



Objective

Students will identify common elements in games and holidays enjoyed by children in the US and children in their partner country. Students will be able to:

- show connection between festivals and events in nature
- recognize how festivals combine secular and religious traditions
- appreciate the diversity of customs and traditions in the US and in developing countries

Academic Expectations Met

AE 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.11, 1.16, 2.16, 2.17, 2.19, 2.20, 2.22

Special Notes for the Teacher

You may want to research celebrations in your Books as Bridges partner country. Provide pictures and/or descriptions of these celebrations as well as descriptions of games and other things children to do for fun in their partner country for your students to compare.

Introduction: How Do You Have Fun?

Ask students, "How do you have fun?"

Fun with family and friends

Fun with your community and neighbors

Fun with people who share your interests (i.e. Church celebrations, Girl/Boy Scouts, in special clubs, etc)

Have you ever been somewhere without your favorite games? Perhaps at a relative's home or the home of a family friend? What did you do to occupy your time? Did you make up a game or use what was available to play your regular games a little differently?

What kinds of games are played in your classroom's partner country?

Contact the International Book Project to get National Geographic magazines. Make a picture collage of people having fun all over the world! Use the collage to educate other students in your school.

Activity 1: Holidays in Your Partner Country

See student worksheet on pages 3-6 for the following activities.

What is your favorite holiday? Why do we celebrate on that day?

Do you celebrate this holiday differently than other people in your class? Ask other students what they do to celebrate this holiday and compare their family's traditions with your own. What did you find?

Allow students to walk around the room and exchange information on how they celebrate their favorite holidays. Encourage the students to share details so they can see how everyone celebrates in their own unique ways.



Activity 1: Holidays in Your Partner Country (cont.)

What holidays are celebrated in your pen-pals' country? How are they similar/different than holidays celebrated in the US?

Students should research what holidays are celebrated in their pen-pals' country. If the holiday is also celebrated in the US, the students can compare what people do to honor the holiday, including what they wear, decorate, and/or recognize.

Does religion affect the holidays celebrated in your pen-pals' country? If so, how?

Discuss religion and its influence on national holidays. Students may compare both religious and secular holidays of their pen-pals' country to those of the US.

What are some holidays celebrated in the US that are based on religion? What are the traditions of that holiday?

Christmas and Easter are Christian holidays, though people who are not practicing Christians often celebrate these holidays. St. Patrick and Valentine's Day have religious roots, though are not considered religious holidays. President's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and Columbus Day honor special Americans, and July 4th celebrates our nation's independence.

Optional activity: Allow students to research the independence of their partner country – when and how the country gained its independence, and how the citizens celebrate. Compare this celebration to our July 4th celebrations.

See the US official website of holidays: <http://www.usa.gov/citizens/holidays.shtml>

What are some holidays celebrated in the US that are NOT based on religion?

Activity 2: Building Community Through Festivals

Have the class choose their favorite local festival. (e.g. Pumpkin, Burgoo, Pioneer, Arts, and Greek Festivals)

Write the name of the festival on the board and allow the students to list their favorite aspects of the celebration, including the special food that is served, games and events that take place, and/or any parades or shows that are performed. Next, ask the following questions for discussion and list the answers on the board.

What is the reason for this festival? Who/what is honored?

Festivals usually celebrate a significant point in a specific culture or town's history.

How are the following involved:

Nature?

Traditions?

History?

Local Specialties (local industry specialties such as food)?

How does the community benefit by celebrating?

Communities benefit from festivals by having the chance to come together and build a tightly knit society. Unity is created as people work together to showcase the best of their community. Pride in local traditions unites people! Have the students compare their own school unity (the school's mascot, t-shirts, fundraising, etc) to the unity that your town or city exhibits.

What unites a community?

Festivals are often very important in uniting people while highlighting traditions and unique histories.



Holidays Around the World Resource Page

By Country

In Cameroon, more than half of the population celebrates traditional Christian holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. Approximately 25% of the population is Muslim, celebrating Ramadan at the end of the holy month of fasting. At this *Fete du Ramadan*, the children get new clothing and sweets.

- *CultureGrams 2009*

In Ecuador, the new year is celebrated with festivals that burn photos with negative images of the last year, symbolizing a new start. Approximately 95% of Ecuadorians are members of the Catholic Church. Because of this, most Catholic holidays and traditions are widely celebrated with elaborate festivals. Both Christmas and Easter are marked with many reenactments throughout the country.

- *CultureGrams 2009*

In Ghana, the fest of Mami Wata is celebrated on December 21st, marking the end of the year and the anticipation of the new season. Mami Wata is envisioned as a chalk-white Mermaid who carries a golden dagger and a trident. Her husband, Densu, is a dark-haired gentleman from India. Mami Wata's primary worshipers are women who seek Her wisdom. At the time of Her feast, old items around the house are stored away, and new ones are introduced. The ceremony begins with a procession of musicians, dancers, and devotees who have painted their bodies with white chalk.

- *Jump Up, Good Times throughout the Seasons with Celebrations from Around the World*, by Luisah Teish

In the Philippines, citizens celebrate Bonifacio Day on November 30th, the birth date of Andres Bonifacio. Bonifacio is considered a national hero of the Philippines who fought towards independence from Spain.

- *CultureGrams 2009*

By Religion

Islam: According to *The DK Factastic Book of 1001 Lists* (DK Publishing, Inc.), Islamic families exchange gifts on Islamic New Year's Day when they remember Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Medina in AD 622. However, the most significant holiday for Muslims is Ramadan, which can actually take place at any time of year depending on the Islamic lunar calendar. Although children are not required to participate, most Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset for the entire month of observance.

Hindu: Dewali is the Hindu Festival of Lights and occurs in either October or November, according to the Hindu calendar. Gifts of clothing are often given during this time. Hindu brothers and sisters exchange gifts at Vaisakh, the Hindu New Year and harvest festival in April or May, and at the summer holiday of Raksha Bandhana, also known as Brother and Sister Day.

Buddhist: The date of the Lunar New Year, the most important Buddhist holiday, varies from country to country, but usually occurs sometime between January and April. Celebrations can last as long as a week and include giving money wrapped in red paper packets to the children.

Be sure to note that holidays that are based on religion tend to be celebrated all over the world, while traditional and cultural festivals are generally based on a community's unique history. In both cases, people are united through celebration.



Name: _____

Worksheet: Holidays and Events

Research and record information about two holidays in your pen-pal's country. Use the chart below to document your findings.

Holiday 1:

Holiday 2:

WHY do people celebrate this holiday?		
WHEN does this holiday take place?		
WHO celebrates this holiday?		
WHERE is this holiday celebrated? One or many countries, certain regions of certain countries, etc.		
HOW do people celebrate? Describe a popular tradition.		
WHAT are some important symbols of this holiday?		
SHARE one more interesting fact about this holiday.		

Chart design and questions are from Scholastic.com Winter Holiday Activities



Name: _____

Worksheet: Holidays and Events

What is your favorite national holiday? What do Americans celebrate on that day?

Do you celebrate this holiday differently than other people in your class? Ask other students what they do to celebrate this holiday and compare their family's traditions with your own. What did you find?

What holidays are celebrated in your pen-pals' country? How are they similar/different than holidays celebrated in the US?

Holiday	Similarities	Differences

Does religion affect the holidays celebrated in your pen-pals' country? If so, how?



Name: _____

Worksheet: Holidays and Events p.2

What are some holidays celebrated in the US that are based on religion? What are the traditions of that holiday?

Holiday	Religion	Traditions

What are some holidays celebrated in the US that are NOT based on religion? What are the traditions of these holidays?

Holiday	Traditions

Ask your pen-pals!

Write to your pen-pals and ask them what their favorite holiday is! Make a list of questions you might ask.
