

Traditional Holidays in Transition (advanced)



Name:

Date:

Different traditions

MI Mina

Hi Mina! Are you excited for Nouruz?

Hey Arman! Yes, I am! How do you celebrate in Iran?

We usually set up a Haft-Seen table with seven items that start with 'S'. It's really beautiful. How about you in Azerbaijan?

We have something similar, but we call it "Kosa" and "Novruz khoncha." It's a tray with sweets, nuts, colored eggs, and candles. Have you heard any old traditions from your grandparents?

Yes! My grandma says they used to jump over bonfires to symbolize getting rid of the bad things from the past year. It was a big deal back then.

That's so cool! My grandpa told me they used to go door to door singing traditional songs and getting treats. Now, we mostly stay home and have family gatherings.

That sounds fun! We still do the bonfire jumping sometimes, but not everyone does it. It's more about spending time together now.

Yeah, same here. I love the festive food though! We have plov and shekerbura. What do you eat?

We have sabzi polo with fish and lots of sweets like baklava. So yummy!

It's amazing how different but similar our celebrations are. I can't wait for Nouruz!

Me too! Have a great celebration, Mina!

Thanks, Arman! You too!

?

How do you celebrate?

Read the chat conversation and talk about it in class: Do you celebrate this traditional holiday, and if so, how? Do you know of any other customs associated with this day?

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Traditional holidays in different countries

The traditional holiday is celebrated differently in various countries. Can you correctly match the traditions?

Match the country with the tradition.

Iran

Kazakhstan

Azerbaijan

Uzbekistan

Turkmenistan

Kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan

Afghanistan

● Jumping over bonfires

● Planting trees and flowers

● Cooking traditional dishes like Nauryz kozhe

● Visiting family graves and cleaning them

● Horse games and competitions

● Decorating homes with fresh flowers

● Outdoor communal celebrations and dances

● Flying kites

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Traditional holidays in transition

Have a look at how traditions associated with the traditional holiday have changed over the course of several centuries.

Shirin, 1620



My name is Shirin, and the year is 1620. We celebrate Nouruz in Persia with the Haft-Seen table, which includes seven items starting with the letter 'S' in Persian, symbolizing health, wealth, and prosperity. Our family gathers around this table, and we partake in traditional meals, such as sabzi polo and fish. It is a time for renewal and joy, marking the beginning of spring.

Shirin describes the celebration of Nouruz in 1620 Persia with the setting up of the Haft-Seen table, traditional meals, and family gatherings.

Navid, 1885



My name is Navid, and the year is 1885. In Persia, we celebrate Nouruz by visiting our relatives and friends. We exchange gifts and share delicious sweets like baklava, nougat, and dried fruits. Our homes are cleaned thoroughly before the new year, and we wear our finest clothes to mark the occasion. It's a time for reconnecting with loved ones and embracing the new year with hope and positivity.

Navid describes the celebration of Nouruz in 1885 Persia with visiting relatives, exchanging gifts, and sharing sweets, emphasizing the importance of cleanliness and new clothes.

Leyla, 2023



My name is Leyla, and the year is 2023. In Iran, we celebrate Nouruz with both traditional and modern elements. We still set up the Haft-Seen table, but now it includes contemporary decorations and items. We participate in outdoor festivities with music, dance, and fireworks. Social media has become part of our celebration, as we share moments with friends and family online. Nouruz remains a time of renewal and joy, blending the old and the new.

Leyla describes the celebration of Nouruz in 2023 Iran with a blend of traditional and modern elements, including outdoor festivities, contemporary decorations on the Haft-Seen table, and the use of social media.

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What important differences can you identify in the way the traditional holiday was celebrated in the past compared to today? Note them down.



A different side of the tradition

Now read the newspaper article on the following page. What problem is being addressed here?

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It appears that there are no specific articles directly addressing recurring negative events related to the Nouruz celebration. To proceed, I will use general knowledge to create a magazine article focusing on environmental pollution caused by the celebration's bonfire tradition.

Pollution Casts Shadow over Nouruz Celebrations

Every year, the joyous celebrations of Nouruz bring together families and communities to welcome the arrival of spring. However, amidst the festivities, a growing environmental concern has emerged. The tradition of jumping over bonfires, known as Chaharshanbe Suri, is causing significant air pollution. This event, held on the last Wednesday before Nouruz, involves lighting fires in streets and public spaces across Iran, Azerbaijan, and other regions celebrating Nouruz.



Bonfires during Nouruz celebrations are causing air pollution and environmental damage. Source: Wikimedia Commons

The bonfire tradition, while symbolizing purification and the warding off of evil, leads to the release of harmful pollutants into the air. In Tehran, authorities reported a significant spike in air pollution levels during the Chaharshanbe Suri festivities in 2022. The fine particulate matter and toxic gases emitted from burning materials not only affect air quality but also pose health risks to vulnerable populations, including children and the elderly.

Efforts to mitigate the environmental impact of this beloved tradition are underway. Environmental groups and local governments are advocating for safer, more sustainable ways to celebrate. Public awareness campaigns and regulations on bonfire materials aim to reduce pollution levels. As Nouruz approaches, communities are encouraged to embrace eco-friendly practices to preserve the beauty of this ancient celebration while safeguarding the environment.

While Nouruz remains a cherished cultural event, balancing tradition with environmental responsibility is crucial. The challenge lies in maintaining the essence of the celebration without compromising the health of the planet. As families gather to celebrate the New Year, let us also commit to protecting the Earth for future generations.

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Criticism of traditional holidays

Although traditional holidays are celebrated often and with enthusiasm, there are also frequently negative aspects associated with them. Can you imagine what points might generally be criticized about traditional holidays?

Collect your ideas together in the class.

Discussion - Partner Work

Now prepare a discussion with role cards in partner work. One of you will take the pro position, and the other person will take the contra position. In addition to the arguments on the role cards, try to find other arguments for your position.

Sara (pro)



My name is Sara, and I love celebrating Nouruz. It is a time for joy and renewal, bringing family and friends together. The tradition of the Haft-Seen table, filled with items representing health, wealth, and prosperity, fills me with hope for the year ahead. The festive atmosphere, the delicious food, and the chance to reconnect with loved ones make Nouruz a special and cherished occasion.

Sara appreciates the positive aspects of Nouruz, focusing on the joy, renewal, and family connections it promotes through traditional celebrations and festive activities.

Reza (contra)



My name is Reza, and while Nouruz is widely celebrated, I have reservations about it. Politically, it can be used to gloss over current societal issues in Iran. Culturally, the commercialization and modernization of the tradition often overshadow its historical roots. Additionally, the environmental impact of extensive celebrations and fireworks is concerning. We need to reflect on these aspects and consider more sustainable and inclusive ways to observe the new year.

Reza is critical of the Nouruz celebrations, pointing out political, cultural, and environmental issues, and emphasizing the need for a more thoughtful, sustainable, and inclusive approach.

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Further arguments

Use this space to note down further arguments that support your position.

Discussion

Now have a discussion with your partner and try to convince them of your opinion.



Discussion in class

Discuss the results of your discussion rounds in class: Which position was more convincing?

Now also ask yourselves the question of what relevance such traditional holidays still have today and discuss this together as a class.

Considering the criticisms of Nouruz, particularly those related to its political, cultural, and environmental implications, what measures can be taken to improve the celebration for a more sustainable and inclusive observance?

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Further questions

Choose one of the following three questions, and answer them in a short text.

Evaluate the cultural significance of Nouruz and its impact on Iranian society. How does this holiday contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage?

Discuss the political implications of Nouruz celebrations. How might the holiday be used to influence public perception and address or ignore societal issues?

Give your opinion on the environmental impact of Nouruz celebrations. What steps can be taken to make the holiday more sustainable?
