

## WINTER - (December-Feb)

Fall

Spring

Summer

### **Navigating this Doc:**

- Categories from top to bottom
  - Awareness month campaigns
  - Religious, ethnic or cultural holidays and celebrations
    - *Due to the fact that the Gregorian and the Lunar calendars do not align, these events are listed categorically rather than chronologically. Religious, ethnic or cultural categories are in no particular order.*
  - Secular events

### **Monthly Awareness Campaigns**

#### **January**

##### **National Mentoring Month**

National Mentoring Month puts attention to the national need that exists for the mentors and the tremendous impacts that mentors can have on the mentees they support. Since its launch in 2002, the U.S. President and Congress have recognized Mentoring Month, as have these other well-known supporters including the late Maya Angelou, Clint Eastwood, Senator John McCain, Quincy Jones, General Colin L. Powell, Cal Ripken Jr., Bill Russell and Usher. Former President Barack Obama shared [this proclamation](#) of the month in 2015.

[Toolkits and Videos on Mentoring](#)

#### **February**

##### **Black History Month (Feb)**

Have you ever wondered why we have Black History Month? In 1915, Scholar and Historian Carter G. Woodson formed an organization dedicated to the study of Black life and history. In 1926 he sent out a press release announcing Black History Week. It is thought that this week was chosen to correspond with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. The ideas became very popular in schools and in the public, leading to widespread events, publications and celebrations. Through the 1960's Black History week expanded and was quickly becoming a month-long event. In 1976, then President Gerald Ford endorsed Black History Month in his bicentennial address. Since that time, every American President has designated February Black History Month. Today we continue to honor Black History month in education through learning about our history, Black people, Black experiences, Black excellence and Black joy.

Understanding the [history of Black History Month](#) and why we still honor it (4 minute video)

[What is the Black Culture](#) with H.E.R. and Jason Reynolds

[Can Kids Change the World?](#) - Children of the Civil Rights Movement

Tips for [Talking to Kids](#) about Race and Racism

[Tips for White Teachers](#) - Teaching Black History

## **Cultural, Ethnic and Religious Events**

### **Jewish**

#### **Chanukah/Hanukkah - 25th day of Month of 9th month in the Jewish Calendar**

Hanukkah is an eight-day celebration that commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Greek Army and the “miracle of lights” after the destruction of a Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The miracle of Hanukkah is that one vial of oil was found with only enough to illuminate the Temple lamp for a single day, and yet it lasted for eight full days. Worshipers celebrate Hanukkah by lighting menorahs in their homes (each night they light one additional candle), playing games, exchanging gifts, and eating traditional Jewish foods like latkes (potato pancakes), bimuelos (fritters), sufganiyot (jelly donuts), and chocolate gelt (chocolate coins). The exchanging of gifts has been popularized due to the Holiday’s proximity to Christmas. Many also play a game using a spinning top with hebrew characters written on four sides called a dreidel. The dreidel, originally not associated with Hanukkah, is thought to have become a hidden learning tool when Jews were forbidden to study the Torah. It is very similar to other tops used by cultures around Europe.

Learn more about [Hanukkah](#) from History.com

PBS has a great 1-minute video about Hanukkah that can be viewed here: [All about Hanukkah](#).

Read more about the [dreidel](#)

### **Christian**

#### **Christmas - Dec 25**

Christmas is a holiday celebrated all around the world. Different cultures and families celebrate and observe in different ways. For some the holiday is deeply religious, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. For others the holiday is more secular with family traditions that have little to do with the Christian origins. Regardless of how people celebrate, the Christmas spirit connected with this time of year is viewed as an opportunity for generosity, gift-giving, and thoughtfulness for those around you. The history of Christmas traditions is diverse and fascinating, with influences from around the world. The season is colorful and full of traditions like decorated trees and holly, family mangers and the three kings, traditional foods like ham or the feast of seven fishes, and lovable characters such as Santa Clause, the Grinch and Krampus!

Learn about some interesting [Christmas](#) traditions around the world

History of Christmas - [Video from the History Channel](#)

#### **Las Posadas - Las Posadas December 16-24**

Las Posadas is a Mexican Christmas holiday to commemorate Mary and Joseph’s Journey to safety in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. It is celebrated for nine days before Christmas with Mass at the Catholic churches and processions where participants traditionally knock on doors, reenacting the search for safety, until reaching the final destination where a nativity is set up or reenacted. Celebrations include fireworks, good food, song, and a pinata.

Video: [Las Posadas in](#) Puerta Vallarta, [Christmas in Mexico](#), [Procession](#)

### **Three Kings Day - Jan 6**

Christmas and New Year's may have ended but for many of Christian faith, the festivities aren't quite over yet. Celebrated on Jan 6, it has several names attributed to it: Epiphany, which is defined as a manifestation of a divine or supernatural being and for this holiday speaks specifically to the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi; Twelfth Night, for occurring 12 days after Christmas; or Three Kings Day, which is a nod to the biblical tale in which the Three Kings, or Three Wiseman, are led by a star to baby Jesus after his birth. There are differences between what Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity commemorate. In general terms though, believers are celebrating the revelation of God incarnate as Jesus Christ. For Spanish and Latin American families, Three Kings Day is as important and as widely celebrated as Christmas. Traditional foods include a sweet bread meant to represent a King's crown and gather in the streets to watch elaborate parades with decorative floats and people in costume as the kings bearing gifts.

[Traditions around the world](#) brief video - learn about more on [Wikipedia page for Epiphany](#)  
[In Mexico](#)  
[Latino Traditions](#)

Lin-Manuel Miranda explains how his family honors [Three Kings Day](#)

### **Valentine's Day - Feb 14**

Celebrated in modern day as a secular holiday, most Americans are familiar with the traditions of gift giving, roses, chocolate and romance. The origins of the holiday are both Christian and Pagan traditions of Rome, having to do with the honoring of martyred saints and welcoming Spring.

Read and watch more on [History.com](#)

### **Ash Wednesday and Lent - 40 days before Easter (sometimes occurring in March)**

Ash Wednesday is a holy day of prayer and fasting that is traditionally observed by Christians. It falls on the first day of Lent which is the six weeks of penitence before Easter. Many Christians begin Ash Wednesday by making a Lenten sacrifice that they will not partake in until Easter. This is often a type of luxury that they would normally enjoy in their everyday life. Ash Wednesday gets its name from the placing of repentance ashes on the foreheads of participants. The ashes are prepared by burning palm leaves from the previous year's Palm Sunday celebrations.

[What is Ash Wednesday](#) a short video from the Church of England

## Black/African American

### **Kwanzaa - Dec 26-Jan 1**

Kwanzaa is the first African-American holiday, founded in 1966 to honor Black African history. A cultural rather than a religious holiday, it is rooted in the seven principles of Kwanzaa; Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith). On each of the seven days of celebration there are opportunities to honor the richness of the African diaspora, sing and dance, enjoy meals together, light a candle on the Kinara for each of the principles. "We will never know ourselves if we do not know our history." - Maulana Karenga

Learn more on this [Kwanzaa dedicated website](#)

What is [Kwanzaa](#) video - 4 minutes

[1-minute video from PBS](#)

Learn more about the [7 principles](#)

What is the [African Diaspora?](#)

## Pan Asian

### **Lunar New Year (Chinese New Year, Tết) - 1st day of the 1st month of the Lunar Calendar**

Both Tết, the Vietnamese New Year, and the Chinese New Year (commonly known as Spring Festival) take place in January or February marking the start of the Lunar New Year. Tết is the most important celebration in Vietnamese culture and is widely celebrated among Vietnamese students in Colchester.

Exuberant festivities showcase excitement and celebration through food, music, and dragon dancing performed in the streets. Both cultures prepare for the new year by cooking traditional foods, visiting with relatives, cleaning the house to sweep away any ill fortune, and performing acts of generosity. Those celebrating consider what they do on the dawn of the new year to determine their fate for the whole year, so people often smile and behave as nice as they can in the hope for a better year. Many Asian cultures believe that the colors red and yellow will bring good fortune, which is why they are used in celebrations and decorations around the time of the Lunar New Year including the traditional red envelopes containing money that are given as gifts, often to children.

[Lunar New Year](#) 2.5 minute video

[Tet in Vietnam](#) 5 minute video

[Chinese New Year](#) Celebrations 4 minute video

Learn more about the myth beyond the [Chinese Zodiac](#)

### **Korean American Day - Jan 13**

In 2005, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed the resolution to recognize January 13 as Korean American Day. The first wave of Korean Americans arrived in the United States in 1903.

[Online Resources for K-14 Educators](#) (Nam Center for Korean Studies, University of Michigan)

### **Lohri - Jan 13**

A special celebration, particularly in Northern India, Lohri marks the end of the winter season. The joyous holiday celebrates the sun and the beginning of longer days. It is celebrated primarily by Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims in India, and is held a day before the Maghi festival, which is dedicated to the sun deity, Surya.

[Lohri - "Why We Celebrate, It's Importance, Significance and Tradition"](#) (YouTube video)

### **Nirvana/Parinirvana Day - Feb 8 or more commonly Feb 15**

This Buddhist holiday, also known as Parinirvana Day, remembers Buddha's death at the age of 80. Buddhists believe that at his passing, Buddha had reached a state of Parinirvana, which means a state of complete understanding and a lack of suffering. Nirvana Day is celebrated with social visits to temples or monasteries, where food is shared and gifts are exchanged. Meditation may also be incorporated into the day, with lights being dimmed and brightened again to show that Buddha's teachings carry on.

[All About Nirvana Day PowerPoint](#)

## **Secular Events**

**Winter Solstice - Dec 21:** Vermonters know the solstice as the "shortest day" or the day when we have the least amount of daylight. It also means that every day beyond the solstice will have a little bit more daylight! For the scientifically inclined, it happens twice yearly, once in each hemisphere, and occurs when one of the earth's poles has its maximum tilt away from the sun. The balance of light and dark has long been tracked and celebrated by people all over the world. [Indigenous Peoples](#) of this continent also mark this occasion, as do people from [around the world](#). This is a wonderful event to explore with kids from a cultural, historical, and [scientific](#) perspective.

28 [Winter Solstice](#) Celebrations

### **Shab al-Yalda/Yalda Night**

A winter solstice celebration recognized in parts of Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, and, the diaspora in the United States Shab al-Yalda marks the beginning of the gradual lengthening of the day. It is a celebration of the birth of the sun as a sign of light triumphing over evil and good over both. Food is a key element of a Yalda celebration with many Iranians believing that starting the winter off with summer fruits will prevent one from becoming sick during the chilly season. Pomegranates and watermelons frequently grace the Yalda table with their vibrant red colors.

[An Introduction to Yalda Night](#) (YouTube)

### **Yule**

Yule is the traditional Pagan celebration of the Winter Solstice that runs throughout the holiday season (December 21-January 1). Yule is honored as the rebirth and return of the sun due to the longer days, and Pagans regard Yule as a time to welcome the season of light. Rituals for Yule include the burning of logs during the 12 days of Christmas, hanging wreaths and lighting candles, as well as the drinking of Wassail, a spiced alcoholic beverage similar to mulled cider.

[Children's Books for Yule](#)



### **International Day for People with Disabilities - Dec 3**

An annual observance to "promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society," International Day for People with Disabilities has been recognized by the UN General Assembly since 1992. According to the World Report on Disability (WHO), nearly 15 percent of the world's population has some kind of disability.

In her [2020 article](#) in Allure magazine, author Madison Lawson asks that we recognize the day by "boost{ing} disabled creators content on social media platforms like TikTok, educat{ing} themselves on our history and civil rights movements, and think{ing} about the ways in which the things you do can be more inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities, both on and offline."

#### [Articles and Lesson Plans for Teaching about Disability](#)

### **International Human Rights Day - Dec 10**

'Human rights' are basic rights or freedoms, including the right to live, health, education, freedom of speech and thoughts, and equal rights. The day was dedicated in 1948 following the Second World War when the United Nations General Assembly declared that human rights should be an "international priority." Today, the day is about equity, peace, freedom, dignity and justice.

#### [Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity Resources for Classrooms](#) (Common Sense Education)

### **New Year's Eve - Dec 31**

New Year's Eve is celebrated on the last day of the year in the Gregorian calendar. It is common for people to celebrate with food, dancing, and fireworks. The Line Islands (part of Kiribati) and Tonga, represent some of the first places to welcome the New Year, while Baker Island (an uninhabited atoll part of the United States Minor Outlying Islands) and American Samoa are among the last.

#### [STEM Activities for New Year's Eve](#)

### **MLK day - 3rd Monday January**

Nobel Peace Prize recipient Martin Luther King Jr. Day was established as a national holiday in 1983 to honor the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.. King was assassinated in 1968, sending shock waves throughout the nation, and his legacy will certainly outlive him. Many honor the holiday by sharing and learning about Dr. King's legacy of non-violent resistance and the ongoing quest to achieve the goals of Civil Rights icons like King. He is best known for the Montgomery bus boycotts, the March on Washington, and his *I have a Dream* Speech. Other important works include the *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, his campaign to combat poverty in America, and his anti-war efforts.

#### [Kid President Explains](#)

[Spoken Word Poem](#) Honoring MLK Jr.

MLK's [Poor People's Campaign](#)

[King reads the his letter from Birmingham Jail](#) - 55 minutes

### **Civil Rights Day (On MLK Day) - 3rd Monday January**

This annual observance, held on the same day as Martin Luther King Jr. Day, celebrates the movement started to end racism and inequality in the U.S that began in 1954. Ultimately a decade-long campaign was launched by Martin Luther King Jr. and other African Americans for their rights and to put an end to legalized racial segregation by the 'white' people against people of 'any other color.'

[Educator Resources](#) (Civil Rights Museum)

### **World Religion Day - Jan 21**

First observed in 1950, World Religion Day intends to promote understanding between all religions. It acknowledges the benefits that come when we learn about other faiths and their followers. The overarching concept for the day from the Bahá'í Faith beliefs – "that all the major religions in the world are fundamentally unified in purpose, even though some of their social practices and interpretations vary greatly."

[Facts and Worksheets about the World's Religions](#)

### **International Holocaust Remembrance Day - Jan 27**

January 27 marks the anniversary of the liberation of [Auschwitz-Birkenau](#) from Nazi rule. The United Nations commemorates this date by recognizing the more than six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and the millions of other victims of Nazism. The United States and Europe come together with any remaining Holocaust survivors on this date to uphold the lessons learned and legacy of Holocaust history.

[A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust \(Lessons for K-12 Grade Levels\)](#)

### **National Freedom Day - Feb 1**

National Freedom Day commemorates the day in 1865 when President Abraham Lincoln signed the 13th Amendment effectively ending slavery in the United States. Originally proposed as a national holiday by Major Richard Robert Wright, Sr., a former slave, Freedom Day was first celebrated in 1942 in Philadelphia.

[Freedom Lesson Plans Across 8 Subject Areas](#) (One Community)

### **Presidents Day - Feb 19**

While referred to as President's Day, the observed federal holiday on this date is called "Washington's Birthday," after the first President of the United State, George Washington. (Washington's observed birthday is on February 22, even though he was actually born on February 11, 1731.) The holiday presents a time to reflect upon the founding of our nation and it's values. To this day, Washington's farewell address is read by a U.S. Senator during legislative session on President's Day.

[A Kids Guide to President's Day](#)

### **World Day of Social Justice - Feb 20**

The United Nations first declared the World Day of Social Justice in 2008, as a way to commit to ongoing social justice work and fair globalization. The day's main objective is to bring communities together to eradicate poverty, all forms of discrimination, illiteracy, etc. The four principles of social justice are **equity, access, participation and rights**.

[10 Social Justice Activities to Try in Class](#) (or at Home!!)

### **Carnival - Approx. 3rd week of Feb**

Carnival takes place approximately 3rd week of February ending 40 days before Easter. Carnival is celebrated in many countries in Europe, the Caribbean, and across the Americas during the three (or more) days before Catholics observe Lent. The most well-known place to be for Carnival is Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, where over two million people can be seen celebrating in the streets. Festivities are usually marked by parades and are seen as the last chance for participants to indulge in the food, drinks, and activities that they're giving up for Lent. The events are known for participants' colorful costumes and exuberant celebrations. Mardi Gras (French for "Fat Tuesday") is an American example of a Carnival celebration. Carnival's elaborate costumes and masks allow people to set aside their everyday individuality and experience a heightened sense of social unity.

[Carnival around the world](#)  
[Carnival celebrations](#)