May Day Flowers

Student Reader

Grades 4-5

Objective

Students will read an article about the origins and events associated with May Day celebrations. They will complete an activity to help develop comprehension and/or bring the article "to life."

Preparation

1. Print pages 2-5 on copy paper, 2 sided, 1 copy for each student. (These can be reused each year, if you wish.)
2. Collate, fold, and staple the booklets together.
3. Print page 6 on copy paper, 1 sided, 1 copy for each student. (This is an optional comprehension worksheet.)

Uses

- Have students read the article in pairs or small groups. Have them choose a section of the article to turn into a skit to present to the class.
- Use the *"Student Reader Comprehension Game Cards"* with the game board *"Merry Month of May".*
- Have students read the article individually and make a worksheet for another student to fill in. Trade worksheets, complete them, then trade back to correct.
- Jigsaw—Divide students into cooperative groups of 4. Have each student read one section (pages 1-2, pages 3-4, page 5, page 6) and then explain their section to the rest of the group. After hearing the whole article, let them quiz each other on each section.
- Read together as a class.
- Read to the class.
- Have students read the article individually and complete the worksheet (page 6).
- Use the *"Student Reader Comprehension Game Cards"* to have a whole class discussion. Students choose a question out of a basket and answer it.

Copyright © 2013 Integreat! Thematic Units

On Your Own

Do some research to find out more about how May Day is celebrated in other countries. Look it up online. There you can find

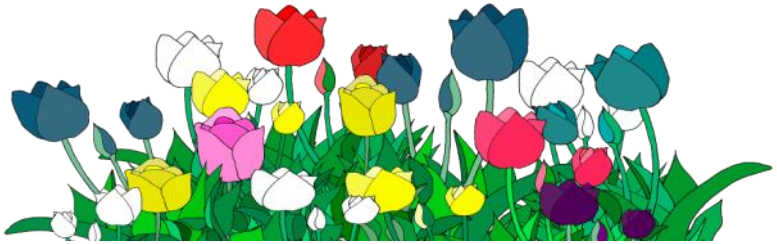
- Informational articles
- Photographs
- Videos of Maypole and Morris dancing

Learn more about the parts of a flower. Later you will dissect one to find its parts.

Maybe you'd like to make a basket to give to friend!

Share what you find out with your friends and classmates.

Have a MERRY May Day!



Copyright © 2010-2013 Integreat! Thematic Units
www.thematicteacher.com

May Day Celebrations

The first of May is celebrated in many places around the world. A long, hard, cold winter creates a good reason to rejoice in the coming warm days of summer. Dancing, sports, and games are common activities of May Day festivals in Europe, and in India, ushering in the start of the growing season.

Ancient Celts in Britain celebrated Beltane, a festival that honored the end of winter and the coming of summer. When the Romans invaded Britain they brought their own spring

May Day in Colonial America

May Day has never been as common in America as it is in Europe. The Puritans of Plymouth despised Maypoles and banned May Day celebrations. They believed they were frivolous and evil. William Bradford condemned Thomas Morton, an English settler, when he erected a Maypole at his fur trading post at Ma Re Mount (about 30 miles away from Plymouth) in 1627. John Endicott cut it down! The Puritans believed these celebrations honored the devil, but there does not seem to be any evidence that this is true.

May Day Celebrations Today

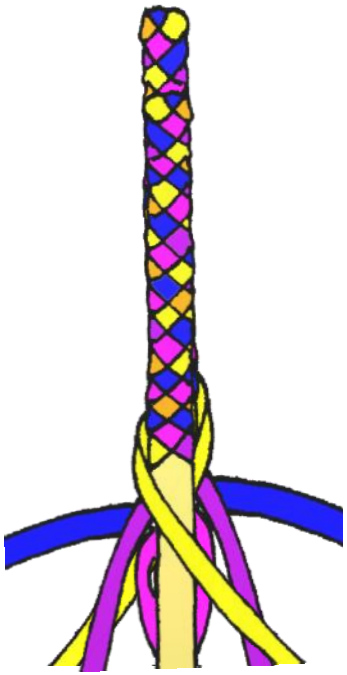
Today children in London go door to door bringing flowers for which they are paid pennies. They toss the pennies into a wishing well and make a wish for the year. Later the pennies are collected and given to charities.

In some areas of America, children place flowers in paper baskets and hang them on the doors of friends or relatives. They ring the doorbell and run away, leaving the flowers hanging on the door knob. May Day is a joyful and fun holiday everywhere it is celebrated.

Maypole Dancing

Dancing was a major part of May Day celebrations. After months of enduring miserable weather, everyone needed a way to relieve their "spring fever."

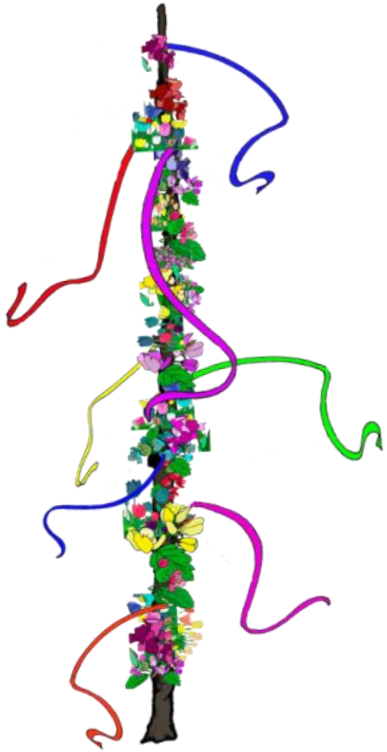
To dance the Maypole, two rows of dancers are needed—an inner row and an outer row. One row will dance clockwise and the other row dances counter clockwise. They wind their ribbons in and out, and around each other, to form lovely weavings around the pole. The dancing is then reversed to unweave the streamers so a new dance pattern can begin.



Each dance can produce a different woven design. The plaits can either be tight against the pole or form a loose web around it. Maypole dances remain popular in Europe today, although they may be performed during midsummer festivals in the colder regions of Europe. They are also popular in parts of the United States.

celebration which honored Flora, the goddess of flowers, and Maia, the goddess of spring. (Maia is the origin of the word May.) These festivals of two different cultures were combined over time to form May Day.

During the Middle Ages every village in England had its own Maypole, which originally were trees stripped of their branches and decked with flora and streamers. Each village competed with the others to see whose pole was the tallest, allowing each communal group to focus on the social interactions and support found within each village which was so necessary for survival in a harsh environment.



May Day has always been a holiday of joy, happiness, and hope that has been a part of agricultural Europe for hundreds of years. It is the only ancient European holiday that Christianity has not adapted to its church calendar.

May Day Celebrations

The Maypole celebration dates back to the 1400s. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), Robin Hood and his merry band were often featured in the festivities. The king and queen of the May were called Robin Hood and Maid Marion, and many of the characters of the legend were part of the pageantry.

Villagers went into the forests on May Eve (the night before May 1st) where they would collect flowers and greens which they loaded up into carts and wheel barrows.

As soon as the sun had completely risen, signifying the start of a new year, they formed a parade with Jack O' the Green as the leader, a villager dressed in green, covered with flowers and streamers leading a red oxcart filled with flowers. He was followed by Morris dancers with bells on their ankles. Maid Marion, the May Queen, came next, escorted by Friar Tuck and followed by her attendants.

More dancers followed them and finally Robin Hood, the master of ceremonies and King of the May, brought up the rear. The villagers brought the wheel barrows back into the village, dropping flowers at the door ways of the houses and decorating the Maypole in the center of the village. The pole was 12-60 feet high and covered with flowers and streamers from top to bottom. They spent the rest of the day dancing, competing in sports events, and playing games around the Maypole. The May Queen awarded prizes to the most graceful dancers and best athletes. During that day, her word was law!

Name _____ Date _____

May Day Celebrations

Use the article *"May Day Celebrations"* to help you fill in the blanks in this report.

May Day is a special day that celebrates the end of _____. It happens on _____ in countries such as _____ and _____. Events such as _____, _____, and _____ show how the people rejoice in the new season.

May Day has been celebrated for _____ of years. The month of May gets its name from _____, the Roman goddess of spring. In England, each village had its own _____. They cut the branches off of a _____, and decorated it with ribbons and _____. _____ and _____ were the king and queen of the festival. They were part of a parade through the village led by _____. Villagers dropped _____ at the doors of each house as they paraded through the town. May Day was not as popular in the United States because the Puritans believed the dances were in honor of the _____. They often _____ _____ the Maypoles.

Today, people celebrate May Day with _____. They take baskets of _____ and hang them on doorknobs. They dance, play games, and compete in sports, just like in the days of old.

Copyright © 2013 Integreat! Thematic Units

Name _____ Date _____

May Day Celebrations—Answers

Answers may vary. Accept any similar and reasonable responses.

May Day is a special day that celebrates the end of ___winter___. It happens on ___May 1___ in countries such as any European or India and any European or India Events such as ___dancing___, ___sports___, and ___games___ show how the people rejoice in the new season.

May Day has been celebrated for ___hundreds___ of years. The month of May gets its name from ___Maia___, the Roman goddess of spring. In England, each village had its own ___Maypole___. They cut the branches off of a ___tree___ and decorated it with ribbons and ___flowers___. ___Robin Hood___ and ___Maid Marion___ were the king and queen of the festival. They were part of a parade through the village led by ___Jack O' the Green___. Villagers dropped ___flowers___ at the doors of each house as they paraded through the town. May Day was not as popular in the United States because the Puritans believed the dances were in honor of the ___devil___. They often ___tore___ ___down___ the Maypoles.

Today, people celebrate May Day with ___answers will vary___. They take baskets of ___flowers___ and hang them on doorknobs. They dance, play games, and compete in sports, just like in the days of old.

Copyright © 2013 Integreat! Thematic Units