|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ks1_special_days_sm** | Ealing Agreed Syllabus: guidance for teachers | |
| **KS1.1: Special days** | **Overall aim:** explore the context–for individuals, families and communities–of days and festive seasons set aside as ‘special’ or ‘sacred.’ |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Special days | Pupils will | understand that certain occasions are observed differently than the normal day-to-day routine; reflect on days that are special to them, their family, and to other people they know. | |
| ***Aim:*** to introduce the topic of time set aside for non-ordinary observances. | SEN |  | |
| Gifted |  | |
| **Possible activities** | | | **Suggested resources** |
| *Before the start of this unit:* tell class to bring in pictures of themselves that could be used in a class project. Then, construct a large linear calendar, with a different colour piece of sugar paper for each month. Paste pictures of class members on their relevant birthday months, as well as images representing the festivals discussed during this unit. Paste over each picture and image a rectangular piece of sugar paper that can be folded up like the windows of an advent calendar. | | | |
| **Introduction:** Brainstorm: what is your favourite day of the year? Why? How do you make it special? Is it just special for you, or is it special for other people as well? How does it make you feel? Make a list of all the special days. Where do people go on their special days? To visit family, e.g. grandparents? To church? The temple, mosque, synagogue or gurdwara? | | | Sugar paper to make calendar, a different colour strip for each month, and rectangular pieces that can be pasted on as ‘windows’. |
| **Activity 1:** Tell class that over the course of six lessons you will be looking at a class calendar, which will feature all the days special to members of the class, including their birthdays. In each lesson you will look at special days for a couple of months.  How do we prepare for a special day? Ask class if their family cleans the house for any special day? What about wearing new clothes? When might that happen? Is it different for people of different cultures/religions? | | |  |
| **Activity 2:** Talk about calendars in general. Show some examples, including both linear and table form. What do calendars tell you? Get members of class to find their birthday on a typical calendar. Show class an advent calendar. What is it for? What special day is it leading up to | | | Examples of calendars, including linear and table examples.  Example of an advent calendar  Online advent calendars:  <http://www.smmp.com/Advent/Advent.php>  (Note the above link is only active during advent period.)  Some charming online advent calendars featuring the adventures of Tate the cat: <http://www.catwholaughed.com/previous/>  Information about various religious festivals can be found on the EGfL Days of Observance calendar: <http://www.egfl.org.uk/categories/teaching/curriculum/subjects/re/days/>  Materials to make cards |
| **Activity 3:** What is the first special day that happens in January? Get one of the pupils to ‘open’ the window over New Year on the calendar. How do people celebrate the New Year? Do they eat special food? Explain that different groups of people have different calendars, and so their New Year might be at a different time. Get another pupil to open the window over Chinese New Year. Look at video clips of celebrations of Chinese New Year. What special foods do the Chinese eat at New Year? Why do they eat these foods? | | |
| **Activity 4:** Let all the children with birthdays in January and February find their spot on the calendar and open that door. Ask them if they eat any special food on their birthday? | | |
| **Activity 5:** If there are any other special celebrations celebrated by members of the class in January and February (e.g. Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, and, depending on the year, the beginning of Lent), and if these aren’t included already in the calendar, mark their place and find images to represent them. | | |
| **Plenary:** Ask class if they have ever received a special card in the post. What was the occasion? Each child to choose an occasion to celebrate with a card. They can choose any special occasion and draw a card or make a montage on the card. Ask if some members of the class are willing to share their cards and explain To whom they would send the card and for what occasion. | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Shabbat Shalom | Pupils will | think about days and times of the week that are special to them; understand that some rituals are established by rules set down in books regarded by believers as sacred. | |
| ***Aim:*** to introduce the idea that certain traditions have rules regarding the observance of special days and occasions. | SEN |  | |
| Gifted |  | |
| **Possible activities** | | | **Suggested resources** |
| **Starter:** Ask class to think about which days of the week are different from other days. For instance, which days are school days? How are these days different? Do you wear special clothes for school that you don’t wear the rest of the week?  Then, ask class which day, if any, their family goes to a place of worship, or a special place, like the family visit to the library/bookmobile. Do they go every week? Or do these visits only occur at certain times of the year? Do they wear special clothes? How do they feel when they are getting ready to go to a place of worship? | | | |
| **Activity 1:** Read Genesis 2: 3: “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”  Explain that this is from the Jewish Bible, the Torah, which Christians call the Old Testament. Then read Exodus 20: 8-10:  “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work….”  Explain that this is a rule that both Christians and Jews keep, although the day of the week on which they observe the Sabbath differs, Friday/Saturday for Jews and Sunday for Christians. | | | |
| **Activity 2:** Explain that the Hebrew word for Sabbath is Shabbat, and that Jewish people often wish each other a peaceful Sabbath (*Shabbat shalom*) when the sun sets on Friday night, which signals the beginning of the Sabbath for them. Show a video of the lighting of the candles and welcoming of Shabbat ritual, e.g. from YouTube. Point out this is how Jews mark the Shabbat period as different from other times of the week.  Explain that some Jewish people interpret the rules in the Bible (Torah) to mean that they cannot do any work at all during the Sabbath, which means not driving cars, not cooking or not turning on lights. Many synagogues have special timers that turn the lights on for them. Also, they will do all necessary cooking, cleaning etc. beforehand, so that they can fulfil the rule. | | | How to light Shabbat candles videos:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqZSfEtAVmk> |
| **Activity 3:** If there are Muslim pupils in the class, ask them if any day of the week is special to them. As Muslims are supposed to pray every day, how are the prayers on Friday (the *jumu’ah* prayer) different? Read Qur’an 62: 9-10, explaining that this is where Muslims get the rule to make the Friday noon prayer different from the same prayer on other days. (Qur’an 62: 9-10 “O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of God and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know. And when the prayer is ended, then disperse in the land and seek of Allah’s bounty, and remember Allah much, that ye may be successful.”) Show a YouTube video of jumu’ah prayer. | | | Example video of Jumu’ah:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YMTw6rGD-Q> |
| **Plenary:** Discuss why it is important to have quiet times, such as days of rest? For instance, how would it feel to go to school all day every day? Look at relevant birthdays and special religious days that occur in March and April on your class calendar (e.g. Holi, Easter, Baisakhi). If it seems appropriate, remind class of the Jewish Sabbath greeting (Shabbat Shalom) and ask them to devise a special class greeting and farewell to mark the beginning and end of the school day. | | |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Special birthdays:  Christmas and Janamashtami | Pupils will | learn to relate certain familiar religious holidays to the birth of figures important to that religion; understand that it is possible to experience these holidays as special times without being a believer. | |
| ***Aim:*** to relate familiar festivities to religious stories. | SEN |  | |
| Gifted |  | |
| **Possible activities** | | | **Suggested resources** |
| **Starter:** Ask class to volunteer how they felt anticipating a birth, e.g. of a sibling or cousin or when a pet gave birth, or when they got a new kitten or puppy. What preparations were made? Were the members of their family excited? When the birth came, how did they celebrate? How did they spread the news? | | |  |
| **Activity 1:** Ask class if they can name any special days that are observed to celebrate the birthday of a special figure. If they mention Christmas, ask them if they know why this day is important to Christians. Return to the advent calendar that you showed in the first lesson. Point out that it is used to count down the days from 1 to 24 December in anticipation of the birth of Jesus. | | | Online advent calendar and Christmas games: http://www.topmarks.co.uk/christmas/ChristmasGames.aspx |
| **Activity 2:** Point out that many people celebrate Christmas, not just Christians. How do they do this (e.g. sending cards, giving presents, having parties)? Look at some non-religious Christmas cards: what are recurring themes? What makes Christmas different for Christians? | | | UNICEF “Season’s Greetings” cards |
| **Activity 3:** Show class an example of a nativity scene. What does this scene represent? Have any members of the class been in, or seen a nativity play? Point out that Christians believe that the birth of Jesus was so important that they act it out every year. Have any members of the class taken part in a school or church nativity play? Show class a video Show video of a Christmas Eve candlelight service. Point out that the candles symbolise the ‘light’ that Jesus brought into the world. But also mention that the days start to get longer at the end of December, and so many non-Christians find Christmas a good time for a celebration in anticipation of the coming of spring. | | | Nativity scenes |
| **Activity 4:** If there are Hindu children in the class, ask them if they ever celebrate Krishna’s birthday. Show class a picture of the young Krishna, and tell them how Hindus paint little blue footprints in their house to mark the arrival of the infant. They put a statue of the infant Krishna in a cradle and blow a conch shell and ring bells to symbolise his arrival (see background information). Just as Christians act out the birth of Jesus, Hindus act out events in the young Krishna’s life on Janamashtami, especially his attempts to steal butter. | | | Look for Janamashtami or Krishna Jayanti on YouTube for videos of celebrations. |
| **Plenary:** Ask class if they know of any other special birthdays that they or their family celebrate, e.g. Guru Nanak’s birthday. What special activities take place then? Look at relevant class birthdays and special religious days that occur in May and June (e.g. Wesak, Shavuot, Ratha Yatra), adding pictures of these on the class calendar. | | |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Giving thanks:harvest festivals and Sukkot | Pupils will | understand the concept of feeling thankful, and the importance of expressing this thanks, either in a religious or non-religious context; they will look at examples of special days set aside to give thanks. | |
| ***Aim:*** to explore ritual expressions of gratitude for the good things in life. | SEN |  | |
| Gifted |  | |
| **Possible activities** | | | **Suggested resources** |
| **Starter:** Show video clip or picture from *Oliver Twist* of the moment in the boys’ home when Oliver asks for more food. What does it feel like to be very hungry? How would you feel when you were finally given something to eat? Alternatively show some pictures of drought, when a harvest is ruined. How does this make the children feel? (Note: don’t show any pictures that would be too disturbing for the children.) | | | “Please, sir, may I have some more?”  **Oliver**  Oliver Twist  [images.salon.com](http://images.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2005/09/23/oliver_twist/story.jpg)  YouTube is a great source for videos, such as of the bhangra and the building of Succah or the waving of the Lulav. |
| **Activity 1:** Ask children what they say when they go to someone’s house and they are given something to eat. Point out that humans often feel the need to give thanks for the blessings of life. Ask children to think about things for which they are thankful. Who would they thank for these things? Explain that many religious people thank their God, whereas other people, who don’t believe in a god, can still experience gratitude and thankfulness, and a desire to be generous to others, and to give to charities that provide food and aid to those less fortunate or to people in parts of the world who are suffering because of war or drought. | | |
| **Activity 2:** Show some pictures of food displays on altars for a harvest festival. Play a recording or video of a Thanksgiving hymn, such as “All things bright and beautiful.” Explain that harvest festivals are ways to give thanks and to share food with those less fortunate than us.  Explain that harvests occur at different times in different parts of the world. If there are Sikh children in the class, ask them about the festival of Baisakhi. How is this celebrated? Show a video clip of a traditional bhangra dance. Explain that farmers in the Punjab area of India used to do this dance because they believed that it encouraged their crops to grow. | | |
| **Activity 3:** Tell the story of the Israelites in the wilderness. Explain that Jews remember this period at the festival of Sukkot, when they give thanks to God for keeping them alive in the wilderness. Show pictures of Succah booths or a video of the waving of the Lulav. | | |  |
| **Activity 4**: Look at the North American festival of Thanksgiving, which is celebrated by most Americans and Canadians, regardless of their beliefs. What is the story behind the American festival of Thanksgiving? What foods are traditional to the Thanksgiving meal? Point out again that not everyone believes in a god, but that it is still important to be thankful for the good things that happen to us, and that many North Americans consider Thanksgiving to be a special time for returning to home/familyS. | | |  |
| **Plenary:** Look at relevant birthdays and special religious days (e.g. Raksha Bandhan) that occur in July and August. Ask your Sikh and Hindu pupils if they have ever participated in Raksha Bandhan? Could this festival be an expression of gratitude that one has a sibling? | | |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Giving thanks: Eid ul-Fitr | Pupils will | look at the Muslim festival of Eid ul-Fitr and relate what they learn to the previous lesson’s learning; they will think about ways that they as individuals can express gratitude. | |
| ***Aim:*** to look in more depth at one expression of a day of thanksgiving. | SEN |  | |
| Gifted |  | |
| **Possible activities** | | | **Suggested resources** |
| **Starter:** Remind pupils of the theme of the previous lesson, i.e. thankfulness. If there are Muslim pupils in the class, ask them if they know of a special day of celebration at the end of the month of fasting, Ramadan. Ask one of the pupils to open the ‘window’ over the image (possibly fireworks or dates) representing Eid ul-Fitr. | | | Eid ul-Fitr e-cards Dates cut up into pieces; small paper cups of water |
| **Activity 1:** On the IWB show an Eid ul-Fitr e card. Alternatively look at some real Eid cards. Explain that Muslims great each other on Eid by saying *Eid Mubarak*, “a happy and blessed Eid. Remind class of the lesson on the Sabbath and the class greeting/farewell. | | |
| **Activity 2**: Prepare questions and select children (or let them volunteer) to interview a Muslim visitor or members of staff about Eid-ul-Fitr. Try to get them to elicit from the interviewee what makes Eid ul-Fitr a special time for them. Do they have any special memories of previous Eid’s? | | |
| **Activity 3:** What special food do Muslims eat to break the fast of Ramadan? Pass round a plate of date pieces, inviting children to take one, along with a small cup of water. Ask class to imagine breaking a fast with a sip of water and a date. Point out that any food can be used to break the fast, but that Muslims often use dates and water, as that is what the prophet Muhammad did. | | |
| **Activity 4:** How do Muslims show thankfulness during Eid (e.g. special prayers and gifts of money to the poor)? Point out that Muslims also express their thanks to Allah for giving them the help and strength they need to observe the fast. | | |
| **Plenary:** Look at relevant birthdays and special religious days (e.g. Navaratri and Divali) that occur in September and October on your class calendar. | | |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Remembering:  Remembrance Day | Pupils will | learn that special days are set aside to remember the dead; they think about the special ways they have of remembering important events in their life. | |
| ***Aim:*** to look at special days for remembering people and past events. | SEN |  | |
| Gifted |  | |
| **Possible activities** | | | **Suggested resources** |
| **Starter:** Show class a Remembrance Day poppy and cross. Who knows what it represents? Tell class they are going to learn about a special day set aside to remember men and women who have been killed in wars. | | | Remembrance poppy and cross  YouTube videos of Remembrance Sunday observances.  <http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival_calendar/Nov/Remembrance_Sunday.htm> |
| **Activity 1:** Ask class what happens when someone dies, i.e. what special observance is made (e.g. funeral service, special mass etc). Ask if anyone wants to share something they said or heard at a funeral. | | |
| **Activity 2**: Mention that people often do something special to mark a death anniversary, e.g. have a special prayer or ceremony in a place of worship. Sometimes this is just observed by the family concerned, but at other times this is observed by everyone in a religious group, e.g. special services held to mark the martyrdom of the Sikh gurus Arjan and Tegh Bahadur. | | |
| **Activity 3:** Go back to the subject of Remembrance Day. Speak about how it is observed at the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month (i.e. November) with two minutes of silence. Talk about how the silence is a show of respect to everyone who was killed in the various wars. | | |
| **Activity 4:** Read an extract from “In Flanders Fields”, pointing out that in Britain a national remembrance ceremony is held on the Sunday nearest to 11th November. Show video clips of the ceremony at the Cenotaph, including the playing of “The Last Post”. | | |
| **Plenary:** Look at relevant birthdays and special religious days (e.g. All Saints Day, Hanukah) that occur in November and December on your class calendar. At the end of the lesson observe two minutes of silence during which pupils can think about someone they wish to remember. | | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key words | Chinese New Year (Yuan Tan) Sabbath, Shabbat, Torah, Jumu’ah, Christmas, Janamashtami/Krishna Jayanti, harvest festival, Sukkot, Succah, Thanksgiving, Eid ul-Fitr, Remembrance Day |
| **Points to note** | Schools will have their own selection of ‘special days’ that they celebrate in assembly and through other observances. It is good to refer to these all-school celebrations throughout this unit (e.g. “remember during Diwali when we…”), but the focus on these lessons is the reasons we set aside certain days as ‘special’. |
| Sample assessment activity | |
| **Outcomes**  Pupils are working at an **emerging** level if they are:   * Be able to name some special days. * Be able to name one practice associated with a religious festival. * Be able to talk about their favourite personal, religious or national festival.   Pupils are working at **expected** levels if they are:   * Understand that people set aside certain days to celebrate their religion, to give thanks and to remember the dead. * Understand that some festivals come from the rules in religious books. * Be able to talk about how certain special days make them feel.   Some pupils will **exceed** expectations and will be able to do all of the above. In addition they will:   * Explain why certain days are special to believers. * Be able to talk about some of the practices associated with the Jewish observance of Shabbat. * Be able to make connections between various thanksgiving observances. | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Background information | |
| http://www.pinoytravelblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/dragon-dance.jpg  Chinese New Year  [www.pinoytravelblog.com](http://www.pinoytravelblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/dragon-dance.jpg) | The Chinese calendar is based on a combination of lunar and solar movements. The year begins with the first new moon of the lunar cycle, the extended festivities lasting until the Lantern Festival (**Teng Chieh**), which occurs 15 days later at the time of the full moon.  Preparations for New Year—also known as the Spring Festival (Yuan Tan)—actually begin on the 23rd day of the last lunar month, with a ritual known as “sending off the kitchen god.” This is the deity who protects the home and audits the family’s behaviour. Each year he is recalled to heaven; after offering him a sticky cake—said to both sweeten his mood and make it difficult for him to speak (in case he was thinking of giving them a bad report)—the family set his image alight, thus sending him on his way.  **Yuan Tan** is celebrated as a time of reunion and thanksgiving. Houses are cleaned, debts are paid, new clothes are bought and every effort is made to remove all traces of ill fortune lingering from the previous year. The entrance to the home is decorated with calligraphic banners (chun lian, “spring couplets”), hopeful messages intended to elicit good fortune. A feast called “surrounding the stove” is held on New Year’s Eve, when the spirits of the ancestors join the living round the family banquet table. Parents encourage their children to stay awake as long as possible in the belief that battling sleep will increase their parents’ longevity.    At midnight, firecrackers are set off and lion-dancers reenact the story of Nian, a mythic beast who appeared in the days of Huangdi to terrorise the countryside. This creature was so fierce that only a lion was able to drive it off. The next year, when the beast returned to take his revenge, the people created a lion out of bamboo and cloth; two men crawled inside and, prancing and roaring, once again managed to banish the beast, and from that moment onward, lion dances became a vital part of the New Year tradition |
| **jiaozi**  New Year jiaozi  [sh.sina.com.cn](http://sh.sina.com.cn/eat/20040129/3_18-90-1526-460_20040129114151.jpg) | The biggest event of any Chinese New Years Eve is the family dinner, which typically centres on a fish dish. This meal is comparable to Christmas dinner in the West.  After dinner many people will visit the local temple to pray for a prosperous year.  In northern China, it is customary to make dumplings (*jiaozi*), which are eaten at midnight. Dumplings symbolize wealth because they are shaped like the Chinese standard weight known as a *tael*.  In the South, it is customary to give special cakes known as *Nian gao* to relatives and friends in the first days of the new year. |
| **niangao**  Nian Gao  [www.chinatownology.com](http://www.chinatownology.com/images/niangao.gif) | Nian Gao are sweet sticky Chinese pastries made from glutinous rice. ‘Nian Gao’ sounds similar to another word implying promotions or prosperity year after year. This association makes Nian Gao a popular gift item during the New Year period.  Among traditional Chinese pastries, Nian Gao probably has the greatest variety in its appearance and shape.  It is available all year round but especially popular during the Chinese New Year period. Just before the start of the Chinese New Year, a small piece of Nian Gao is pasted on the image of the kitchen god before sending him off to the celestial court. It is believed that doing so ensures that the kitchen god gives a favourable report on the household.  The traditional Nian Gao is round with an auspicious decoration such as the character for prosperity on its top. |
| Welcoming the shabbat  Lighting Shabbat candles | **Shabbat** or Shabbos (‘rest/inactivity’), is the weekly Sabbath or day of rest in Judaism, symbolizing the seventh day in Genesis, after the six days of creation. Though it is commonly said to be the Saturday of each week, it is observed from sundown on Friday until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night. The exact time therefore differs from week to week and from place to place, depending on the time of sunset.  Shabbat is observed both by positive observances, such as three festive meals (Friday-night dinner, Saturday lunch, and a Saturday-evening meal), and restrictions. Activities forbidden on Shabbat come from thirty-nine basic actions (*melachot*, loosely translated as ‘work’) that are derived by the Talmud from Biblical sources.  challahMeals begin with a blessing over two loaves of bread, usually braided *challah*, which is symbolic of the double portion of manna God gave the Jewish people on Fridays during their time in the desert after the exodus from Egypt. At the beginning of a Shabbat or holiday meal, a blessing (*Kiddush*) must first be made over the wine in order to the sanctify the Shabbat. This is followed by the blessing over the bread.  Many Jews attend synagogue services on Shabbat even if they do not do so during the week. Services are held on Friday night and Saturday morning. |
| nativity_scene  Nativity scene, Salisbury Cathedral  [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wiltshire/content/images/2006/12/01/salisbury_nativity_05_470x350.jpg) | A **nativity scene** is a depiction of the birth of Jesus, the term popularly referring to static, three dimensional, commercial or folk art dioramas, or ‘living’ tableaus in which humans and animals—such as donkeys, sheep, and camels—take part. Such scenes typically feature figures representing the infant Jesus, his mother Mary, and Mary’s husband, Joseph; they might also include shepherds, the three Magi, angels and various animals in a stable or other structure.  Saint Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first nativity scene in 1223 in an attempt to encourage the worship of Christ. It was so popular that it inspired communities throughout Christendom to stage similar pantomimes and eventually to create ever more elaborate static exhibitions with wax and ivory figurines garbed in rich fabrics set against intricate landscapes.  Distinctive nativity scenes and traditions have been created around the world and are displayed during the Christmas season in churches, homes, shopping malls, and other venues, and occasionally on public lands and in public buildings, such as St. Peter’s Square and the White House. |
| krishna_footprints  Krishna’s footprints  [library.thinkquest.org](http://library.thinkquest.org/11719/media/ricefeet.jpg) | To most Hindus, Krishna is an avatar of the great god Vishnu. He was born on the 8th day of the Hindu month of Shravan; the festival marking his birth, **Janamashtami** (janam, ‘birth’, ashtami, ‘eighth’) is observed with fasts, prayers and enactments of incidents from his childhood.  **Janamashtami—also known as Krishna Jayanti—**celebrates Krishna’s arrival on earth as a beautiful boy with bluish skin who plays a flute and enjoys humble domestic pastimes with his most intimate devotees. At midnight on the day of the celebration, a statue of the infant Krishna is bathed and placed in a cradle, which is rocked amidst the blowing of conch shells and the ringing of bells. In parts of South India, rice-flour mixed with water is used to paint little blue footprints leading from the doorway into the home, both welcoming and conjuring up the presence of the infant who is the embodiment of joy.  The legends of Krishna’s mischievous antics are fondly recollected. In some parts of India, his attempts to steal butter and curd from pots that were beyond his reach are re-enacted during Janamashtami. A similar earthenware pot is suspended high above the ground and groups of young people form human pyramids in an attempt to reach and break the pot. |
| http://www.standrewscongresbury.org/uploads/Puxton Altar at Harvest small.jpg  Altar decorated for Harvest Festival  [www.standrewscongresbury.org](http://www.standrewscongresbury.org/uploads/Puxton%20Altar%20at%20Harvest%20small.jpg) | Thanksgiving ceremonies and celebrations for a successful harvest are both worldwide and very ancient. In England, ceremonies to give thanks for a successful harvest have taken place since pagan times. Modern Christians celebrate this day by singing, praying and decorating the church with baskets of fruit and food, usually during the month of September.  **Harvest Festival** used to be celebrated at the beginning of the harvest season on 1 August. In those days it was called Lammas, meaning ‘loaf Mass’. Farmers made loaves of bread from the new wheat crop and gave them to their local church. They were then used as the communion bread during a special mass thanking God for the harvest. The custom ended when Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church, and nowadays harvest festivals are held at the end of the harvest season.  The modern tradition of celebrating Harvest Festival in churches began in 1843, when the Reverend Robert Hawker invited parishioners to a special thanksgiving service for the harvest at his church at Morwenstow in Cornwall. Victorian hymns such as “We plough the fields and scatter”, “Come ye thankful people, come” and “All things bright and beautiful” helped popularise his idea of harvest festival and spread the annual custom of decorating churches with home-grown produce. Food brought to the church is typically then distributed to the needy. |
| sukkot Sukkah [curtisloftin.tripod.com/sukkot.htm](http://curtisloftin.tripod.com/sukkot.htm) | *On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.* Leviticus 23:40 *You shall dwell in huts for seven days; all that are home born Jews shall dwell in huts; then shall the generations know that I made the children of Israel dwell in huts when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.* Leviticus 23:42-43  The word **Sukkot** means ‘booths,’ and refers to the temporary dwellings that Jews are commanded to live in during this holiday in memory of the time the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness.  *Etrog and Lulav*  Of the many symbols associated with this festival the most important are the Four Species: *Etrog* (the citron, similar in appearance to a lemon but with a beautiful perfume), *lulav* (palm branches), *hadas* (myrtle), *aravah* (willow). Together these items make up the **Etrog and Lulav.** The branches are bound together and referred to collectively as the lulav, because the palm branch is by far the largest. The etrog is held separately. A blessing is recited as the etrog and lulav are waved in the six directions (east, south, west, north, up and down), symbolizing the belief that God is everywhere. |
| Eid-ul-Fitr fireworks  Eid-ul-Fitr, Sharjah, UAE  [EGfL](http://www.mythicmaps.net/Festival_calendar/Nov/Eid-ul-fitr.htm) | Eid is an Arabic word meaning a recurring event, and in Islam it denotes the religious festivals. Fitr means “to break” and this particular festival marks the breaking of the fasting period of Ramadan. This Eid is known as the ‘small’ festival, al-Eid al Saghir, as it lasts only three days compared with the four days of Eid-ul-Adha, the festival of sacrifice.  For a Muslim, **Eid-ul-Fitr** is a day of thanksgiving. Fasting is forbidden and in the morning, Muslims are encouraged to enjoy a sweet snack such as dates. Other practices include bathing and wearing one’s best or new clothes. Thanks to Allah are expressed by distributing alms among the poor and needy and offering special prayers. On this day, gifts are also given to children and loved ones, but it is also a time of forgiveness, and for making amends.  The first Eid was celebrated in 624 by the Prophet and his friends and relatives after the victory of the battle of Jang-e-Badar. Therefore it can be said that Muslims are not only celebrating the end of fasting, but also thanking Allah for the help and strength they received throughout the previous month.  The festival begins with the first sighting of the new moon, although Muslims in most countries rely on news of an official sighting. There are special services out of doors and in Mosques, processions through the streets, fireworks and a special celebratory meal—the first daytime meal Muslims will have had in a month.  The traditional greeting at this time is Eid Mubarak, i.e. “a happy and blessed Eid”. |
| In Flanders fields the poppies blow Between the crosses, row on row, That mark our place; and in the sky The larks, still bravely singing, fly Scarce heard amid the guns below.  We are the Dead. Short days ago  We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  Loved and were loved, and now we lie  In Flanders fields...  From “In Flanders Fields”  by John Macrae, 1915 | Throughout Western Europe, wild poppies spring up when the earth is disturbed, and the destruction unleashed by the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th Century transformed bare land into fields of blood red poppies, a sight unfortunately revisited in 1914 when the First World War churned up Flanders and northern France.  Recounting the story of the death of Adonis, ancient Greeks told of scarlet anemones blooming wherever a drop of his blood had landed. The Canadian surgeon John McCrae found a similar significance in the poppy, immortalising it as a lasting memorial to the fallen in his poem “In Flanders Fields”. Nowadays, in the weeks before **Remembrance Sunday**, small paper or silk poppies are on sale, the proceeds going towards the care of wounded ex-service people.  Early on the morning of 11 November 1918, an armistice was signed in the Forest of Compiegne in France, thus ending World War I after four years of conflict between the Germans and the Allies. The moment the armistice was signed, an order was issued for all firing to cease. Weapons were laid down, whistles were blown, places of business were closed and there were impromptu parades as rejoicing spread round the globe. In remembrance of this, at 11 am each year, on the Sunday nearest to 11 November, a service is held at the Cenotaph in London to commemorate British and Commonwealth servicemen and women who died in the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts. |
| http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/images/poppy1_rdax_225x218.jpg  [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/images/poppy1_rdax_225x218.jpg) | In the United Kingdom, although two minutes of silence is observed on 11 November itself, the main observance is on Remembrance Sunday.  The Cenotaph was designed and built by Edwin Lutyens in 1919 at the request of then Prime Minister Lloyd George. Meaning “empty tomb” in Greek, the Cenotaph was initially a wood and plaster construction intended only for the first anniversary of the armistice. However, at its unveiling observers spontaneously covered the base of the monument in wreaths. Such was the extent of public enthusiasm that it was decided it should become a permanent and lasting memorial; the temporary construction was replaced by one made of Portland stone, simply inscribed with the words “The Glorious Dead”.  The service on Remembrance Sunday has changed little since it was first introduced in 1921: hymns are sung, prayers are said and a two-minute silence is observed. Officials lay wreaths at the base of the Cenotaph, and the ceremony ends with war veterans marching past in a gesture of respect for their fallen comrades. This is repeated in cities, towns and villages throughout the country as special church services are held, along with parades around local war memorials. |