

LEVELED Book • L

New Year Celebrations

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Written by Evan Russell

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Focus Question

What are different ways people celebrate the New Year?

Words to Know

Buddha
cycles
festivals

figures
resolutions
traditions

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A Chinese boy celebrates the New Year by wearing red and eating a stick of candied red berries (left). Two Japanese children ring in the New Year (right).

Introduction

People around the world celebrate the New Year at different times of the year. They also celebrate the New Year 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 **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

In New York City, around a million people come together to count down the seconds before midnight. At midnight, the crowds cheer and celebrate. Many cities set off fireworks at midnight.



A young girl and her father celebrate the New Year in New York City.



A man dressed as a zebra plays music at the Mummers Day Parade in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (left). Floats made from flowers are part of the Rose Parade in California (right).

In the United States, special football games are played on New Year's Day.

Many places have New Year's Day parades. In Pennsylvania, thousands of people dress up in fancy costumes for a special parade.

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

It's good luck to eat twelve grapes on New Year's Eve in Central and South America. Each grape stands for one month of the coming year.

In many countries, the color of your clothes on New Year's Eve is important. In many places, people wear brand-new yellow underwear. Because yellow is the color of gold, people hope they'll get rich.



Children in Peru pose next to figures that will be burned in honor of the New Year.

Another New Year's tradition in Central and South America is to make **figures**. At midnight, people set them on fire in the streets.



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

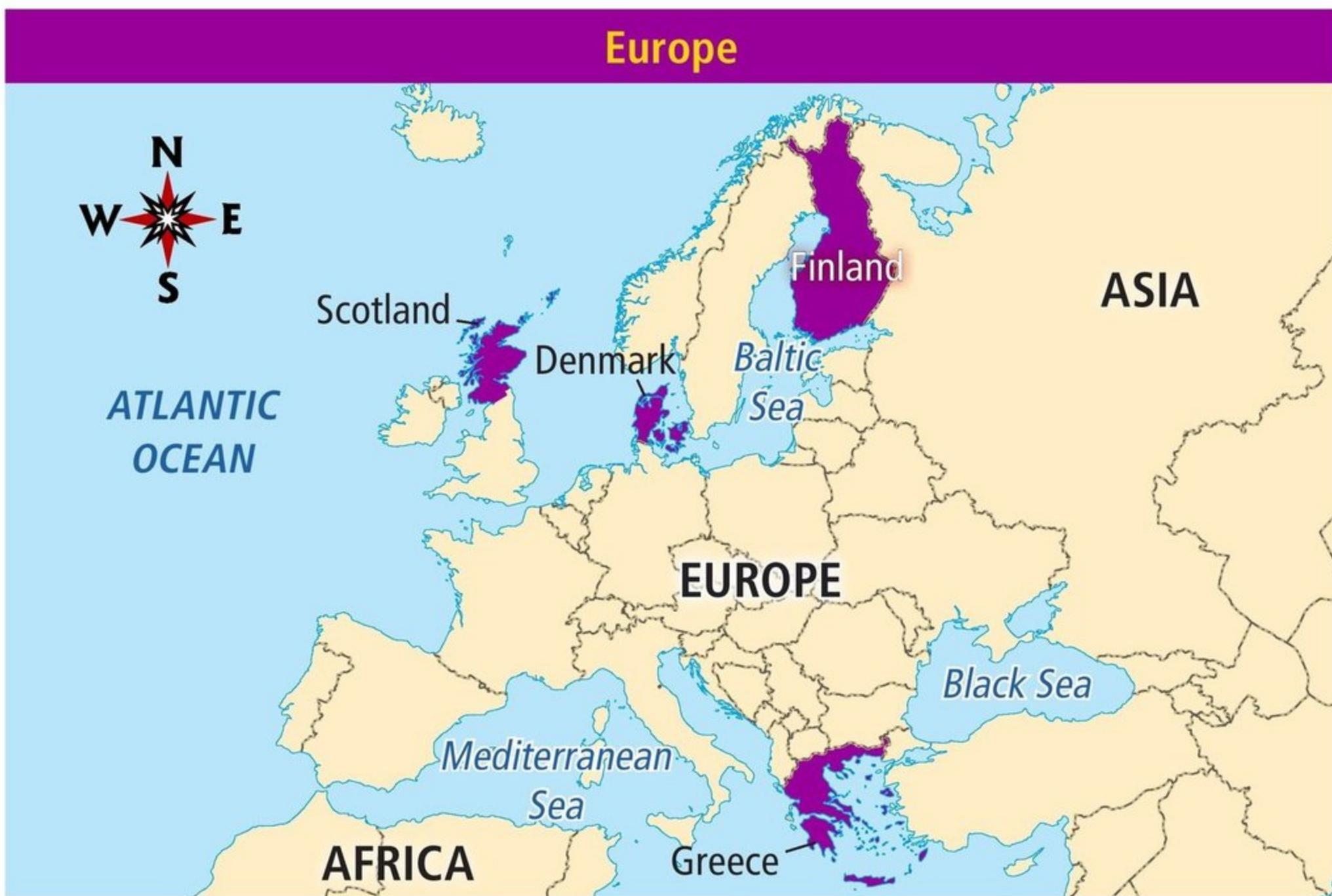
In many countries, people say goodbye to bad luck in another way. They throw water out of the window. Cleaning your house before midnight so that good luck feels welcome is also a popular tradition.

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.



People in Denmark save broken dishes all year long to break on New Year's Eve.

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

On New Year's Eve, people in Scotland carry torches and swing balls of fire.

For good luck in Scotland, the year's first visitor must be a male with dark hair. He brings gifts of coal, bread, and a drink.



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



A man swings a long pole with a ball of fire at a New Year celebration in Scotland.



Southeast Asia

In the Philippines, round things stand for coins and good luck.

People celebrate the New Year by wearing clothes with polka dots.

They also eat twelve different types of round fruit.

People buy different kinds of round fruit in Manila, Philippines, hoping for good luck in the New Year.



In parts of Southeast Asia, people celebrate the New Year in late March or mid-April. It's a very hot and dusty time of year—a time for water **festivals**.

To prepare for the New Year, people clean statues of the **Buddha** with water. They save the water. Then, the water is poured onto people's shoulders to bring them 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

For some people, the New Year happens at a different time every year. The Islamic New Year is based on a calendar that follows the **cycles** of the Moon. The 365-day calendar is based on the time it takes for Earth to move around the Sun.



The Chinese and Jewish New Years are based on both calendars.

People wearing red hold up a dragon at a parade on the Chinese New Year.



Children around the world play music and dance to celebrate the New Year.

Conclusion

From fireworks to cleaning your house, people share many New Year's traditions around the world. Most traditions help you begin the New Year with a fresh start and a fun celebration.

How will you celebrate the New Year?

Glossary

Buddha (<i>n.</i>)	the title given to the person who started the Buddhist religion (p. 13)
cycles (<i>n.</i>)	sets of events that keep repeating in the same order (p. 14)
festivals (<i>n.</i>)	celebrations (p. 13)
figures (<i>n.</i>)	forms, especially human shapes (p. 8)
resolutions (<i>n.</i>)	decisions or promises to do certain things (p. 4)
traditions (<i>n.</i>)	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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