

Holidays

Around the World

Ramadan, the Month of Fasting

"May you be well throughout the year" is the typical greeting during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, a special occasion for over one billion Muslims throughout the world. According to Islamic tradition, Ramadan marks the time when Muhammad received the word of God through the Koran. Throughout the month, Muslims fast—totally abstaining from food and drink from the break of dawn until the setting of the sun. It is also a time of increased worship and giving to the poor and the community. Ramadan ends with the festival of Eid ul-Fitr—three days of family celebrations—and eating!

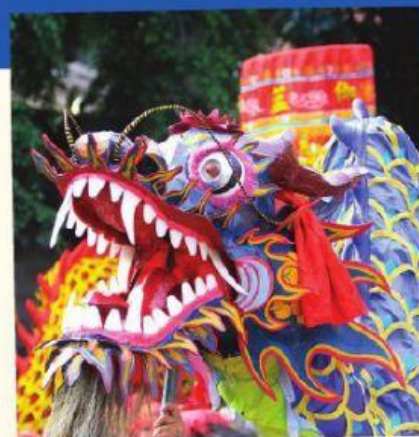


Worshippers pray during Ramadan.

The Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year is celebrated by Chinese around the world and marks the beginning of the first month in the Chinese calendar. The celebration usually takes place in February and lasts for fifteen days. Before the holiday begins, families clean out their houses to sweep away bad luck, and they decorate their doors with red paper and big Chinese characters for happiness, wealth, and longevity. The night before, families gather together for a delicious meal. Outside, people set off firecrackers that make loud noises all through the night. In the morning, children wish

their parents a healthy and happy new year and receive red envelopes with money inside. It is customary for people to give each other small gifts of fruits and sweets and to visit older family members. In the street, lion and dragon dancers set off more firecrackers to chase away evil spirits.



On the last day, people dance in the

Simón Bolívar's Birthday

Simón Bolívar was born on July 24, 1783, in Caracas, Venezuela. He is known throughout Latin America as "The Liberator" because he led the fight for independence from Spain. His armies freed Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. He is memorialized in many ways, but two countries celebrate his birthday every July 24th—Venezuela and Ecuador. On that day, schools and most general businesses are closed, and there are military parades and government ceremonies. But the malls are open, and people usually use the holiday to go shopping.



Bolívar led the fight for independence.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

A. Based on the Reading, write the holiday described in each statement.

1. It's a period of fasting. _____
2. It's a national holiday. _____
3. It's the beginning of the first month in the calendar. _____
4. It's a religious holiday. _____
5. It's when children receive red envelopes with money inside. _____
6. It's celebrated on July 24th. _____
7. People set off fireworks on this day. _____

CRITICAL THINKING

B. Answer these questions based on the information in the Reading.

Which of the three holidays is observed in a serious manner? Which is fun and festive?
Explain your answers.

SCAN FOR FACTS Complete the chart. Check the holidays on which each tradition is observed, according to the information in the Reading. Explain your answers.

On this holiday, people...	Ramadan	Chinese New Year	Bolívar's Birthday
give gifts.	☐	☐	☐
wear costumes.	☐	☐	☐
pray.	☐	☐	☐
wish each other well.	☐	☐	☐
get together with their families.	☐	☐	☐
perform traditional dances.	☐	☐	☐
decorate their homes.	☐	☐	☐
celebrate for several days.	☐	☐	☐
give away money.	☐	☐	☐
have parades.	☐	☐	☐
avoid eating during the day.	☐	☐	☐

Which holiday is celebrated in more than one country?

☐ Ramadan

☐ Chinese New Year

☐ Simón Bolívar's Birthday