

How and why do people celebrate and worship at NEW YEAR

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE FOR THE TEACHER

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

- The Hindu festival of Diwali marks the end of a lunar year in traditional Hindu calendar. New year begins the day after Diwali. Diwali and new year is thought of as the period in a year that is especially full of good fortune for individuals, businesses and the community.
- Celebrations of new year can be religious and might involve worship and prayer, and they may also be secular. Even secular new year celebrations can involve traditions and rituals connected with, or originating from, religious belief and practice.

Most pupils will have seen or been involved some kind of new year celebrations, perhaps involving religious worship, or rituals that might be religious or secular. They will appreciate that marking the end of a year and the beginning of a new one is an important milestone for many people. Pupils should be encouraged to think critically and creatively about the importance of leaving behind things that are old and embracing the new, outside of the context of new year.

Some pupils might not realise that there are religious and cultural celebrations of new year that do not coincide with the most widely used Gregorian calendar. In short, some cultures and religions do not begin their new year on 1 January, with celebrations mainly on 31 December, as do the vast majority of people in the UK. Many people in the UK might have two new year's celebrations, one marking the Gregorian calendar new year and another marking their cultural or religious new year. The most well-known example of this is the Chinese new year, which falls between 15 January and 20 February and is a celebration that lasts for around 15 days.

This work uses a religious studies lens to explore festivals, using information about them and quotes from people who celebrate them.

This work links to RE Today units of work L2.5 Why are festivals important to religious communities? and L2.6 Why do some people think that life is a journey? What significant experiences mark this?

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR THE PUPIL

By the end of this unit pupils should know:

- for many people, religious and non-religious, marking the end of one year and the beginning of another is an important occasion
- the calendar we follow in the UK the most widely followed in the world, but there are many religions and cultures who follow calendars where 1 January is not the first day of a new year
- celebrations of new year can be religious or non-religious and sometimes a mix of both; they might involve worship as well as rituals that might be religious, or not
- about different ideas around how and why people celebrate new year, and understand some Hindu and non-religious practices and traditions

Key vocabulary:

ritual, celebration, Hindu, Diwali, *rangoli* patterns, *diva* lamps, deity, Lakshmi

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

In order to access the learning in this unit, pupils should have learnt about:

- some basic aspects of the Hindu religious tradition
- general concepts of celebration, worship and ritual

ASSESSMENT FOR 7-9s

The statements below suggest expected outcomes from this unit for 8-year-olds. Adapt them for the age of pupils you are teaching. These link to the outcomes for this series of books shown on the webpages. You may need to adapt them slightly for the syllabus or guidelines you follow.

Expected

- Understand that new year celebrations are important to many people and can be religious, non-religious or a mix of both.
- Describe some diverse ways in which religious or non-religious people celebrate new year.
- Explain the importance of rituals and symbols associated with celebrating new year.
- Make links between the diverse celebrations of new year and express personal insights based on reflection.

This unit helps pupils in Scotland to achieve RME 2-04c, 2-06a and 2-06c.



ERESOURCES

Go to www.natre.org.uk/bqic-big-questions-big-answers

to access the resources below:

- film clips and photos showing new year celebrations

Members are able to download extra resources to support this unit:

- a copy of the unit
- a fact file on Rosh Hashanah to support Activity 4 (Resource 4.3)

ACTIVITY 1:

Out with the old and in with the new!

Ask pupils to think about times in their lives when they have begun something new and left something old behind. If they find this difficult, suggest a few ideas, such as: moving house; starting a new school year, perhaps with a different teacher; or maybe a new baby or brother or sister coming home. It is important, within this activity, for pupils to consider the positive and challenging aspects of changes and new beginnings and ways in which these are marked. Put pupils into groups of about four to discuss their experiences. It might help to have some focus questions on view for them to discuss, such as:

- What was good or exciting about the new beginning?
- What were the main things that changed?
- Was there anything you missed about how things were before?
- Did you do anything to celebrate the new beginning or to remember how things used to be?
- Did you make any promises or pledges to mark the new beginning?

As a follow-up task, ask pupils to sum up their experience on one page. They can draw pictures and symbols but can use no more than ten words on the page. If there is time, choose some pupils to feed back to the rest of the class.

ACTIVITY 3:

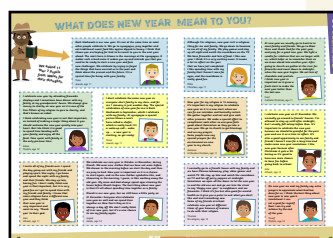
What does new year mean to you?

Use the pupil statements on pp. 18–19. It might be useful to cut these into a card-sort activity, so that pupils can move them around and read them out to each other easily. Divide pupils into groups to read and discuss the statements about new year. Pupils can take turns to read out the statements and discuss what they find interesting about them, what is similar to their own experience and what is different or perhaps unusual. Ask groups to elect a spokesperson who will feed back, telling the class which statement they found the most interesting, which statement they felt was most familiar and three things they learnt from reading the statements.

Pen pal

As individuals, pupils choose one of the pupil statements that they feel is most different from their experience of new year. Encourage them to imagine that the pupil whose work they've chosen is a new 'pen pal'. After re-reading the statement carefully, ask them to write an email to the pupil they've chosen. They should explain what they found interesting and different about this experience of new year, and ask one or two questions. They should explain how they celebrate new year and what these celebrations mean to them.

As an extension task, they can do some research to find out the answers to questions asked in the pen-pal email.



Resource 4.2

ACTIVITY 2:

Fact file

Read Resource 4.1, the fact file on Hindu and non-religious celebrations of new year on p. 17, as a class and watch the BBC *My Life, My Religion* clip on Diwali. Ask and invite questions as the text is read, and invite pupils to talk about their own experiences where appropriate. After reading, encourage pupils to discuss any differences and similarities between these different celebrations of new year.

Give me five

Ask pupils to write down or draw five things they remember about each celebration of new year. Invite pupils to feed back to the class.

Recall and explain

Show pupils stimulus images – for example, *diya* lamps, Lakshmi, Big Ben, fireworks – and ask them whether they relate to Diwali, non-religious celebrations of new year or both.

Select a pupil to explain how each image relates to the new year celebration to make sure they understand the how new year is celebrated and the meanings of the actions and the symbols within these celebrations.



Resource 4.1

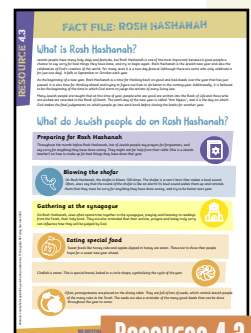
Journalist challenge

Ask pupils to imagine that they are writers working for a magazine aimed at children of their age. The editor has asked them to create a double-page spread with the title 'Why is new year such a big deal?' She wants the article to focus on either two religious perspectives or one religious and one non-religious perspective of new year. Pupils might focus on the two examples that feature in this unit (Diwali and non-religious celebrations), or they may choose two others to research independently and write about. Online resource 4.3 on Rosh Hashanah is available to members to support independent research. The article should deal with these four key questions:

1. Why is new year such an important celebration for so many people?
2. How do people worship and/or celebrate new year? (Choose two types of celebration – at least one should be religious.)
3. What are some of the similarities between the different kinds of celebrations in your article?
4. As the author, what are your own views on celebrating new year?

Encourage pupils to be creative and to use pictures, photographs and/or quotes to make their article clearer.

ACTIVITY 4:



Resource 4.3

FACT FILES – NEW YEAR WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION

Here in the UK, the first day of each year is 1 January. The night before (31 December) is known as New Year's Eve, and this is when most people will have new year's celebrations, staying up to welcome in the new year at midnight.

Not all places around the world have the same calendar as us, so for some people new year falls at a different time of the year. Some celebrations of new year can last for several days, or even weeks! Let's look at some different celebrations of new year

Hindus: Diwali and new year

Diwali is a five-day Hindu festival that falls in October or November. There are many different ways that the festival is celebrated across the world. Here are some examples of popular ways in which Hindus worship and celebrate during this festival.

Diwali welcomes the beginning of the new year, with many Hindus marking the new year on the fourth day of the festival. As well as decorating their homes with lights and diva lamps, many Hindus will clean their houses thoroughly to welcome in visitors over the holiday. This is also symbolic of sweeping away the old year and making way for the new. New clothes are worn, and children will give and receive gifts. In India, where many people are Hindus, Diwali marks the start of the new year in business too. People try to pay off their debts and start afresh. Diwali firework displays and street parties welcome in the new year. People eat traditional foods and sweets, often sharing these with their neighbours.

Each day of Diwali is important in its own way. Here are some examples..



On the first day of Diwali, many people pray to the goddess Lakshmi, bake sweets and clean their homes.



On the second day, many people decorate their homes with lamps and rangoli patterns on the floor, made out of coloured sand, powder, rice or petals.



Some Hindus see the third day of Diwali as the most important. On this day many people make a special effort to go to the *mandir* (temple) to worship the goddess Lakshmi. She is the goddess of wealth and good fortune, which people hope she will bring to them in the new year to come. Many people gather with friends and family for feasting and fireworks. Some light the lamps they displayed the day before.



The fourth day of Diwali is regarded as the new year for many Hindus. This is the time when many people exchange gifts.



On the fifth day it is common for people to honour and show appreciation for their brothers or sisters

Non-religious celebrations of new year

For lots of people, new year celebrations are not religious. This might be because the person is not religious, or it could be that a person who is religious is celebrating new year in a way that is not connected with their religion.

Around the world, there are many ways in which people mark the end of a year and look forward to the new year ahead. For instance, in parts of South America some people go for a walk with an empty suitcase on New Year's Eve to symbolise a year ahead that will hopefully be full of adventure. In Denmark, broken plates symbolise good luck and breaking old habits of the past year.

Here in the UK, many people celebrate by staying up late on 31 December, past midnight, into New Year's Day.



Fireworks and parties are part of gatherings of families and friends all over the country, and lots of people watch the new year countdown on TV, waiting for Big Ben to chime 12 times at midnight and holding crossed hands to sing the old Scottish song 'Auld Lang Syne'.



Rituals are performed every year by some families. This could be eating a certain type of food or visiting a special place. Opening the back and front door of the house to let the old year out and the new one in at midnight is a tradition to symbolise getting rid of old ways and worries.



Some people make new year's resolutions. This is a promise or pledge that they make that they believe will make life better in the new year. Popular new year's resolutions might include eating more healthily, saving up pocket money or doing something to help a charity or the local community.



WHAT DOES NEW YEAR



**We asked 11
Year 7 pupils
from Wales for
their thoughts.**

Rosh Hashanah is our new year. It's not at the same time as most other people celebrate it. We go to synagogue, pray together and eat traditional sweet food like apples dipped in honey. I think that shows you are hoping for God to be sweet to you in the next year ahead. The ram's horn is blown in the mornings at the synagogue. It makes such a loud noise it wakes you up and reminds you that you need to be ready to start a new year and face new challenges. We celebrate by trying to forget the things that have worried us in the past and think about the present and the future. It's a special time for being with your family.

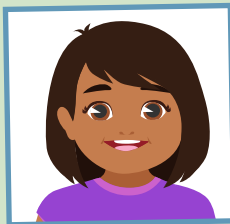
Ynon
Jewish, age 11



I celebrate new year by attending fireworks displays and I sometimes have dinner with my family at my grandparents' house. We always give money to charity on new year as it is one of the Five Pillars of my religion to give to charity, and that's known as zakat.

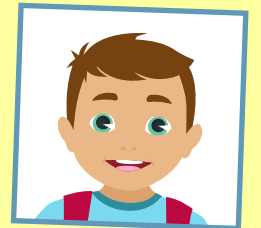
I think celebrating new year is not that important, as instead of making a major thing about it you should welcome the new year quietly into your heart. But I do think it is good to spend time bonding with your family and enjoy all the food. Time spent with family is the only precious time.

Zaina
Muslim, age 12



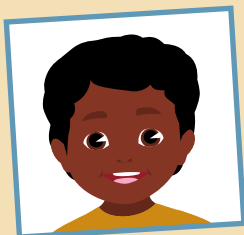
I don't celebrate the same new year as everyone else's family in my class, and for me 1 January is just another day. The special celebration of new year for me is Rosh Hashanah in September, which I celebrate with my family. At synagogue a special person blows a ram's horn called a shofar, which is really loud. It's a wake-up call – wake up ... a new year is starting, so get ready!

Tohar
Jewish, age 11



I invite all of my friends over. I spend the day going out with my friends and playing sport, like rugby. I go home and spend the night with my family and their friends. We stay up late, having fun. I don't really think new year is that important, but it is very good fun as I get to spend time with my friends and family. I know that some religions have a different new year and they think their new year is very important and want to say, 'Thank you' to their god.

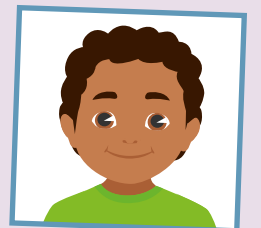
Hari
Atheist, age 11



We celebrate our new year in October or November, during Diwali. We wear new clothes that we have not worn before. We shower in the morning before we start the day and then we pray to God. New year is important as it is a chance to start again, and so the new clothes symbolise this, and showering in the morning, I guess, is like washing away the old year. My mum and dad always spend ages cleaning the house before Diwali begins. The best thing about new year is that it's all about spending time together as a family.

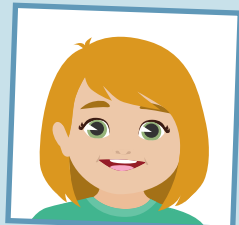
Diwali is our new year, but we still have a little party on 31 December. Everyone else celebrates new year as well and we spend time together on New Year's Day as it is always a day off. We don't really think of it as new year, but it's a nice chance to see my family again.

Jagad
Hindu, age 12



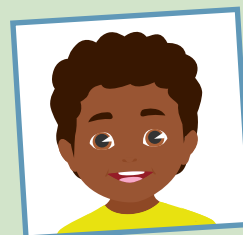
Although I'm religious, new year isn't a religious thing for me and family. We go down to Swansea to see all of my family. We play games and stay up all night and watch the countdown on the TV. We have fireworks and lots of food. I like new year. I think it's a very exciting event. It means a lot to reflect on the year that we have just completed. I like spending time with my family that I haven't seen for ages, and the countdown is really good fun.

Milla
Christian, age 11



At new year we usually go to Austria to meet family and friends. We go to Mass there and thank God for the past year, and pray for a good new year. We light a candle for relatives that are no longer with us, which helps us to remember them as we move ahead into another year. After going to church we gather at the river for fireworks and count down to midnight, when the new year begins. We eat lots of chocolate and pretzels. I think new year is important as it gives a fresh start to make the next year better than the last one.

Fred
Catholic Christian, age 11



New year for my religion is 14 January. It's important in my religion to celebrate new year as it is a new start where we can fix our mistakes and basically restart. We gather together and eat and give each other presents. We make a special effort to compliment each other so everyone feels good about themselves as they go into a new year. We go to church to get blessings and we say prayers. Some people now say special prayers for the environment on new year in my church.

Adriana
Orthodox Christian, age 11



I celebrate new year on 31 December. We normally go around to friends' houses. I'm allowed to stay up until after midnight, but I usually fall asleep before then. It's important to celebrate the new year because we should be grateful for the past year and use it as a time to reflect. It's also a good opportunity to see family and friends I haven't seen for a long time and make some new year resolutions. I like new year because after Christmas it gets a bit boring so it's good to have one more chance to have fun before going back to school.

Edie
Atheist, age 12



I normally go to a friend's house with my family and we have Chinese takeaway, play video games and watch TV. We stay up late and watch the countdown on TV and let off party poppers at midnight. Sometimes we open all the doors to let the new year in and the old one out and go out into the street to say 'Happy new year' to neighbours and see fireworks. I think it's fun but also good for mental health as it give you a point to end what you don't like and start something new. Some of my friends at school celebrate new year at different times of year because of reasons to do with their religion.

Thomas
No religion, age 12



On new year me and my family say extra prayers to appreciate what God has done for us. I think the best thing about new year is new year's resolutions! I can set a goal for myself that I can try and achieve by the end of the year.

Yousif
Muslim, age 12

