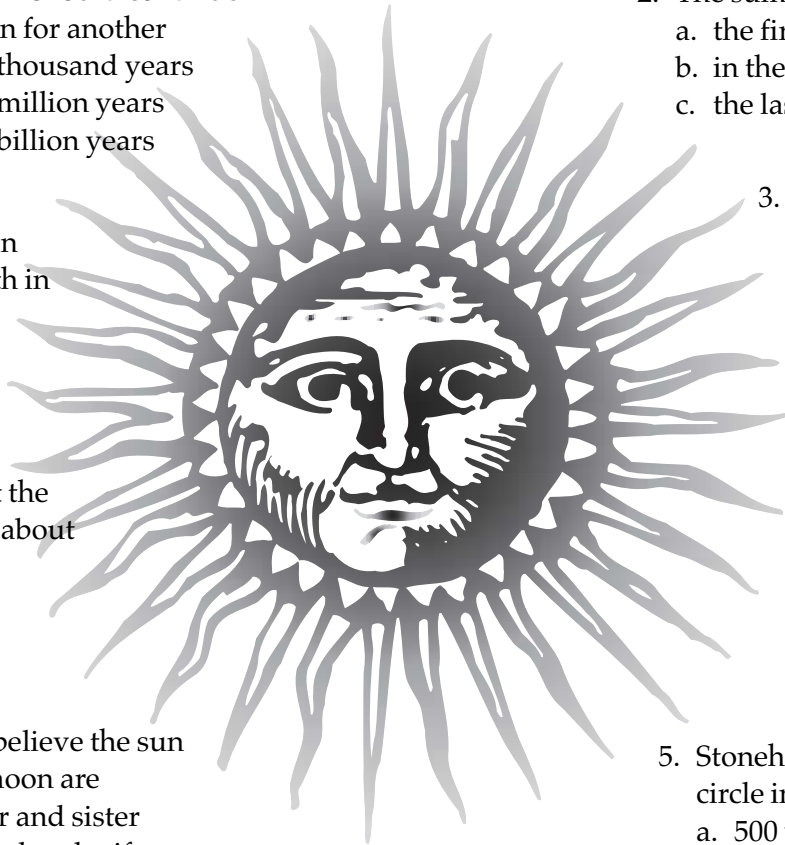


The Sun, celebrations and the Summer Solstice

1. Before you read, do the following quiz.

1. The summer solstice is
 - a. the shortest day of the year
 - b. the longest day of the year
 - c. a day when day and night are equal
2. The summer solstice is
 - a. the first day of summer
 - b. in the middle of summer
 - c. the last day of summer
3. In Portugal, to celebrate the summer solstice people hit each other with
 - a. hammers
 - b. flowers
 - c. wood
4. The biggest solstice celebration in the world is in
 - a. Sweden
 - b. the United States
 - c. Mexico
5. Stonehenge, the ancient stone circle in the UK, is about
 - a. 500 years old
 - b. 5,000 years old
 - c. 50,000 years old
6. *Ra* is the ancient sun god of
 - a. the Greeks
 - b. the Incas
 - c. the Egyptians
7. Eskimos believe the sun and the moon are
 - a. brother and sister
 - b. husband and wife
 - c. mother and daughter
8. The temperature at the centre of the sun is about
 - a. 1,500°C
 - b. 1.5 million°C
 - c. 15 million°C
9. Light from the sun travels to the earth in
 - a. 8 seconds
 - b. 8 minutes
 - c. 8 hours
10. The sun should continue to burn for another
 - a. 5 thousand years
 - b. 5 million years
 - c. 5 billion years



2. Check your answers by reading the texts on worksheets B and C.

The Sun, celebrations and the Summer Solstice

The summer solstice

The summer solstice is the longest day of the year and is the first day of summer. In the northern hemisphere, this is 21 June and in the southern hemisphere it is 21 December.

Celebrations

The summer solstice has been celebrated for thousands of years. In pagan times, people lit fires, danced, sang and offered flowers and food to the sun. These traditions are seen in many modern-day celebrations from around the world. Here are a few of them.

It's very strange, but people hit each other with plastic hammers.
(Luis, Portugal)

Girls put flowers in rivers. If the flowers float a long way, they will get married soon.
(Ewa, Poland)

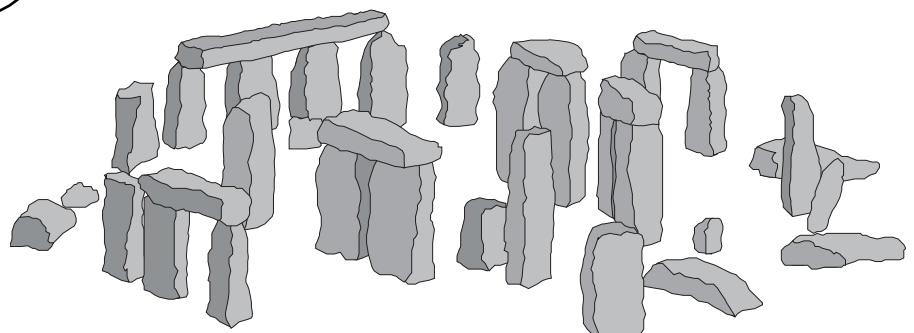
People decorate fountains with flowers and they go swimming at midnight.
(Sandy, Mexico)

Thousands of people parade through Santa Barbara. It's full of colour, music and energy. It's the biggest solstice celebration in the world.
(Eddie, USA)

In the morning, we pick flowers and wear them on our heads. In the evening, we dance around the midsummer pole and then have an all-night party.
(Anna, Sweden)

Stonehenge is an ancient circle of stones over 5,000 years old. Many people go there to watch the solstice sunrise.
(Angus, UK)

We have fires on the beach and have a big party.
(Fernando, Puerto Rico)



The Sun, celebrations and the Summer Solstice

Sun gods

Many ancient cultures worshipped the sun as a god. Here are four of them.

The Egyptians called their sun god *Ra*. He created light from his eye and he created humans from his tears.

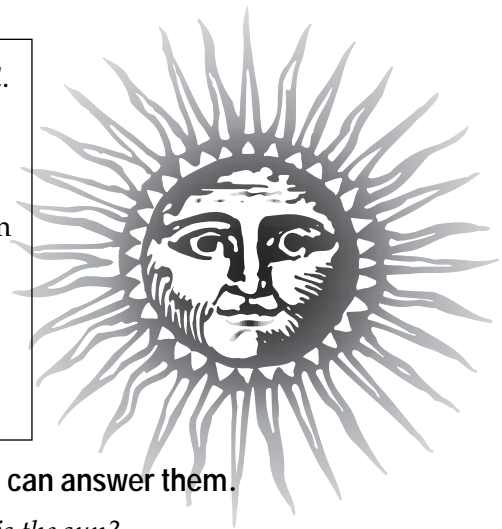
The Greek sun god was *Helios*. Every day, he drove the sun across the sky from east to west in his golden chariot. At night, the sun sailed back across the ocean in a ship.

Malina is sun goddess of the Eskimo people. *Anningan*, the moon god, is her brother. They got into a terrible fight and *Anningan* chased his sister into the sky. *Malina* is still trying to escape and this is why we have night following day.

Chinese mythology says there were ten suns in the sky. It became too hot for the people and they killed nine of the suns with a bow and arrow. The one that remained is the sun in the sky today.

Sun facts

- The temperature at the centre of the sun is 15,000,000°C.
- The sun is a million times bigger than the earth.
- The sun is about 150 million kilometres from the earth.
- It takes 8 minutes and 19 seconds for light to travel from the sun to the earth.
- Light travels at about 300,000 km per second.
- The sun is about 5 billion years old. It should continue to burn for 5 billion years more.



3. Write four questions about the text. See if your classmates can answer them.

For example: *Where do people decorate fountains? How old is the sun?*

1.
2.
3.
4.

4. In small groups discuss the questions.

- a. Do you live in a sunny country? Do you have too much or not enough sun in your country?
- b. Does the sun have a big influence on your country?
- c. Is the summer solstice celebrated in your country? How do people celebrate it?

Teacher's notes

Tasks

To find out about the summer solstice and its celebrations by reading a text.

To write and ask questions about the text.

To discuss related issues about the student's own country.

Preparation

One copy of worksheets A, B and C for each student.

You could pre-teach/ check the following vocabulary: pagan, lit (past tense of light), pole, float, pick (flowers), druid, bow and arrow.

Procedure

1. Tell the students that 21 June is the summer solstice in the northern hemisphere and 21 December in the southern hemisphere. Elicit or brainstorm a few facts about the sun and the summer solstice.
2. Give the students a copy of worksheet A and ask them to discuss and answer the questions in (1) in pairs or small groups.
3. The students read the text to check their answers to the questions. This can be done individually or as a collective effort with the students working in pairs.
4. Check the answers with the whole class.
5. At this point you could ask the students to read in more detail, underlining any vocabulary or language they do not understand. Then check this with the whole class.
6. Ask the students, working individually or in pairs, to write four questions about the text. The students then ask other students their questions. The students answer the questions from memory or by scanning the text for the answers. Alternatively, you could put the students into small groups and get them to pool their questions. The teams then ask each other the questions, scoring one point for each correct answer.
7. The students then discuss, in pairs or small groups, the questions in (4). Ask the students to report back anything interesting from their discussions.

Answers

1 b 2 a 3 a 4 b 5 b 6 c 7 a 8 c 9 b 10 c

Follow up

The students could prepare a poster about the sun and the summer solstice using the information in the texts and other information they can find from other sources such as the Internet or encyclopaedias.

Websites

For more information about the summer solstice and its celebrations, visit the following websites:

www.religioustolerance.org/summer_solstice.htm

www.education-world.com/holidays/archives/solstice_2000.shtml

www.familyeducation.com/topic/front/0,1156,1-7122,00.htm