This webquest will help you investigate solstices: what causes them and how they are celebrated throughout the world.

Activity 1: Solstice science

Read the article below.

What are the solstices?

In the northern hemisphere, 21 June is the longest day of the year. It is called the summer solstice and marks the beginning of summer. 21 June is the shortest day of the year in the southern hemisphere – there, it is the winter solstice and marks the beginning of winter. Since humans first began noticing the changes of the seasons and the movement of celestial objects, the solstices have been celebrated in many ways.

Answer the questions. You will find the answers both in the article above and at the weblinks below.

www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/time/seasons.htm
www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/time/solstice.html
www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/time/equinox.html

1. Why do we have seasons?
2. What is the summer solstice?
3. What is the winter solstice?
4. What are the equinoxes?
5. What and when is the autumn equinox in the northern hemisphere?
6. What and when is the spring equinox in the northern hemisphere?

Activity 2: Summer solstice celebrations

Either working individually or in groups, choose one of the topics below. Visit the link and find the answers to the questions. Then prepare a short presentation about the topic, and share it with your classmates. Use the answers to the questions as guides when preparing the report.

A. Significance of the summer solstice

www.religioustolerance.org/summer-solstice-1.htm
(Read the section ‘Significance of the summer solstice’.)

1. Why was summer a joyous time in prehistoric times?
2. What is another name for the first full moon of June? Why?
3. Why wasn’t May a popular month for weddings?
4. Where does the term ‘honeymoon’ come from?
B. Midsummer celebrations in ancient times

www.religioustolerance.org/summer-solstice-1.htm

(Read the section ‘Midsummer celebrations in ancient times’ about halfway down the page.)

Complete the chart to help you summarize the ideas in this section. Tip: not all questions here have an answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society</th>
<th>Name of celebration</th>
<th>What or who did it celebrate?</th>
<th>How was it celebrated?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancient China</td>
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<td>Ancient Gaul</td>
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<td>Ancient Rome</td>
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<td>Ancient Sweden</td>
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<td>Essenes (a Jewish group)</td>
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<td>Christian countries</td>
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</table>

C. Modern pagan celebrations

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/paganism/holydays/summersolstice.shtml

1. What does ‘Litha’ mean?
2. According to the pagans, what happens at midsummer?
3. Besides celebrating growth and life, what do the pagans remember at this time?
4. Where do pagans celebrate the solstice in England?
Webquest: Summer solstice

D. Celebrations at Stonehenge
www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-48703632

1. What is Stonehenge?
2. How many people celebrated at Stonehenge in 2019?
3. Can people walk amongst the stones during the summer solstice celebrations?
4. Why do people go to Stonehenge at the time of the summer solstice?
5. For how long have people been celebrating the summer solstice at Stonehenge?

E. Celebrations in Denmark
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midsummer#Denmark

1. What is the midsummer celebration called?
2. When does it take place?
3. Why do the Danes light bonfires?
4. How are the bonfires supposed to affect witches?

F. Celebrations in Germany
www.bellaonline.com/articles/art172089.asp

1. With what do some Germans celebrate the summer solstice?
2. Describe customs related to:
   a. lovers;
   b. healing;
   c. mountain fires in Bavaria.

G. Celebrations in California
www.noozhawk.com/article/summer_solstice_parade_in_santa_barbara_20190622

1. What was the theme of the 45th annual Santa Barbara Summer Solstice parade?
2. How many spectators attended the event?
3. What happened after the parade was over?
4. In what year did the parade first take place?
5. What is the annual competition, and why does it happen?