this same lesson it would be different according to whom they are too. So it is really a process of synergy of child & teacher, child & structure, temperament & method, etc.

This transition between letters and reading will be different for all children. Some will not need extra verses at all. Some will need it for the entire year and some will surpass your lesson plans and want to go on. They will grasp it quickly and soon be “reading.” However, for planning purposes we always plan for the slowest case scenario so that we give the child a relaxed time frame and allow them to blossom when they will. If they blossom early then we can move on. If not, there is no pressure because we have already planned to work on these tasks for a year.

The ability to read in a Waldorf school comes from years of storytelling but ALSO upon reflecting upon what one writes. Children copy the simple content of the lesson into their books, forming it into words they have written themselves, and then read it and re-read as the main lesson books fill up. In first grade you will be exploring the letters. In second grade you will start some of these writing lessons. At some point in second grade the child will take the leap into reading at which point you should still continue the lessons, however, you can speed up the process.

Opening Songs

We had different opening songs depending on the time of day we had class and the age of the children. I tried to choose an opening song that would be the same for each age so as the child moved up in age they looked forward to a different opening song. And don't worry that they get tired of it! Some kids I had sang the same opening song for two years and still loved it! Choose what is appropriate for your family/group below and START your circle time with your chosen song every morning. You can see these verses being sung at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7b7tdyVGnU>.

Yoga Lessons for All this Month

Please see the "supplemental lessons" file for this lesson. You may shorten or modify this as you see fit. I usually give the poses names that fit in with our lessons or theme of the month like poses for the sun, moon, earth, animals, flowers and/or letters of the alphabet.

3-5 year-old children can "do what they can" as you do the sequence, introducing it to them only three sequences at a time. Do not be worried about their form at all. Let them follow along in their own way. At this age it does not have to be silent or quiet. You can talk about what animals or plants the poses remind you of. For 7-9 year olds you can lead them through the poses (3-4 a week) slowly and gently move their arms to correct the poses in an approximation of what it "should" be. At this age they should start trying to be more silent and concentrate on the poses. For ages 9 and up you can correct the poses, direct their breathing and encourage them to hold poses and to be silent.

Remember – you can give these different names according to the themes you are celebrating this month or the seasons. Yoga lessons this month are found in the audio and visual section of the files. Yoga cards are provided every month so you can easily carry them to circle time and use them.

February Snack Ideas

Simple snacks kids can make!

Valentine Roll Ups

Strawberry flavored cream cheese

Strawberry jam

Tortilla

Spread cream cheese and jam on a tortilla. Roll the tortilla into a log and cut into 1 inch thick slices.

Valentine Sandwiches

Cream cheese, softened

Red food coloring

Bread

Heart cookie cutter

Jam ~ strawberry or raspberry

Add a few drops of red food coloring to the softened cream cheese and mix until the color is a light pink throughout.

Cut bread into heart shapes with the cookie cutter. Spread cream cheese on the bread and top with the jam.

Valentine Smoothie

1 cup low fat strawberry yogurt

1 cup mixed berries (fresh or frozen) (strawberries, blueberries, etc.)

2 teaspoons frozen orange juice concentrate

Combine in a blender and mix until smooth. Thin with more orange juice if desired.

Pretzel Rods

White chocolate chips

Whole pretzel rods

Red, white and/or pink sprinkles("jimmies")

Wax paper

Melt chocolate according to package directions. Dip pretzel rods in the chocolate and place on the wax paper. After the chocolate has hardened, dip them again and then roll them in the sprinkles. Place them on a new sheet of wax paper to harden.

Preschool and/or Parent-Child SAMPLE Class (Some also suitable for Kindergarten)

Fables, rhythmic stories, and relational stories. Stories children can relate to as their own personal experiences. These kinds of stories could be as simple as telling the child a story about what they did when they got out of bed in the morning.

Contents

Stories

The Moon and Her Mother - PS/KG

Suggested Crafts:

Crepes for Candlemas (Crepes are shaped like the moon)

The Valentine's Fairy – PS/KG

Suggested Crafts:

Valentine Sachets

Cinnamon Dough Decorations

Mane Pink – PS/KG

Suggested Crafts:

Cookie Cutter Candles

Strawberry Jam

A Rose by Any Other Name – PS/KG

Suggested Crafts:

Valentine Sachet

The Prickly Purple Patch – PS/KG *Suggested Crafts:*

Handmade Paper

Bread Sushi

The Seed Babies Blanket – PS/KG *Suggested Crafts:*

Seed Necklaces

The Snowflake and the Leaf – PS/KG

Suggested Crafts:

Handmade Paper (you can even use some of those old snowflakes you cut out or use the scraps from snowflake cut out parts or ones that didn't turn out!)

Crafts

Cookie Cutter Candles

Suggested Stories:

Mane Pink

Cinnamon Dough Decorations

Suggested Stories:

The Valentine's Fairy

Handmade Paper

Suggested Stories:

The Snowflake and the Leaf

The Prickly Purple Patch

Sunflower Seed Necklaces

Suggested Stories:

The Seed Babies Blanket

Shadow Tag for Groundhog Day

Suggested Stories:

No-Cook Strawberry Jam

Suggested Stories:

Mane Pink

Bread Sushi for Setsubun

Suggested Stories:

The Prickly Purple Patch

Valentine's Sachet

Suggested Stories:

The Valentine's Fairy

A Rose by Any Other Name

Crepes for Candlemas

Suggested Stories:

The Moon and Her Mother

Lessons

Watercolor Story of the Month – PS

Math: (See the math verses in the verses for this age and this month. Children of this age learn math through verse and experience. Note that circle time is a very important time of day for this age. Sometimes I spend thirty minutes or more with the circle time for this age as many of their lessons are learned during this time. You can also do two circles each day if you want.)

Language: (See language related verses in the verses for this age and this month. Children of this age learn language through verse.)

Science: (See science & nature stories for this month. Children of this age learn science through communing with nature and through stories about nature.)

Kindergarten SAMPLE Class (some also suitable for first grade)

Fairytales, fables, simple nature, science and math stories. Special: every month this section will include letters from the “Aesop’s ABCs.” You can read these stories (each starts with the designated letter) and you can use them as a guide for which letters to focus on this month OR just to tell as a fable...

Contents

Stories

Restoring the Moon

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Basic Felting – felt a circular yellow moon

Crepes

More Folks in Red (Science)

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

The Boy and the Moon (Fable)

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Flowers Aglow (at night in the moonlight)

Crepes

Sleeping Beauty in the Wood

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Flower’s Aglow from the woods

Sweetheart Rolland

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Handmade Paper (to write Rolland a sweet letter)

The Moon and the Great Snake (Native American Myth & Legend)

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Paper Batiq (As you are crumpling the paper you can do it as a snake and you can start with a round paper – the moon – once you finish this first activity do more in different shapes)

A Mild Day in Winter

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Sunflower Seed Necklaces (to welcome winter guests)

Little Red Riding Hood

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Cinnamon Dough Ornaments (Little Red gives to grandma for Valentine's Day)

Beauty and the Beast

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

Crafts

Basic Felting (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

Restoring the Moon

Cinnamon Dough Ornaments (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

Little Red Riding Hood

Paper Batiq (Paper Skills)

Suggested Stories:

The Moon and the Great Snake

Handmade Paper for Valentine's (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

Sweetheart Rolland

Flowers Aglow (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

Sleeping Beauty

The Boy and the Moon

Sunflower Seed Necklaces (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

A Mild Day in Winter

Shadow Tag

Suggested Stories:

The Story of Candlemas & Groundhog's Day (see lessons for all)

Soup & Story of the Month

Suggested Stories:

Lesson & Craft & Story Included

Crepes for Candlemas

Suggested Stories:

Restoring the Moon

The Boy in the Moon

Lessons

Sixth Sense Language

Sixth Sense Math Exploring: The Number Seven

Read: “A Math Story to Honor Cupid: Throw Those Darts”

Watercolor Story of the Month

Science: See lessons above & stories from “The Storybook of Science.”

Verses (Ages 4-7 and up)

“German Snowflake Song”

A great song to sing while hanging up snowflakes!

Schneeflocken,
SchneeFlocken
(shnee flahken)
Snow flakes
Jede ist anders
(yehdah ist ahnders)
each one is different
Schneeflocken,
schneeflocken
(shnee flahken)
Snow flakes
Jede ist schon
(yehdah is shern)
each one is beautiful

First & Second Grade SAMPLE Class

Fairytales, folktales, more advanced nature, fables, legends, science, and math stories. Special: A Story from the Fairyland of Science will be included in this section every month!

Stories

Donkey Skin – F/S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

Bluebeard – F/S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Mardi Gras Mask

The Moon and the Frog Bride – F/S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

The Boy and the Moon - F

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Dipped Candles

The Legend of the Woodpecker (Science Fairytale) – F/S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Mardi Gras Mask

Sunbeams (Fairyland of Science) - S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Finger-Knitted Flowers (grow in sunbeams)

The War Between the Sandpipers and the Whales - F

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Mardi Gras Mask

What Broke the China Pitcher - F

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Dipper Candles

The Discontented Rock – F/S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

Red Snow - S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Basic Snowflake

A Clever Slave - S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Handmade Paper

A Story to Honor Love - F

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Berry Ink

The Lover of Men - S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

Saint Stories – S

Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius (Feast Day on Feb. 14)

Saint Margaret (Feast day: Feb 22)

Saint Valentine

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Berry Ink

Arthur in the Cave - F

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

Two Ways to Count to Ten - F

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

Visit to Fairyland – F/S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Cinnamon Dough Ornaments

Six and Four are Ten – F

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Watercolor or play

The Stolen Soup Aroma – F/S

Suggested Crafts/Lessons:

Shadow Tag

Crafts

Berry Ink and Quill Pens (To write your Valentine's with)

Suggested Stories:

A Story to Honor Love

St. Valentine

Mardi Gras Mask (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

Bluebeard

The Legend of the Woodpecker

The War Between the Sandpiper's and the Whales

Cinnamon Dough Ornaments (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

Visit to Fairyland

Basic Snowflake (Paper Skills)

Suggested Stories:

Red Snow

Finger-Knitted Flowers (Knitting)

Suggested Stories:

Sunbeams

Handmade Paper Valentine's (Handcrafts)

Suggested Stories:

A Clever Slave

Dipped Candles (Handcrafts)

Suggested Stories:

The Boy in the Moon

What Broke the China Pitcher

Shadow Tag (Game)

Suggested Stories:

The Stolen Soup Aroma

Edible Rocks (Science)

Suggested Stories:

Lesson & Craft & Story Included

Lessons

Language - F: Exploring the Letters O & P

Sixth Sense Language – S: Sixth Sense Reading for Second Graders & Excerpts from Vintage Readers

Sixth Sense Math – F/S: The Number Seven, Creating Times Tables Through Math, Poem/Play for Seven

Form Drawing for February – F/S

Watercolor Story of the Month – F/S

For Science...see stories & craft section above.

Verses 1st/2nd Grade

“Quand on fait des crêp’s chez nous”

French Candlemas Verse

Quand on fait des crêp’s chez nous, ma mèm’ vous invite
Quand on fait des crêp’s chez nous, ell’ vous invite tous
Un’ pour toi, un’ pour moi, un’ pour mon p’tit frèr’
François Un’ pour toi, un’ pour moi, un’ pour tous les trois.

“When We Make Crêpes at Our House”

When we make crêpes at our house, my mom invites you
When we make crêpes at our house, she invites you all One for you, one for me, one for my
little brother Francois One for you, one for me, one for all three of us.

Third & Fourth Grade SAMPLE Class

3rd Grade: Myth, Legends of Saints and Animals, Heroes, Inventors, Fairytales with Lessons Discussed, Math, Science and Nature Stories Continue but more in relation to hands-on activities...Stories from the Old Testament are introduced. If you want to teach stories from another religious book you can start introducing those at this time. Contact me if you would like references for Islamic, Jewish or Buddhist sources. I do have some of those available.

4th Grade: Norse Mythology, Homesteading, Biographies.

Stories

Although this section was created for 3rd and 4th grade I am now starting to include some additional information for 5th grade and up. In some cases the same material is suitable. In other cases I have included entirely different material. It is labeled as such: – 4th/5th/6th/7th

The King Arthur Legend

Suggested Crafts:

Chevron Weaving

Hans and the Wonderful Flower

Suggested Crafts:

Flower Arranging

Dyed Wool

Zenobiya of Palmyra

Suggested Crafts:

Blessing Box

Form Drawing this Month

Western Inventions – The Spinning Machine

Suggested Crafts:

Wool Painting

Spinning Wool (from January)

Finger Knitted Flowers

Saint Valentine

Suggested Crafts:

Paper Cut Hearts

Chocolate Fudge Candy

Handmade Truffles

Handmade Paper

Gethin and the Candle

Suggested Crafts:

Dipped Candles

Stories from the Bible – T

How the Sea Became Dry Land

The Mountain that Smoked

How Aaron Made a Golden Calf

The Tent Where God Lived

The Arabian Nights (Tell one each week) (4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th)

No craft/Do as painting or drawing stories or plays AFTER you tell the story. Remember, these are the ORIGINAL stories and not the “watered down” versions. You will need to decide how you want to change them or shorten them for your child. Ask me if you need help with night 26, night 27, night 28, night 29. Also good as water-color stories. Fourth graders should also be hearing stories from your local (area) history. Visit the local library and find some of these stories or visit the local history center to find resources. You only need a couple stories every month so don’t get too overwhelmed!

Crafts

Blessing Box

Suggested Stories:

Zenobiya of Palmyra

Paper Cut Hearts

Suggested Stories:

St. Valentine

Wool Painting

Suggested Stories:

The Spinning Machine

Finger Knitted Flowers for Valentine’s (Knitting/Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

The Spinning Machine (then finger-knit with hand-spun yarn)

Chevron Weaving (Handcraft)

Suggested Stories:

King Arthur

Dyed Wool

Suggested Stories:

Hans and the Wonderful Flower

Flower Arranging

Suggested Stories:

Hans and the Wonderful Flower

Handmade Paper

Suggested Stories:

St. Valentine

Dipped Candles

Suggested Stories:

Gethin and the Candle

Chocolate Fudge Candy

Suggested Stories:

St. Valentine

Handmade Truffles

Suggested Stories:

St. Valentine

Lessons

Science: The Astrolabe

Sixth Sense Language – T/F: 3rd Grade Grammar, The Old Testament – 3rd Grade, Norse Stories – 4th Grade, Writer's Workshop

Sixth Sense Math – T/FR: Explore 27

Form Drawing for December – T & FR: Horizontal Symmetry

Extra Math: Times Tables for Six Review, Times Table Poem for Six, The Astrolabe (3rd, 4th & 5th Grade).