

DECEMBER SOLSTICE

Level: Pre-intermediate (equivalent to CEF level A2)

Age: Teenagers / Adults

Time: 60 minutes

Summary: This infographic lesson looks at interesting facts and figures about the December solstice.

Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; access to a projector or IWB to project the infographic from onestopenglish.

HOW TO USE THE LESSON

1 Write *December* on the board. Ask a student to tell you a word connected with this month. Write the word on the board and drill the pronunciation. Ask students to work in pairs or a group of three and add nine more words to their lists together.

2 Ask students to look at exercise 2. They work in pairs or small groups to answer the questions together.

3 Ask students to read the infographic. You could give them the infographic as a printed worksheet or display it on the board from onestopenglish. Then, ask them to compare their answers from exercise 2 with the information in the infographic.

4 Ask students to look at exercise 4. Tell them to find the words that match each definition. Students can do this individually and then check with a partner, or work in pairs if it is a weaker group. Write the vocabulary on the board, and work on the pronunciation of any difficult sounds.

5 Remove the image from the screen or ask students to turn over their worksheets. Tell them to look at exercise 5. They complete the gaps in the paragraph using the words in the box. Now tell them to check their answers by looking at the image of the Earth in the infographic.

6 Ask the students to look at exercise 6. Students look at the four December solstice celebrations in the second part of the infographic to find *Things that people do* and *Food that people eat or offer*. They work in pairs or groups of three and write the relevant information in the correct columns.

7 Ask students to think of a popular festival that they and their family or friends celebrate

and ask them to answer the first two questions. Students work with a partner or a small group and discuss the celebrations together.

Key:

1 students' own answers

2, 3

- 1 between December 21 and 23 in the northern hemisphere and between June 20 and 22 in the southern hemisphere
- 2 spring, summer and autumn
- 3 between December 21 and 23 in the northern hemisphere and between June 20 and 22 in the southern hemisphere
- 4 longer
- 5 students' own answers (the four linked in the 'Related websites' section are: Dong Zhi, Hogmanay, Yalda and Chaomos)

4

- 1 turn(s) away, turn(s) towards
- 2 tilt(s)
- 3 rays
- 4 point
- 5 follow
- 6 midnight
- 7 gifts
- 8 coal
- 9 baths
- 10 relatives

5

- 1 the Equator
- 2 hemispheres
- 3 the Tropic of Cancer
- 4 the Tropic of Capricorn
- 5 the Antarctic Circle
- 6 the Arctic Circle



DECEMBER SOLSTICE

6

<i>Things that people do</i>	<i>Food that people eat or offer</i>
<i>meet</i>	<i>rice</i>
<i>eat</i>	<i>fruit</i>
<i>some say they are a year older</i>	<i>cake</i>
<i>visit family and friends after midnight</i>	<i>bread</i>
<i>take and exchange gifts</i>	
<i>don't sleep</i>	
<i>have small parties</i>	
<i>have baths</i>	
<i>sing</i>	
<i>dance</i>	
<i>make fires</i>	
<i>offer food to dead relatives</i>	

7 students' own answers

RELATED WEBSITES

The following websites might be useful for either you or your students.

www.timeanddate.com/calendar/december-solstice.html

news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/12/1220_021220_solstice.html

ed101.bu.edu/StudentDoc/Archives/fall05/andiq87/DongZhi.htm

www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Celebrating_Yalda_2.htm

www.csmonitor.com/1982/0121/012159.html

www.scotland.com/festivals/hogmanay/



DECEMBER SOLSTICE

1 Make a list of 10 words that are connected with December.

_____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
 _____ / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____

2 Ask and answer the following questions with a partner.

1. When does winter begin in your country?
2. What are the other three seasons of the year?
3. What date is the shortest day where you live?
4. Are the days longer or shorter after this date?
5. What festivals do you celebrate in your country in December?

3 Now read the infographic about the December solstice and compare your answers.

4 Find words in the infographic that mean the following.

1. to change direction _____ , _____
2. to move something so that one side is lower than the other _____
3. light and heat from the sun _____
4. a particular place _____
5. to do the same as another person _____
6. 12 o'clock at night _____
7. things you give to someone as a present _____
8. a black substance used to make fires _____
9. containers that you fill with water to wash yourself in _____
10. members of your family _____

5 Complete the paragraph with words from the box. Then read the infographic again to check your answers.

<i>hemispheres</i>	<i>the Equator</i>	<i>the Antarctic Circle</i>
<i>the Arctic Circle</i>	<i>the Tropic of Capricorn</i>	<i>the Tropic of Cancer</i>

(1) _____ is an imaginary line that goes round the Earth and divides it into the northern and southern (2) _____. The line is between two other imaginary lines:

(3) _____ to the north and (4) _____ the south. This area is the hottest part of the Earth. The coldest parts of the world are (5) _____, an imaginary line around the South Pole, and (6) _____, an imaginary line around the North Pole.



DECEMBER SOLSTICE

6 Look at the celebrations section in the infographic again. Write the information from the infographic in the correct columns below.

<i>Things that people do</i>	<i>Food that people eat or offer</i>

7 Think of one tradition or festival that you and your family or friends celebrate. Answer the following questions.

- What do you do?

- What food do you eat or offer as gifts?

- Now tell a partner about your celebration.

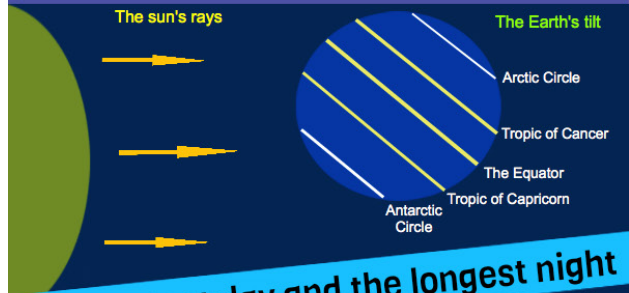


DECEMBER SOLSTICE

DECEMBER SOLSTICE

The period between December 21 and 23 is a very important time for our planet and its relationship with the sun. In the northern hemisphere winter begins and in the southern hemisphere summer begins. In the north this time is called winter solstice - in the south it is called summer solstice.

The Earth's tilt
 As the Earth goes round the sun it tilts. This means that for half of the year the North Pole turns away from the sun and the South Pole turns towards the sun. For the other half of the year the North Pole turns towards the sun again. This means that one part of the Earth receives more of the sun's rays than the other. When this happens the seasons change - we change from summer to autumn to winter and to spring.



The shortest day and the longest night
 The winter solstice marks the shortest day and the longest night of the year. On this day the sun is at its lowest point in the sky. The word 'solstice' comes from the Latin word 'solstitium'. 'Sol-' means sun and '-stitium' means a stop.

History and cultural significance
 The winter solstice has been very important to people since ancient times and today we continue to follow many of those ancient traditions at this time of the year. After the winter solstice the days are lighter and longer. That is a good reason to celebrate.

CELEBRATIONS

- 1 **DONGZHI - East Asia**
 Families meet and eat balls of rice. These balls represent the reunion of the family. After this celebration many people say they are 1 year older.
- 2 **Yalda - Iran**
 People don't sleep on this night. They have small parties and eat the last fruits of summer. Lovers exchange gifts on this night.
- 3 **HOGMANAY - Scotland**
 It was originally a winter solstice celebration from Viking times. People visit family and friends after midnight. They take gifts, normally cake and coal.
- 4 **Chaomos - Pakistan**
 People have baths, sing, dance, eat and make fires. Families offer bread and fruit to dead relatives.