

Topic: Winter Holidays

Let's get started...

Before you begin discussing today's topic, take a few moments to share a story about a special memory from your childhood. The memory could be about a holiday, birthday, family vacation, etc.

New words and Idioms:

Groundhog, legend, shadow, woodchuck, cupid, valentine, bouquet, affection, sweetheart, saint, custom, etc.

Background:

Groundhog's Day

In the US, many people look forward to Groundhog's Day which falls on February 2nd. According to popular legend, the groundhog wakes up from its winter sleep and emerges from its nest on February 2nd. If the groundhog sees its shadow, it will be frightened and will return to its nest. This means that there will be six more weeks of winter. If the groundhog doesn't see its shadow, then popular legend says that we will have an early spring.

Try repeating this tongue twister for fun:

How much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
(How much wood could a groundhog chew if a groundhog could chew wood?)

Valentine's Day

Every February 14th, candy, flowers, cards and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. But who is this mysterious saint, and why do we celebrate this holiday? The history of Valentine's Day -- and its patron saint -- is a mystery. But we do know that February has been a month of romance for a long time.

President's Day

This year President's Day is on February 20th. President's Day is a holiday that was created to honor two very important presidents in American history: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. George Washington became the first president after he worked hard and fought to help the United States become a free and independent country. Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president and is famous for abolishing slavery. All government offices and schools are closed on President's Day.



In pairs for 5 minutes, ask and answer these questions:

If you could create a new holiday in your original country, what would you celebrate? Why?

What foods would you eat? Why?

Share your partner's answers with the group.

Discussion Questions:

Is there a day in your original country when people celebrate changing seasons? What is the name of the day? Is it celebrated in the summer, fall, winter, or spring?

Are there any traditions or special customs associated with that day? Do people have the day off from work?

In your original country is there a day set aside that people use to honor political leaders? Are all leaders honored on that day or just one person in particular?

Do people hold celebrations? If yes, what do they do?

Do you celebrate Valentine's Day in your country? If not, what holidays or celebrations do you have in your culture to celebrate love or friendship?

Do people give gifts to their friends and family? Do people eat special foods?

What are some ways that you can let someone know that you appreciate or love him/her?

What is your favorite love song, romantic movie, or book?

What holidays have disappeared in your country? What holiday(s) should be abolished?

What is your favorite holiday? Why?

When is the holiday celebrated? Is it celebrated as a family or a group? How does your family celebrate this holiday? Has your family always celebrated this holiday? If not, when did you start celebrating it?

Is it a religious holiday? Which religion celebrates it? Is attending a temple or a church on that day part of the celebration?

What special foods are connected with the holiday? Which of these foods have you eaten? Do you or did you like the foods? How do you make these foods?