

# Spring is in the air

March 21<sup>st</sup> is the first day of spring, when both night and day last twelve hours. In many countries people celebrate the first day of spring because it means that winter is over. There are some similar things about the celebrations but also some interesting differences.

In Iran, the name of the spring celebration is Noruz. It lasts 13 days and is thousands of years old. In preparation, people clean their houses and make or buy new clothes for their family. For the meal, it is important to have seven foods which start with the letter 's' in their language. They think that eating many different kinds of food is lucky. They have other things on the table, sometimes coloured eggs, candles, a mirror or rose water. They also visit relatives and sometimes give eggs as a present. Some people in Iran light fires and jump over them because they think this is also lucky.

In Ukraine, birds fly back in spring. To celebrate this, people make bread in the shape of a bird. Children then play with these birds in the fields and sing songs. Men and boys light fires because they think that the fires clean the neighbourhood of bad things and people throw something into the fire because it brings good luck and money.

In Japan, many people visit the graves of their family on the first day of spring. They usually leave flowers and some sweet rice balls because traditionally they believe their ancestors prefer round food. They also celebrate by having picnics under cherry trees.

In ancient Italy, women planted seeds and watered them every two days. When the plants started to grow, they put red ribbons on them and placed them on family graves. Women in Sicily still do the same today.

One thing that is important in spring in many countries is eggs. In some countries people believe that if you can stand an egg on its end it brings good luck. People also roll eggs. For example, every year in the USA the President's family open a public egg-rolling event. In 2010, 30,000 people went to the event from all 50 states and there were 14,500 eggs!

So the first day of spring is a good time to celebrate the beginning of a new season and new life for plants, animals and people. Now you have some ideas for celebrating. Which will you choose?

## 1 In which country does/did the following happen?

- 1 People put food on people's graves. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 People from all over the country go to roll eggs. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 People jump over fires. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 People grow plants to decorate people's graves. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 People have food which starts with the same letter in their language. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Children play with birds made of bread. \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Here are some numbers from the article. Match them with the correct information. Then read the article quickly to check your answers.

50	1000s	12	14,500	2	30,000	7	13
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- 1 In the USA, \_\_\_\_\_ people came to the event and there were \_\_\_\_\_ eggs.
- 2 The Noruz celebration lasts \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- 3 People have \_\_\_\_\_ different foods for the celebration.
- 4 On the first day of spring, day and night both last \_\_\_\_\_ hours.
- 5 People come from all \_\_\_\_\_ states for the event.
- 6 In Sicily, women water the seeds every \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- 7 The Noruz celebration is \_\_\_\_\_ of years old.

3 Complete the table with the correct pronouns and possessives.

subject pronoun	object pronoun	possessive
You	you	your
It	it	
They		

4 Now complete the sentences with the correct pronoun or possessive from the table above.

- 1 People clean \_\_\_\_\_ houses.
- 2 Women grow plants and put ribbons on \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 3 On March 21<sup>st</sup> some people believe it is good luck to take an egg and stand it on \_\_\_\_\_ end.
- 4 People light fires and jump over \_\_\_\_\_ .
- 5 People visit the graves of their family and put flowers and rice balls on \_\_\_\_\_ graves.
- 6 People make bread in the shape of birds and children play with \_\_\_\_\_ in the fields.

5 Which of the ways of celebrating in exercise 4 is from which country? Look back at the text to check your answers.

6 Match the verbs from the box to their partner from the text.

give	buy	bring	light	have	clean	visit	make
1 _____	fires			5 _____	new clothes		
2 _____	relatives			6 _____	bread		
3 _____	presents			7 _____	good luck		
4 _____	their houses			8 _____	a picnic		

7 Discuss these questions with your partner(s).

- What was the most interesting or surprising thing you learned about celebrations around the world?
- Do people celebrate spring in your country? If so, how do they celebrate?
- Did people celebrate spring in the past in your country? If so, how did they celebrate?
- Would you like to celebrate spring? If so, which of the activities would you like to do? Are there any you wouldn't like to do?

### Glossary

**ancestor** (*noun*) - someone related to you who lived a long time ago

**ancient** (*adj*)- very old

**celebrate** (*verb*) - to do something enjoyable in order to show that an occasion or event is special.

**grave** (*noun*) - the place where a dead body is buried in a deep hole in the ground

**neighbourhood** (*noun*) - a particular area of a city or town

**picnic** (*noun*) - a meal you eat outside, especially in the countryside

**plant** (*verb*) - to put trees, plants, or seeds in soil or the ground so that they will grow there

**relative** (*noun*) - a member of your family, especially one who does not live with you, for example a grandparent or cousin.

**ribbon** (*noun*) - a long narrow piece of coloured cloth or paper, usually used as a decoration or to tie something

**roll** (*verb*) - to make something move forward by turning it over and over

**seed** (*noun*) - small hard part of a plant that can grow into a new plant of the same type

**traditional** (*adj*) - based on very old customs, beliefs, or stories **traditionally** (*adv*)