

Sites For Sore Eyes

It's almost Christmas. Then comes New Year's. After that it's Valentine's Day and April Fool's Day and Easter and... You think to yourself, "Oh, I have lots of time before I need to prepare anything." But suddenly it is the eleventh hour, and your eyes are tired from scanning pages and pages of websites looking for that one activity, recipe, or piece of information that is just right for your class.

Help has arrived! With Internet access to the websites listed here and even just a little time, you will be sure to find some great ideas for most holidays: games; crafts; traditions and customs; recipes; songs; coloring sheets; jokes; and even lesson plans already laid out for you. Many of these ideas would only take a few minutes to do in class, so if you have been wanting to add some holiday teaching to your classes but didn't know what to do, or had never thought to teach about these celebratory events, now is the time to start.

Let's look at what some of our readers have found on the Internet:

Thomas Asada-Grant: Calendar work is the very first activity I do every class. I have a traditional-looking classroom calendar kit I bought from Lakeshore Learning Materials (www.lakeshorelearning.com), with



All-in-one calendar kit. (Used with permission of Lakeshore Learning.)

removable dates, a month-long weather log, past/present/future tense expressions for days, and yesterday's/today's/tomorrow's weather. I now use an extensive list of holi-

days from the Internet (www.rubicon.com/passport/holidays/200109.htm, though the dates are for 2001 and need to be checked) and create a calendar-insert birthday card of a famous person or of a country to talk about every week. When we're learning about a country, I get a picture of the people in native costumes from the Internet and shrink it down so it will fit on the calendar-insert card. Lakeshore also has a very nice, high-quality set of photographs of middle-class American families of different ages, sizes, and ethnicities which I use, too, though I am looking for a similar set of people in native dress from other countries (www.dollsoftindia.com has costumed dolls in native dress, though not in groups).

If I have music from that country I play it as students come into the classroom. We summarize birthdays that have already occurred, using the proper language. Next we go over to the map and find the country and flag. Occasionally the students make and color the flag of the country as art homework (<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/cbk.html>).

Haruko Okamoto: I hold a Christmas party every year, but before I do, I tell the students about the meaning of Christmas and the story of Christ. The kids nowadays don't know this; they think only of parties, presents, and cakes. We can't blame them, as they usually haven't had the opportunity to learn about it, but I found some good information at www.holidays.net/christmas about the origin of Christmas, Jesus Christ, and Santa Claus that I use to explain to my students.

Before the party, in class, each student starts making a Christmas card to give to another student at the party. I give the students various kinds of colored paper, stickers, and some cotton for snow. I found some good advice at www.zeeks.com/463.html about making cards.

At the party, the students are divided into groups. I get some good games



Holiday homepage of Kidsdomain.com

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from www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/xmas/party.html, such as "Christmas Scramble." This game is good for any holiday. Choose some Christmas (or Halloween, Easter, Valentine's, etc.) words like "Rudolph," "Santa," "tree," or "Jesus," and write the letters separately on cards. Then mix the cards and put two sets of the same word in a bag. The students have to figure out what the word is and spell it correctly to win. Another game I found on a different site I call "Read Your Friend's Back." The teacher puts big pieces of paper on the backs of two kids who are rivals in the game. Neither of them knows what is written on his or her own paper. Each tries to read the other's paper while trying not to let the other read his or her own. Depending on the age and ability of the students, simple words like "dog," "cat," or "strawberry" could be written, or whole sentences could be used like "What a stupid shirt you are wearing!" or "Oh, am I so beautiful? Thank you." Funny sentences are more exciting, as the other students are laughing loudly while the two kids are competing. They turn around, run backwards suddenly and try as hard as they can to avoid the other. Watching them is really fun, as they look like crazy mice!

Jane Takizawa: I'd like to recommend www.theholidayzone.com for planning holiday activities. This is an American-based website, but it includes



*New Year's word search puzzle.
(TheHolidayZone.com)*

several universal holidays such as New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, Easter, and Christmas. There are also seasonal pages, for a total of 19 holidays. Each page offers ideas for arts and crafts, games, language activities, poetry and/or songs and action rhymes, discussion topics, recommended books, and recommended links. The links from the home page include ESL/EFL sites for children. This is definitely the site I check first for holiday ideas, but not only that; I also use it for holiday and seasonal decorating ideas for my waiting room. A five-star site!

Jeremy Cowling: I recommend ESL KidStuff (www.eslkidstuff.com/ ChristmasGames.htm for Christmas, but Halloween pages are coming soon). I use the site's resources all the time, though if you are not a member (at only \$20/year) you cannot access all of the resources.



*Pin the Nose on Rudolph!
(eslkidstuff.com)*

There are many games and other activities available to visitors, though, such as flashcards, songs, and coloring pages.

For Christmas last year, we did a load of things. For example, we made Christmas cards and sent them to each other; we even wrote the addresses in English. We played "Pass the Parcel,"

and I dressed up as Santa and the kids had to tell me in English what they wanted for Christmas. We sang "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and played "Pin the Nose on Rudolph." We also made a huge Christmas tree out of construction paper and painted decorations and presents on it.

Kim Bradford-Watts: Here is a link to my own webpage that has teaching ideas for Halloween,



Easter crafts and fun! (allcrafts.net)

Christmas, Easter, and World AIDS Day. The first two have extensive lesson plans for my university-level stu-

dents, but they can easily be adapted for younger students. The last two have short descriptions of what we did. (bradford-watts.freesevers.com/photo3.html)

Easter is one holiday I do with children and even small groups of adults. I have used true/false quizzes, decorated eggs, and talked about which Japanese holiday Easter reminds them of. www.holidays.net/easter is really nice for the story of Easter, Easter egg whys, Easter bunnies, chocolate rabbits and other goodies, recipes, pages for kids, and other information. I made my quizzes from this site and others (check for "Easter" on the general sites below). I recommend www.allcrafts.net/easter for crafts, especially dyeing eggs with natural colors such as coffee, onion skins, and red cabbage!

Many of the additional sites in the sidebar have similar themes, though the information and ideas are often very different. Check them all out and decide for yourself which ones are most helpful to you!

Happy Holidays every day of the year!

Other sites

- www.falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/holidays.htm (calendar, links, interfaith holidays, songs)
- www.middleschool.net/Holidays/holidmain.htm (calendar, links)
- www.holidaysmart.com/directories.htm (links to holiday sites)
- www.kidsdomain.com/holiday (clipart, games, links)
- www.holidays.net (many holidays, origin, information, crafts)
- www.bethanyroberts.com (recipes, games, crafts, songs)
- www.janbrett.com (Valentine's Day, Christmas, many crafts)
- www.education-world.com/holidays (teaching ideas)
- www.atozteacherstuff.com/themes (holidays, lessons)
- www.surfnetkids.com/halloweencostumes.htm (costumes to make or buy, links)
- www.zeeks.com/548.html (multi-cultural calendar)
- www.assa.org.au/edm.html (Easter Sunday dates)
- www.allcrafts.net (crafts for some major holidays)
- www.foodtv.com [click on "entertaining," then "holidays"] (recipes, information)
- theholidayspot.com (calendar, interfaith holidays, history, recipes, jokes, greetings)



*Make a Hedgie Valentine's Mailbox
(janbrett.com)*



*4th of July cooking!
(www.foodtv.com)*