



Relaxing English Gas Station

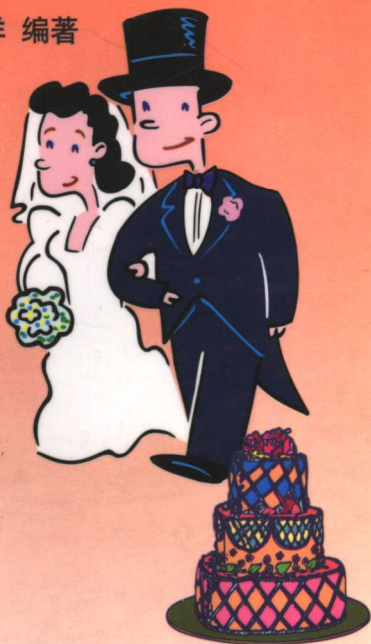
轻松英语加油站 · 学生英语课外阅读系列

Holidays and Customs in West



西方节日习俗

何家祥 编著



广东教育出版社



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编 者 的 话

浓厚的兴趣和广泛的知识是学习英语的重要条件，盖惟此才有开卷之欲，惟此才能触类旁通。

《轻松英语加油站》英语系列读物集趣味性和知识性于一体，旨在激发英语学习者的学习兴趣，拓展英语爱好者的知识面，进而达到轻轻松松学习、地地道道使用英语之目的。

该系列读物选材新颖，内容涉及文化、教育、科技等各个方面，如文化习俗(《西方节日习俗》)、幽默故事(《走进幽默天地》)、逻辑推理(《侦探故事乐园》)、科技知识(《科普世界新知》)、文化教育(《世界名城名校》)、名人轶事(《名人趣闻轶事》)等。

书中所选各篇相对独立，且大多短小精悍，便于随时翻阅。文中较难较重要的词语均附有读音注解，以扩充读者的词汇量；篇末还配有练习题及参考答案，以加深读者对文章的理解。尤其值得一提的是，书中不少篇章颇适于朗诵复述，而用英语向同学、朋友讲述一个幽默故事，或介绍一个节日习俗，于己于人往往会收到意想不到的奇效！总之，

该系列读物力图使英语阅读既生动有趣，回味无穷，又学以致用，益学益智。

本系列读物适合一切英语学习爱好者，尤其是中学生和大学低年级学生使用。

由于时间仓促，加之编者水平有限，书中错漏在所难免，恳请广大读者指正。

编 者

2002年7月



Introduction	(1)
January	(7)
1. New Year's Day	(7)
2. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	(18)
February	(29)
3. Groundhog Day	(29)
4. Abraham Lincoln's Birthday	(39)
5. Valentine's Day	(51)
March	(65)
6. Saint Patrick's Day	(65)
April	(74)
7. April Fool's Day	(74)
8. Passover	(82)
9. Easter	(90)
May	(99)
10. Mother's Day	(99)
11. Memorial Day	(108)
June	(115)
12. Flag Day	(115)
13. Father's Day	(124)
July	(131)



14. Independence Day	(131)
October	(145)
15. Columbus Day	(145)
16. Halloween	(152)
November	(167)
17. Guy Fawkes' Day	(167)
18. Veterans Day	(174)
19. Thanksgiving Day	(182)
December	(194)
20. Christmas	(194)
21. Boxing Day	(215)
Supplementary Reading: Dos and Don'ts	(222)
Key	(242)



Introduction

This book is an introduction to the historical and social background of major American and Western holidays.

People in every culture celebrate holidays. Although the word “holiday” **literally** ① means “**holy** ② day,” most American and Western holidays are not religious, but **commemorative** ③ in nature and origin. The United States of America is known as a “**melting pot** ④”, and this is especially true when it comes to celebration of various holidays, because the nation has rich **ethnic** ⑤ **heritage** ⑥. It is possible to trace some of the American holidays to different cultural sources and traditions, but all holidays have shown a clearly American characteristic. In the United States,

① literally [ˈlɪərəli] *adv.* 照字面意义; 逐字地

② holy [ˈhəʊli] *adj.* 神圣的; 圣洁的

③ commemorative [kəˈmemərətɪv] *adj.* 纪念的
commemorate *v.* 纪念 commemoration *n.* 纪念

④ melting pot 坩埚; 熔化锅; 熔炉

⑤ ethnic [ˈeθnik] *adj.* 源于某种文化传统的; 种族的; 人种学的
(亦作: ethnical)

⑥ heritage [ˈherɪtɪʒ] *n.* 遗产; 继承权; 传统

the word “holiday” is *synonymous*^① with “celebration”!

Attention, therefore, is focused on those holidays observed in the United States. *In the strict sense*^②, there are no federal (national) holidays in the United States. Each of the 50 states decides its holidays. In practice, however, most states observe the federal (“legal or public”) holidays, even though the President and Congress can legally designate holidays only for federal government employees. 指明.指定.

Ten holidays per year are *proclaimed*^③ by the federal government. They are as follows: New Year's Day (January 1); Martin Luther King Day (traditional - January 15, official - third Monday in January); Presidents' Day (traditional - February 12 & February 22, official - third Monday in February); Memorial Day (traditional - May 30, official - last Monday in May); Independence Day (July 4); Labor Day (first Monday in September); Columbus Day (traditional - October 12, official - second Monday in October); Veterans' Day (traditional - November 11, official - second Monday in November); Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thursday in November); and Christmas Day (December 25).

In 1971, the dates of many federal holidays were officially moved to the nearest Monday by then-President

① synonymous [si'nɒnɪməs] *adj.* (后面与 with 连用)同义的

② in the strict sense 精确地说; 严格地说

③ proclaim [prə'kleɪm] *vt.* 宣布; 声明

理查德·尼克松

Richard Nixon. There are four holidays which are not necessarily celebrated on Mondays: Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Day, Independence Day and Christmas Day. When New Year's Day, Independence Day, or Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, the next day is also a holiday. When one of these holidays falls on a Saturday, the previous day is also a holiday.

Federal government offices, including the post office, are always closed on all federal holidays. Schools and businesses close on major holidays like Independence Day and Christmas Day but may not always be closed, for example, on Presidents' Day or Veterans' Day.

Federal holidays are observed according to the *legislation* ① of individual states. The dates of these holidays, and others, are decided upon by each state government, not by the federal (national) government. Each state can agree on the same date that the President has proclaimed, such as Thanksgiving Day. State legislation can also change the date of a holiday for its own special commemoration.

布鲁克林 (比利时代广场) 1855年拿破仑战争纪念碑

Waterloo, New York, for instance, always observes Memorial Day on May 30 rather than on the last Monday in May, as this was the original date on which Waterloo founded the commemoration. Cities and towns can decide not to celebrate a federal legal holiday at all. However,

① legislation [ˌledʒɪsˈleɪʃən] n. 立法, 法律的制定(或通过)



the majority of the states (and the cities and towns within them) usually choose the date or day celebrated by the rest of the nation.

There are other “legal” or “public” holidays which are observed **at the state or local level**①. The closing of local government offices and businesses will vary. Whether citizens have the day off from work or not depends on local decisions. Some “legal” or “public” holidays are specific only to an individual state. For example, Nebraska always celebrates **Arbor Day**② on April 22, the birthday of the **originator**③ of the holiday. Since Arbor Day originated as a treeplanting day, different states change the date depending on the best season for planting trees in their region: **Hawaiians**④ plant trees on the first Friday in November.

Events involving famous Americans, living or dead, have a wider **appeal**⑤. Many Americans may have forgotten the exact date when President John F. **Kennedy**⑥ was

① at the state or local level 在州或地方一级

② Arbor Day (美、加、澳、新等国的)植树节(一般在4月或5月)

③ originator [ˈɔːrɪdʒɪneɪtə] n. 创始人; 发明者

④ Hawaiian [haɪˈwaɪjən] n. 夏威夷人, 夏威夷语

adj. 夏威夷的, 夏威夷语的

⑤ appeal [əˈpiːl] n. 吸引力; 引起兴趣

⑥ Kennedy [ˈkenɪdi] n. 肯尼迪

assassinated^① (November 22, 1963), but they remember exactly where they were and what they were doing when they first learned about his tragic death. Other days commemorate events which may be personally significant for one generation but have less *relevance*^② for another. For example, Pearl Harbor Day (December 7) marks the day when Japanese Imperial Forces attacked Hawaii in 1941 and brought the US into World War II. President Franklin D. *Roosevelt*^③ in his address to the nation referred to the attack as “a day that will live in *infamy*^④”. Adults and children of the time have a personal *recollection*^⑤ of the day. The younger generations of today may know of the event from their history books only.

Other holidays such as “*Groundhog*^⑥ Day” (February 2) are observed, at least in the media. The day is associated with *folklore*^⑦ which has grown up in rural America. It is believed, by some, if the groundhog, or woodchuck comes out of its hole in the ground and sees its

① assassinate [ə'sæsineit] *vt.* 暗杀; 行刺

② relevance ['relivəns] *n.* 有关; 中肯; 适当

③ Roosevelt ['rəuzəvelt] *n.* 罗斯福

④ infamy ['infəmi] *n.* 声名狼藉; 臭名; 不名誉; 恶名昭彰; 丑行

⑤ recollection [,rekə'lekʃən] *n.* 回忆, 记忆; 回想

⑥ groundhog [,graund'hɒg] *n.* (美国产的)土拨鼠

⑦ folklore ['fauklɔ:(r)] *n.* 民间传说

shadow on that day it will become frightened and jump back in. This means there will be at least six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't see its shadow, it will not be afraid and spring will begin shortly.

Critics of the *proliferation* ① of holidays blame greeting card manufacturers and other entrepreneurs ②. The critics say that "Holiday X" is simply promoted to get people to buy their goods. "Secretary's Day", or "Grandparents Day" might *fall into this category* ③.

Obviously, no effort has been made to be comprehensive in treating all holidays that Americans or Westerners would possibly celebrate. Only "major" holidays, recognized if not celebrated in general, have been included here. Each unit deals with the background of one American or Western holiday or celebration. There might be a special feature about the holiday, such as regional or religious factors which make the celebration different.

This book *summarizes* ③ the important dates commonly observed in the United States and the West, including important occasions observed by some major immigrant groups.

② proliferation [prəʊˌlɪfə'reɪʃən] n. 增殖; 扩散; 分芽繁殖

③ fall into this category 属于这一类

③ summarize ['sʌməraɪz] v. 概述; 总结; 摘要而言



1 月

January



1. New Year's Day

(January 1st)

First day of the year, *New Year's Day* is often *observed*^① by the making of *New Year's resolutions*^②.

New Year's Day is a legal holiday.



Part I. New Year's Eve^③

New Year's Eve falls on December 31st, the day before the first day of the new year. In the United States, Canada, England, and many other countries around the world, New Year's Eve is a *festive*^④ *occasion*^⑤ to welcome the new year.

In the United States, the *federal*^⑥ holiday is January

① observe [əb'zərv] v. 纪念; 庆祝

② resolution [ˌrezə'lʊʃən] n. 决心; 决定; 决议

③ New Year's Eve 除夕

④ festive ['festɪv] adj. 庆祝的; 喜庆的; 欢乐的; 节日似的
festivity n. 欢宴; 欢庆

⑤ occasion [ə'keɪʒn] n. (特定的) 时刻, 时候

⑥ federal ['fedərəl] adj. 联邦的; 联合的

first, but Americans begin celebrating on December 31. Many people go to New Year's Eve parties. Sometimes people have *masquerade balls*①, where guests dress up in costumes and cover their faces with *masks*②. According to an old tradition, guests unmask at midnight.

At New Year's Eve parties across the United States on December 31, many guests watch television as part of the festivities. Crowds gather in *Times Square*③ in New York City, on State Street in Chicago, and in other public places. Most of the television channels show Times Square. At one minute before midnight, a lighted ball drops slowly from the top to the bottom of a pole on one of the buildings. People *count down*④ at the same time as the ball drops. When it reaches the bottom, the new year sign is lighted, bells ring, *sirens*⑤ sound, *firecrackers*⑥ explode, people hug and kiss, and wish each other "Happy New Year!" People also *drink a toast to*⑦ the

① *masquerade* [ˌmæskə'reɪd] ball 化妆舞会

② *mask* [mɑːsk] *n.* 面具 *unmask vi.* 脱去假面具

③ *Times Square* 时代(泰晤士)广场(位于美国纽约市曼哈顿区)

④ *count down* 倒计时; 倒计时

⑤ *siren* ['saɪərən] *n.* 汽笛, 警报器

⑥ *firecracker* ['faɪəkrækə] *n.* 爆竹, 鞭炮

⑦ *drink a toast to* 为……干杯

new year and sing *Auld Lang Syne*①.



Part II. A Brief History of New Year's Day Around the World

Not all countries celebrate New Year at the same time, nor in the same way. This is because people in different parts of the world use different *calendars*②. Long ago, people divided time into days, months, and years. Some calendars are based on the movement of the moon, others are based on the *position*③ of the sun, while others are based on both the sun and the moon. All over the world, there are special beliefs about New Year.

In ancient Egypt, New Year was celebrated at the time the *River Nile*④ *flooded*⑤, which was near the end of September. The flooding of the Nile was very important because without it, the people would not have been able to grow crops in the dry desert. At New Year, *statues*⑥ of the god, Amon and his wife and son were taken up the Nile by boat. Singing, dancing, and *feasting*⑦ was done

① *Auld Lang Syne* 〈苏格兰〉美好的昔日(歌曲名)

② *calendar* ['kælɪndə] *n.* 日历; 历法

③ *position* [pə'zɪʃən] *n.* 位置; 职位; 立场; 形势; 阵地

④ *River Nile* 尼罗河

⑤ *flood* [flʌd] *vi.* 涨洪水; 被水淹

⑥ *statue* ['stætju:] *n.* 雕像

⑦ *feast* [fi:t] *n. & v.* 节日; 盛宴; 筵席



for a month, and then the statues were taken back to the *temple*①.

During the *Middle Ages*②, most European countries used March 25, a *Christian*③ holiday, to start the year. By 1600, many Western nations had *adopted*④ a new calendar called the *Gregorian* Calendar. This calendar, the one used today, *restored*⑤ January 1 as New Year's Day. Great Britain and its colonies in America adopted it in 1752.

Many ancient peoples started the year at harvest-time. They performed *rituals*⑥ to do away with the past and *purify*⑦ themselves for the new year. For example, some people *put out*⑧ the fires they were using and started new ones.

In early times, the ancient Romans gave each other New Year's gifts of branches from *sacred*⑨ trees. In later

① temple ['templ] *n.* 庙, 寺; 神殿; 教堂; 礼拜堂

② Middle Ages 中世纪

③ Christian ['kristjən] *adj.* 基督教的; 信基督教的

④ adopt [ə'dɒpt] *vt.* 采用

⑤ restore [ris'tɔ:] *vt.* 恢复

⑥ ritual ['ritjuəl] *n.* 典礼; (宗教)仪式; 礼节

⑦ purify ['pjʊ:rɪfaɪ] *v.* 净化

⑧ put out 熄灭

⑨ sacred ['seɪkrɪd] *adj.* 神的; 宗教的; 庄严的; 神圣的