

# Winter Solstice

## What Is Winter Solstice?

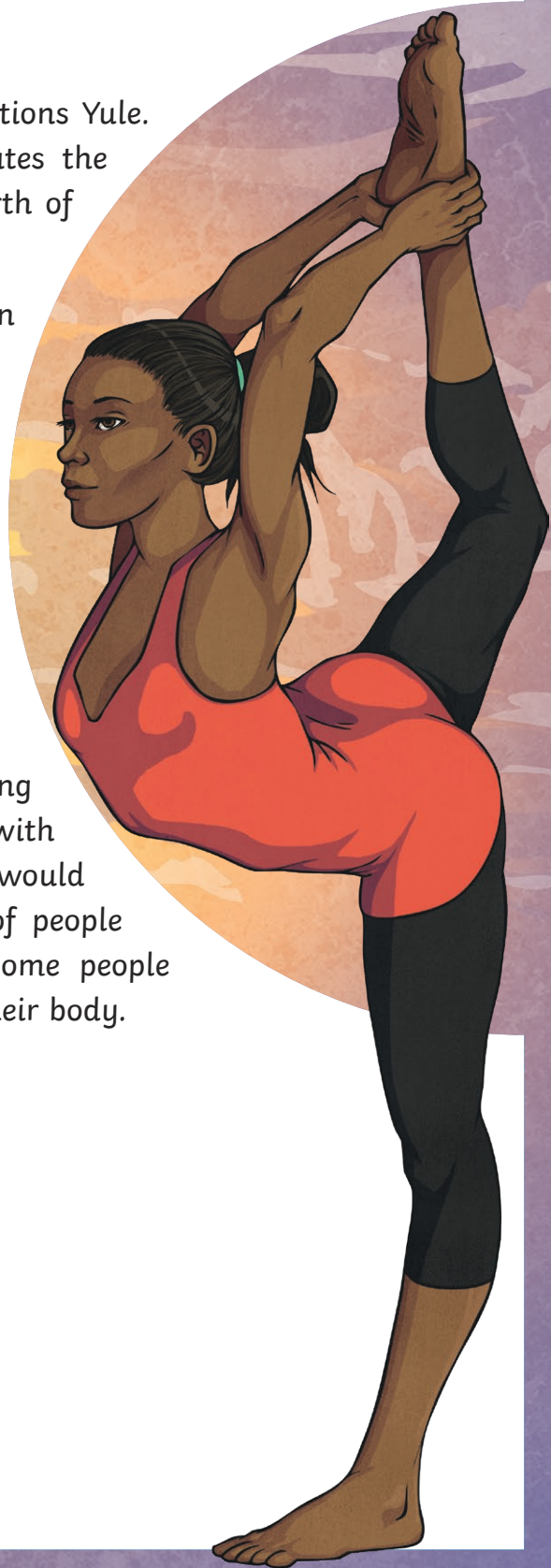
Every year, in June, there is one day that has the fewest hours of sunlight and the most darkness. This day is called winter solstice and usually falls between 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of June.

## Celebrating the Winter Solstice

Pagan people call their winter solstice celebrations Yule. Many pagan people believe that Yule celebrates the birth of the Sun God. Yule celebrates the rebirth of the Sun.

One way that people celebrate Yule is to go on a walk to find a Yule log. In the past, people looked for a log that would go on the fire and burn for a long time. Part of the log was saved and strapped to the family's plough (a farming tool used to break up the soil) to bring good luck to the land. Another piece was kept for a full year to light the next Yule log. The Yule log is meant to bring the family good luck and keep them safe.

Some people decorate their Yule log before burning it, using plants and ribbon. The log is sprinkled with flour to bring luck to the crops that the family would grow and eat in the next year. Today, lots of people celebrate the winter solstice. In Australia, some people celebrate by doing a yoga session to awaken their body.



# Questions

1. When is the winter solstice?

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2. Whose birth do pagans believe Yule celebrates? Tick one.

- The Sun God
- The Weather God
- The Rain God
- The Moon God

3. What did people traditionally decorate their log with? Tick all of the correct answers.

- Plants
- Tinsel
- Glitter
- Ribbon
- Silver foil

# Answers

1. When is the winter solstice?

**The winter solstice usually falls between 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> June.**

2. Whose birth do pagans believe Yule celebrates? Tick one.

- The Sun God**
- The Weather God
- The Rain God
- The Moon God

3. What did people traditionally decorate their log with? Tick all of the correct answers.

- Plants**
- Tinsel
- Glitter
- Ribbon**
- Silver foil

# Winter Solstice

## What Is Winter Solstice?

In the month of June each year, there is one day that has the fewest hours of sunlight and the most darkness. This day is known as winter solstice, the shortest day and longest night of the year. This day usually falls between 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of June but the exact date can vary.

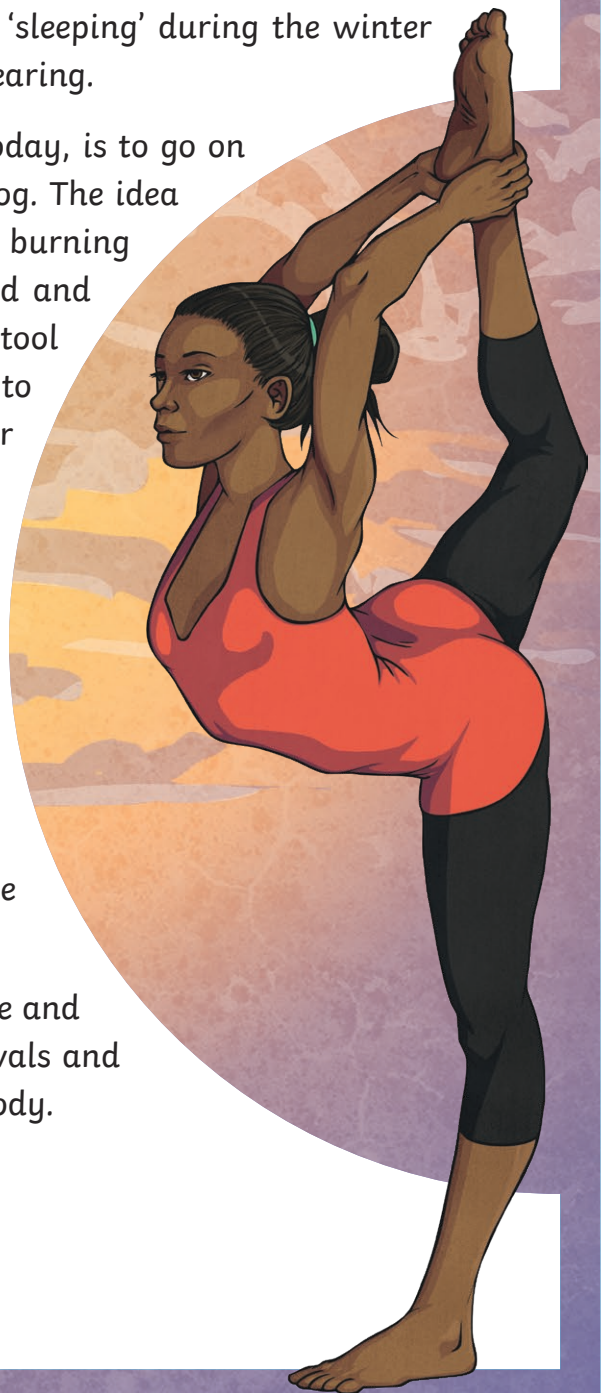
## Celebrating the Winter Solstice

Pagan people call their winter solstice celebrations Yule. Many pagan people believe that Yule celebrates the birth of the Sun God, who was thought to be the child of the Goddess. They brought holly and ivy into their homes as a sign that the Earth was not dying, it was just 'sleeping' during the winter months. The Sun was being reborn, not disappearing.

A Yule celebration, that many people still do today, is to go on a walk with family and friends to find a Yule log. The idea is to find a log that will go on the fire and keep burning for a long time. Part of the log would be saved and strapped to the family's plough (a farming tool used to break up the soil) to bring good luck to the land. Another piece was kept for a full year to light the following year's Yule log. The Yule log is meant to bring the family protection and good luck.

Some people decorate their Yule log before burning it, using plants, ribbon and coloured string. It was believed that each family member must have a turn at decorating the Yule log. The last job is to sprinkle it with flour. This was supposed to bring good luck to the crops for the next year.

Today, many people celebrate the winter solstice and some choose to attend light shows, magic festivals and even do yoga, which is meant to awaken the body.



# Questions

1. What is winter solstice?

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2. In the 'What Is Winter Solstice?' section, find and copy the word that shows that winter solstice isn't always on the same day.

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3. Why did people celebrate Yule?

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4. Which plants did people bring into their homes at Yule?

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5. Describe one winter solstice celebration in as much detail as you can.

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# Answers

1. What is winter solstice?

**Winter solstice is the day with the fewest hours of sunlight and the most darkness. This day usually falls between 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of June but the exact date can vary.**

2. In the 'What Is Winter Solstice?' section, find and copy the word that shows that winter solstice isn't always on the same day.

**Usually**

3. Why did people celebrate Yule?

**People celebrated Yule to celebrate the birth of the Sun God and the rebirth of the Sun.**

4. Which plants did people bring into their homes at Yule?

**Holly and ivy.**

5. Describe one winter solstice celebration in as much detail as you can.

**Children's answers will vary but should cover one of the following celebrations using details from the text: bringing holly and ivy inside; finding, burning and decorating a Yule log; or going to light shows, magic festivals and doing yoga.**

# Winter Solstice

## What Is Winter Solstice?

In the month of June each year, there is one day which has the fewest hours of sunlight and the most darkness. This day is known as winter solstice, the shortest day and longest night of the year. This day usually falls between 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of June but the exact date can vary.

## Celebrating the Winter Solstice

Pagan people call their winter solstice celebrations Yule. Many pagan people believe that Yule celebrates the birth of the Sun God, who was thought to be the child of the Goddess. Traditionally, many decorated their homes with holly and ivy to remind them that the Earth was not dying during the winter months, it was just sleeping. The Sun was being reborn, not disappearing.

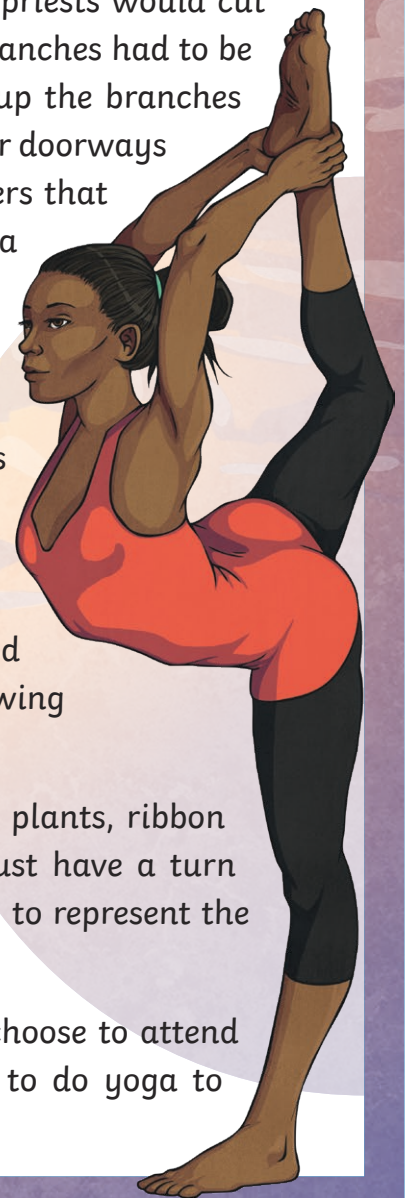
Another group, the Druids, brought mistletoe into their homes. To them, mistletoe was an important plant with many magical powers. Druid priests would cut mistletoe from an oak tree during a special ceremony. The branches had to be caught before they touched the ground. The priest divided up the branches into sprigs and gave them to other people, who hung them over doorways as protection. They believed that mistletoe had special powers that could cure illnesses and keep them safe. Mistletoe was also a sign of peace and kindness.

## Yule Logs

A Yule celebration that many people still do today is to take a walk with family and friends to find a Yule log. The idea is to find a log that will go on the fire and keep burning for a long period of time. In the past, these logs were supposed to burn for a full 12 days. A piece of the log would sometimes be saved and strapped to the family's plough to bring good luck to the land. Another piece was kept to light the following year's Yule log.

Some people decorate their Yule log before burning it, using plants, ribbon and coloured string. Traditionally, each family member must have a turn at decorating the log. The last job is to sprinkle it with flour, to represent the crops that the family will grow and eat the following year.

Many people celebrate the winter solstice today and some choose to attend light shows, magic festivals, and some people even decide to do yoga to awaken their body.



# Questions

1. What is the winter solstice?

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2. Why did people celebrate Yule?

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3. Which three plants did people bring into their homes at Yule?

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4. What did people do with their Yule log when it was finished burning?

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5. Why do you think that people wanted to bring good luck to the land?

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6. Look at the 'Yule Logs' section. Find and copy the word that means the same as 'usually'.

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# Answers

1. What is the winter solstice?

**The winter solstice is the day which has the fewest hours of sunlight and the most darkness. It usually falls between 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> of June.**

2. Why did people celebrate Yule?

**People celebrated Yule to celebrate the birth of the Sun God and the rebirth of the Sun.**

3. Which three plants did people bring into their homes at Yule?

**Holly, ivy and mistletoe.**

4. What did people do with their Yule log when it was finished burning?

**When the Yule log had finished burning, people would keep part of it to light next year's log or would put it on their plough to bring good luck.**

5. Why do you think that people wanted to bring good luck to the land?

**Answers will vary but must refer to the fact that it was very important to have a good crop to provide people with enough food. For example, People would want to bring good luck to the land because they needed their crops to grow well in order for everyone to have enough food.**

6. Look at the 'Yule Logs' section. Find and copy the word that means the same as 'usually'

**Traditionally**