



Objective

Students will identify common elements in games and holidays enjoyed by children in the US and children in their partner country. Students will be able to:

- show connection between festivals and events in nature
- appreciate the diversity of customs and traditions in the US and in developing countries

Academic Expectations Met

AE 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.11, 1.16, 2.16, 2.17, 2.19, 2.20, 2.22

Special Notes for the Teacher

You may want to research specific celebrations in your Books as Bridges partner country (see example list on page 4). Provide pictures and/or descriptions of these celebrations as well as descriptions of games and other things children do for fun in their partner country for your students to compare.

Introduction: How Do You Have Fun?

Ask students, "How do you have fun?"

Fun with family and friends

Fun with your community and neighbors

Fun with people who share your interests (i.e. Church celebrations, Girl/Boy Scouts, in special clubs, etc)

Have you ever been somewhere without your regular games? Perhaps at a relative's home or the home of a family friend? What did you do to occupy your time? Perhaps made up a game or used what was available to play your regular games but with different parts.

What kinds of games are played in your classroom's partner country?

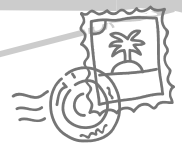
Show Your Pen-Pals!

Draw a picture for your pen-pals showing what you do for fun!

If you're playing a game, can you describe it so your pen-pals can play the game too?

Describe what you're doing on the back or bottom of the picture.

Do you think your pen-pals do the same things for fun? If not, why? If so, do you think there is anything different about the way they do it?





Activity 1: Holidays in Your Partner Country

See worksheet on page 5.

What is your favorite holiday? Why do we celebrate on that day?

Do you celebrate this holiday differently than other people in your class? Ask other students what they do to celebrate this holiday and compare their family's traditions with your own. What did you find?

Allow students to walk around the room and exchange information on how they celebrate their favorite holidays. Encourage the students to share details so they can see how everyone celebrates in their own unique ways.

What holidays are celebrated in your pen-pals' country? How are they similar/different than holidays celebrated in the US?

Provide information (check page 3 for more information) on holidays that are celebrated in their pen-pals' country. If the holiday is also celebrated in the US, the students can compare what people do to honor the holiday, including what they wear, decorate, and/or recognize.

How is nature a part of your favorite holiday?

Christmas trees, Halloween pumpkins, Thanksgiving, July 4th picnics outside. Discuss holidays that honor nature, such as Arbor Day, Earth Day, and World Water Day. Are there any holidays based on nature in your partner country? Please see page 3 for more information on holidays and festivals in other countries.

Activity 2: Building Community Through Festivals

See the worksheet on page 6.

What do festivals celebrate?

Festivals give thanks to supernatural or mortal beings, ask for help or good fortune, celebrate the "best" in a category, celebrate personal milestones or life-cycle events, or to keep traditions alive.

Use the worksheet on page 6 for the students to take notes as you discuss festivals in your own community and in your partner country. Students can compare their festivals with those of their partner country. Be sure to note the connections that festivals have with nature, giving thanks, celebration, traditions, and personal milestones. Use the following questions for discussion:

How is nature a part of your favorite festival? Of local festivals?

On the board, make a list of local festivals. List the connections the festivals have to nature, such as honoring a special kind of animal (i.e. horse festivals) or a season (i.e. winter and summer festivals).

How do festivals highlight local specialties?

How is your community special? What do you have to be proud of? Think of history, specialty products such as chocolate and other foods, and any other unique characteristics your community boasts. Why do we have festivals that highlight these special things about our community?

- Festivals promote unity, allow community members to gather together and celebrate their pride in their heritage!

What kind of festivals do your pen-pals celebrate?

Research festivals in your partner's community. What do their festivals celebrate? Compare these to those that your students discussed for their own community. Please see page 3 for more information on holidays and festivals in other countries.



Activity 2: Building Community Through Festivals (cont.)

How is food a part of your favorite festival/holiday?

Make a list on the board as the students share how food is a part of their favorite holidays/festivals. Some suggestions for discussion are:

Thanksgiving dinner

Christmas dinner, candy canes, etc.

July 4th cook-outs

Boxed chocolate and candy on Valentine's Day

Green food on St. Patrick's Day

Candy Corn, Popcorn balls, and other candies on Halloween

Candy apples in the fall

Hot dogs, cotton candy, lemonsade, pretzels, and funnel cakes are some items that can be found at festivals

Does your favorite festival celebrate a food specialty of your community or region such as bar-b-que festivals?

How is food a part of your pen-pals' festivals and holidays?

*In **Ghana**, the Ga people of the southern Accra Plains celebrate the Homowo Festival. It's the largest cultural festival of its kind in West Africa. For the Ga people, the word Homowo means "hooting at hunger." The origin of Homowo is tied to the origin of the Ga people and their several-year migration to Ghana. Along the way they experienced famine, but because they helped each other, they survived. Later when their harvests were bountiful, they held a feast at which they jeered at the hunger and hard times that had plagued them. This was the first Homowo. A traditional Ghanaian procession made up of costumed kings, queens and followers of the royal family of each of Ghana's ethnic groups makes up the festival's procession.*

*In **some African cultures** they hold a ceremony called "first fruits" that takes several days of planning in order to bless the newly harvested crops and purify the people before they eat the foods.*

*In **West African nations**, particularly **Ghana and Nigeria**, many countries celebrate the Yam Festival by having ceremonies and offerings of yams to their ancestors and to the gods. The Yam Festival is named after their most common food and is usually held in the beginning of August at the end of the rainy season. Yams are the first crops to be harvested. During the Yam Festival, people offer yams to the gods and ancestors first before they distribute them to the rest of the village as a way of giving thanks to the spirits.*



*In the **Philippines**, 85% of the population depends on rice as a staple food item. In May, Filipinos celebrate the work of rice farmers in Palayan City, as they are the most important part of the country's national food security. Part of the festival also includes working to improve production and access to rice.*

"A Mayoyao villager fixes bundles of rice during harvest festival."
<http://majawjaw.multiply.com/photos>



Activity 2: Building Community Through Festivals (cont.)

Did you know...

... in **Argentina**, religious holidays are celebrated more festively than national holidays? Christmas Eve is a time for family to gather around 9:00 p.m. for music, dinner, and often dancing. Candies are served just before midnight, when fireworks displays begin. Argentines (especially in the north) celebrate Carnival before Lent in February by dressing up in fancy costumes and singing and dancing in the streets (just like Mardi Gras!).

... in **Belize** September is the month for celebrations? St. George's Caye Day is celebrated on September 10th. The date is set to remember the battle of St. George's Caye, the effort that kept Mexico from taking over Belize on behalf of Spain on September 10, 1978.

... in **Cameroon**, they celebrate "Unification Day" on May 20th? This day marks the 1972 union of the French and British zones.

... in **Ghana**, Boxing Day is celebrated on December 26th? This holiday comes from the British tradition of giving service employees small boxed gifts. Today, people generally spend the day visiting friends and relatives. Local festivals are also very popular throughout the country; these may be during harvest time or during other seasons. Some are centered on activities like hunting, fishing, or boat racing. Almost all holidays and festivals involve traditional music, drumming, and dancing.

... **Ecuadorians** mark the new year by burning images of the Old Year in the streets on New Year's Eve? These images represent problems they do not want to reencounter in the coming year. The *Inti Raymi* (Festival of the Sun) occurs in June at the Incan ruins near Cuenca. It features dancing and draws indigenous groups from Ecuador and other countries.

... in **Morocco** and Nigeria, citizens celebrate many "*Moussems*," which are religious festivals? Eid al-Fitr is one of the most popular—it marks the end of the 30-day fasting period of Ramadan and is a great celebration throughout the Muslim world. On the evening of Eid al-Fitr it is common to get together with friends, families and loved ones for a huge feast. It is also common for Muslim women to decorate their hands with intricate patterns that are painted on with henna.

... in the **Philippines**, people celebrate many local "fiestas?" The Sinulog festival is celebrated every 3rd week of January in Cebu City (Visayas region). Cebu's patron saint, the Santo Nino (Child Christ) is celebrated throughout the week by processions, street dancing and parades. It's very similar to Mardi Gras! "Flores de Mayo" (Flowers of May) commemorates the search for the Holy Cross by Reyna Elena and her son, the emperor Constantine. This country-wide festival is marked by a parade of maidens escorted by young men under floral arches.

... in **South Africa**, in the Swartberg region of the Western Cape, the Prince Albert Town and Olive Festival is celebrated in April? This festival is marked by an olive pit-spitting contest and offers the region's most famous olives and wine.



Name: _____

Worksheet: Holidays and Events

What is your favorite national holiday? What do Americans celebrate on that day?


Do you celebrate this holiday differently than other people in your class? Ask other students what they do to celebrate this holiday and compare their family's traditions with your own. What did you find?





Name: _____

Worksheet: Holidays and Events

	Festival	Main Event	Colors	Foods	Date





Name: _____

Worksheet: Holidays and Events

Draw a picture of what you like to do on your favorite holiday! Cut the picture out and glue it onto a piece of construction paper with a description of the holiday to send to your pen-pals!

Ask your pen-pals!

Write to your pen-pals and ask them what their favorite holiday is! Make a list of questions you might ask.