

LEVELED BOOK • O

New Year Celebrations

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Focus Question

What are different ways people celebrate the New Year?

Words to Know

Buddha
cultures
cycles

figures
resolutions
traditions

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A Chinese boy celebrates the New Year by wearing red and eating berries (left). Two Japanese children ring for the New Year (right).

Introduction

People around the world celebrate the New Year at different times of the year and in many different ways. Some people celebrate with parties. Other people have **traditions** that might seem strange, such as wearing yellow underwear.

Many people make New Year's **resolutions**. A resolution is a promise to end a bad habit or begin a good one. It can be anything from cutting back on junk food to being a better friend.



North America

A New Year's Eve celebration might mean a small party with family and friends. In New York City, however, around a million people come together to count down the last seconds of the year. At midnight, the crowds cheer and celebrate. Many cities, including New York City, set off fireworks at midnight.

A young girl and her father celebrate the New Year in a crowd of people in New York City.



In the United States, special football games are played on New Year's Day. The most famous is the Rose Bowl game in California.

At the famous Mummers Parade in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, thousands of people dress up in fancy costumes on New Year's Day. They spend the day dancing through the city.



Floats made from thousands of flowers are part of the Rose Bowl Parade in California.

Do You Know?

In the southern United States, people eat a dish of rice and black-eyed peas called Hoppin' John. Some believe that if you enjoy simple foods on New Year's Day, you might do well the rest of the year.



Central and South America



Central and South America

Eating twelve grapes on New Year's Eve is a tradition in Central and South America. Each grape stands for one month of the coming year. It's good luck to eat all twelve during the last twelve seconds of the year.



In many countries, the color of your clothes on New Year's Eve is important—actually, the color of your underwear! In many places, people wear brand-new yellow underwear. They hope for riches because yellow is the color of gold.

Eating green grapes brings good luck in the New Year.



Children in Peru pose next to figures made to honor the New Year.

In Peru, Panama, and Ecuador, people make **figures** out of straw, rags, and paper. They decorate these figures and parade them around the streets on New Year's Eve. At midnight, people set them on fire. By burning the figures, people let go of bad memories from the past year.



Women throw water out of a window in Uruguay to bring luck in the New Year.

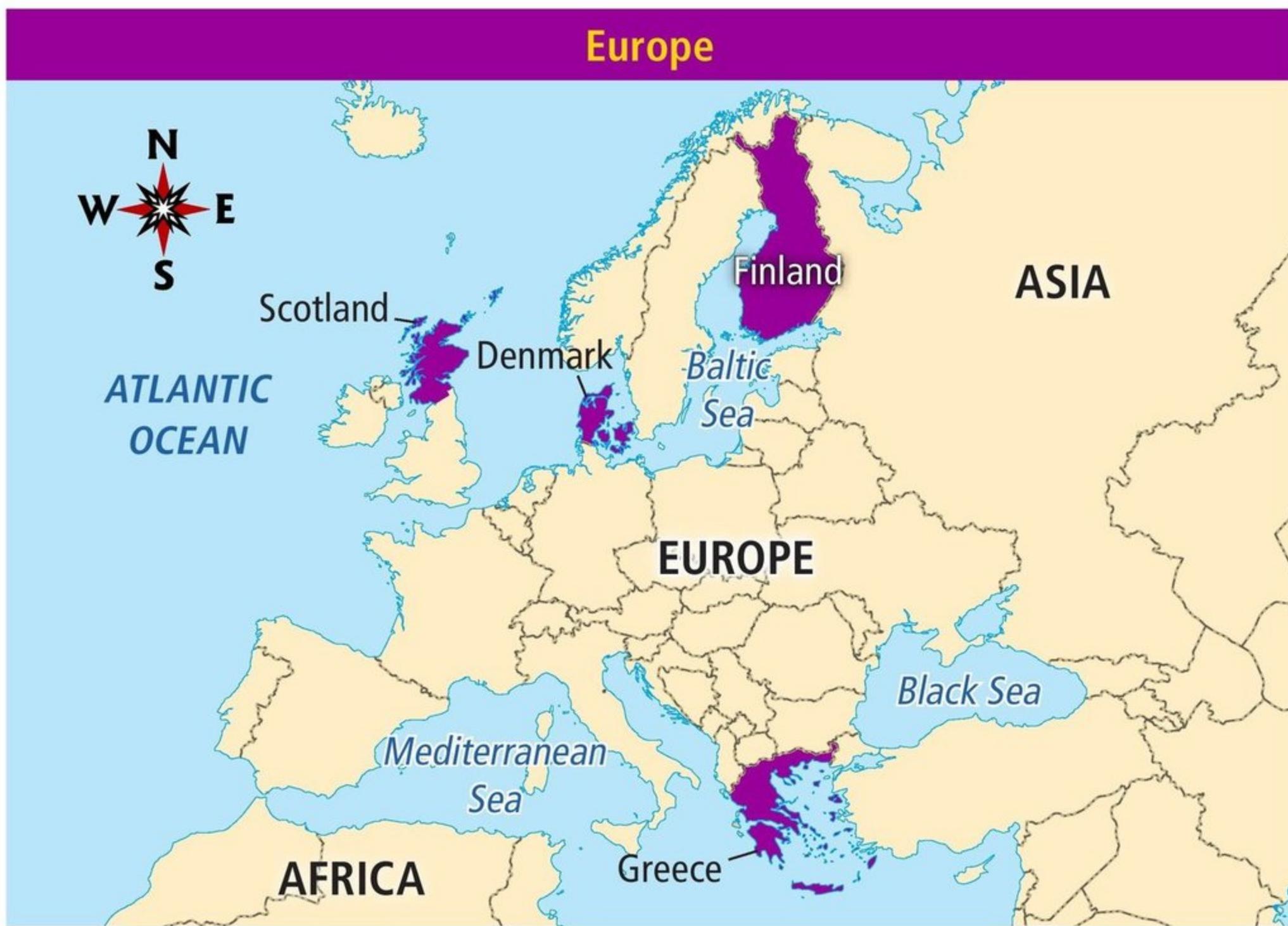
In many countries, people say goodbye to bad luck by throwing water out the window. Another popular tradition is cleaning your house before midnight so that good luck feels welcome.

Two-Faced!

The month of January is named for the ancient Roman god Janus. Janus was the god of doors, gateways, and beginnings. He is usually shown with two faces. One face looks backward at the old year and the other looks forward into the New Year.



This statue of Janus was made in Russia.



Europe

In Denmark, people smash old and broken dishes on the doorsteps of family and friends. This brings them good luck in the New Year.



In Denmark, people save broken dishes all year long to break on New Year's Eve.

In Finland, people melt tin to guess what will happen in the next year. If the tin melts in the shape of a heart, it means love or marriage. If it melts in the shape of a circle, it means good luck.

In Greece, people bake a special cake with a coin hidden in it. If you get the slice with the coin, then you should have luck in the coming year!

In Scotland, it's also important to clean the house by midnight.

Scottish people hold torches and swing long poles with flames to celebrate the New Year. Another Scottish tradition is called *first-footing*. The first visitor to a home in the New Year must be a male

with dark hair. He brings gifts of coal, bread, and a drink.

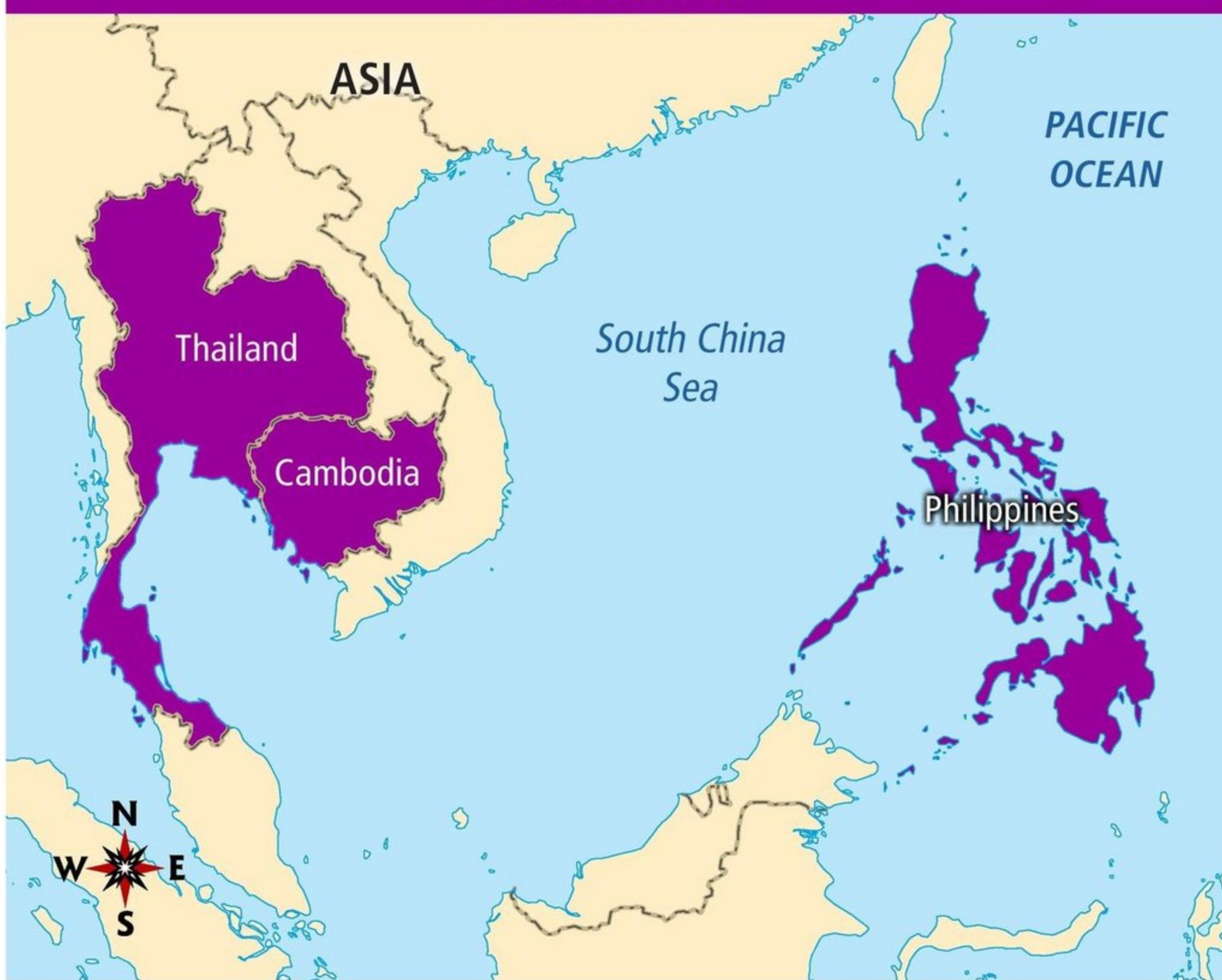


A man carefully swings a ball of fire at a New Year celebration in Scotland.



A Scottish man holds a torch with a large flame on New Year's Eve.

Southeast Asia



Southeast Asia

In the Philippines, round objects stand for coins and good luck. Filipino people celebrate the New Year by wearing clothes with polka dots and eating twelve different types of round fruit.

Filipino people also clean their homes before New Year's Eve. At midnight, they open their windows to invite good luck in.

In parts of Southeast Asia, people celebrate the New Year in late March or mid-April.

This is the end of the dry season. It's a very hot and dusty time of year—a time for water festivals!

To prepare for the New Year, people clean dusty statues of **Buddha** with water. They save the water for priests to pour onto their shoulders for good luck.



Two girls pour water over a statue of Buddha in Cambodia.

Water Fight!

In Thailand, the water festival is called *Songkran*, and it usually lasts from April 13 to 15. Parade floats spray crowds with water, and children chase one another with water blasters and water pails. It might easily be 38° Celsius (100° F) in Thailand on New Year's Day. When it's this hot, a water fight is the perfect way to celebrate!





A boy blows the shofar, a ram's horn, in honor of the Jewish New Year (left). People herd buffalo at a parade for the Islamic New Year in Indonesia (right).

Changing New Years

The New Year happens at a different time every year in some **cultures**. The Islamic New Year is based on a lunar calendar. This means it follows the **cycles** of the Moon. The 365-day calendar is based on the movement of Earth around the Sun. The Chinese and Jewish New

Years are based on both calendars.



People wear red and hold up a dragon at a parade to celebrate the Chinese New Year in London, England.



Children around the world celebrate the New Year with music and dancing.

Conclusion

Many New Year's traditions are shared around the world. Most traditions help you begin the New Year with a fresh start and a fun celebration. Cleaning your house and setting off fireworks are two of the most popular ways to welcome the New Year.

How will you celebrate the New Year?

Glossary

Buddha (n.)	the title given to the person who started the Buddhist religion (p. 13)
cultures (n.)	the ideas and customs of certain groups of people (p. 14)
cycles (n.)	sets of events that keep repeating in the same order (p. 14)
figures (n.)	forms or shapes, especially human shapes (p. 8)
resolutions (n.)	decisions or promises to do certain things (p. 4)
traditions (n.)	beliefs or customs that are passed down from year to year and generation to generation (p. 4)

New Year Celebrations

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Connections

Writing and Art

How do you celebrate the New Year?
Draw a picture and write about what
you do.

Social Studies

Compare your New Year celebration to
a celebration in the book using a Venn
diagram. Include how and when the
celebrations take place. Use facts from
the book and outside resources.



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