

THIS ISSUE

Homeschooling Quick Take

Information
Crafts
Puzzles
Activities
Recipes
Songs

And many other things to aid you in making this holiday season bright and full of fun for you and your family.

Have A Great Month!

Want to see something else? Let us know! paganmoonbeams@yahoo.com

Holiday Festivities

December is the month that holds more holidays than any other. Almost every religion has their own versions and names for these holidays. Yet they share a common thread in the way they celebrate them.

To aid you in your celebrating, Moonbeams will step out of it's regular format to offer a holiday focused newsletter. A big effort has been taken to offer useful things to aid in the many celebrations of this month.

It is with great hope that all of our readers will learn a lot and carry some holiday cheer throughout the whole month.

Happy Holidays From Moonbeams Staff!

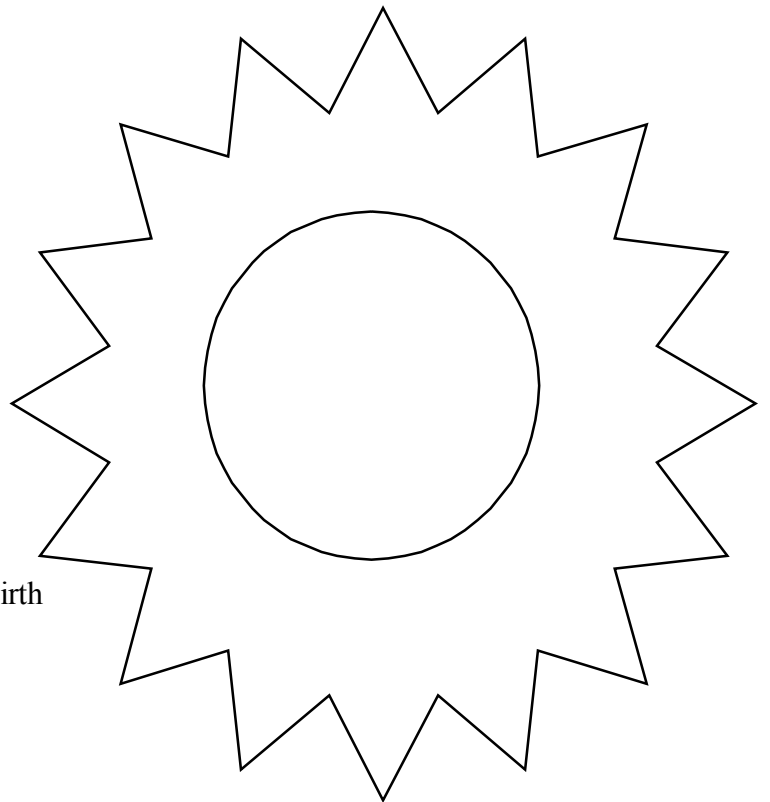
The Sun's Kiss

The sky has become dark
Unfolding funeral preparations
The death will make it's own mark
And bring forth new birth for it's sun

On it's last day the sun leans in close
To lightly kiss the very land it has ruled
Sadness visits due to what it knows
Being so bright it can't be fooled

A celebration takes place by almost all
To morn the death and hope for a great rebirth
A festivity of tradition straight from Gaul
Shines above the many different titles of this mirth

The sky takes a different dress
As the birth of a new sun appears
The earth has once again been blessed
And even so a new kiss slowly nears



Color the sun with the colors you feel during or after you read the poem.

The Midwinter's Shrine

The festivities of the month seem to put a lot of focus on religious and cultural traditions. The history for Midwinter seems to put strong demands on almost everyone and this can be overwhelming to us all at times. It is important to understand that there is no right or wrong way to celebrate this holiday, it is just important that you do celebrate it.

A great project would be to make a Midwinter Shrine. The shrine itself could be placed anywhere that makes you feel comfortable and can contain items or images of the things that make up your view of Midwinter. It should be something easy to set up each year and to alter if your beliefs change. You could also make a larger Midwinter shrine outside. Place it where you can see it from inside if possible.

Some ideas are listed below on how you could build your own Midwinter Shrine. Pick and choose as you see fit. Remember that the most important thing about a Midwinter Shrine is that it should be a reflection of you and your way of seeing things during this holiday.

INDOOR

use a red, green, blue, or white table cloth to cover the area in which you are making your shrine

spread fake snow fluff on top of your table cloth
place a small pine tree in the middle of the area

make small snow flakes out of paper to decorate your tree

make small thin pentagrams out of salt dough and cut into small circle ornaments to decorate your tree

add a mirror to represent a body of water and frost the edges with fake snow

add ice skater figurines to the body of water

add woodland creature figurines to the forest floor under your tree

lay some small pine cones around the base of the tree

lay some sprigs of holly or mistletoe on the branches of the tree

tie bells to the tree branches to represent Santa Clause and to ward off evil spirits

place small antlers at the foot of the tree

add a figurine of Santa
add figurines of small deer

place oranges with cloves pressed into them around the shrine to represent the sun

add pretty candles to represent the sun

OUTDOOR

small tree, make your shrine in a spot where there is already a small tree growing

make a star out of sticks and twine to put on top of the tree

set your luminaries around the shrine to represent the sun
add antlers at the base of the tree to represent the wildlife

set small flower pots full of bird seed as an offering to the woodland creatures

tie holly and pine sprigs to the tree with twine

add red outdoor holiday bows to your tree

add a stepping stone of the moon and sun as a reminder that the sun has returned

tie bells to represent Santa's sleigh bells to the tree branches

add a stone circle around your shrine area to represent the wheel of the year

paint Pagan symbols on the stones or make woodland creatures and faery creatures out of tin foil to hang from your tree

paint rocks to resemble pretty presents and place them under your tree

make God's eye ornaments and hang them on your tree

add a large rock or bench to sit upon and reflect about the sun returning and how it will effect your life in the upcoming months

The Season Tree

Timmy and his mother went shopping and to Timmy's amazement his mother bought a Christmas tree on the clearance rack. When he asked his mother why she had bought such a thing he was simply told for the family. In his mind he was a little upset because he could think of no reason a Pagan family would buy a Christmas tree.

It wasn't soon after that Timmy's mother began to frequent the craft stores, which was something new to her. She also began to make a lot of nature crafts throughout the year. Timmy never said anything to his mother or anyone about her strange behavior the whole year.

It was the Summer Solstice of the next year when Timmy learned all about his mother's plans. He was woke up to the smell of pine from an air freshener his mother had plugged in and she was singing some of the older Pagan songs.

Timmy, his sister and little brother all went into the living room to find their mother putting up that Christmas tree he remembered her buying last year. She had boxes and bags of decorations and asked the kids if they wanted to help.

As the kids helped her put the birds, nests, green leaves, and other summer decorations on the tree their mother talked to them about the holiday. Timmy seemed to learn more about the Summer Solstice than he ever had. His sister learned a new ancient Pagan song and his baby brother learned the meaning to three new words.

It has been many years now and Timmy is getting in the car to take his own children to his mother's to celebrate the Winter Solstice. His son asks him to pull over to the side of the road because he sees a leaf in the shape of the Greenman and wants to take it to grandma so she can use it on the Season Tree next time, they will even have time to press it.

Timmy watches as his children take off the colored leaves from the Season Tree, visually turning it from autumn to winter. He listens as his children learn about the holiday. Then he smells that sweet smell of pine just like he did that morning long ago as he woke up for the Summer Solstice.

Draw or paste cut-outs from magazines to show what you would like to put on your own season tree for each of the seasons.

Summer

Autumn

Winter

Spring

Celebration with Local Animals

As we enjoy nature's journey through the dark, cold side of the year let's not forget the animals. This is a season when we contribute to nature and a large part of that is the animals. Try giving them home-made offerings of food to comfort them during times when it is most needed. There are some recipes below that you can make and leave out for them as you celebrate this holiday season with them.

Fish Feed

1 Cup Ground Seaweed
1/3 Cup Ground White Bread
Ground Fish Skin

Mix together. Refrigerate until used.

Deer Feed

Deer eat many different things. The best foods to scatter on the ground for deer would be a mush made of cornbread with dry corn kernels in it or deer corn soaked in apple cider.

Opossum Feed

20 Mealworms
5 Crickets
4 Wax Worms
3 Cups Canned Cat Food
1 Chopped Banana
1 Chopped Sweet Potato
1 Chopped Apple

Combine into a salad form put into a container with a small screen (no rough edges) laying on top. Usually the screen keeps the worms in if they are still crawling around and the opossum can knock it off when they want to eat.

Wild Bird Feed

1 Box Cornbread mix
Pkg. required + 1 Eggs
Bird Seed
1 Small Jar Applesauce baby food

Make Cornbread according to package with the exception of the eggs. Be sure to add one more egg than package requires and do not crack—throw in whole egg, shell and all). Add bird seed and applesauce. Mix by hand.

Any unused portions can be froze and used again later by thawing out completely.

Rabbit Sandwiches

Bread
Lettuce
Sliced Tomato
Sliced Cheese

Make into a sandwich and leave for rabbit.

For All

Throwing out bread, nuts, berries, dry corn kernels and fresh vegetables will most likely feed a variety of animals anytime of the year!

Be sure to think clearly when feeding wild animals. Here are a few pointers to remember:

-) Never get too close to a wild animal no matter how 'tame' or 'pretty' it seems to be
-) Never feed wild animals on a regular place or schedule because they will become used to it and whenever you stop they could die waiting for that schedule of feeding to return.
-) Never think that food made for one animal is only going to be eaten by that animal. This means not to add any ingredient that would hurt or harm other animals that live in the area in which your food will be consumed.
-) Never put food too close to your own house. Wild animals are not always welcomed near homes; keep in mind how neighbors will react to them. They may harm the animals.

News Spin



Quick Clips

By: P. Nichols

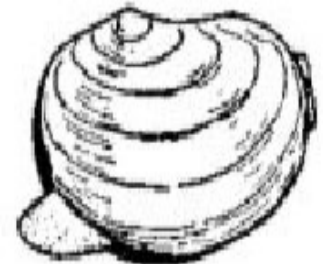


Tallest Vacuum Cleaner

Can you guess how tall the worlds tallest vacuum cleaner is? Can you guess what it is? If you guessed that it was a man made tornado 113 feet (34.43m) tall, you were right. Engineers at a Mercedes Benz Museum in Germany have created an indoor tornado that is not only a wonder to behold but also doubles as an excellent vacuum cleaner.

Old Animals

Do you want to live to be 100 years old? How about 400 years or more? There are some animals that can live that long. A clam caught by fishermen near Iceland is 405-410 years old making it the oldest known animal in the world. You can tell how old clams are by counting the rings on their shells.



Clam

How old am I?

Newgrange, a Solstice Location

The Winter Solstice is a holiday that many will celebrate. Each family and/or person has their own way to welcome the sun, this special day and the upcoming dark portion of the year. A great place to celebrate it would be Newgrange in Ireland (Donroe village in Co. Meath) .

If you haven't heard of Newgrange you may have been missing out on one of the greatest Winter Solstice stories ever. Newgrange is an ancient one acre long Megalithic Tomb shaped like a kidney and surrounded by a wall of 97 curbstones. The curbstones surrounding the tomb are covered with symbols and signs dating back to the ancient Celts. Newgrange receives over 2,000 visitors per year and has been determined a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

Newgrange is rich in history in several Pagan religions. The most well-known thing about Newgrange is that only during the Winter Solstice are certain halls lit up by the rising sun. People travel from far away to come and walk where the ancient people walked and witness the 17 minutes of sunlight that is given to special areas of the tomb during the five days of the Solstice.

There is only a limited number of people allowed in the hallway of the tomb because it is rather small. Each year a different procedure takes place to see who the lucky people will be. This year they are allowing applications in advance and a drawing to determine who and which days winners will be able to enter the tomb and see the special light of the Winter Solstice.

Take some time and do a little research on Newgrange. Plan a mock trip there. Write in your diary or special place how you think you would feel if you were actually permitted to feel and see the rising sun of the Winter Solstice in such a magical place. Draw a picture of the things you think you would see inside the tomb.

Celebrate the month with Pagans from all times and places

DECEMBER

1 Cromniomancy - to find the name of your husband
- unwed women and girls can carve names of boys/men on onions and set them in a warm place; whichever onion sprouts first will be the name of their future husband.

2 Hari Krugo - dedicated to women's crafts
- make a craft of your favorite Goddess using paper maché and add it to your alter or special place

3 Bona Dea - woman's secret celebration
- have an evening picnic for only the women and girls; the boys and men can prepare the food

4 Minerva - celebration to patroness of wisdom & art
- Learn a new word and make the word and/or meaning into an art form to hang it up for the day

5 Posidea - celebration by the sea in her honor
- have a picnic type meal near the water (a river, ocean, pool, filled sink, etc...)

6 Dion Fortune - born on this day
- read a little about Dion Fortune and make your own decision if she was really Pagan.

7 Haloia of Demeter - wonders looking for his lost daughter
- find something you or a loved one has lost recently and can't seem to find

8 Festival of Neith - honor the earth Goddess Delta
- aid the earth today by offering aid to something that it nourishes like trees or plants

9 Fiesta of the Mother of Health - honoring the mother of health
- brush up your CPR techniques, read up on some natural health remedies, smaller kids can learn how to care for cuts or what size band-aid is used for the different sizes of cuts

10 December Moon Ceremony - honoring all the souls of the dead that was used as food
- Burn some incense while you meditate today

11 Fire Festival of Sada - to show the victory of light over dark
- light bonfires at sunset or turn all the lights on in the house to aid in the winning of this fight

12 Day of Bruma - celebration in honor to Goddess of the winter season
- spend some time out in the winter weather

13 Saint Lucia's Day - a candlelight ceremony in Sweden carrying on a Pagan holiday
- daughters serve parents food this day

14 Nostradamus - he was born this day and set forth many predictions which some still believe are coming true
- use your form of divination or make a prediction of your own

15 Holcyon - a 7 day festival of tranquility and time of magical powers
- spend some time meditating

16 Soyal Ceremony - welcoming back the sun
- plan a special morning to watch the sun rise

17 Saturnalia - celebration to Saturn the God of the Sun
- play charades by candlelight

18 Birth of Deiv - which marks the rebirth of the sun
- decorate your house for the Winter Solstice today

19 Festival of Opalia - in honor of Ops Goddess of grain and agriculture
- do some baking today

20 Uri Geller born - famous psychic of Isreal
- work on mind strength today through meditation or any other means you are comfortable with

21 Winter Solstice - sun's rebirth
- be sure to do some celebrating on this day

22 Stewart & Janet Farrer founded their own coven - writers with many contributions to Witchcraft
- see how many books in your library are written by them, read at least a few passages from one of their books or do research to see how many books they wrote together

23 Chaomos - ritual purification ceremony
- take a long bubble bath or sing and dance

24 Start Birch Tree Month - Celtic tree calendar
- connect with your local birch tree by visiting one at it's home or through something you own made of birch wood

25 Dies Natalis Invicti Solis - birthday of the sun
- make a bonfire or small fire during the day outside

26 Yuletide Begins - honoring old gods & ancient magic
- make a mask of your favorite deity (Frau Sonne, Igae-hindvo, the Star Faery, Sunne, and Yemaya; or your own choice)

December (con't)

27 Birth of Freya - Goddess of fertility, beauty, and love
- take extra care of how you look today and be sure to tell the one closest to you that you love them

28 Peace Festival - honoring spiritual enlightenment and renewal
- write the names of your most respected spiritual leaders on paper then burn the paper outside so they can join the deities through the smoke

29 Procession of Anubis - a 7 day festival of tranquility and time of magical powers
- spend some time meditating

30 Ancestor Appreciation Day - in honor of those of importance
- Do your own form of "thank-you" to the ancestors from which you came.

31 Hogmagog - celebration to this sun God
- open all doors & windows in the house

Wassail For Yule

- 1 tsp. bitters
- 6 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tsp. ground allspice
- 12 oz. frozen apple juice
- 2 cups cranberry juice
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 16 whole cloves



Tie spices together in a cheesecloth bag. Combine juices, sugar, and bitters. Simmer together for ten minutes and remove spice bag. Serve hot, but not too hot for the little ones.

Season's Symbol Roots

Many religions celebrate their own holidays during this part of the season. Circle the things below that have Pagan roots. When you are done you can check your answers on page 19 .

BELLS

CANDLES

CANDY CANE

CAROLS

ELVES

EVERGREENS

GINGERBREAD

HOLLY

LIGHTS

MISTLETOE

ORNAMENTS

POINSETTIA

REINDEER

SANTA CLAUS

SLEIGH

SNOWFLAKES

STOCKINGS

TINSEL

TREE

WASSAIL

WREATH

Yule Riddles

1. My coat is wax. My cap is a flame. I wonder, can you guess my name?
2. I have pointed leaves and many a berry to deck the halls and make them merry. Who am I?
3. I'm long, sharp and cold...that's me! I hang from every roof and tree. Do you know what I am?
4. My berries are white and my leaves are dark green. A kiss you'll receive beneath me, if you are seen by another. What am I?

*** answers can be found on page 11.*

Instrument Test

Past holidays were celebrated with food, music, and merriment. Match the traditional European instrument with its name. See how many you get right! Check your answers on page 20.

BLOWING HORN

BONE FLUTE

BULL ROARER

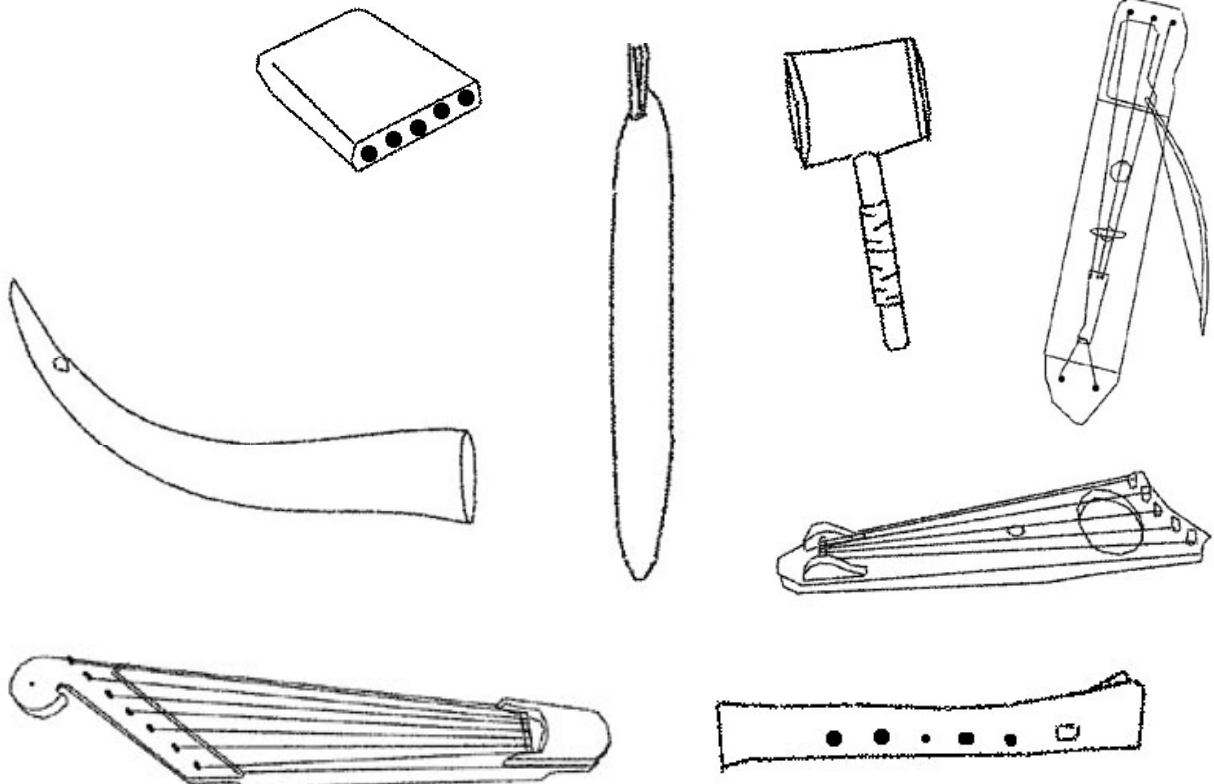
GUSLI

JOUHIKKO

KANTELE

PANPIPE

RATTLE



The gifts of Saturnalia

Giving homemade gifts is a great tradition during Christmas. There are many stories as to how this started, however, the most evidence for the date and holiday can be traced to the second century B.C.E. in Rome.

The Roman Saturnalia was a ceremony dedicated to Saturn, the God of agriculture and time. The holiday would last from Dec 17th—24th. The Romans would have tremendous feasts and they would throw all sense of order out of the way during this time. People would dress-up like other professions or social caste during this time. You would see the masters dressed like their slaves, husbands dressed like their wives and so on. All governmental buildings would be closed.

The actual gift giving would happen on the first day during the sacrificium publicum; the sacrifice of a young pig in the temple of Saturn in the Forum. Casual attire was worn and gifts were exchanged.



Make a Terra Cotta Doll

Carry on this ancient tradition by making a terra cotta doll of your own. These dolls will be used to enforce the upcoming study of different God/Goddess' which will begin in January.

Supplies Needed

Salt Dough
Toothpick
Twine
Baking Sheet

Recipe for Salt Dough

2 1/2 Cups Expensive Flour 2 TBL Cooking Oil
1 1/2 Cups Cheap Flour
1 1/2 Cups Fine Salt
1 1/2 Cups Warm Water

Instructions:

In a Large bowl mix the expensive flour, cheap flour, and salt together and set aside. In a medium bowl mix the water and oil together and gradually add to the flour mixture kneading in completely after every cup or so. Knead the dough until all the flour and salt is completely moist and the dough is soft and pliable. Take a piece of dough and roll into a long tube and hold in between your fingers. If the dough holds its form it is ready, if it does not and it starts to sag then you need to add a bit more flour. Leave the dough in the large bowl and cover for a couple of hours before you start your project. After you have let your dough sit and it is at room temperature you are ready to start making your doll. Have younger children roll the dough out flat, about 1/3 inch thickness, and cut out the arms, legs, and body. Be sure when cutting out the body you include the head. It needs to be all one piece. For older children, have them roll and shape the arms, legs, and body to give more of a 3 D look. For the fingers use mitten shapes, and for the feet use balls or boot shapes. You may want the torso to resemble a tunic or dress. Once you have the dolls body parts constructed you can set them aside on the baking sheet. Take the toothpick and at the top of the shoulders make a hole all the way through the doll. At the top of the arm do the same and make a hole all the way through the arm. Do the same for the other arm. At the bottom of the tunic, dress, or extended torso make a hole all the way through the doll, one on each side for each leg. Do the same at the top of each leg. Make sure you make to hole big enough the twine will go through it. You may want to leave a toothpick inserted in each of the hole you made while baking to insure the hole does not close. Bake at 300 degrees F for about 2 hours or until the dough is a golden brown and hard all the way through. Once your doll is through baking and has cooled you are ready to attach the limbs to the body. To do this you will need to cut 4 eight inch pieces of twine and thread through the holes to attach the limbs. Be sure to double knot the twine.

Enjoy your new doll and remember back to a time when these dolls were a Winter Solstice treasure!

Backyard Solstice Feast

There are many people who don't live in an area where they can meet with a group to celebrate the Winter Solstice. There are also many Pagan festivities that aren't available to kids. As an alternative have your own feast with nature. You can do this by turning your backyard into a Solstice Feast using the ideas presented below. While you enjoy your dinner sitting inside be sure to peak out the window and share your energy with nature's best view, complete with wildlife.

Garland

String some popped popcorn. Use colored popcorn for a more festive look.

Ornaments

Cut apples into pieces showing the pentagram then dry them in the oven on low heat. Attach to the trees with thin twine.

Icicles

Gather small twigs from the ground and wrap them with twine. Coat in peanut butter and roll in wild bird seed. Hang from the trees using the twine you wrapped over the twigs.

Wrapping

Wrap tree tops and other items around the yard with raffia. For an added touch you can tie them into loosely tied bows.

Draping String

Carefully string different kinds of unsalted nuts. Drape the strung nuts over trees or wrap them around tree trunks of tall trees.

Fruit Rings

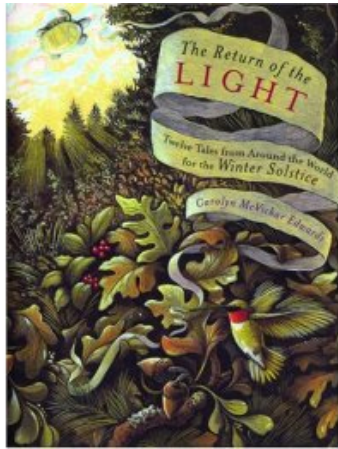
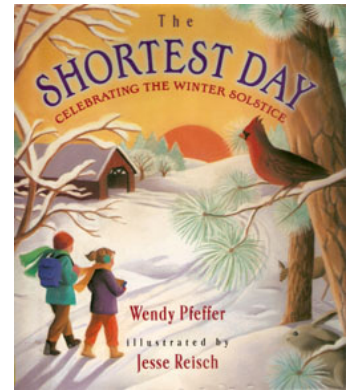
String a variety of dried fruits on strings. For added decoration add fresh cranberries in a pattern. Make them in the shape of circles.

Moonbeams Book Picks

The Shortest Day; *Celebrating the Winter Solstice*
by: Wendy Pfeffer

Age Recommendation: 6-9 yrs.

Review: This book tells a lot of Solstice history, the science behind the solstice, recipes, and fun idea's.



The Return of the Light; *Twelve Tales From Around the World for the Winter Solstice*
by: Ellen Jackson

Age Recommendation: 10yrs. and up or younger if being read to

Review: A great collection of 12 stories representing different beliefs which answer simple questions while showing the importance of this holiday time. There is also information on the countries the stories are from to an educational twist. Wonderful sea-

Yule Riddles Answers

(Answers from page 8)

1. My coat is wax. My cap is a flame. I wonder, can you guess my name?

CANDLE

1. I have pointed leaves and many a berry to deck the halls and make them merry. Who am I?

HOLLY

1. I'm long, sharp and cold...that's me! I hang from every roof and tree. Do you know what I am?

ICICLE

1. My berries are white and my leaves are dark green. A kiss you'll receive beneath me, if you are seen by another. What am I?

MISTLETOE

Bell Ringing

Hold or participate in a bell ringing as the Winter Solstice happens. Be sure to honor all directions and tell of a vision or wish for the planet earth for the upcoming year.

Mistletoe Mystery

The ancient Druids concluded the Winter Solstice to be the best time to cut Mistletoe from its host tree using a golden sickle. It is also mentioned that for a Druid to find mistletoe on an Oak tree would be magical.

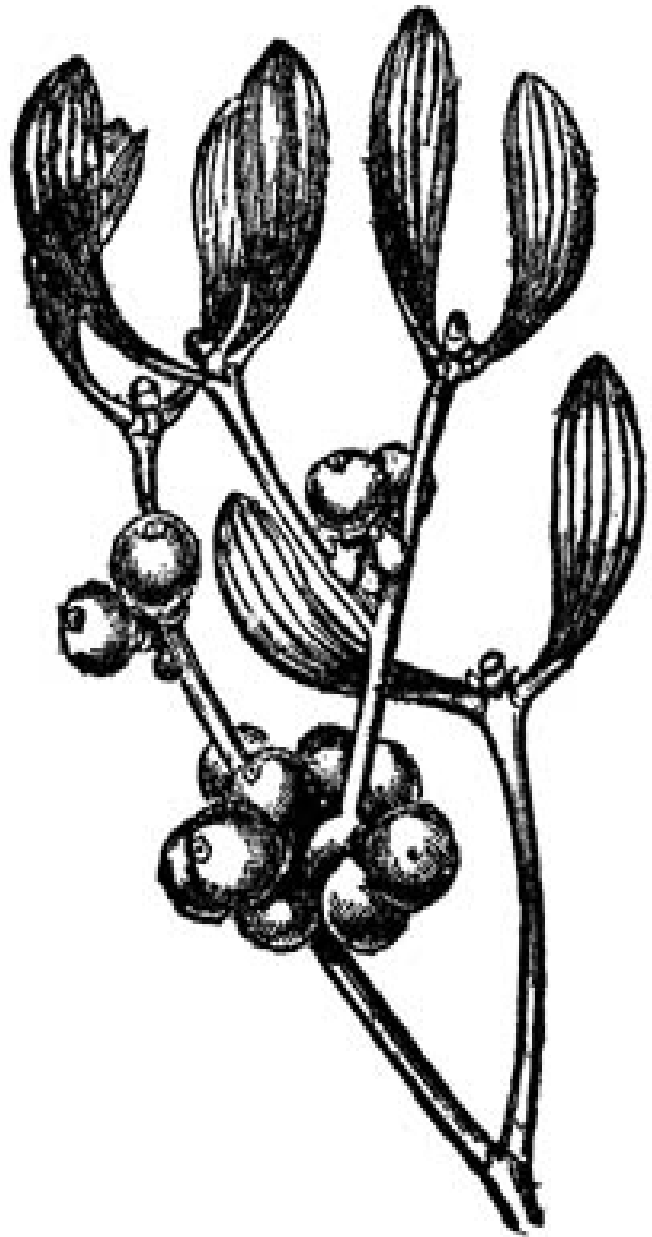
How much of this is true? Do your own research to find out. Some key questions are listed below to help direct your research a little.

1. The Druids were spread out through most of Europe. Does this area support the Oak tree?
2. Can a golden sickle be sharpened enough to cut mistletoe?
3. The ancient Druids were said to have worn long robes, would climbing a tree be possible in them?

A lot of the ancient Celtic religion and the actions of their leaders, the Druids, are lost to time because they weren't written down. What people have to rely on is information pulled from the writing of others who dealt with or witnessed things the Druids did. The statement at the beginning of the article was first found in writings by Pliny the Elder.

Today when trying to figure out if things actually happened we start with research, similar to what you just did. There are always disagreements in the way people view things, but, usually in the end a conclusion is made through compromise and/or one side showing the best proof.

Color the mistletoe below. When done see if you can point out its parts.



Norse Mythology

The Goddess Frigga made every plant and inanimate object promise not to bring harm to her newborn son Baldur. By mistake she overlooked the mistletoe. Loki, the God of mischief took advantage of this mistake and had Baldur killed by another God using a spear made of mistletoe through trickery. Because Baldur was the God of vegetation when he died the earth was forced to a life of winter. The other Gods got together and gave life back to Baldur. When this happened Frigga declared the mistletoe sacred and that it would only bring love in the future and no death to the world in all years to come. Kissing while under the mistletoe shows respect to Frigga and the sacredness she gave to the mistletoe.

Parasite Mistletoe?

Mistletoe is not an actual parasite, it is a partial parasite. Mistletoe actually can produce and grow on its own, it just chooses not to.



The Yule Wreath

The Wheel of the Year is continuously encircling time. Like the wheel of the year a wreath has no beginning and no end. The Pagans of long ago made wreaths from natural materials as a constant reminder that the wheel of nature keeps spinning; a wheel with no beginning and no end. It is constantly returning back to its place of origin. The Yule wreath symbolizes that light will return, for the wheel is constantly turning and the sun is growing.

Traditional Yule Wreath

18' wire wreath and a newspaper
Floral wire boughs of holly, pin, oak or other type of ever green
Pine cones
Dried apple slices
Cinnamon sticks
Spray Bottle

Take the wreath form and lay in on a newspaper. Take the nature items you are going to use and start by grouping them into small bunches and wiring them onto the form. It works best if you use floral wire that is on a spool so you can just wrap as you go. Attach the small bunches around the form pulling the wire tight until you have your wreath complete. You can then add the apple slices, pine cones, and cinnamon sticks with pieces of wire. Add a pretty bow on the top or bottom and it is ready to hang. Your Yule Wreath can be hung indoors or out depending on your preference. A fine, light mist of water should keep your wreath looking alive and well through the holidays as long as it does not freeze.

Yule Wreath in Texas

Living in Texas definitely has its perks, especially in the Winter season. We don't generally see much snow and the temperature is nice even fro this time of the year. Our family uses the wonderful Texas winter weather to our advantage when it comes to creating our Yule Wreath. As the days get shorter we find ourselves longing to be outside more. The cool air is inviting compared to the scorching heat from the end of spring, through summer, and into fall. Though the season tends to become full of hustle and bustle with the holidays approaching, we like to try and spend as much time as possible taking in the quite times and the little things that we neglect to notice when the heat is in the 100's. We start our outdoor holiday adventure on the first of December with a holiday tradition in mind. Each afternoon before supper we venture outside to look for natures little gifts. It may be a sprig of cedar, as there are no pines where we live, or a holly bush red with berries. We might find a pretty feather or an antler that a deer lost jumping a fence earlier in the year. As the month of December drags on we collect our treasures in a basket kept by the door. If it is a live sprig from a tree or plant we seal it in a plastic bag and place it in the refrigerator to keep it green and fresh. You would be amazed at how many things you can collect through out a month of evening walks. The evening of Dec 22nd I cook a fun holiday meal with every ones favorites in mind and we assemble our Yule Wreath. With each thing we add we say something we are thankful for. This can get one to thinking quite a bit since our collection can be quite large. Once we have completed our wreath we take an offering from our dinner out to the garden and place it there for the Faery Folk to enjoy as a thanks for all the wonderful treasures nature allowed us to use on our Yule Wreath.

Yule

In Northern Europe, as far back as ancient times, Yule was celebrated during the later part of December or the beginning of January. The festivities celebrated the middle of the winter season and fell in line with the lunar cycle. Although the dates have changed throughout the years, some form of this holiday exists in most parts of the world today. If you are planning to celebrate you may want to know a little more about how today's Pagan celebrates Yule; some of the important items are listed below.

HERBS

Bayberry, blessed thistle, evergreen, frankincense holly, laurel, mistletoe, oak, pine, sage, yellow cedar.

STONES

Rubies, bloodstones, garnets, emeralds, cat's eye, diamonds.

ALTAR DECORATIONS

Mistletoe, holly, small Yule long, strings of colored lights, Yule/Christmas cards, home-

APPROPRIATE GODS

All Re-Born Sun Gods. Some Yule Gods are: Apollo, Baldur, Oak/Holly King, Ra, Saturn, Helios, Ukko Odin, Lugh, The Horned One, The Green Man, The Divine Child, Mabon, Frey

APPROPRIATE GODDESSES

All Spinning Goddesses. Some Yule Goddesses are: the Dagda, Brighid, Angeronam, Eve, Pandora, Zvezda, Metzli, Yachimato-Hime, Tiamat, NuKua, Isis, Demeter, Gaea, Diana, The

SPELLWORKING

Peace, harmony, love, divination, a healthier planet, and increased happiness.

ANIMALS AND BEASTS

Stags, wolf, hawk, squirrels, wren/robin, phoenix, trolls.

COLORS

Red, green, gold, white, silver, yellow, orange.

TABOOS ON YULE

extinguishing fire, traveling

ACTIVITIES

Caroling
Wassailing The Trees
Burning The Yule Log
Decorating the Yule Tree
Kissing Under The Mistletoe
Making Wreaths
Throwing Holiday Parties
Meditate Or Do Magic For World Peace

Send Greetings
Show Love For Friends
Light A Fire
Do Volunteer Work
Make A Yule Log
Aid The Poor In Your Area
Pledge To Do Good Things
Start Caring For Wild Birds With Feeders & Water

Show appreciation to those who are important in your life

Yule Song

Ring, ring, ring the bells
Ring them loud and clear
To tell the children everywhere
That Yule time's finally here.



The Yule Log

The Yule Log is an old world English holiday tradition passed on from the Northern Pagans of Europe. On the day of Yule the families of the village ventured into the woods to find a great tree, usually oak. This tree, the Yule log, is a living symbol of the forest and of life. They would cut it down and bring it back to their homes. Back then the houses had huge hearths and fireplaces and eventually the entire tree would be burned. The new Yule log was lit from a scrape of burned log from the year before to serve in the continuity of good fortune. There were many superstitions and expectations that went along with the Yule log, such as; no unnecessary work was to be done while the Yule log burned in or around the house. Ashes were saved from the log and mixed in the feed of livestock and spread in the fields to ensure health of the manors animals and crops. Un-charred pieces were made into ceremonial plow shares to guarantee the fertility of the soil. The Yule log was burned from December 25th through January 6th; hence the twelve days of Christmas or Yule! Once the holiday celebration was complete, and the twelve days had reached its end, a scrap of wood from the log was saved to light the Yule log the following year. They stored this piece of wood under the bed of the mistress to protect the home against fire, lightning, and evil ailments.

“May the log burn”
“May the wheel turn”
“May evil spurn”
“May the sun return”

Crones Cottage

Common Yule Woods

Ash -- brings protection, prosperity, and health

Aspen -- invokes understanding of the grand design

Birch -- signifies new beginnings

Holly -- inspires visions and reveals past lives

Oak -- brings healing, strength, and wisdom

Pine -- signifies prosperity and growth

Willow -- invokes the Goddess to achieve desires

* * Never use the Elder



Yule Log Craft

A Small log from the woods listed below or of your choice (not Elder wood)

2 Small sticks about a half inch in diameter and the length of your log

Sprigs of pine, holly, or mistletoe

Candles (red, green, and/or white)

Festive colored ribbon

Carving tool

Drill with 3/4 inch drill bit

Hammer and small nails

Hot glue gun

Turn your Yule log over so the bottom is facing up and nail the two sticks about an inch apart from one another to keep log from rolling later then turn it back over and drill 2 or 3 holes (3/4 inch) for candles to fit in (you may want to get help from an adult). Now it's time to decorate your Yule log. Use the hot glue gun to attach the sprigs you have. Add a pretty bow and carve Pagan symbols of your choice into the log using the carving tool. You can anoint the candles with oils for Yule and place them into the holes. Your log is now ready for the Yule celebration of ensuring that light will return!

*** Be sure to keep one of the candles for lighting next year's Yule log. Wrap it in a dark cloth and store in a cool place.*

Yule Log Cake

What better project for the whole family to do together than to make a Yule Log Cake. If your family doesn't really do things like that, then surprise them when you make it on your own!

Preparations: Preheat an oven to 375 degrees F.

Cut sheet of parchment paper to fit a 16x12" Jelly roll pan (press it into pan to be sure it fits well)

Spray all sides with cooking spray.

Line the middle cups of a cupcake pan with cupcake papers (2-4, your choice)

Make Cake:

4 eggs	1 cup sugar	1/2 cup water
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	1 1/4 cups cake flour	1 1/4 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt		1/2 cup confectioners' sugar

In a large bowl beat eggs 5 minutes or until thick, use an electric mixer if you have one.

Add sugar and beat 5 more minutes.

Mix in the water and vanilla on low speed.

In separate bowl mix the dry ingredients (cake flour, baking powder and salt).

Add the dry ingredients to the rest of the ingredients and mix until combined.

Fill cupcake papers 1/2 way full.

Pour all remaining batter into the Jelly roll pan and be sure to move pan around until it is spread evenly.

Bake the cupcakes and cake until they spring back when touched (approx. 10 min.)

Let both cool for 5 minutes, then set aside cupcakes.

Spread out a clean kitchen towel and sprinkle powdered sugar on it.

Turn cake upside down and let it fall onto the powdered towel, remove the pan, and gently pull off the parchment paper.

Roll up the cake and towel together starting with the long side.

Put in refrigerator for 30 minutes.

While waiting mix up filling:

1 pt. heavy whipping cream

1 (3 1/2 oz. box) instant pudding mix, desired flavor

Fruit (if desired)

Beat whipping cream on med-high with a mixer until it starts to get thick

Add in pudding mix a little at a time

Be sure it is all mixed well.

If using fruit fold it in.

Prepare the serving platter for cake:

Put two dollops of icing in the middle of the plate so the cake will stick to it.

**you can use an icing made the same as the filling or made with a different flavor pudding or you can use canned icing.

When cake is ready to come out assemble it:

Unroll it on counter.

Spread filling over the cake using a spatula while leaving 1" space on all edges

Roll cake up again beginning at the long side and remove towel as you do so (go slow and be careful)

Place the cake on the serving platter and gently push it down so it stays secure with the icing dollops

Ice the completed log cake with 1/2 of the icing.

Next take cupcakes out, cut them if desired, and arrange them on the log cake to resemble branches.

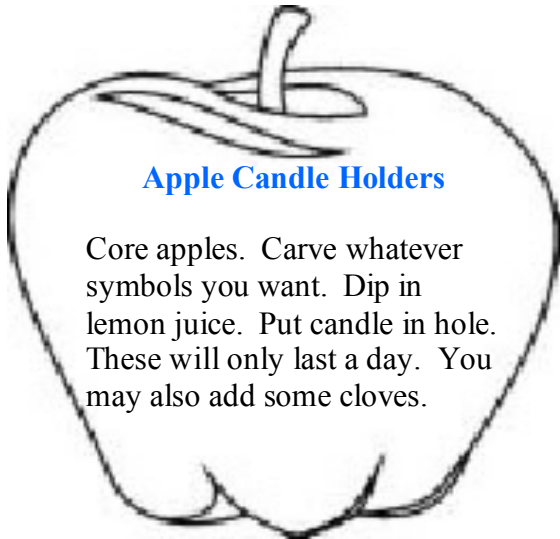
Use icing as needed to cover or affix the cupcakes to cake

Design Cake:

If your cake is not the color of a log you can lightly sprinkle cocoa powder to give it the correct color

Take a toothpick and lightly drag through the icing for a bark look

Use candies, small plastic plants, or other things to add a decorative look to your Yule Log Cake.



Apple Candle Holders

Core apples. Carve whatever symbols you want. Dip in lemon juice. Put candle in hole. These will only last a day. You may also add some cloves.

Winter Solstice Luminaries

Celebrate the birth of the sun by placing Winter Solstice Luminaries out side of your home!

Supplies:

- tin cans
- nail hammer
- candle
- sand or kitty litter

- 1) Cut out one end of tin cans.
- 2) Fill the cans with water and put them in the freezer overnight, or until the water is frozen. This prevents the can from caving in when you use the nails and hammer to decorate it.
- 3) When it's frozen, use a hammer and a nail to puncture holes in the cans in the pattern of a sun or star.

Cinnamon Stick Garland

Thread some dental floss, embroider floss or quilting thread onto a needle. String cinnamon sticks through the long hole in the middle of the stick onto the thread. You can add whatever else you want in between the cinnamon sticks (cranberries, popcorn, etc...).

ORNAMENTS

Pine Cone

Find or buy pine cones and hang from ribbon. You can decorate them with paint or gems.

Dried Citrus Fruit

Find fresh citrus fruit, such as oranges, limes, lemons, or grapefruits. Slice into thin circle slices. Put them carefully on a cooling rack. Put into oven at 200° for several hours, turning every hour until they are dry. Open the oven door slightly and leave in the oven overnight. String with fishing line, and hang on the tree.

Scented

- 1 Cup Cinnamon
- 3/4 Cup Applesauce
- 1/4 Cup White School Glue

Mix ingredients together, roll out on a lightly floured surface. Cut out with cookie cutters. Punch a hole in the top of each ornament with a drinking straw. Dry for at least 48 hours. Tie a string or ribbon through the hole, and hang on the tree.

Hard Candy

Lay out any hard candies on a cookie sheet. Bake 10 minutes in 300° oven. Let cool for a few minutes. Before they are hard, poke a hole in the tops of each with a toothpick or pencil. After they are hard, put an ornament hanger through the hole.

They will last for years!

*** Use yellow hard candies and follow directions to represent the sun and honor him and aid in bringing him back.*

Celtic Corner

The Sacrifice of the Wren

In ancient Pagan times a king would only hold office for seven years. At the end of his term he would be sacrificed along side a wren. Both the sacrificed king, wren, and newly chosen king would be part of the Winter Solstice parade, a major part of the festivities.

The Bird King

The birds decided to have a race to determine which bird would be the king of all birds.

As would be expected the eagle flew way above the others and then ran out of energy so he began to fall. Then the wren, who had been hiding under the eagle's wing, flew out with lots of energy and flew even higher.

The Wren was then considered the king of all birds. He is respected by both the birds and humans. The Wren was considered very sacred to the Ancient Celtic peoples.

Color the Bird King

Use colored pencils to color this wren. Use an internet search if you aren't familiar with the correct colors. Remember you are looking for the Wren that is in Europe, not it's U.S. relative. Older kids can do a search for the same bird that was around in Ancient Celtic times; especially during the Halstatt period.



Cakes & Ale

Cakes & Ale is one of the oldest traditions known. This tradition can be found in many cultures throughout the ages.

The Ancient Celts made this tradition theirs as well. They would celebrate all small acts like a good fight, successful hunt and all high days.

Celebrate this Winter Solstice with your friends or family by having cakes & ale. Some authentic Celtic recipes are here if you would like to try them.

Faerie Cakes

1 Stick Butter
2/3 Cup Sugar
2 Eggs (beaten)
1/2 Teaspoon Vanilla Extract
Grated Rind of 1 Orange
3/4 Teaspoon Baking Powder
1 1/4 Cup Flour
1 Tablespoon Milk
1/3 Cup of Raisins

Mix butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in eggs, vanilla and orange rind. Mix baking powder and flour then add to mixture. Add milk to make batter dropping consistency. Fold in raisins then put in well greased or papered muffin cups. Bake 375° for 25 minutes.

Sugar Icing: Mix 2 Cups Powdered Sugar & 2 Tablespoon Boiling Water. Drizzle over Faerie Cakes.

* Make these on December 12 to get their magical properties that enable you to see fairies.

Mulled Cider

8 Cups Apple Cider
1/2 Cup Brown Sugar
Pinch of Ground Nutmeg
6 Inches of Stick Cinnamon
1 Teaspoon Whole Allspice
1 Teaspoon + 8 Whole Cloves
8 Orange Wedges with Rind Attached
Cheesecloth

In saucepan combine cider, brown sugar and nutmeg. Place cinnamon, allspice and 1 teaspoon of whole cloves into cheesecloth and tie with a string. Add spice bag to cider mixture and bring to boil. Reduce, cover and simmer for another 5-10 minutes. Take out spice bag and throw away. Serve cider in mugs with a clove studded orange wedge in each. Use cinnamon sticks for decoration.

Season's Symbol Roots

(answers from page 7)

Bells– Pagan. Bells were used to drive away demons which surfaced during the dark time of the year.

Candles– Pagan. Candles were lit to encourage the sun to shine, especially during festivals.

Candy Cane– Christian. Peppermint leaves and teas are Pagan, however the candy cane was invented by an American confectioner using a Christian symbol.

Carols– Christian. Carols were introduced in the fourth century by the Catholic Church.

Elves– Pagan. The Norse land of Alfheimr (land of the elves) was inhabited by spirits that created the sun.

Evergreens– Pagan. There is evidence of different Pagan groups throughout history decorating evergreens.

Gingerbread– Christian. The Crusaders started this tradition by introducing ginger, and gingerbread. French and German bakers united to make the gingerbread into a man.

Holly– Pagan. Holly began as a symbol of rebirth and friendship for many different Pagan religions.

Lights– Pagan. For many centuries homes were decorated with light to frighten negative entities and urge the sun to shine.

Mistletoe– Pagan. Believed to first be used by the Greeks during winter ceremonies. The Druids are the ones who gave it sacredness and special meaning.

Ornaments– Pagan. Fruits, candy, cookies and flowers were all used to decorate trees by the Germanic people.

Poinsettia– Christian. An old Mexican myth of a poor boy wanting to buy Christ a gift for Christmas made this magical flower appear.

Reindeer– Pagan. These magical creatures were derived from the Goddess Freya Stags that carried her chariot or symbolizing Cernunnos, a Celtic god.

Santa Claus– Pagan. Either from the Norse sun-god or the Aryan god Odin.

Sleigh– Pagan. Definitely from the Norse god Freya who spent 12 days after the Winter Solstice in her chariot drawn by stags. She gave gifts and goodwill to the good and misery to the bad.

Snowflakes– Pagan. These represent Demeter's tears when Persephone descended to the Underworld. The symbol was also used by Pagans throughout time to represent love.

Stockings– Christian. They fall back to a story of women who were worried about living alone and of St. Nick leaving presents in them one night when their windows and doors were locked.

Tinsel– Christian. A story of spiders wanting to climb on the tree and not being permitted so the Christ child allowed them to go on the tree anyway. They wove webs that covered the tree which delighted the child and he turned them to silver so they would always be there.

Tree– Pagan. Decorating a tree began back with the Egyptians and Babylonians. Decorating a tree during this particular holiday came from a version of this practice used by the Germans, who got it from the Romans.

Wassail– Pagan. The Anglo-Saxons started this ritual by sprinkling trees with eggs, apples, cider and ale to insure a good apple yield for the coming year.

Wreath– Pagan. The Greeks picked the circle because it was a symbol of life (death, rebirth, death, rebirth, etc...), like the sun in the Pagan religions, then covered it with greenery and used it for decoration during their Sacaea festival.

The Horn Dance

12 men with auroch or deer horns on their heads walk and dance to the beat of a couple of ancient instruments. Behind them to represent chasing them is a boy on a hobby-horse with a bow and arrow and a maiden. The dance would start with the horned dancers facing one another and butting horns while they danced. The dance would take off to a walk towards a holy ground. The horned dancers would represent the horned animal running from the boy which was hunting them. The complete walk, their movements, and the mini-play they put on are all a part of the Horn Dance.

During the Winter Solstice 1000 CE this ceremony took place. It was an actual ritual believed to ensure a good hunt. The ceremony is said to have been accompanied by bone chilling war music.

Although it actually was celebrated during the Winter Solstice, today it has moved it to early September. The dance has also gained a name; Abbots Bromley Dance. There are a few reenactments, mostly in Europe countries, of the event where the dancers go from house to house following a trail of 5-10 miles to get everyone excited about the dance.

Does the Night Win?

There is a constant battle between the light of the sun and darkness which carries the moon.

This battle is a very old battle and the wins and losses seem to be tallied by the heavens. A winner can never be determined because reasoning and circumstances outweigh the results.

The most puzzling time is the night of the Winter Solstice. Maybe you can decide who wins during this confusing time.

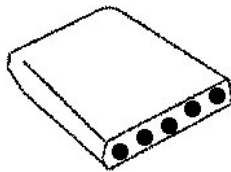
See the night is the longest it is throughout the year. On that same note it is during this same time that the heavens give rebirth to the sun. Rebirth may take a while.

Can you decide who should get the tally point for the Winter Solstice day?

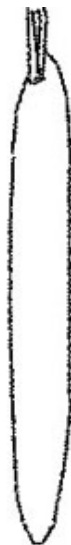
Instrument Test Answers

(Answers from page 8)

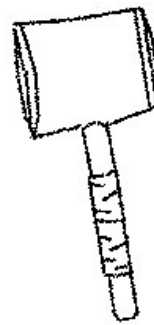
Ancient instruments were made of animal parts and wood. Even though they were very simple they had a wonderful sound adding a festive mood to any occasion.



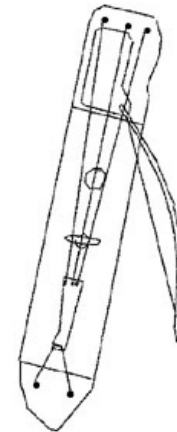
Pan Pipes



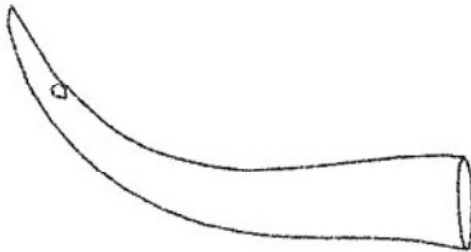
Bull Roarer



Rattle



Jouhikko



Blowing Horn



Gusli



Kantele



Bone Flute

Make some tree snacks for the animals to eat and leave behind a message for you!

Gift Giving From the Trees

Back before recorded history the northern shamans are believed to have shared with each person the fate of the world, turning of the seasons or prediction of things to come in the future.

The Shaman would climb a tree and bring back with him these messages for everyone as it was given to them from the Gods.

This could be considered the beginning of the ritual preformed by Santa Clause.

Soft Pretzels

1 Pkg. Active Dry Yeast (scant tablespoon)	2 3/4 Cup Flour
1 Cup warm Water (115 to 120°F.—no boiling)	1 Tablespoon
2 Tablespoon Vegetable oil or Softened Butter	1/2 Teaspoon Salt
2 Tablespoon Baking Soda	4 Cups Water
2 Tablespoon Coarse Salt	

Makes 12 large pretzels or 24 sticks.

Add yeast to warm water; let sit 5 minutes

Combine 1 1/2 cups flour, sugar, salt and oil in a large mixing bowl. Add yeast mixture and stir until well-combined. Add remaining 1 1/4 cups flour. Knead dough 3 min.; form into a ball. Let sit 1 hour. Dough should double in size.

Divide dough into 12 pieces and roll each piece into a ball (dust hands with flour to prevent sticking). Place balls on a cookie sheet or lightly floured surface. Let rest 15 minutes.

Roll each ball into a 16" length and form into a pretzel shapes. Or, divide each ball in half and roll each half into a 3" stick, about 3/4 inch wide. Let rest a few minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 475°F. Grease a large cookie sheet. In a non-aluminum pot, bring remaining 4 cups water to a boil with baking soda.

Add pretzels to the boiling water in batches (do not crowd pot) and boil 1 minute, turning once. Shake off excess water. Place pretzels on cookie sheet and sprinkle with coarse salt. Bake 10 min. until golden brown. Best eaten right out of the oven.

Write sayings on slips of paper and wrap them in tin foil so that the animals can not eat them. Roll out the pretzel dough and place the tin foil with the paper in it in the center if the dough and then form into what ever shape you desire. Once baked you can coat in peanut butter and roll in bird seed or you can add the bird seed right to the recipe before you back it. Tie the ornaments to

The Complete Tradition of Santa Clause

The children begin to run to the northern shaman who is coming out of the dark forest. They know it is him because they hear the bells in his sack of tricks ringing.

The come forward and join the other's who have gathered around him. The Shaman is covered in red; his cape or robe is red trimmed in white and he has with him a sack of tricks. The color red is very familiar and special to the children because it represents many important things like fire bringing warmth and blood which is the connection of mankind and animals.

The children's eyes light up as the shaman begins to pull things out of his sack. This is truly an amazing event and it only happens once a year. The most amazing thing is that out of this red bag the shaman pulls a burning brand to signify the fire within everyone; the life fire. The fire is actually a gift to the people of the village, one given by the Gods and Spirits of the land.

The shaman pulls magical reindeer that could fly from his bag. They are decorated in reins with bells attached to them. He talks of how these very reindeer took the shaman on a journey into the heavens in search of the gifts of fire and prophecy.

The kids grew very excited to hear what the shaman had learned on his journey. Especially the stories and facts about their village and certain people within it.

Moonbeams First Contest

Moonbeams would like to hold several contests through the year for different ages of children. The contests would aid in the child's educational and spiritual growth as well as give them an opportunity to contribute to Paganism as a whole. To kick off this new concept the first contest will begin this month; you can find all information for it below.

Input, idea's or complaints about us holding contest would be greatly appreciated and considered. Feel free to drop an email to paganmoonbeams@yahoo.com.

Coloring Imbolc Contest

Ages: 11-14

Contest: Create an Imbolc themed color-by-number that also tells the meaning of the colors to be used.

Prize: 1 year tuition @ Grey School of Wizardry
<http://www.greyschool.com/>

Deadline: Jan 12, 2008

Details: Must be your own work done on paper and scanned in. One entry per child to be e-mailed as an attachment to paganmoonbeams@yahoo.com. Include your first name or magical name and age. Winning Color-by-number will be posted in Pagan Moonbeams February Issue along with credit information. Winner will be contacted by reply email for prize retrieval information.