

2. FAMILY CELEBRATIONS

A Comparison of Korean and American Cultures

GRADES: K-6

AUTHOR: Mary Haas

SUBJECT: Social Studies

TIME REQUIRED: One class period

OBJECTIVES:

As a result of this lesson, students will:

1. Identify holidays and describe ways they celebrate them with their families.
2. Identify special celebrations in the Korean culture and describe the activities of the families on those occasions.
3. Complete a Venn diagram which lists unique and common family celebrations in Korea and the United States.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Reading and worksheet provided with the lesson.

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask: "What are the names of the holidays that you and your family celebrate?" List the students' responses on the board.
2. Divide the list of holidays into those all classmates celebrate and those only some of the members of the class celebrate. Look at the list of holiday names and group them by categories such as religious, ethnic or heritage, individual, and national.
3. For each holiday, ask the students to briefly share some of the special things that family members do to celebrate each holiday. Make a separate list of all the special and unique ways American families celebrate their holidays.
4. Distribute the reading: Korean Celebrations and read the selection aloud to the students.
5. Now distribute the Venn diagram worksheet and ask the students to work in cooperative groups of three to complete it.
6. Have a class discussion to check and complete a class Venn diagram by asking the different groups to provide one listing from each category until all of the small groups' correct ideas are included in the class diagram. Count the number of different or unique entries for the U.S.A. and for Korea. Count the number of common ways families celebrate. Ask: "Which of our lists is the longest?" "What does this tell us about the similarities and differences of families in the U.S.A. and Korea?" Ask these students to identify which of the Korean holidays are similar in their purpose with holidays celebrated by families in the U.S.A.?"
7. Summarize the lesson by asking: "If you could talk with students in a Korean school and ask them to tell you things about their family celebrations, what do you think they would say?" "What would you tell Korean students about your family celebrations?"

EVALUATION:

Ask the students to identify important ideas they have learned about American or Korean holiday celebrations. List their answers on the board.

REFERENCE:

Korean Overseas Information Service. (1994). *A Window On Korea*. Seoul, Korea: Seoul Systems Co., Ltd

KOREAN CELEBRATIONS OF HOLIDAYS

In ancient Korea the calendar was a lunar calendar which means all months have the number of days that it takes the moon to pass through its phases. This type of calendar was often used in ancient cultures throughout the world. The days for celebrating festivals were identified as a certain number of days after a particular moon. The western or Gregorian calendar, based on the sun, has different numbers of days in various months. Koreans began to use the Gregorian calendar in the early 1900's. Since most Korean festivals and holidays have their origin in ancient times, the day for a celebration is derived from the lunar calendar. This means that in today's Korea a holiday may not always be celebrated in the same month. For example, Buddha's Birthday is the eighth day of the Fourth Moon, which is usually in the month of April or May. This may seem confusing because you are only familiar with the Gregorian calendar, but the Korean people have no trouble determining when they celebrate their holidays. Calendars published in Korea usually include lunar dates as well, even today.

Traditionally, the first month of the year was very important because it marked the beginning of a new year, and many activities took place throughout the entire month to please the spirits and bring good luck to the family or the village. Since most of the people were farmers, many of the games and ceremonies were closely related to farming and the need for good weather and natural conditions to grow enough food. In ancient times people remained awake all through the night on the last night before the New Year. Among both the royalty and the farmers music and special services were presented to drive out evil spirits so that the New Year would be filled with good fortune.

In Korea the first day of the First Month is *Sollal*, New Year's Day. It is one of the biggest holidays of the year. To observe this day people take off work to share it with their family. They dress in their very best clothing and conduct ceremonies to honor their ancestors. Younger members of the family pay honor to the older members by bowing to them and taking New Year's greetings to older relatives and neighbors. A feast is prepared and eaten by the family.

The 15th day of the First Moon finds people celebrating by eating various kinds of nuts and setting off firecrackers to rid themselves of harmful spirits, insects, and animals. In the moon's light traditional games are played. Neighboring villages take part in mock fights, tugs of war, and stone fights while hundreds of spectators watch. Traditionally, it was believed that the winning village would be blessed with bumper crops.

Hansik, which falls on the 105th day after the winter solstice, is usually celebrated in early April. Families visit the graves of their ancestors to pay respects and repair the tombs by planting new grass on the grave mound.

The eighth day of the Fourth Moon is the celebration of Buddha's Birthday. While the majority of Koreans are not Buddhist today, as they once were, Buddhism is still widely practiced and the history and traditions of Korea are greatly influenced by Buddhism.

Therefore, this day has been designated as a national holiday. People visit the temples and shrines and hang special lighted lanterns in the shape of a brightly colored lotus flower in honor of their families and Buddha.

On the fifth day of the Fifth Moon is the holiday *Tano*. On this day people rest from work, dress in their best clothing and feast as they do on New Year's Day. Traditionally, men had wrestling matches called *sírum*, and the winner would receive a bull, while the women had a swinging competition with a gold ring as the prize.

Ch'usok, the Harvest Moon Festival, is celebrated on the 15th day of the Eighth Moon (usually in September or October). *Ch'usok* is celebrated with much enthusiasm and enjoyment. It is a national holiday marking the end of the agricultural season and its harvest. Feasting is only a part of the celebration. Families visit the shrines and tombs of their ancestors, often traveling long distances to be able to participate in the memorial services. Offerings of fresh foods from the new harvest and flowers may be brought to honor the ancestors. The traditional dress with its bright colors is worn and in the evening everyone views the full moon.

The Tenth Moon is *Kimjang* season. This is not actually a holiday, but it is a season set aside for a specific purpose that is practiced by everyone. During this month enough *kimch'i* (pickled vegetables) is prepared to last through the three months of winter. Although *kimch'i* is not the main dish, it is an essential part of each meal. Often more than one type of *kimch'i* is served with a meal.

Since a larger number of Koreans follow Christianity than any other religion, the Christian holidays of Christmas and Easter are celebrated in the churches with special religious services. Christmas especially, is celebrated by everyone regardless of one's religious belief.

WORKSHEET
Classifying Ways Families Celebrate

