

Webquest: New Year

by Gabrielle Jones

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate
Target age: Teenagers / Young adults
Time needed: 60 minutes
Key skills: Reading, speaking
Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student

In this New Year webquest, your students will learn about the history of New Year celebrations and the traditions that are practised today in a variety of cultures.

This webquest is designed for students to work from activity to activity. Most tasks require them to compare their answers in pairs or small groups and there is always an element of discussion or interaction involved. The lesson could, however, be made into a jigsaw activity by assigning teams one activity each and then forming new teams with one member of each activity group, who share the information they read.

Warmer

Hand out the worksheet. Ask your students to discuss the questions in pairs or small groups, commenting on New Year traditions in their own countries. Write some of the points on the board.

Activity 1: The history of New Year celebrations and traditions

Ask the students to go to the first weblink and answer the questions on the worksheet. They should then discuss their answers in pairs. Feed back on the answers as a whole class.

wilstar.com/holidays/newyear.htm

Key:

1. *thousands of years ago in Babylon.*
2. *the first day of spring*
3. *The original celebration lasted 11 days.*
4. *Julius Caesar*
5. *the feast of the circumcision of Christ and Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*
6. *the first person to walk through your door, who should be tall and dark-haired to ensure good luck for the coming year*

7. *paying bills, breaking anything, shedding tears (crying), taking any items out of the house*
8. *run into water or splash water on one another*
9. *'Auld Lang Syne'*
10. *Rose Bowl*

Activity 2: New Year's traditions around the world

Ask your students to look at the weblink again and read the text from the paragraph 'New Years France' onwards. Ask the students to answer the questions and, then, compare answers in pairs. Give feedback on the answers as a whole class.

wilstar.com/holidays/newyear.htm

Key:

1. *champagne*
2. *chicken and fish*
3. *card games*
4. *12*
5. *to raise money for charity / to raise awareness for a cause*
6. *(at the stroke of) midnight*
7. *1796*
8. *'old long ago' or 'the good old days'*

Activity 3: New Year celebrations around the world

Student A in each pair will read about the Scottish New Year and student B will read about the Jewish New Year. Ask your students to try to work out whether the statements are true or false before reading the texts. They should then check their answers using the weblinks provided. Finally, they should discuss their answers with each other and fill in the table.

Student 1 – Scottish New Year

www.scotland.org/features/hogmanay-top-facts

Key:

1. *F – 'Hogmanay' means 'the last day of the year'.*

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2. T
3. F – Strangers are welcome in people's houses.
4. T
5. T

Student 2 – Jewish New Year

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/judaism/rosh_hashanah.shtml

Key:

1. T
2. F – The celebration lasts two days.
3. T
4. F – The 'Shofar' is a ram's horn trumpet. A hundred notes are played in a special rhythm.
5. T

Key:

	Scottish New Year	Jewish New Year
name of celebration	Hogmanay	Rosh Hashanah
customs	singing 'Auld Lang Syne'; welcoming friends and strangers with warm hospitality and a kiss; the first footing – the first person in the house after midnight should be a dark-haired male	reflecting on the year; asking for forgiveness; blowing of the Shofar; spending time at a synagogue; eating a special meal at home
food and drink	shortbread, black bun, whisky	apples dipped in honey, a sweet carrot stew, pomegranates, round bread

Activity 4: Quiz: International New Year's Eve customs

www.topics-mag.com/international/holidays/new-year/quiz/new-years.htm

Ask your students to complete an online quiz in their pairs in which they discuss New Year's customs in a number of countries. Answers are given on the screen. They should then discuss the question at the end of the section.

Activity 5: Round-up task

Ask students to imagine that they have friends from another country coming to celebrate New Year with them and their family. In pairs, they plan the evening, considering a number of different points. When they have finished, they should compare their plans with another pair.

Optional activity

Ask your students to make their own list of New Year's resolutions. Compare the lists as a whole class and see which resolutions are most popular.