

Do Holiday Symbols Make Holidays Simple?
Alexis Tuckfelt
Fort Pitt Accelerated Learning Academy

Overview

Rationale

Objectives

Strategies

Classroom Activities

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Appendices-Standards

Overview

Young children love holidays. When they see a pumpkin on the classroom calendar they know that Halloween is not far away. Turkeys, Christmas trees, hearts, clovers and colored eggs are other symbols of holidays that children are familiar with. What they don't know are the origins behind these symbols. Many of these origins come from other countries. Teaching young children about other cultures is important and necessary. The focus of many mainstream "American" or "Hallmark" versions of holidays doesn't include much of this valuable historical significance. By giving students this background information they can continue to enjoy celebrating holidays with an additional spark of interest and meaning. Embracing other cultures, and in turn, other views, will empower them in all aspects of their lives.

This multidisciplinary unit is geared for 1st grade students. In this unit, the history of celebrations and their symbols is fused into the existing Social Studies, Science, Math and Writing curriculums of Pittsburgh Public Schools. This unit will provide explanations of the relevance of using holidays as a learning tool. The lessons and activities compliment the lessons that I'm required to teach. The purpose of this unit is to further advance students' insight into the history of symbols of celebrations and raise their multicultural awareness.

Rationale

Each holiday symbol has a story or legend. This section of the unit provides the background knowledge necessary to understand the historical aspects of symbols of holidays. Jack Santino believes that "in order to understand our holidays today, we need to find out about their origins and the ways in which they developed over the centuries." (18) The cultural significance of symbols of holidays is apparent. Many American holiday customs originate from those of ancient holidays and have been adapted from other traditions and rituals. Santino states that "these ancient symbols have acquired new and various meanings. We should not confuse the contemporary uses and meanings with the ancient ones; they are not necessarily the same." (12) Some symbols have religious meaning and this reference to the symbols might not be relevant to students but could be

valuable for personal knowledge. The nature of the content needs to be made suitable to young students, involving age appropriate concepts, lessons and activities at the grade level you are teaching.

Every student loves to celebrate holidays. The mention of a reason to celebrate lends itself to student appreciation. Every student uses symbols to help with their learning. In *All Around the Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life*, Santino quotes Victor Turner, an anthropologist, as saying, “symbols, which include actions, words, and objects are the minimal building blocks of ritual, and to understand ritual we must first understand symbols.” (Turner 1967) These ideas merge when dealing with the symbols of holidays and explain the appeal to and importance for young students. Familiar elements, such as symbols give them comfort. New concepts, such as learning about ancient traditions and connecting them with modern ones, increase their knowledge of other cultures. Santino agrees that “virtually any custom or symbolic element that today we associate with particular holiday can be found at other times of the year, either in ethnic and regional variations or at some other time and place.” (13) Whether by picking out their Halloween costume, writing a letter to Santa, passing out Valentine cards or participating in a newly learned custom of an unfamiliar holiday, students of all ages find activities surrounding celebrations to be enjoyable. These activities are embraced as an awaited change from daily rituals and routines and the teaching of curriculum. Even daydreamers and struggling students find interest and can be motivated by this topic. However, it is natural for young children to focus on the materialistic nature of holidays. If students can develop the skills of seeking out information about the origin and meaning of celebrations or anything for that matter, then as adults they will achieve greater success in developing personal relationships and experiences by digging deeper. Santino thinks that the nature of symbols is that “they have meaning only in social contexts.” (16)

The following sections describe the symbols of various holidays. I’ve chosen ones that students will be familiar with. In the Classroom Activities section of the unit I’ve added lessons, which include the origins of the Olympics, Ghost Dancing of Native Americans, Jewish holiday of Sukkot and Japanese Doll Festival Hinamatsuri. These lessons have symbolism that students are probably unfamiliar with yet they can connect with American holidays or customs.

HALLOWEEN-October 31

Halloween is my Grandma’s birthday and my favorite holiday for that reason. It’s a time for costumes, trick or treating and all things scary in spite of them being make-believe. Long ago people lived in real fear of ghosts and evil spirits. About three thousand years ago Celts, disguised in masks and costumes, made sacrifices in kind regard to the spirits. On the festival of Samhain it was thought that spirits of the recently deceased traveled to the land of the dead. (Moehn, 40) Samhain was also a harvest festival marking beginning of a new year and a time for honoring the sun god Baal. (Barth, 9)

Romans had similar festivals. Feralia, a day in late October to honor the dead and the harvest festival of Pomona, goddess of orchards, was celebrated in November. These

combined with Samhain. (Moehn, 9) Some Romans soldiers converted to the Druid religion of the Celts until Roman emperors banned it and many priests were killed. Christianity was born with a slow start until the Roman emperor Constantine declared it lawful and branded older religions pagan. Celts who converted were given a new meaning for their fire rites, now protecting them from the Devil. Samhain became a festival of Christian dead although Celts who became Scottish, Irish and English continued to anticipate ghosts on October 31. In the seventh century All Saint's Day or All Hallows was celebrated in May in memory of Christians who died for their beliefs. It was later changed to November 1. October 31 was originally called All Hallows Even. Then in the tenth century All Soul's Day was celebrated on November 2 in recognition of the souls of all the dead. In France, Southern Europe and Latin America these days combine in a religious season. (Barth, 9-11)

In the United States Christians observe All Saints Day and All Souls Day while Halloween is non-religious. In the 1800's Irish immigrants brought many Halloween customs to the United States. Trick or treating began in Ireland when beggars would ask the rich for gifts for Muck Olla, a god who rewarded the generous while punishing the stingy. People tended to "treat" the beggars so they wouldn't be "tricked" by the god. (Moehn, 41)

Pumpkins- Carving jack-o-lanterns from pumpkins stems from an old Irish custom. There is a legend about a man named Jack, whose spirit was forced to roam forever, with a small lantern to lead the way. He couldn't get into heaven or hell because he was selfish during his life, playing many tricks. English children carry small lanterns made from beets called punkies to honor Jack. In Scotland they are called bogies and made from turnips. Irish children use turnips or potatoes. (Moehn, 41)

Bats-In the Middle Ages, bats, which were sacred to the Norse goddess Freya, were also linked to witches and viewed as evil. The blood and wings were used in witches ointments and brews. They were frightening creatures of the night. Today we know that the vampire bat is dangerous, living on the blood of others. However, many bats are useful to us since they eat harmful insects. Scientists have also made us aware of radar bats used to fly through the night, which was unknown and feared in the past. (Barth 52,53)

THANKSGIVING- fourth Thursday in November

The Puritans left England in the 1600's for the New World because they felt they were being persecuted for their religious beliefs. In 1620, the Pilgrims voyaged across the Atlantic Ocean on the Mayflower and made a settlement at Plymouth. Having never lived in the wilderness many Pilgrims died. Squanto, an Indian who had escaped slavery by English settlers in Virginia, showed the Pilgrims how to plant and hunt. With enough food to last through winter, they celebrated with a feast. (Moehn, 96)

This feast in 1621 is commonly called The First Thanksgiving. However, it is now believed that this was more of a harvest festival. Prayer and fasting make up a real

thanksgiving. Forty-three years prior, English settlers in Newfoundland held a harvest festival. The Popham Colony in what is now Maine held one fourteen years earlier. December 4 was the date of a thanksgiving held in Berkeley's Hundred three years prior to the Pilgrim celebration. (Barth, 8)

Chief Massasoit of the Wampanoag tribe and ninety others joined the Pilgrim feast. They offered the five deer to the three-day feast. Games were played and stories were told. There were no plans to make this an annual event and the following year there wasn't enough food anyway. However, the year after, a celebration was held again due to a good harvest. This spread to other parts of America and took place when harvest was complete. This led to some celebrations in October as well as November. In Canada Thanksgiving is the second Monday in October. (Moehn, 96)

Years later, Mrs. Sarah Hale, editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, felt that Thanksgiving should be celebrated by the nation at the same time. With the Civil War ended, President Lincoln announced Thanksgiving to be held on the last Thursday in November. Then in 1939, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared Thanksgiving Day to be the fourth Thursday of November. Today Americans celebrate with their families eating a large dinner and watching parades and football games. (Barth12-13)

Turkey- The Tom Turkey can stand alone as a symbol of Thanksgiving. However, Governor Bradford never said that they were eaten at the feast. Pilgrim Edward Winslow sent a letter to England saying that four men went out fowling and brought back enough food to feed everyone for about a week. This included duck and geese. Maybe there wasn't any turkey there. Later Pilgrims brought poultry from England and tamed the wild turkeys. The Spaniards brought tame Mexican turkeys to Europe before the Pilgrims in 1513. In past centuries, American raised their own turkeys and then began to buy them as the standard of living increased. Benjamin Franklin said the turkey was a "true original Native of North America. (Barth, 86-88)

Native Americans- Squanto and Massasoit were two famous Native Americans who helped the settlers to grow their own food and become better hunters. However, Samoset, the leader of the Pemaquid Indians, was the first Indian to be seen by Pilgrim children. He spoke English he had learned from fisherman. Samoset brought Squanto, the sole survivor of the Pawtuxet tribe, to Plymouth and he arranged a meeting with Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoags. He made a peace treaty in the name of King James of England with Governor Carver. Massasoit's loyalty and good will enabled the Pilgrims to endure the following years. Squanto began to spread rumors that the Pilgrims buried Indian sickness and ended up dying from this on a future voyage to trade for food. Recent men who came to Plymouth began to steal from the Indians. After finding an Indian spy Miles Standish was sent out to take action and returned with an Indian head. Things were quiet for a while although the Pilgrims were taking land to which they had no right. They were also trying to convert the Indians to Christianity but they had their own religion and customs. (Barth 60-69)

CHRISTMAS-December 25

Christmas is a universally popular celebration. For Christians, Christmas celebrates the birth of Christ even though his exact date of birth is unknown. There are explanations for why the date of December 25 was chosen. In ancient times, the winter solstice was celebrated around this time. People worshiped the sun and feared when the days became shorter in the northern hemisphere. This is the time of year when we have the shortest days and the beginning of winter. In Northern Europe they set fires and feasted for the new spring. During Saturnalia, the main Solstice holiday of Rome, Romans honored Saturn the god of agriculture. Hebrews celebrated Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, during the Jewish month of Kislev. Egyptians honored Isis, mother of the sun god Horus. In Persia fires were lighted to praise Mithra, the god of light. These midwinter festivals celebrated with light. Most Romans worshiped pagan gods so the first Christians worshiped in secret. Then the Roman emperor Constantine I declared Christianity to be lawful in the fourth century. Many Romans still celebrated Saturnalia, while others worshiped the Persian Mithra who saw December 25 as the birthday of the sun. In 350 Pope Julius I chose the date of December 25 for Christians to celebrate the birthday of the son Jesus rather than the sun. The Armenians disliked this link with pagan holidays and observed Christmas on January 6. In the Netherlands the season starts on December 6, St. Nicholas Day. In Spain, Mexico and Puerto Rico it lasts until January 6, Three Kings' Day. In the United States we celebrate the season from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day. (Barth, 8-11)

Christmas tree- In the United States, many people decorate evergreen or pine trees with ornaments and lights with a star or angel on top. The first Christmas trees were found in Germany in the 1500's. A Weihnachtspyramide, a wooden pyramid covered with evergreen branches, was built. This was possibly related to the "Paradise tree", a medieval play fir decorated with apples surrounded by candles and featured in plays. In legend, when Adam left Paradise he took a seed from the Tree of Knowledge. The wood from that tree was used for the cross on which Jesus was crucified. (Moehn 17)

In ancient times, a decorated tree had significance too. Thousands of years ago the Celtic Druids decorated oak trees with apples and candles. The apples thanked the god Odin for fruit and showed honor to Balder the sun god. (Barth 16) During Saturnalia in Rome, businesses closed for days and the halls were decorated with holly branches and evergreen wreaths. The evergreen tree, or "Christmas tree", was sacred to the sun and a common part of the decorating. People celebrated by visiting family, attending parties, singing holiday songs and exchanging gifts. In Rome, the tree was also used to celebrate the spring festival of Arbor Intrat. Egyptians used palm branches to honor Isis the goddess of growing things and mother of the sun god Horus. (Barth 17) (Moehn 16,17)

The Christmas tree tradition became popular in Germany in the 16th century and elsewhere in the 19th century. Initially the trees were short, about two feet tall, and were set out on tables. Early "ornaments" were edible, explaining the name "sugar trees". Candy, cookies, and fruits were meant for the guests. Next came paper ornaments. Then

glass ornaments and electric lights came in the late 17th century. Taller trees became popular when the Christmas tree came to America.

VALENTINE'S DAY- February 14

Valentine's Day is celebrated in England, France, Canada and the United States. The origins of Valentine's Day go back to two Roman Holidays, which were celebrations of spring. Lupercalia, honored Lupercus, who guarded Rome from wolves and the other honored Juno, queen of the Roman Gods. During this festival, men picked the names of girls from a bowl. These matched couples then celebrated the holiday together. With the spread of Christianity, these holidays mixed with a Christian holiday honoring St. Valentine. (Moehn 100)

St. Valentine was said to be the patron saint of lovers. In legend, he was a Roman priest who secretly married young couples after Emperor Claudius II decreed that no one could marry due to a need for soldiers. For this he was imprisoned and put to death. Legend also tells of a Valentine who was imprisoned for helping Christians who were persecuted by Claudius II. The jailer and his family are said to have converted to Christianity due to the Valentine's honesty and how he miraculously restored the sight of their blind daughter. Before his execution on February he wrote her a note that said "From your Valentine." (Barth, 8-9)

Many valentines are decorated with hearts, which long ago people felt contained their feelings. Cupid, the Roman God of love, is another symbol. Valentine's Day became popular in the US during the Civil War. Soldiers sent valentines from the battlefields. Some superstitions surrounding Valentine's Day are that the first person you see that day will be your valentine. It's good luck to be awakened by a kiss that day, or the person you dream of the night before will be your sweetheart. (Moehn, 100)

In Italy, in the Middle Ages, there was a Feast of St. Valentine in the spring. There was poetry, music and strolls in the gardens. These customs have since died out. In France, young women and men who wished to marry were paired off. If they liked each other, they would eat a meal together before attending a dance. If the man didn't like who he was paired off with, he would desert her, leaving her alone for eight days, then himself being burned in effigy. This was eventually banned. St. Valentines was also banned in England when the Puritans held a strong influence, later to be restored in 1660 by Charles II. Men in all classes of society sent love tokens to women. In the late 18th century love letters and tokens became what we know of as valentines today. English and German settlers brought valentines to the New World. (Barth, 12-14)

Heart- A heart is a symbol of love. A red or pink heart with an arrow symbolizes Valentine's Day. The heart is a vital organ, which was believed in primitive societies to contain the soul. Ancient Egyptians felt it was a source of intelligence. In modern times we know this is not the case but we still send "heartfelt" greetings. If a heart was pierced with Cupid's arrow one was said to be lovesick. The saying wearing your heart on your sleeve stems from the custom of men pinning the names of selected partners on their

sleeves. Women believed that the first man they saw on Valentine's day would become their future husband. They also wrote names on paper, wrapping them in clay and dropping them into water. The first name to come up would be the one for her. The idea of a classroom Valentine box stems from these customs. (Barth, 45-48.)

ST. PATRICK'S DAY-March 17

St. Patrick Day is celebrated in Ireland and the United States. St. Patrick was born in Britannia to a wealthy family around A.D. 385. His birth name was Maewyn. As a boy he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and forced to work as a shepherd. Before this he had not been religious. He spent his days as a shepherd alone and praying. One day he heard a voice saying, "Your ship is ready for you." He ran away to the port and found a ship bound for England. He studied religion and Pope Celestine I named him a bishop and gave him the name Patercius when he became a patron saint. Patrick used the shamrock to illustrate the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. In Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is a holy day, while in the US it is more festive. Parades are held with people wearing green and eating corned beef for good luck. (Moehn, 90)

Clover- A four-leaf clover is a symbol of good luck. A shamrock is a plant that has three leaves and looks like a clover. This is a symbol of St. Patrick as well as Ireland.

EASTER- between March 22- April 25, the first Sunday after the first full moon after March 21

In the northern hemisphere, Easter is celebrated in spring, but not on the same day. This day depends on the sun and moon. As the earth spins on its axis traveling around the sun it is directly over the equator twice within the year's trip. This is called an equinox, when the length of day and night is equal. Forty days prior to Easter, excluding Sundays, begins the season of Lent, lengthening days. On Ash Wednesday, the first day, Catholics wear an ash cross on their foreheads as a sign of sorrow for their sins. In the Dark Ages, "public sinners" were important people involved in a scandal, identified by wearing sackcloths, hair shirts and bare feet. In recognition of the forty days Jesus fasted in the desert, Christians give up something they enjoy or try to break an unpleasant habit during this time. The last week of Lent is Holy Week with Palm Sunday on the first day. Palms are taken home from church in remembrance of the palms set before the execution of Jesus in Jerusalem. He was there celebrating Passover, a Hebrew festival of Freedom, with his twelve disciples. This was a celebration of the freedom from their ancestors' slavery in Egypt. In the Book of Exodus, the angel of God passes through Egyptian homes destroying the first born yet passed over the Hebrew homes. Pesach, Passover in Hebrew, was the origin of Easter in many languages other than English or German. (Barth 6-9)

For Christians, Easter is a celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus. However, the name and most of the symbols do not come from Christian history. The name Easter comes from Oestara, the Germanic goddess. Spring festivals were held in her honor. She often appeared as a rabbit, which along with eggs is a symbol of renewed life, fertility

and spring. Russian and Greek Orthodox Christians chose to use different calendars after a split from the Roman Catholic Church and causing them to celebrate Easter with somewhat different customs and traditions. (Haven, 65-66)

A popular Easter custom is to watch the sunrise, which is symbolic of rebirth. People wear new clothes and hats for good luck or to find love. In Los Angeles, up to 30,000 people gather each year in the Hollywood Bowl- a large open-air theatre- to wait for sunrise. Then everyone rejoices, attending an outdoor church service. (Moehn, 28)

Easter eggs-Eggs are a symbol of new life. Decorating Easter eggs is popular in many countries. Mainly chicken eggs are hard boiled and dyed. Most countries have their own traditional patterns. In Greece, people dye eggs the magical color red, with a blessing being released when the shell is broken. Egg races were popular in eighteenth century France where eggs are rolled down a hill with the winning egg staying uncracked. In Washington D.C., children do this on Easter Monday on the White House lawn. Easter egg hunts are also a custom. The Easter rabbit is thought to have left the eggs. Legend tells of a poor woman who colored eggs for her children and hid them in the yard. A rabbit hopped from the bushes just as they found the eggs, so it was thought to have brought them, hence the Easter Bunny. In Italy, bread with hard- boiled eggs baked into it is eaten. The head of the household cuts up a colored egg in Poland and a piece is eaten by everyone. (Moehn, 29)

Objectives

In Reading and Language Arts (Communication), students will participate in oral responses to literature and use robust vocabulary and comprehension to develop an understanding of the history of celebrations and symbols. They will participate in activities that require research and inquiry. They will use phonemic awareness and phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency to develop an understanding of symbols.

In Math, students will use and understand the importance of using symbols in daily routines for recording the weather. They will identify symbols on US currency. Students will tell and solving number stories using symbols in the problem and solution, including illustrations.

In Social Studies (Citizenship), students will identify symbols of the United States and discuss their significance. They will identify special days that families celebrate, explain their importance and recognize that families celebrate special times in different ways. Students will discuss the history of celebrations in the US and learn celebrations from other cultures. Students will identify symbols on a map key.

In Science, students will understand how the position of the Earth relates to seasons. They will understand the concepts of balance and motion.

In Writing, students will follow the Writer's Workshop model to publish pieces of writing in the personal narrative, fantasy and report genres.

These objectives relate to the overall curricular goals of my school in that they provide opportunities for students to meet and exceed the standards. All objectives aim to promote the interconnectedness of subject areas. These lessons meet the national, state and local standards that all Pittsburgh Public School curricula must meet. The state has developed 62 content standards within 10 Core Curriculum frameworks. In this unit I will focus on the Communications, Math, Citizenship Science and Writing Standards, which can be found in Appendix A.

Strategies

An interdisciplinary approach will be taken to make connections between subject areas. All of the elements of the curriculum will fuse with the general curriculum so there can be a smooth transition to extension activities. Due to the pacing guidelines we are required to follow, I've found that incorporating units into the existing curriculum lends to successful implementation of the unit. Therefore, elements of this unit will be taught throughout the entire year.

Many aspects of this curriculum can be taught using hands-on activities. This will ensure that students learn through their own experiences. In doing this they will gain an increased understanding of symbols since students learn in a variety of ways and there are activities for all types of learners. Some examples are: Visual- pictures of symbols to place on calendar or in picture books, Auditory-Holiday stories and songs Tactile-making a sukkah and Kinesthetic-re-enacting Ghost Dances of Native Americans in Music and playing games of Olympians in Gym.

Differentiated instruction will be used when appropriate. The books selected are at a variety of reading levels. The activities and lessons can be made accessible to the struggling learner and more complex for the purpose of enrichment. The following lessons offer students choices and support their individual interests. This allows them to gain ownership of their learning.

Classroom Activities

The following lessons and classroom activities support the ideas in the curriculum unit. All subjects will extend the existing curriculum to encompass ideas of symbols and celebrations. Since every classroom differs, teachers can adapt the lessons to meet their students' individual needs. When reference is made to charting responses or generating lists, these artifacts should be posted in the classroom and/or accessible to students for reference at all times.

Lesson 1: Symbols

Day 1: Teacher will start a discussion of symbols. Determine if the students have any prior knowledge. Define using the first grade dictionary. A symbol is a mark or sign that means something. Ask children what symbols they see in the classroom. List on chart paper to be used as an artifact. If students don't come up with this on their own, offer the idea that letters are symbols for sounds and words are symbols for things. Homework: look for symbols at home and in the neighborhood. Examples: Mr. Yuk means no and a green light means go. Explain that different symbols can represent the same thing. Example: A peace sign and an olive branch are both symbols of peace.

Day 2: In the Everyday Math curriculum, students use symbols on a daily basis to report the weather. Discuss weather symbols used in the classroom. What are other weather symbols? Chart responses. Students also learn about coins and their values. Discuss the symbolism on coins. Chart findings and responses.

Lesson 2: United States Symbols

Day 1: After teaching Lesson 5: Our Symbols and Pledge in Unit 3: Good Citizens of the Macmillan/McGrawhill Social Studies curriculum People and Places review and assess knowledge of United States symbols. Chart responses. Watch a movie on symbols on the website: <http://www.brainpopjr.com/socialstudies/citizenship/ussymbols/>.

Day 2: Discuss Olympics. Chart responses. Explain that this is an Olympic year if not mentioned. Read *Hour of the Olympics* by Mary Pope Osborne. Discuss story. Find Greece on a map. Was it fair that women couldn't participate? How does the original Olympics compare to the modern? Discuss that these athletic contests were symbols of victory and discuss the significance of gold, silver and bronze medals. Stress the idea that "if you have fun you won." Discuss famous African Americans in the Olympics such as Jesse Owens and Wilma Rudolph. Read *Ancient Greece and the Olympics* by Mary Pope Osborne for more Olympic facts. Make arrangements with the Gym teacher for students to participate in games from the Olympics. For a home-school connection have students visit the following website to research and track current Olympic events: <http://ivillage.waidev5.com/familyroom/site/?sky=ggl|sls|family|olympics|#>.

Lesson 3: Symbols and Holidays

Day 1: After teaching Lesson 2: Families Celebrate in Unit 1: All About Families of the Macmillan/McGrawhill Social Studies curriculum People and Places, start a discussion of holidays by showing symbols of a pumpkin, turkey, tree, heart, clover and colored egg. Ask students what holiday they go with. Chart responses. Ask students to write about their favorite holiday and explain why it's their favorite? Share responses and chart.

Day 2: Read pages of *Celebrations* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley relating to Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day and Easter. Discuss and chart responses.

Day 3: Allow students to choose other pages of *Celebrations* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley to read and discuss.

Lesson 4: Halloween

Day 1: Ask students what they know about Halloween. Chart responses. Read *Halloween Is...* by Gail Gibbons. Discuss the story. Ask students why people were scared of winter? Should we be scared now? Discuss the pumpkin symbol. Explain that the pumpkin is a symbol of harvest. Discuss why we have a Harvest Fest at school on Halloween. Share custom of using beets, punkies, in England and turnips, bogies, in Scotland. List other harvest vegetables.

Day 2: Ask students what they know about bats. Chart responses. Discuss the symbol of bats as related to Halloween. Should we be scared of bats? Read *Bats* by Gail Gibbons. Chart bat facts. Have students write a report on bats.

Day 3: Connect idea of Halloween ghosts with the Ghost Dance of the Native Americans. Ask students why people dance. Chart responses. Read *Ghost Dance* by Paul Miron. Discuss story. Explain that dancing was a symbol of hope. Make arrangements with the music teacher to re-enact the Ghost Dance. Use following website to research dance: <http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/caddo/page32.htm>. Make up a class dance and discuss what it symbolizes. Perform one or both of these dances at morning assembly or the Harvest Festival.

Lesson 5: Thanksgiving

Day 1: Ask students what they know about Thanksgiving. Chart responses. Read *Thanksgiving Is...* by Gail Gibbons. Discuss celebrations long ago. Chart responses. Discuss Pilgrims and Native Americans. Ask students how they helped each other. Discuss Thanksgiving today. Ask students how they give thanks. Sing *One Little Two Little Three Little Pilgrims* by B.G. Hennessy.

Day 2: Connect Jewish Celebration of Sukkot with Thanksgiving. Read section on Sukkot in *New Year's to Kwanzaa: Original Stories of Celebration* by Kendall Haven. Discuss and chart responses. Answer follow-up questions and chart responses. Write a how-to make a sukkah paper. Make a class sukkah (harvest booth) and celebrate Sukkot. Show students pictures from trip to Israel and discuss mission work and how it relates to Sukkot.

Lesson 6: Christmas

Day 1: Ask students what they know about Christmas. Chart responses. Read *Christmas Is...* by Gail Gibbons. Discuss story. Chart responses. Talk about gift giving as opposed to receiving. Students make a list of what they want to give,

Day 2: Show students a sun symbol and ask if they know why this could be a symbol for Christmas. Read *The Winter Solstice* by Ellen Jackson. Discuss the story. Define winter

solstice, as the shortest day in the year when the sun is at its lowest point in the sky. Discuss why having less sunlight would worry people. What did they do to help each other during this scary time? They joined together for goodwill, forgiveness and love. Connect these to the Virtues of Maat. Focus on remembering the less fortunate, collect money for a cause or donate. Locate places discussed in the story on a map (Scotland, British Isles, Rome, Scandinavia, Europe, Britain, Peru, Arizona, New Mexico and British Columbia) and discuss their connection with the winter solstice. How are these alike and different from what we do in the United States? What symbols came from these times?

Day 3: In the FOSS Science curriculum module Balance and Motion students learn about things that have movement. In the Plants module students learn about what is necessary for a plant to grow. These are great concepts to connect with the idea of the position of the sun to the Earth (movement) and the lack of sunlight (needed for plants to grow) as mentioned in the discussion of the winter solstice. Investigate the experiment mentioned in the story using 2 toothpicks, one in top and one in bottom of an orange (Earth), to see how the position of the Earth creates the seasons. Use a flashlight for the sun. Tilt the orange toward and away from the light and record observations. Explain that the Earth travels around the sun in one year. Look at a map and discuss the seasons as they relate to Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

Day 4: Read A SOLSTICE STORY at the back of *The Winter Solstice* by Ellen Jackson. Discuss what words and parts of the illustration give clues of the seasons. Work together to make a class solstice story. Make arrangements with the Art teacher to illustrate the story.

Day 5: Tell students about my trip to South Africa over Winter Break. Show pictures. Discuss similarities and differences such as weather and what is used for a Christmas tree. Read about and discuss Boxing Day or Day of Goodwill in *World Holidays* by Heather Moehn.

Day 6: Read different parts of *Christmas Around the World* by Mary D. Lankford. Add to the chart of similarities and differences.

Lesson 7: Valentine's Day

Day 1: Ask students what they know about Valentine's Day. Chart responses. Read *Valentine's Is....* By Gail Gibbons. Discuss story and chart responses. Talk about it being a festival of spring that honored a real saint. Why did people celebrate spring? What is a saint and why did he become one? Have students re-enact the Roman custom of boys picking out girls names. How is this similar or different from what we do with Valentine cards?

Day 2: Discuss the heart as an important Valentine symbol. Connect with the symmetry lesson in Everyday Math. Fold paper in half and draw half a heart. Cut out and color. Write special messages on the hearts.

Lesson 8: St. Patrick's Day

Day 1: Ask students what they know about St. Patrick's Day. Chart responses. Read *St. Patrick's Day* by Gail Gibbons. Discuss story and chart responses. Why do people wear green on St. Patrick's Day? Discuss legends. Have students write their own fantasy legend. For a fun extension activity students can go to the website www.apples4theteacher.com/slappad.html to play an interactive Irish symbols game.

Lesson 9: Easter

Day 1: Ask students what they know about Easter. Chart responses. Read *Easter* by Gail Gibbons. Discuss story. Chart responses. Talk about how Easter got its name from Eostre, the spring goddess. Ask students what happens in the spring. Relate these events to Easter traditions. Example: Spring is a time of renewal and many people get new outfits for Easter.

Day 2: Read *Spring* by Nuria Roca. Discuss and chart responses. Make a list of things that happen in spring. Invent a spring festival along with classroom customs and traditions.

Day 3: Discuss eggs as a symbol. Read *The Egg Tree* by Katherine Millhouse. Discuss connection of the designs on the eggs to Pennsylvania Dutch folk art. Make designs on Eggs. Discuss ostrich eggs from South Africa. Show pictures of designs on those eggs.

Day 4: Connect spring festival of Easter with Japanese Doll Festival of Hanimatsuri. Read about Hina Matsuri in *Celebrations* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley. Discuss how the dolls represent values and other symbolism. Connect with Virtues of Maat. Use website of <http://www.geocities.com/mrsjacksonsclass/japandollfestival.htm> for a variety of activities surrounding the Japanese Doll Festival.

Bibliography

Teacher Resources

Barth, Edna. *Witches, Pumpkins, and Grinning Ghosts: The Story of the Halloween Symbols*. Sagebrush Education Resources: August 2000. Explains the origins of and relates stories associated with familiar Halloween symbols.

Barth, Edna. *Turkeys, Pilgrims, and Indian Corn: The Story of Thanksgiving Symbols*. Sagebrush Education Resources: August 2000. Traces the history of this American harvest celebration and the development of its symbols and legends.

Barth, Edna. *Holly, Reindeer, and Colored Lights: The Story of Christmas Symbols*. Houghton Mifflin Company: September 2000. Examines the origins of Christmas symbols and many other holiday observances.

Barth, Edna. *Hearts, Cupids, and Colored Lights: The Story of the Valentine Symbols*. Houghton Mifflin Company: January 1982. Describes the celebration of St. Valentine's Day from pagan festival to present day activities.

Barth, Edna. *Shamrocks, Harps and Shillelaghs: The Story of St. Patrick's Day Symbols*. Houghton Mifflin Company: February 2001. The history of St. Patrick's Day symbols.

Barth, Edna. *Lilies, Rabbits and Painted Eggs: The Story of Easter Symbols*. Houghton Mifflin Company: February 2001. The history of Easter symbols.

Brown, Dee Alexander. *Bury My Heart at Knee: An Indian History of the American West*. Henry Holt & company, Incorporated: January 2001. A record of the Indian struggle against the white man's greed.

Haven, Kendall. *New Years to Kwanzaa: Original Stories of Celebration*. DIANE publishing Company: January 2005. Original stories that accompany 30 celebrations with follow up questions and suggested activities.

Kindersley, Barnabas. *Celebrations*. DK Publishing Inc., September 1997. Children around the world celebrate 25 holidays and traditions.

Lankford, Mary D. *Christmas Around the World*. Harper Collins Publishers: September 1998. Symbols, celebrations and foods that make Christmas special in 12 countries.

Moehn, Heather. *World Holidays: A Watts Guide for Children*. Scholastic Library Publishing: March 2000. Illustrated alphabetical guide to celebrations and holidays around the world.

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Hour of the Olympics*. Random House Children's Books: October 1998. A magic tree house takes Jack and Annie back to ancient Greece where they witness the original Olympic games.

Osborne, Mary Pope. *Ancient Greece and the Olympics: A Nonfiction Companion to Hour of the Olympics*. Random House Children's Books: June 2004. Information about ancient Greece and the athletic events known as the Olympic games that were held there.

Santino, Jack. *All Around The Year: Holidays and Celebrations in American Life*. University of Illinois Press, 1994. Discussion of a variety of holidays, festivals, life-cycle rituals and celebrations using research and personal accounts.

Children Resources

Adams, Michelle Medlock. *What is Christmas?* Ideals Publications: September 2006. Christmas symbols.

Chancellor, Deborah. *Holiday! Celebrations Days Around the World*. Dorling Kindersley Publishing, INC.: 2000. Special events around the world. Level 2: Beginning to read alone

Foley, Daniel J. *The Christmas Tree*. Chilton Company: 1960.

Gibbons, Gail. *Bats*. Holiday House Inc.: 2002. Many kinds of bats and their abilities.

Gibbons, Gail. *Christmas Is....*. Holiday House Inc.: September 2002. Christmas background, symbols and traditions.

Gibbons, Gail. *Easter*. Holiday House Inc.: January 1991. Easter background, symbols and traditions.

Gibbons, Gail. *Halloween*. Holiday House Inc.: 2002. Halloween symbols.

Gibbons, Gail. *St. Patrick's Day*. Holiday House Inc.: April 1994. Legends about St. Patrick.

Gibbons, Gail. *Valentine's Day is....*. Holiday House Inc.: April 1996. Valentine traditions.

Hennessy, G.B. *One Little, Two Little, Three Little Pilgrims*. Penguin Young Readers Group: August 2001. Pilgrims and Wampanoags in Plymouth celebrate Thanksgiving.

Jackson, Ellen. *The Winter Solstice*. The Millbrook Press: 1994. Celebrating the winter solstice from ancient to modern times.

Marx, David. *Easter*. Scholastic Library Publishing: March 2000. Basic facts about holidays.

Milhouse, Katherine. *The Egg Tree*. Aladdin Books: 1950. Grandmom starts the Easter tradition of an Egg Tree.

Miron, Paul. *Ghost Dance*. Houghton Mifflin Company: March 2001. Native American custom, which hoped to restore the world to balance.

Pauli, Hertha. *The Story of the Christmas Tree*. Houghton Mifflin: 1944.

Roca, Nuria. *Spring*. Barron's Educational Series, Incorporated: August 2004. Activities of spring.

Websites:

<http://altreligion.about.com/library/weekly/aa122005a.htm> -customs of Christmas

<http://americanhistory.mrdonn.org/Symbols.html> -patriotic symbols

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/slappad.html>- interactive St. Patrick's Day symbol game

<http://www.brainpopjr.com/socialstudies/citizenship/ussymbols/> -students movie on US symbols

<http://www.symbols.net/holiday/>- origins of various holiday symbols

<http://ivillage.waidev5.com/familyroom/site/?sky=ggl|sls|family|olympics> -family activities surrounding the Olympics

<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/caddo/page32.htm> -Ghost Dance details

<http://teacherlink.ed.usu.edu/TLresources/units/Byrnes-celebrations/topics.html> -online lessons on various celebrations

<http://www.holidays.net/teach.htm> -online resource to collaborate for a class project on a particular holiday

<http://www.geocities.com/mrsjacksonsclass/japandollfestival.htm> -Japanese Doll Festival

Appendix A-Standards

PPS Content Standards for Communication

1. All students use effective research and informational management skills including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrative, inform and persuade, in all subject areas.

5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes, and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and recognizing the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make academic presentations for each academic area of study, that are designed to inform, persuade or describe.
9. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

PPS Content Standards for Citizenship

1. All students demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States, and other nations and describe the patterns of historical development.
2. All students demonstrate an understanding of themes and patterns of geography, know the locations of major bodies of water, land masses, and nations, and describe the relationships between geography and historical, economic, and cultural development.
3. All students describe the development and operation of the economic, political, legal and governmental systems in the United States.
4. All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation, and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.
5. All students develop and defend a position on current issues confronting the United States and other nations by conducting research, analyzing alternatives, organizing evidence and arguments, and making oral presentations.
6. All students explain basic economic concepts and the development and operation of economic systems in the United States and other nations and make informed decisions about economic issues.
7. All students demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating, and cooperating with others.

8. All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.
9. All students demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing their communities, the United States, and other nations.
10. All students demonstrate an understanding of the various roles they can play as citizens through participation in a community service project.
11. All students demonstrate the ability to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways, including but not limited to peer mediation, anger management, interpersonal skills, and problem solving

PPS Content Standards for Math

1. All students use number, number systems, and equivalent forms (including numbers, words, objects and graphics) to represent theoretical and practical situations.
2. All students compute, measure and estimate to solve theoretical and practical problems, using appropriate tools, including modern technology such as calculators and computers.
3. All students apply the concepts of patterns, functions and relation to solve theoretical and practical problems.
4. All students formulate and solve problems and communicate the mathematical processes used and the meaning for using them.
5. All students use and apply the basic concepts of algebra, geometry, probability and statistics to solve theoretical and practical problems.
6. All students evaluate, infer and draw appropriate conclusions from charts, tables and graphs, showing the relationship between data and real world situations.
7. All students make decisions and predictions based upon the collection, organization, analysis and interpretation of statistical data and the application of probability.

Writing Standards

Writing Standard 1: Habits and Processes

Writing Standard 2: Writing Purposes and Resulting Genres

Writing Standard 3: Language Use and Conventions

