New Year: history and resolutions

Name _____ Date _____

History

In 46 B.C. the emperor Julius Caesar introduced the Julian calendar. Caesar made January 1 the first day of the year, partly to honour the month's namesake: Janus.

Janus was the Roman god of beginnings, whose two faces allowed him to look back into the past and forward into the future. Janus became the ancient symbol for resolutions and many Romans looked for forgiveness from their enemies and also exchanged gifts before the beginning of each year.

In medieval Europe, Christian leaders temporarily replaced January 1 as the first day of the year with other days carrying more religious significance, such as December 25 (the anniversary of Jesus' birth) and March 25 (the Feast of the Annunciation). Pope Gregory XIII reestablished January 1 as New Year's Day in 1582.

However, the New Year has not always begun on January 1, and it doesn't begin on that date everywhere today. In countries such as China, a lunar calendar is used. Lunar calendars are based on the cycles of the moon. In China, their new year begins at the time of the first full moon (over the Far East) after the sun enters Aquarius. This is between January 19 and February 21 so it is not the same every year.

Although the date for New Year's Day is not the same in every culture, it is always a time for celebration and for customs to ensure good luck in the coming year.

Resolutions

At the end of the year it is traditional to make a set of promises to yourself about how you will change your life for the better in the following year. These are called New Year's resolutions.

Common New Year's resolutions include wanting to lose weight, give up smoking, move jobs, being a better person or give more money to charity.

A lot of people make these promises and then give up before the month of January is even over! If you want to be successful with your resolutions then the best thing is to make sure that they are realistic and something that you actively want to do not something you think you should do. If they are too difficult then you have set yourself up to fail before you have even started!

Adapted from http://www.history.com/topics/new-years

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Questions

1. When was the Julian calendar introduced?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Who was Janus and what could he do?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What is special about December 25 and March 25?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Is New Year's Day always on January 1?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. What is a New Year's Resolution?

   _____

   _____

   _____

6. Give two examples of popular New Year's resolutions.

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. What should you do to make sure that you are more successful with your resolutions?

   _____

   _____

   _____

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Resolutions

Make some resolutions for the people that you see on the PPT. Work in your table groups to make these resolutions and give reasons why you have chosen these resolutions.

Now make some New Year's resolutions for yourself in the table below.
Give reasons for your choices.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

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Covers many aspects of E3-L1 Adult literacy and ESOL (reading comprehension, writing composition).
Associated PPT, resolutions activity and further curriculum links can be found on the download page for this resource at skillsworkshop.

New Year

Answers

1. The Julian calendar was introduced in 46 BC.
2. Janus was the Roman god of beginnings and he was able to look back into the past and also forward into the future.
3. December 25th is the anniversary of the birth of Christ and March 25th is the Feast of the Annunciation.
4. No, only for some cultures.
5. A set of promises you make to yourself about how you will change your life for the better in the following year.
6. Any two of these will do:
   - wanting to lose weight
   - give up smoking
   - move jobs
   - being a better person
   - give more money to charity
7. You should make sure that they are realistic and something that you actively want to do not something you think you should do.