



# Nowruz resource pack for teachers and schools



## The British Council welcomes you...

Dear friends,

I hope that you find this pack stimulating, and that it leads to greater interest and understanding of other cultures and peoples.

Please do contact us at **Nowruz@britishcouncil.org** with any feedback, or with any questions that you may have.

With best regards,



Danny Whitehead

British Council Country Director Iran



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## Introduction to Nowruz

The festival of Nowruz (pronounced no-rooz) is an ancient Persian celebration that marks the New Year, the coming of spring and the renewal of nature. It is a happy and joyous secular festival celebrated by millions of people of different cultures and faiths in South Asia and Central Asia, as well as in the UK, the US and other countries across the world.

The word Nowruz comes from two Farsi words meaning 'new day.' Farsi is the local name for the modern Persian language, and the official language of Iran, with over 20 million speakers. The festival has been celebrated for over three thousand years and began in Persia, which was an area stretching from the River Nile in the west to India in the east. Nowruz was originally linked to the Zoroastrian faith, which preceded both Christianity and Islam.

It marks a time of new beginnings and occurs every year on March 20th or 21st on the spring equinox when the sun is over the equator. It has been proclaimed an official UN observance day since 2010 because it promotes peace and solidarity and focuses on cultural diversity and friendship among different peoples and communities.

This education pack contains assembly and lesson plans along with activity and resource sheets to help your pupils learn about some of the special features and traditions associated with the celebration of Nowruz.

The discussions and activities can be used as starting points in individual lessons or as elements of a larger cross-curricular project over a number of subjects that could be carried out across the school or with a partner school overseas. It is aimed primarily at pupils aged 7–11, but could also be adapted to suit younger or older pupils.





# Let's Celebrate Nowruz

## Assembly Plan

Aims and objectives: to give an overview of Nowruz

## Resources

Large screen, internet access, Iranian music, slides showing Nowruz traditions or Haftseen tables containing symbolic objects, BBC clip celebrating Nowruz

## Introduction

Play some traditional Iranian music for your pupils to listen to as they come in and out of assembly. An example can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxKknz9OH5A>

Give the traditional greeting, 'Sal- e no Mobarak.' Explain that this means 'Happy New Year' in Farsi and today we will be finding out about the New Year spring festival of Nowruz, which is celebrated by communities all over the world at this time of year. If anybody at your school or their families are celebrating the festival, invite them to share their knowledge and experiences during the assembly.

Introduce some of the traditions of the Nowruz festival using the slideshow and/or a prepared Haftseen table. Perhaps also show the short BBC film of the comedian Shappi Khorsandi preparing to celebrate Nowruz with her family at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01wdhsf>

## Suggested assembly script

Download the PowerPoint presentation for guidance on delivering a Nowruz assembly in your school. The sections introduce you to the history of Nowruz, the Haftseen table, festive food, fire jumping festivities and sizdah be-dar (the thirteenth day of the New Year).

Follow this link to download the presentation:

[https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/sites/so/files/assembly\\_on\\_suggested\\_nowruz\\_script.pdf](https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/sites/so/files/assembly_on_suggested_nowruz_script.pdf)



# Greetings and Haftseen tables

## Lesson plan

Age range: 7-11

Curriculum links: English, RE, PSHE

Global skills and outlooks: communicating, developing a positive sense of identity and being open to new ideas

Aims and objectives: to learn about the main features of the festival of Nowruz, write a greeting in Farsi and label symbolic items on Haftseen tables

Resources: copies of resource sheet 2 and activity sheet 2, card, colouring pens



## Introduction

Begin by telling the children that every year world leaders including President Obama send a greeting in Farsi to those who are celebrating the festival of Nowruz.

Ask your pupils to record what they have learnt so far about the festival of Nowruz from the assembly, add any questions that they have and find out what else they would like to know. These working documents can be added to in different colours or post it notes as they discover more about the festival and can provide a useful baseline to ascertain their initial understanding and a simple tool for monitoring progress as the topic gets underway.

## Main activities

Provide each pupil with a copy of the written version of the greeting on the activity sheet. Ask them to trace over the Farsi letters and then try writing it carefully on a piece of card. Remind them to move their pen or pencils from right to

left and not to forget to include the dots.

Farsi calligraphy can be enhanced using decorated frames and patterns. Encourage your pupils to create a final version of their Nowruz greeting with gold and silver pens or bright colours and decorate around it with a frame or pictures of the Nowruz traditions you saw in assembly.

Look at the photographs of the decorated Haftseen tables on activity sheet 2. Remind the pupils of the symbolic meanings behind each object (as found in the assembly presentation) and then ask them to discuss the following in small groups:

- Can you spot the 7Ss on each table and name them?
- What other symbolic items are on the tables?
- Can you think of other festivals where families decorate objects together?

Ask each child to cut out the labels on the sheet and match them with the correct item and symbolic meaning.

## Additional activities

Collect the objects needed to set up your own Haftseen table in your classroom for the thirteen days of Nowruz. Take a photograph when it is complete and exchange with your partner school if you have one.

Goldfish are a symbol of new life at Nowruz. Try making a goldfish sun catcher from the instructions on the activity sheets to decorate your classroom or place on your Haftseen table. Alternatively you could stick the goldfish onto a piece of card with your Farsi greeting to make a Nowruz greeting card.





# Nowruz around the world.

## Lesson plan

Age range: 7-11

Curriculum links: English, Geography, RE, PSHE

Global skills and outlooks: communicating, collaborating, developing a positive sense of identity and being open to new ideas

Aims and objectives: to learn more about children's lives in other countries and how people celebrate the Nowruz festival

Resources: internet connection, globe, atlas or mapping software, copies of letters on resource sheets

## Introduction

Many countries and communities around the world celebrate Nowruz, but some traditions vary from place to place. Show your pupils the following short film from a school in Pakistan that shows children taking part in their local Nowruz festivities:

<https://vimeo.com/90738045>

Which traditions seem unique to this community?

Divide the class into small groups and explain that you have a selection of letters from children in different countries sharing how they celebrate Nowruz in their communities. Give each group copies of some of the letters. Use your judgment to select which will be most appropriate for your children's reading levels.

Ask your pupils to read the letters as a group, and discuss in order to make a note of the following:

- What is the name of the child who wrote the letter and what country do they come from?
- Which Nowruz traditions do they seem to particularly enjoy?
- Which rituals are the same and which seem unique to their specific countries or communities?
- What is the most interesting or surprising piece of information in the letter?
- If you could ask one of the letter-writers a question, what would it be?

Ask the children to describe a family tradition that is part of a festival that they celebrate. Then draft a reply to one of the letters describing the food, decorations, and traditions associated with the festival of their choice.

As a follow up use globes, atlases or map software to help the pupils locate the home countries and capital cities of the letter-writers in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, the UK and India. Have any of your pupils ever visited these countries or do they have family or friends living there?

Nowruz begins when the sun shines directly on the equator and the length of night and day are nearly equal. This signals the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. Can your pupils identify the equator and tropics of Cancer and Capricorn on their globes and maps?

## Main activities

Provide each pupil with a copy of the written version of the greeting on the activity sheet. Ask them to trace over the Farsi letters and then try writing it carefully on a piece of card. Remind them to move their pen or pencils from right to left and not to forget to include the dots.

Farsi calligraphy can be enhanced using decorated frames and patterns. Encourage your pupils to create a final version of their Nowruz greeting with gold and silver pens or bright colours and decorate around it with a frame or pictures of the Nowruz traditions you saw in assembly.

Look at the photograph of the decorated Haftseen table on Activity sheet 2. Remind the pupils of the symbolic meanings behind each object and then ask them to discuss the following in small groups:

- Can you spot the 7Ss on each table and the other symbolic items?
- Do all the tables contain the same things? Which is your favourite decorated table?
- Can you think of other festivals where families decorate objects together?

Ask each child to cut out the picture of their favourite Haftseen table and label each item and its symbolic meaning.

## Additional activities

Children all over the world decorate eggs at Nowruz as a symbol of new life. This tradition goes back hundreds of years and is shared by many different cultures.



Photocopy the egg template on the activity sheet. Show your pupils examples of painted egg designs and then use the template to plan and create your own Nowruz design. Use traditional Persian patterns, or goldfish and hyacinths as part of the design. Colour or paint the design and use it as a prototype for painting onto hard-boiled eggs or small balloons covered in papier-mâché before adding collage decorations such as sequins and glitter.

Your pupils could also try growing some sabzeh by filling a plate with water and lentils, leaving it in sunlight to sprout. Discard it on the thirteenth day of the New Year during a sizdah be-dar class picnic.





## Activity sheet 1

Trace over the Farsi greeting for Happy Nowruz from right to left and then try writing it on your own. Decorate with colours and illustrate it with pictures of Nowruz traditions or a frame.

# نوروزتان پیروز

## Nowruz-e ton pirooz Happy Nowruz



## Activity sheet 2

Cut out the labels from the list below and match with the pictures. Can you remember what each one symbolises?

Somaq (crushed spice of berries)	سماق
Senjed (sweet, dry lotus fruit)	سنجد
Serkeh (vinegar)	سرکه
Seeb (apples)	سیب
Seer (garlic)	سیر
Samanu (wheat pudding)	سمنو
Sabzeh (sprouted wheat grass)	سبزه
As well as these:	
Mirror	آینه
Candles	شمع
Painted eggs	تخم مرغ رنگی
An orange	پرتقال
Coins	سکه
Hyacinths	سندبل
Goldfish	ماهی قرمز
Copy of the Qur'an or book of poetry	قرآن یا کتاب شعر





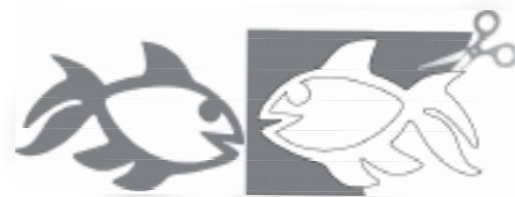
# Activity sheet 3

## Make a goldfish suncatcher

Goldfish are a symbol of good luck in the New Year.

1

Using the template provided, draw the goldfish on a sheet of orange or gold card. Cut out the outline, then cut out the centre of the body, leaving a border of about 1.5cm. Repeat with a second sheet (reversing the template if using one sided card)



Leaving the folded edges uncut, cut a parallel curve along the top and bottom edges. Unfold the paper and you should have a strip of curved wave-like shapes. Repeat with several strips of different coloured tissue paper.

3

Leaving the folded edges uncut, cut a parallel curve along the top and bottom edges. Unfold the paper and you should have a strip of curved wave-like shapes. Repeat with several strips of different coloured tissue paper.

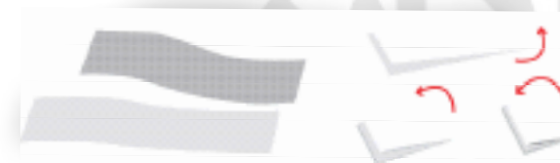


### You will need:

- Two A4 sheets of orange or gold coloured card
- Red, yellow, orange and pink tissue paper
- Cling film
- PVA glue
- Paintbrush
- Scissors
- Sticky tape
- Googly eyes (optional)
- Needle and thread

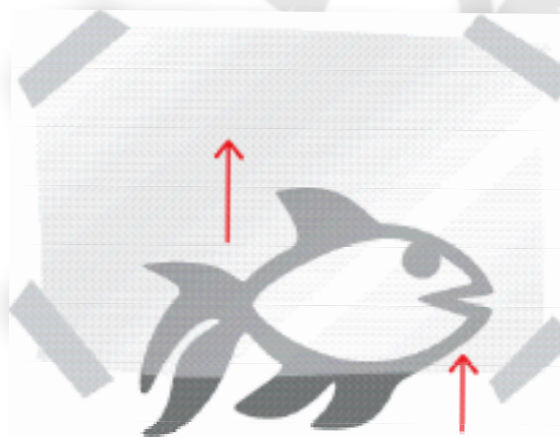
2

Cut the coloured tissue paper into strips about 3cm by 15cm. Fold each strip in half three times.



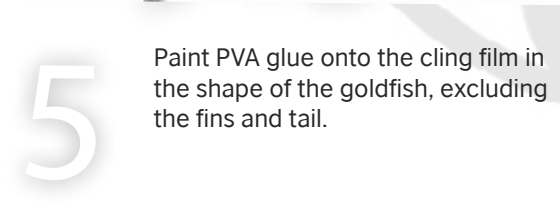
4

Tape a piece of cling film smoothly to your table and slide one of the fish outlines underneath it.



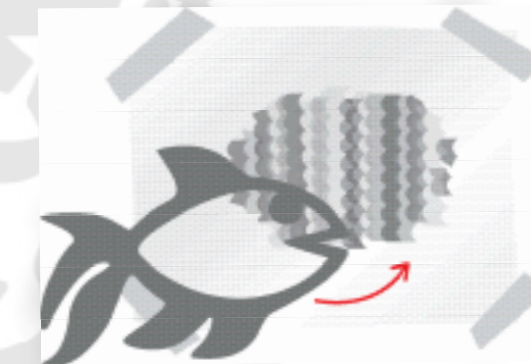
5

Paint PVA glue onto the cling film in the shape of the goldfish, excluding the fins and tail.



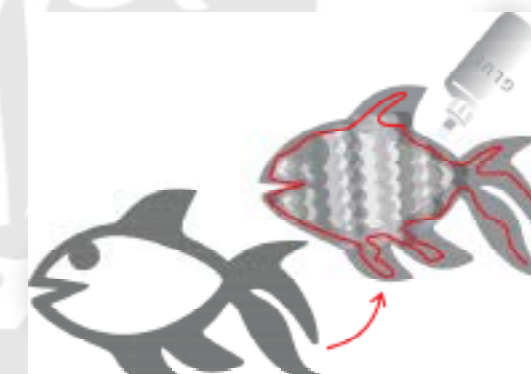
6

Lay the strips of tissue paper vertically onto the gluey cling film, with the convex curves facing the tail, covering all of the centre. Overlap the strips and alternate colours to give the effect of bright scales. Gently brush more glue over the strips once they are in place.



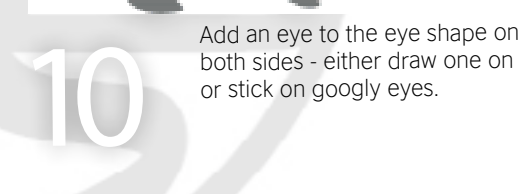
8

Leave the fish in position for the glue to dry overnight. Remove the cling film from the table and trim the excess tissue paper and film from around the fish.



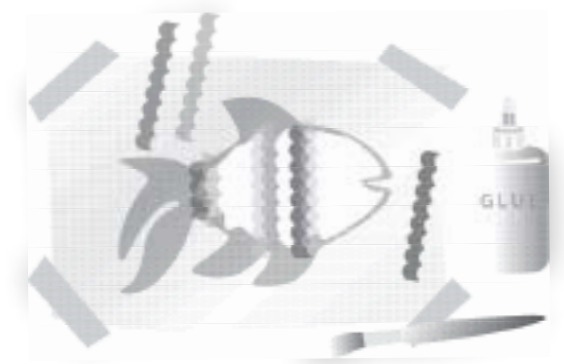
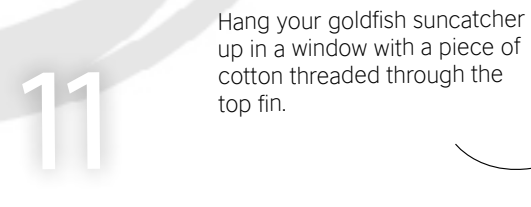
10

Add an eye to the eye shape on both sides - either draw one on or stick on googly eyes.



11

Hang your goldfish suncatcher up in a window with a piece of cotton threaded through the top fin.



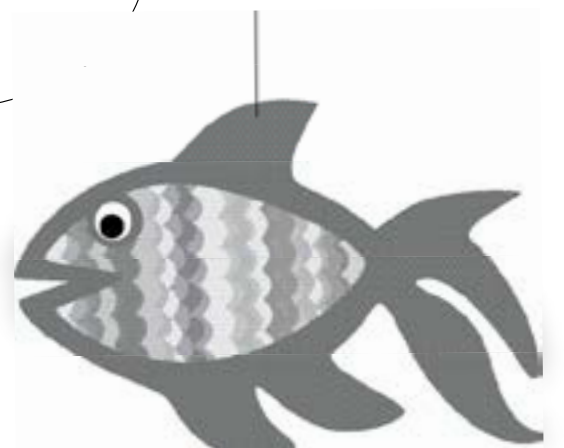
7

Remove the outline from under the cling film, and place it on top of the scales in the same position. Add some more glue to the border if necessary.



9

Turn the fish over and glue the other fish outline on to the back, matching up the shapes and covering the edges of the scales.





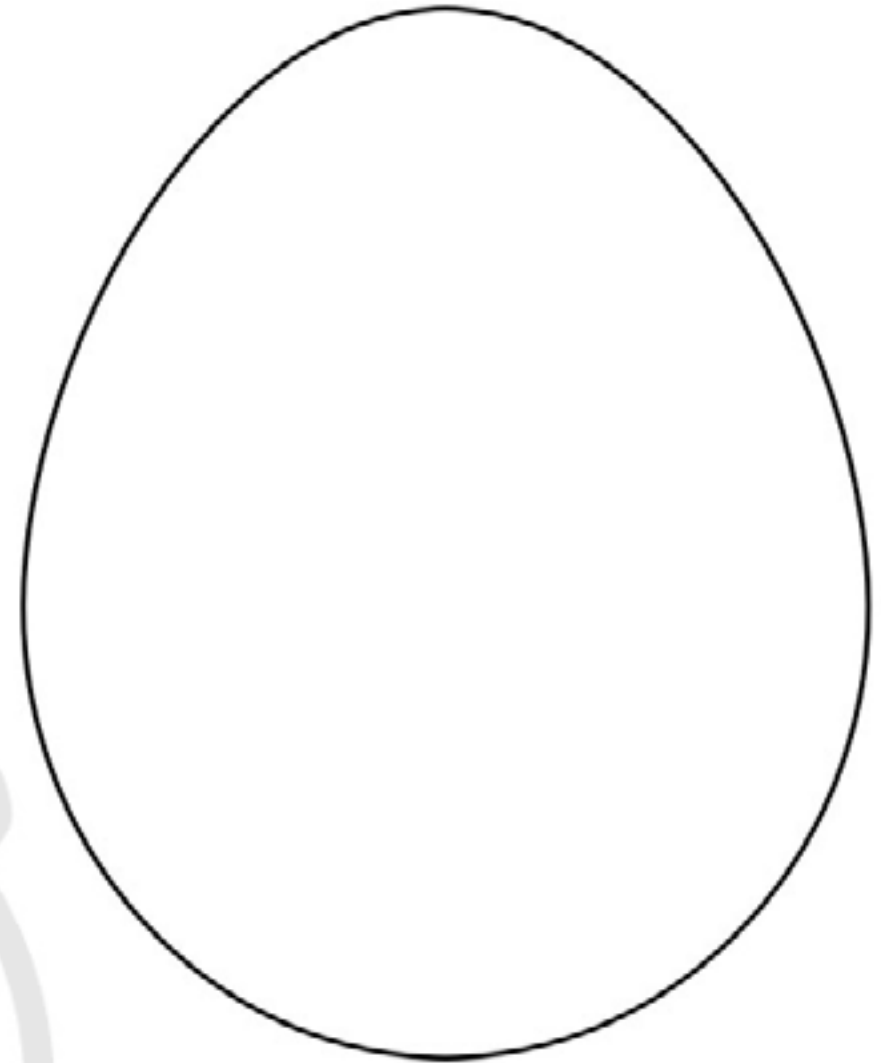
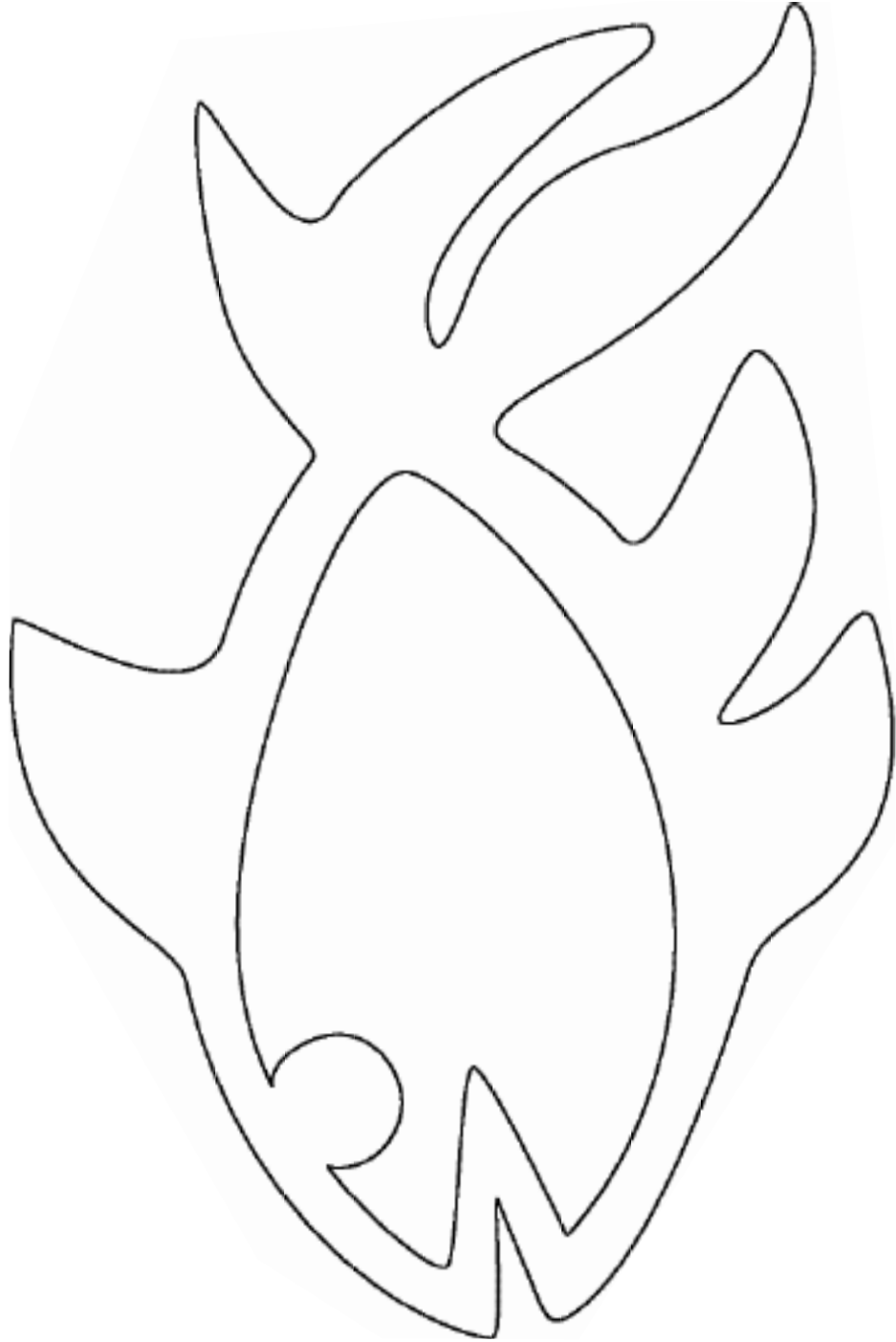
## Activity sheet 4

### Goldfish outline

Photocopy the template below and follow the instructions on 'Activity sheet 3'.

### Egg template

Photocopy the template below, then draw on the design for your painted egg.







# Resource sheets: Letters from children around the world

## Letter from Afghanistan



Hello friends,

My name is Massih and my brother's name is Jawad. I am 11 and Jawad is 7 years old. We are from Afghanistan. I am in class 6 and Jawad is in class 1 of school.

Nowruz is the first day of the year. We enjoy the day as it is the first day of the spring season. Grandma, in the Nowruz folkloric story, tell us "the old lovers, Nowruz (the man) and Kampeerak (the woman) get young again on this day and want to get married. Nowruz sits on a branch of a tree. If he falls in the water Nowruz day will be rainy but if he falls on the land the day will be sunny". We like sunny Nowruz because we can go out and play.

On the last night of the year, we stay up late to celebrate the change of date.

Haft maiwa, samanak and sabzi chalaw are Nawruz traditional foods. Jawad and I like haft maiwa and samanak because they are sweet and delicious.

On this day the flag of Sakhi's shrine is erected and people pray for a better and peaceful new year. People also go out to gardens to see traditional sports and plays on this day.

I know that there are some similarities between Nowruz and Christmas celebrations.

I hope that you have learnt some information about how we celebrate Nowruz.

Massih and Jawad.

## Letter from Uzbekistan

There are so many holidays in Uzbekistan. For example: New Year, Women's Day, Independence Day and Nowruz. Out of all of them I like Nowruz most and I am going to explain you about Nowruz.

Nowruz is a national holiday in Uzbekistan which is celebrated on the 21st of March when the day and night are equal. It is also a spring "New Year". According to historical events, our ancestors celebrated New Year on this day. Our grandmothers and mothers cook a main food "sumalak." I think it is the most delicious food. Our grandfathers and fathers cook khalim because we do not celebrate Nowruz without sumalak and khalim. Also we like kuk somsa and chuchvara. They are our traditional foods. There is a lot of music, dancing and singing. People in our country do not work on this day. They visit their friends and family and say 'Happy Nowruz.' They invite them to their homes. Often they take their children to the park. This is the first day of the spring holidays at schools.

On Nowruz, Uzbek women and girls wear national dresses and they are very beautiful. Our men and boys like to compete in different national games. We like to sing songs and dance. I wear a red dress and embroidered duppi.

Nowruz is a good and happy holiday!

Akhmatova, Akhangaran district, 7 "B" grade



## Letter from Iran

Dear friends

My name is Nahal, I'm 12 years old and live in Iran. I go to school 5 days a week from Saturday to Thursday. In Iran Thursdays and Fridays are the weekends. I learn English at school but I also go to an English school on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

In this letter I want to tell you about my new year, Nowruz. I know about your festivals and how you decorate a Christmas tree. My new year is on 21 March when winter ends and spring starts. A few weeks before Nowruz we start spring-cleaning and give the things we don't need, but other people can still use, to charities. I also give some of my toys and smaller clothes to them. Every year before Nowruz we have a big charity event and people give food, clothes, and money to children and grownups in need.

The last Tuesday of the year is called charshanbe suri. We jump over fire and sing a song saying we are giving our ills to the fire and taking all its goodness. On this day we eat special noodle soup, rice noodles and special dried nuts. Some children go to the doors of the neighbours with a bowl and they get some nuts.



As you decorate Christmas trees for your new year, we set a special table and put 7 things that start with an 's' sound on it. These 7 things are put on the table for special reasons.

Seeb: Apples are for health

Serkeh: Vinegar is for wisdom and patience

Somaq: Somaq is for the sunrise and sunset

Sekke: Gold coins for wealth

Sabzeh: We grow lentil and wheat shoots for a good harvest

Seer: Garlic for medicine

Senjed: A dried fruit for love

We also buy a goldfish and put it in a bowl. Flowers, special sweets, candles, a mirror, and a book of poetry are also on the table. On Nowruz we eat spicy rice with fish.

During the Nowruz holiday, which is 13 days long, we visit our families and go to lots of parties. Grownups normally give new money or golden coins to younger people. Some families go on holiday during the second week, but wherever we are on the 13th day we put our sabzeh on the roof of our car and go on a picnic and throw our sabzeh in a river but before throwing it we try to make knots and then make a wish.

So after 2 weeks of fun we have to prepare for school. We always get some homework before Nowruz and I try to do half an hour a day during the holiday season. It is hard to go back to school but I am always happy to see my friends and my lovely teacher.

Happy Nowruz







## Letter from Kazakhstan

Hello, to everyone who may read this!

My name is Artem. I'm 13. I've been learning English for some years. Let me try to tell you about my country. I think that you may not know a lot about my country because it is a very young state. My motherland is Kazakhstan and my native town is Shymkent, which is the third largest town in my country. I am eager to write about our holiday "Nowruz"

Do you know that you can celebrate New Year Day in March? It is the Nowruz holiday, which is celebrated as a beginning of spring. Nowruz means "new day" and symbolises goodness and wealth, happiness and love. Kazakhs named the month of March – Nowruz and they have three days- off starting from March 21 to March 23. There is an interesting tradition: boys born on this day would be called Nauryzbai or Nauryzbek and girls –Nauryz or Nauryzgul.

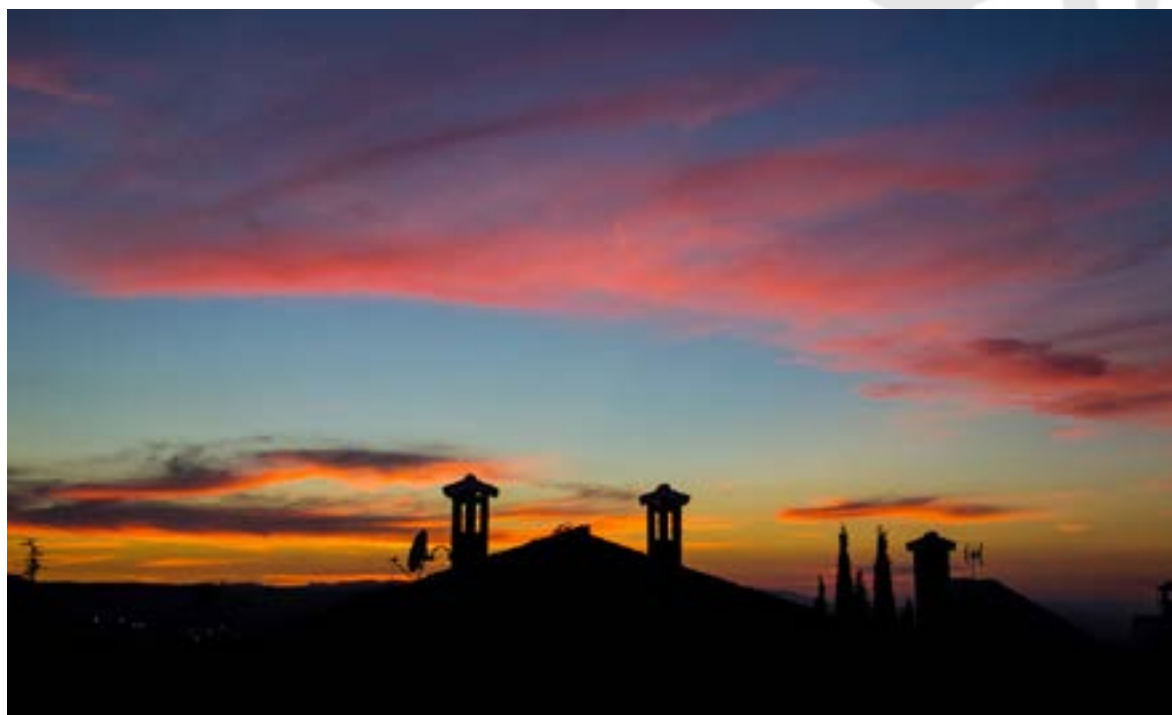
It isn't a religious, political, civil holiday. It is a national holiday, that's why it is so cheerful and kind.

People prepare for Nowruz beforehand, clean their homes, buy new clothes, and clean out their yards. Streets are decorated with flags; national yurts are put in places of celebration. Children in kindergartens have fun mornings, pupils at schools - concerts, people in businesses and government organizations - banquets. On March

22nd people from smaller villages come to bigger cities. Families get together to help one another on constructing a "yurt" which is the traditional Kazakh home. Since the Kazakhs were originally nomadic people they had homes that could be easily set up and moved from one place to another. If you enter a yurt on Nowruz you will see that it is decorated with beautiful Kazakh ornaments, rugs and blankets.

As a guest you will sit at a long low table and eat Kazakh dishes such as "karta" (round pieces of dried horse meat), "plov", "boursak", "besbarmak" ("five fingers - a dish which consists of noodles, onions and sheep's meat).

People wear national costumes. They also listen to Kazakh songs and play national musical instruments. Traditional gifts and souvenirs are also sold in the squares. Then you may see many ancient Kazakh games. After street festivals people come to visit or receive visitors at home. It is a great opportunity to meet the relatives and friends around a big dastarkhan (a holiday table). The main dish served during Nowruz is Nauryzkozhe, which is also the main symbol of the holiday. It is a kind of soup, made of 7 components: water, meat (horsemeat, mutton), fat, flour, salt, cereals (rice, wheat or corn) and dairy products (kurt or irimshik). Seven ingredients symbolize seven virtues, such as joy, success, intelligence, health, wealth, agility and security. This food is very delicious and the holiday is unforgettable!



## Letter from the UK

Hello my name is Maani and I am ¼ Iranian. At home we celebrate Iranian New Year, it is called Nowruz and it is the first day of Spring. There are loads of fun things to do and yummy things to eat.

The Wednesday night before Nowruz we have fireworks and jump over small fires and sing a special song. We usually go to a big fireworks party with our Persian school. We learnt a song about giving all our ills (yellow) to the fire and taking all its goodness (red) as we jump. Last year we got a new baby sister so we jumped over candles in the garden instead!

On Nowruz we see all our family, give presents, wish things and set up a 'Haftseen'. Haftseen is a special table that has 7 things beginning with 's' on it ...

1. Seeb - Apples are for earth and health
2. Serkeh - Vinegar is for wisdom and patience
3. Somaq – Sumac is for the of sunrise and sunset
4. Sekke - Gold coins make you rich
5. Sabzeh - We grow lentil shoots for a good harvest
6. Seer - Garlic for medicine
7. Senjed – A funny dried fruit thing for love

As well as all that we have goldfish for water, a mirror for sky, coloured eggs for new life and candles for fire. On Nowruz we eat special spicy rice and smoked fish and have lots of cakes. We usually wear new clothes and get money from the grownups.

The last thing we do is to go on a big picnic with all our family and friends. At the picnic we play lots of games and eat kebabs. After we put the sabzeh on the roof of the car and take it to a river where we tie knots in it and make a wish, we then throw it in the river where it washes it away so our wishes can come true.





## Letter from India

Dear Friends,

*I have my roots in Iran and my grandmother and parents maintain the tradition of celebrating the New Year with a bang at Nowruz. It is a traditional Iranian festival of Spring which starts at the exact moment of the vernal equinox. It is celebrated on the twenty first of March every year. It's an ancient festival which goes back to at least three thousand years and is deep rooted in the rituals and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion.*

*The table spread on this day is extraordinary. It is the most special and traditional part of the whole festival. It is a large traditional spread placed on a table. In the old days it was placed on the floor, on a Persian carpet it is called 'Sofreh Haftseen'. There are seven articles put on the sofreh (spread) names of all starting with the Farsi alphabet (Seen) 'S' in English.*

*Just before the change of year, all members of the family in their new clothes, holding a new coin in their hand for good luck and wealth gather around the 'Haftseen'. Everyone rejoices and kisses each other and exchanges Nowruz greetings. My grandmother reads a meaningful*

*prayer in Arabic which means:*

*'In the name of God, The one who changes the hearts and visions, The one who directs the night and the day, The one who changes situations and circumstances, Change our circumstance to the best of circumstances.'*

*For lunch we have a special Iranian dish of 'Sabzee Polo Mahi' (rice cooked with special herbs along with roasted fish). We then visit the elders of the family and our neighbours exchanging good wishes and gifts. This celebration goes on for twelve days. On the thirteenth day of the first month of the New year, we all go out of town and spend a joyful day with our family and friends. Believing that laughter and joy throws away all bad thoughts.*

*I must say it is a wonderful festival. I am sure after reading my letter you will love to experience this beautiful day. I hope in 2015 you could take a few days off and come to India and have fun with all of us.*

*Yours affectionately,*

*Shohreh.*



## Find out more...

As part of the British Council's **UK-Iran Season of Culture** we are running an exhibition called **'The Spirit of Nowruz'**.

We invite you and your students to the exhibition in London between 5 March-15 May.

If you would like to book a free guided tour for your students please email **Nowruz@britishcouncil.org** or visit our website for more information.

Find out more about the **UK-Iran Season of Culture**:

- <http://www.britishcouncil.ir/en/underline/season>

## Try these links for other Nowruz resources:

Nowruz children's app available at:

- <http://www.apptalia.com/norooz.html>

An excellent resource that adds further details and suggests classroom activities for pupils to learn about Nowruz:

- <http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu/files/NowruzCurriculumText.pdf>

Some examples of creative Nowruz craft activities:

- <https://www.pinterest.com/jennywedgbury/norouz-festival-va/>

Further Nowruz lesson plans and resources for teachers:

- <http://www.kudakon.com/Teachers.html>

An interview about Nowruz:

- [http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/specials/2014/03/140320\\_happy\\_nowruz.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/specials/2014/03/140320_happy_nowruz.shtml)

The Nowruz story:

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/lets-celebrate/stories/lets-celebrate-norouzperformance>

Iranian born comedian Shappi Khorsandi sets up the Haftseen table:

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01wdhsf>

## Nowruz children's books

The Story of Spring and Norooz (Beginning Readers Series) Level 2 (Persian/Farsi Edition) (Persian) by Nazanin Mirsadeghi

Nana Falls Asleep Again! (Norooz Celebration) (Pre-school Series) (Persian/Farsi Edition) (Persian) Paperback – 28 Sep 2013 by Meimanat Mirsadeghi (Zolghadr)

Leila's Nowruz Adventure: Activity and Colouring Book Paperback by Solmaz Parveen

Amoo Norooz and Other Persian Folk Stories by Ahmad Jabbari (Editor)

## Nowruz at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Information about activities to mark the celebration of Nowruz at the Victoria and Albert museum in London. Help make a giant pop-up paper carpet for a Persian picnic, create designs for tiles and find out all about the animals, plants and objects that represent spring:

- <http://www.vam.ac.uk/whatson/event/4124/norouz-celebrating-spring-at-persian-new-year-1746583466/>

## Find a partner with another school through the British Council

If you do not currently have a partner school but would like to find one and set up an online collaboration space to work together, further information can be found here:

- <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/partner-with-a-school>







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