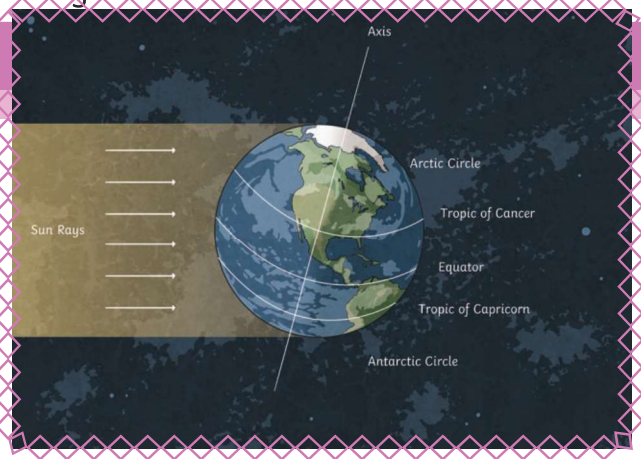


Winter Solstice

The winter solstice takes place around the 21st of December every year in the top half of the Earth which is called the northern hemisphere. It is the day when there is the shortest amount of daylight and the longest night.

What Is a Solstice?

A solstice only happens because the Earth is tilted at an angle. This means that as the Earth orbits the Sun, sometimes the northern hemisphere is tilted towards the Sun, getting more light and heat and sometimes it is tilted away from the Sun, making it darker and colder.



When the northern hemisphere is tilted towards the Sun, it is summer. When it is tilted away, it is winter. A solstice is when either summer or winter reaches its peak. The summer solstice is the point when there is the most light and the winter solstice is the point of least light.

How Do People Celebrate?

Solstice Facts:

- Some countries near the North Pole have no daytime at all during midwinter.
- If the Earth didn't tilt, we would have no seasons at all.
- Have you worked out that the winter solstice in Australia happens in June when Europe is having its summer solstice?

For most of history, people have celebrated the winter solstice. People had to keep track of the seasons, especially in the winter when stored food had to last until the following spring. Many cultures celebrated the winter solstice because it is the longest night before the days begin to get longer again.

The winter solstice is also known as 'Midwinter', 'Yuletide' or 'Yule'. In historic celebrations, a large log called a Yule log was burned in a fire that lasted the twelve days of Christmas. The Yule logs made of cake and chocolate eaten today were inspired by this tradition.

Celebrations often include lights to brighten up the dark months as well as singing, dancing and, of course, good food. Traditional midwinter foods would have been saved from the summer and autumn harvests such as meats, dried fruits, cheeses and pickles – you might still see similar food today during Christmas celebrations.

Questions

1. What is the name of the top half of the Earth?

2. A solstice can only happen because of what?

3. How much sunlight is there at the North Pole during the winter solstice?

4. Draw **three** lines to complete each sentence.

People had to track ...

is celebrated around the
21st December.

Traditional midwinter
foods were saved ...

from the summer and
autumn harvests.

The winter solstice ...

the changing seasons.

5. Explain the two different types of 'Yule logs'.

6. Tick 'true' or 'false' for each statement.

True False

☐
☐

The northern hemisphere is tilted towards the Sun in summer.

☐
☐

There are four solstices per year.

☐
☐

The winter solstice happens all over the world at the same time.

☐
☐

The northern hemisphere is tilted away from the Sun during winter.

7. Which of these words is closest in meaning to the word 'reaches its peak'? Tick one.

- ☐ goes down a mountain
- ☐ gets to the top
- ☐ travels in an orbit

8. Describe what someone in Australia might be wearing on 21st(superscript) December.
Explain how you know.
