

Summer Solstice

Actual Holiday: June 20, 21, or 22

First Celebrated: Unknown

June



Introduction

The Summer Solstice is the day when the North Pole is tilted toward the Sun. With at least 12 hours of sunlight in every part of the Northern Hemisphere, it is the longest day of the year. It is the beginning of the season of summer. Celebrate this day in your classroom by having students learn about what the solstice is and then deciding how they would spend a day if the Sun never set.

Materials

- *The Longest Day* activity sheet (page 41)
- pencils
- art supplies

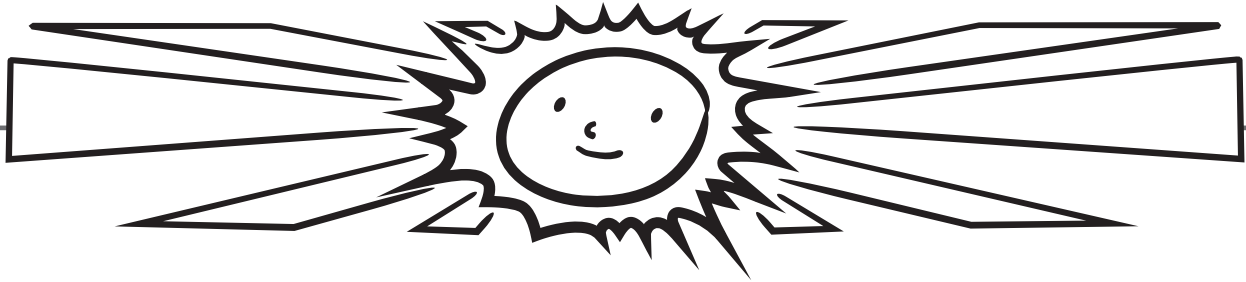
The Activity

- Tell students that today you will be celebrating the summer solstice. This is the first day of summer and the day that the Earth in the Northern Hemisphere is tilted closest to the Sun.
- Let them know more about what the solstice means by sharing the following information:
 - Although it seems like this is a day when Earth is the closest to the Sun, that's not true at all. The Northern Hemisphere of Earth is tilted toward the Sun more than usual. The planet itself is not any closer at all.
 - The name *solstice* means "Sun stand still" in Latin, because it seems as though the Sun is at the very same high point in the sky for a very long time.
 - The solstice is not actually the hottest day of the year. Although it gets more sunlight, only the air has heated up. The ground and the water warm up more slowly. When the air, ground, and water have all heated up, our days are warmer.
 - At exactly noon on the summer solstice, you won't see any shadows because of the position of the Sun.
 - All planets have summer solstices. Some last longer than others. Uranus has a solstice once every 84 Earth years! Seasons on Uranus last for 21 Earth years!
 - All areas in the Arctic Circle have 24 hours of daylight on the solstice. In Alaska, there is a midnight baseball game played on the night of the solstice.
 - In Iceland, which is just south of the Arctic Circle, you can watch the Sun start to set, stop at the horizon, and then start to rise again.
- Talk to students about what they would do with extra hours of sunlight or even an entire night of sunlight if they found themselves in the Arctic Circle.
- Distribute *The Longest Day* activity sheet to students. Have them draw a picture in the box to show what they would do with extra hours of sunlight. Then have them write about their imaginary day or night on the lines below.
- When the class has finished their drawings and stories, have student volunteers share their pages, or post the pages on a bulletin board so all students can take a look at them.



Name: _____

The Longest Day



A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or illustration related to the sun.

Seven horizontal lines spaced evenly down the page, intended for writing a story or description.