

# Easter

## Symbols

**Easter is celebrated in different ways around the world. There are many significant symbols of Easter. These include:**

### The Cross

To followers of Christ (Christians) the cross is the symbol of His death and resurrection. It is an ancient symbol, represented in different ways across many cultures. To some people, the cross is a symbol of the link between Heaven and Earth.

### Flowers

As Easter has connections with ancient spring festivals, it is natural that it should be associated with blossoms and flowers. Flowers also represent the awakening of nature—the new life—which is the spirit of Easter in the Northern Hemisphere.

### Chickens

Chickens and eggs are naturally connected. Chicks represent the new life formed in the cold hardness of an egg. Spring is the time when many birds build their nests in preparation for egg laying.

### Rabbits

Rabbits and hares are both symbols of new life.

### Bilbies

While furry bunnies are an historical symbol of Easter, rabbits are not native to Australia and became a major pest here soon after they were introduced in 1859 because they destroy the pasture and habitat of native wildlife. For this reason, many Australians prefer to replace the Easter rabbit with a native animal—the bilby.

### Hot Cross Buns

The eating of spicy cakes was a custom associated with ancient spring festivals. Christians continued baking sweet spicy buns and marked them with a cross to commemorate the death of Christ.

### Eggs

The most popular symbol of Easter is the Easter egg. It appears in a huge variety of forms, from the ornamental to the edible. Coloured or decorated eggs have been given as gifts for many centuries.

#### ACTIVITY—Decorating Easter eggs

Eggs for decoration should be hard boiled or blown. Before blowing an egg, have tissues or a container handy to collect the yolk and white. Using a needle, pierce the broad end of the egg then invert it and pierce the other end. Hold the egg over the container and gently blow to remove the insides. Seal the hole with a little glue.

#### Natural colouring

In the early days, dyes were made from herbs, leaves, flowers and spices. They were often boiled to remove the colour. These days, dyes can be bought from craft shops or supermarkets but to dye naturally you could use brown onion skin. Wrap the onion skin around the egg and secure with thread or an elastic band. Boil the egg long enough for the dye to adhere to the egg. This produces an interesting marble effect. You could also use beetroot for a purplish-pink effect; spinach for a green colour; coffee for a brown shade; and saffron for yellow. Adding vinegar to the boiling water will make the colour brighter.

#### Wax crayons

You can use wax crayons on hard-boiled eggs to make interesting designs and patterns. Once you've drawn on an egg, place it in cold water then try dyeing each section a different colour. Another dyeing method involves crepe paper dye, which is made by pouring hot water on strips of crepe paper in a bowl. When the dye is released, remove the paper and add a small amount of white vinegar. Make sure the liquid is cool before using on waxed eggs.

## Easter Around the World

### A Lebanese Easter

During the six weeks leading up to Easter (known as Lent), Lebanese people collect eggs which they colour and use for egg-cracking games. Traditionally the eggs were dyed by boiling them with brown onion skins, almond skins or wild daisies.

### A Greek Easter

Greek people dye eggs red to celebrate the breaking of the Lenten fasts. They also light candles for good luck. Families light candles in church then take some home to light their house icon for the coming year.

### An Italian Easter

In Italy the 40 days before Easter are filled with the festive fun of Carnivale. Colourful pageants, masquerades, dancing and music festivals take place throughout the country. The Italian Carnivale begins in January and lasts until Ash Wednesday. The last three days are the most important, especially the *Martedì Grasso* (Fat Tuesday), when pancakes are eaten. The wearing of masks during Carnivale is an age-old tradition that comes from travelling theatre groups which have performed throughout Italy since 1500.

#### ACTIVITY—Masks for Carnivale

**What you need**

- Cardboard
- Scissors
- Glue
- Stapler
- Coloured pencils or pens
- Decorations including feathers, wool, glitter
- Drinking straw

**What to do**

1. Download the *Australian Easter Card* blackline master from the Easter in Australia set of blackline masters on the Teacher Toolkit.
2. Cut out the mask parts from the *Australian Easter Card* blackline master.
3. Cut out the eye holes, then colour and decorate the mask.
4. Staple the ears to the mask.
5. Staple the straw to one side of the mask.

### A Dutch Easter

Making egg trees is a traditional Easter custom in The Netherlands (also known as Holland). Children still enjoy decorating and hand-painting eggs to hang on the bare branches of their Easter trees.

#### ACTIVITY—Make a papier-mâché egg to decorate or hang on an Easter egg tree

**What you need**

- Balloons
- Glue
- Paint
- Glitter (optional)
- Sticks
- Torn-up newspaper
- String
- Material remnants
- Paint and glue brushes

**What to do**

1. Blow up a balloon to the chosen size, tie the end off and attach some string at the end.
2. Have students layer the balloon with glue then cover with layers of newspaper. Allow each layer to dry before applying another layer. Cover with several layers to ensure the 'egg' becomes hard.
3. Once the 'egg' has hardened and dried, encourage students to decorate it with material remnants, paints and glitter.
4. Use one or several fallen sticks to create an Easter egg tree on which to place all the decorated eggs.

### A Polish Easter

An old Polish Easter custom was for the family table to be laid on Easter Saturday, when a priest would visit the home to bless the food on display. Today, Polish people prepare small baskets of food to take to church, where a time is set aside for blessing each of the decorated baskets.

#### ACTIVITY—Baskets good enough to eat

**What you need**

- Oven-proof dish, greased on the outside
- Bread dough (see recipe below)
- Egg white

**What to do**

1. Roll the dough into long thin strips.
2. Weave the strips, moulding them over the shape of the outside of the dish.
3. Bake at a moderate heat in an oven for 45 minutes.
4. Remove the dish, brush the dough with egg white and attach a plaited strip to represent the rim of the basket.
5. Return the dish to the oven for a further 30 minutes.
6. Use to place Easter eggs in.

#### Bread dough recipe

**What you need**

- 4 cups of flour
- 1 cup of salt
- 1 ½ cups of water
- Mixing bowl

**What to do**

1. Mix the ingredients together and knead as you would for bread.
2. Add more water if necessary.
3. When modelled, this dough can be baked in an oven at 170°C for approximately an hour.

### An American Easter

In New York, it is traditional for people to promenade in their 'Sunday best' for the annual Easter parade. In Washington, the President of the United States watches hundreds of children take part in an egg-rolling competition on the lawns of the White House.

#### ACTIVITY—Easter Bonnets

**What you need**

- Paper plates
- Wrapping paper
- Glue
- Easter motifs from the *An American Easter* blackline master in the *Easter Craft Around the World* set of blackline masters on the Teacher Toolkit.
- Ribbon
- Old hats of various kinds
- Scissors

**What to do**

Allow students to be creative by decorating their old hats to make Easter bonnets. You could have a parade to show the Easter bonnets to other classes or parents.

### A Mexican Easter

Mexican children make crosses from sticks and scraps of wool. They call them *Ojo de Dios* (Eye of God) and hang them at the end of their beds.

#### ACTIVITY—Ojo de Dios

**What you need**

- 2 sticks (tree branches, skewer sticks or paddle pop sticks)
- Different-coloured wool
- Beads

**What to do**

1. Secure the two sticks in the shape of a cross using glue or wire, depending on the sticks used.
2. Beginning in the centre, wind yarn once around each arm of the cross in turn. Use as many different colours as possible and continue weaving until the edges of each stick are reached.
3. Secure the ends of the wool by tying or gluing.
4. Add a bead to each end of the stick and a tassel of wool on each side and to the bottom arm of the cross.

### An Australian Easter

In Australia we have adopted the bilby, an endangered Australian native animal, as an Easter icon. The bilby is a marsupial about 30 to 45 cm in length with a long tail and long, rabbit-like ears. It has bluish-grey fur and a distinctive black-and-white tail.

#### ACTIVITY—Make an Australian Easter card

**What you need**

- Coloured cardboard or thick paper
- Coloured pencils or felt-tip pens
- Glue
- Copies of the *Australian Easter Card* blackline master from the *Easter in Australia* set of blackline masters on the Teacher Toolkit.
- Scissors

**What to do**

1. Colour the templates from the *Australian Easter Card* blackline master then cut them out.
2. Fold the cardboard or paper in half.
3. Glue on the templates and write in the card.

## FREE Teacher Toolkit Resources available at [www.scholastic.co.nz/schools/bookclub](http://www.scholastic.co.nz/schools/bookclub)

- *Easter in Australia* set of eight blackline masters.
- *Easter Around the World* set of eight blackline masters.

## Resources available in the 2012 School Essentials catalogue

- *All About Australian Animals* (p 190)
- *Heinemann First Atlas* (p 207)
- *Around the World Kids* (p 206)
- *Festival Fun* (p 206)
- *Global Village Craft Paper* (p 228)
- *Egg and Spoon 6-Pack* (p 388)



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