

Easter is a very important festival for most Christians, and for many other people it's a time to celebrate the arrival of spring, and of course eat chocolate eggs!

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–j) with the vocabulary (1–10).

Vocabulary

1. the Resurrection
2. a symbol
3. pagan
4. a tradition
5. Holy Week
6. to hunt for something
7. to roll
8. confetti
9. sawdust
10. a procession

Definition

- a. belonging to a religion which existed before the main world religions
- b. something people usually do at a special time, and have done for many years
- c. to make a round object move by turning over and over
- d. a sign, shape or object that is used to represent something else
- e. very small pieces of wood that are produced when you cut wood with a saw
- f. in the Christian religion, Jesus Christ's return to life on the third day after his death
- g. a formal line of people walking in the same direction during a religious ceremony or public celebration
- h. the week before Easter Sunday
- i. to try to find something
- j. very small pieces of coloured paper that you throw at a celebration

Easter

The meaning of Easter

Easter is a spring festival of new life. For Christians, it's a very important festival which marks the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and many attend special church services. Many non-Christians also have a holiday at this time, so it is a popular time for spending time with friends and family. We see lots of symbols of new life at Easter, especially eggs, chicks, flowers and rabbits. These symbols go back to ancient pagan traditions which celebrated fertility, rebirth and new growth after the long winter months.

When Easter is celebrated

The dates of Easter change from year to year, as they are based on the moon, but it's usually sometime between the end of March and the end of April. In the Christian church, Palm Sunday celebrates Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem and marks the beginning of Holy Week. In the UK, the Easter holiday weekend lasts for four days, from Good Friday to Easter Monday.

Easter eggs

Eggs are a popular part of Easter celebrations, as they are a symbol of new life. Traditionally, people paint chicken eggs and decorate them with bright colours. Nowadays, chocolate eggs are just as popular as the traditional kind! There are many different Easter egg traditions around the world.

In the UK, as well as many other countries, lots of people take part in Easter egg hunts, and go hunting for chocolate eggs in parks and gardens.

Egg rolling is also popular in many places. Eggs are boiled, then painted and then rolled down a hill. The challenge is to roll your egg down the hill without it breaking! There is even an annual 'Easter Egg Roll' every Easter Monday in the grounds of the White House in Washington DC.

In places like Poland and Ukraine, a special technique is used to make beautiful coloured designs on eggs, which are known as *pisanki* or *pysanky*.

In some parts of Mexico, there is a tradition of filling empty eggs with confetti. When you break the egg, or *cascarone*, over someone's head, the colourful shower of confetti is said to bring them good luck.

Other Easter traditions

There are many other Easter traditions which don't involve any eggs at all!

In Bermuda, for example, people fly homemade kites on Good Friday. The kite represents the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In many places in north-western Europe, people have bonfires – big outdoor fires which symbolise the end of winter and the beginning of spring.

In Guatemala, Holy Week, or *Semana Santa*, is a whole week of celebrations leading up to Easter. In some towns, people decorate the streets with colourful carpets, made of coloured sawdust, ready for a religious procession on Good Friday.

Norway has many Easter traditions, but one of them has nothing to do with religion, spring or chocolate eggs – Easter crime! Many Norwegians spend the Easter weekend reading crime novels or watching crime films and series.

Happy Easter!

So, there are many different ways that Easter is celebrated across the world. While some Easter traditions focus on the religious part of the festival, some celebrate the arrival of spring and others are mostly about having fun and eating chocolate eggs. Happy Easter!

Tasks

Task 1

Complete the sentences.

Poland and Ukraine	Bermuda	parks and gardens	north-western Europe
Mexico	Guatemala	Norway	the White House

- Easter egg hunts take place in many
- There's a famous 'Easter Egg Roll' at
- In places like, people make beautiful, decorated eggs called *pisanki* or *pysanky*.
- In, eggs are filled with confetti and cracked on people's heads!
- In, people often fly kites at Easter.
- In some countries in, there are big outdoor fires to celebrate Easter.
- In, you can see colourful 'carpets' and religious processions.
- People in often read crime novels or watch crime films at Easter.

Task 2

Put the words and phrases in order to make sentences.

- new life. end of spring, the winter and Easter celebrates
- very important for many It's a religious festival Christians.
- are flowers and rabbits new life. Eggs, chicks, symbols of
- Many Easter traditions. symbols pagan originally come from
- moon. to the of Easter change according The dates
- the world, Easter in many Around different ways. people celebrate

Discussion

Is Easter celebrated where you live?

Answers

Preparation task

1. f
2. d
3. a
4. b
5. h
6. i
7. c
8. j
9. e
10. g

Task 1

1. parks and gardens
2. the White House
3. Poland and Ukraine
4. Mexico
5. Bermuda
6. north-western Europe
7. Guatemala
8. Norway

Task 2

1. Easter celebrates spring, the end of winter and new life.
2. It's a very important religious festival for many Christians.
3. Eggs, chicks, flowers and rabbits are symbols of new life.
4. Many Easter symbols originally come from pagan traditions.
5. The dates of Easter change according to the moon.
6. Around the world, people celebrate Easter in many different ways.