

HELLO, NEW YEAR!

People from all over the world celebrate the first day of the calendar year, or New Year's Day. Usher in another new year with these fun and festive activities!

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Roman Rituals

Learning about the past

New Year's festivities range from religious celebrations to midnight gatherings with noisemakers. The ancient Romans celebrated New Year's Day by giving gifts of coins imprinted with the likeness of *Janus*, the god of gates, doors, and new beginnings. Janus had two faces that looked in opposite directions—one toward the past and the other into the future. January was named for Janus, whose name is derived from the Latin word for *gate*. Ask students if they see a connection between January and the Roman god. Lead a discussion about what it would be like to be able to see into the future, as Janus could. Have each student write a letter to Janus, asking him some questions about the future.

Next, create Roman coins with your students. Give each student a piece of gold wrapping paper and a six-inch circle template. Have students trace and cut out their gold coins. Using fine-point markers, have each student draw a likeness of Janus onto his coin. Display the coins and letters as a reminder that the future holds many surprises!

Colonial Traditions

Writing invitations

American colonists in New England celebrated the new year by firing guns into the air, shouting, and cheering. Many people went "calling" on friends and neighbors who were holding an open house with food and drink. Today many people celebrate with noisemakers and still hold open house for New Year's Day.

Plan a New Year's Open House for parents and families. Prepare by making invitations with the pattern on page 10. Determine how many invitations each student needs. Have students color and cut out the patterns and then mount them on 8" x 10" construction paper. Invitations with this personal touch are sure to bring lots of visitors! (See the New Year's Open House ideas on page 9.)



Counting the Days

Making and using a calendar

The coming of the new year has not always been celebrated in January. At one time it was observed during the harvest season. Christians used to celebrate the new year in March, on Annunciation Day. The ancient Romans declared January 1 to be the official beginning of the year. The Chinese, Muslims, and Jews celebrate on different dates. One reason for the variety of dates was the absence of a standard calendar. In 1600, many Western nations adopted the 12-month Gregorian calendar, which we still use today.

Familiarize your students with calendar concepts using the reproducible on page 13. Provide a copy for each student. Instruct each student to label the calendar page for January. Have him number the days, taking care to begin on the correct day and end on the 31st day. Be sure to label New Year's Day and any student birthdays in January.

Extend the lesson by providing a calendar page for each of the other months. Have students complete calendars for the entire year. When they have completed the pages, help students staple them between construction paper covers. Have students keep these calendars in their desks to keep track of birthdays, assignments, and special upcoming events.



A.M. or P.M.?

Understanding A.M. and P.M. times

Midnight, or 12:00 A.M., marks the beginning of a brand-new day. This is the perfect time to discuss the concept of A.M. and P.M. with your students. Use a face clock to show students the passage of time from midnight to noon, and back to midnight. Make a chart with your students as they brainstorm a list of activities they do every day. Include activities that take place at school and at home. When several activities have been listed, ask children to identify them as A.M. or P.M. activities.

To reinforce this concept, have each student use this information to make a schedule of his school day. Each student should sequence the subjects or classes in his day and then write the time followed by A.M. or P.M. Allow the students to take their schedules home so that they can share their new knowledge as well as the outlines of their busy day.

For additional practice with A.M. and P.M., use the reproducible on page 12. What a timely lesson for the New Year!

