New Year Celebrations in the USA and Around the World

Sarah E. Montgomery and Erica M. Christie

This Pullout provides further details and Handouts for Lesson 2 and Lesson 3 in the preceding article by the same authors. To prepare for Lesson 2, set up five centers in the classroom through which students can rotate in small groups.

Center 1: The Times Square Ball Drop
Students compare and contrast celebrations in Times Square in New York City from 1904 to today, noting the origins of the ball dropping and how technology has changed the celebration over time. They use primary resources, online videos, and websites.

*Key resources for this lesson include:*
- History of New Year’s Eve in Times Square, www.timessquarenyc.org/nye/nye_history.html. This website provides historical information, photographs, and an interactive timeline about the iconic ball drop and celebrations in Times Square.

Center 2: Local Celebrations
Students examine videos of local celebrations across the country (Key West, Boston, New Orleans, etc.) to gain insight into how they reflect local geography, climate, and culture.

*Key resources include:*
- History Channel, www.history.com/topics/new-years. This website offers short videos and readings about New Year’s celebrations and traditions in the United States and abroad.


- Father Time’s Net, www.fathertimes.net/ Based in Australia, this website provides links to information about New Year’s traditions, recipes, songs, and games in many different countries around the world.

Center 3: Fireworks around the World
Students view online video clips of fireworks from cities such as Taipei, Sydney, and Rio de Janeiro, locating the city and specific landmarks on a world map, and noting the time zone for each city.

*Key resources include:*
- news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8436016.stm Countdown to New Year, www.timeanddate.com/counters. This webpage counts down the days, hours, minutes, and seconds until the next New Year. See other main menu items as well: Time Zones, Sun & Moon, etc.

Center 4: Auld Lang Syne
Students discuss the meaning of the lyrics to *Auld Lang Syne* by listening to and decoding the song. (HANDOUT A, page P2)

Center 5: Symbols of Time Passing
Students analyze the image of “Father Time and Baby New Year,” discussing the meaning and symbolism of the picture, and suggesting alternative ways to symbolize endings and beginnings. (HANDOUT B, page P3)

After students cycle through the centers, the class reconvenes to draw conclusions about the larger meanings of New Year’s celebrations and symbols. In pairs, students then create their own song, symbol, or celebration that reflects this larger meaning.

Lesson 3 (described in the previous article) involves students discussing and then stating personal resolutions that aim at improving the community, not just self-improvement. (HANDOUT C, page P4)

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Handout A

A Popular New Year’s Eve Song: Auld Lang Syne

Directions: Examine the lyrics (right) and answer the questions that follow.

This is a song adapted from a poem by the Scottish poet, Robert Burns (1759-1796 C.E.)
The first verse is the best known, and it is shown here.
A performance this song can be viewed at Youtube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=acxnmaVTlZA

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne!*

Chorus:
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne.
We’ll take a cup o’ kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

* “Auld lang syne” means “Long, long ago” or “Old long since” in the Scottish language

What does the song say about “auld acquaintances”?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

What do you think a “cup o’kindness” means?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

Why do you think we sing this song as the old year changes into a new one?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

How much thought should we give the past as we greet the New Year?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

How do you think a Scottish song became an American New Year’s tradition?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

Where is Scotland on the globe?
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

Give an example from your life that connects to the song.
_________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________

Source: www.carols.org.uk/auld_lang_syne_song.htm
Who are the two figures in this picture?
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

What does the book represent?
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

What is each person doing?
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

What do these characters symbolize?
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

Why do you think these characters are popular for the New Year’s holiday?
________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

Draw your own picture that might also communicate the significance of New Year’s day.

Handout C

From Concern, to Resolution, to Action
“Together We can Make a Difference!”

Our New Year’s Resolution for our community, or our world: Work with a partner to answer the questions below as you develop an action plan to fulfill our New Year’s resolution.

We resolve to ____________________________________________

Why is this project important?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

Where can we learn more about this issue?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

With whom can we work to take action?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

What are some ways we can fulfill our resolution?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

List the steps you will take to get started on your project.
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

What challenges might arise as you try to fulfill your resolution?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

How will you know if you have been successful?
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________