

Blwyddyn 2 a 3

Mrs K Jones

Literacy – Reading Comprehension

Have a read of the text (or get an adult to read it to you) about the Mari Lwyd - an old Welsh tradition of celebrating the New Year.

Once you've read the text, there are questions to answer. Don't worry about printing any sheets off to write answers on, just say them out loud to an adult working with you.

Once you've done this and have a better understanding of the Mari Lwyd, have a go at drawing your own Mari Lwyd by following the step-by-step instructions.

Have a read of this text about the Mari Lwyd Welsh tradition and then answer questions about it. If you need help reading it, ask an adult to read it with you.

Mari Lwyd and The Old New Year

When Is The New Year?

In the UK, we celebrate the New Year from midnight on December 31st until January the 1st. People enjoy celebrating the new year by having fireworks, parties and eating party food.

But in some areas of Wales, like Cwm Gwaun in Pembrokeshire and Aberystwyth they still celebrate the New Year during the Old New Year.



What Is The Old New Year?

In September 1752, the calendar was changed to the Gregorian calendar. The New Year was changed to January the 1st.

This change was very unpopular in rural areas of Wales. They decided to keep the Old New year that follows the Julian calendar, which celebrates the New Year on the 13th January.



How Do They Celebrate The Old New Year?

There are a variety of Welsh traditions of celebrating the old new year.

People celebrate by preparing special food and drinks.

Villagers go from house to house with **Mari Lwyd**, singing songs to welcome the new year.

Mari Lwyd

The Mari Lwyd was one of the strangest traditions of the Old New Year.

It was the skull of a horse covered with a sheet, ribbons and bells.

The skull would be placed on a pole so that the person under the sheet could open and close the mouth!

Today a wooden skull is used.



The Battle

People will still recite and sing traditional verses as they go to 'pwnco.'

'Pwnco' is a group of people asking to come into the home by singing a verse similar to this:

Outside Group

Wel dyma ni'n dwad,
Gyfeillion diniwad,
I ofyn am gennad i ganu.

Once the battle is over they decide whether or not to allow the crew with the Mari Lwyd into the house to enjoy refreshments.

It was believed that it would be unlucky to refuse entry to Mari Lwyd.



New Year's Morning and The Children's Traditions

Groups of children would visit nearby homes to sing and offer best wishes for the New Year.

The children would hold a special apple, called 'perllan'. The 'perllan' is made of an apple, twigs, evergreen leaves and cloves. The 'perllan' would bring luck for a good harvest for the year to come.

Sometimes they would splash water over people to wish them good luck!

It was traditional to do this before 12 o'clock on the morning of the New Year.



Singing 'Calennig'

Children would knock on doors and sing songs and receive 'Calennig'. 'Calennig' is a gift or present. A popular verse to sing is:

"Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chi
Ac i bawb sydd yn y tŷ.
Dyma fy nymuniad i,
Blwyddyn Newydd Dda i chi."

Giving gifts on New Year's Day is a practice that is still popular today.



Answer these questions about what you've just read. Don't worry about writing the answers down, just have a chat to an adult about what you think the answers are.

1. When was the New Year's date changed and to what date?

2. When is the Old New Year celebrated? Choose **one**.

January 1st

January 31st

January 13th

December 31st

3. What do the villagers do with the Mari Lwyd?

4. The skull of which animal was used to make Mari Lwyd?

5. Is this fact **true** or **false**?

'It was believed that it would be unlucky to refuse entry to Mari Lwyd.'

6. Describe what a 'perllan' is. (remember how Ll is said in Welsh)

7. What would the children splash over the people for good luck?

Choose **one**.

Apple juice

Tea

Water

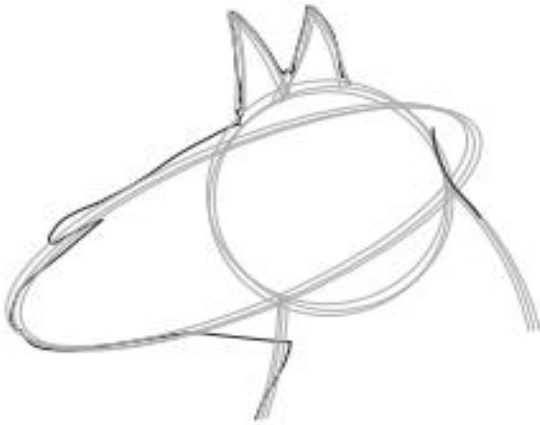
Leaves

8. What is your opinion on receiving and giving 'calennig'?

Have a go at drawing your own Mari Lwyd by following the steps below. Use what you have available, take a photo and upload them to either your HWB account (j2e) or send Mrs Jones a picture on Class Dojo.

How to Draw the Mari Lwyd

Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Have a read of this extra information text (or get an adult to help read this to you).

What Is the Mari Lwyd Tradition?

This is one of the strangest new year traditions in Wales. A horse's skull is wrapped in a white sheet and decorated with ribbons. The skull is placed on a pole so that the person underneath can open and close its mouth.

How Did the Mari Lwyd Tradition Start?

It started as part of the wassailing tradition of the Old New Year (Hen Galan) as a way of wishing luck for the new year to come. It was first recorded as happening around the year 1800.

When Did People Celebrate the Mari Lwyd?

People have traditionally celebrated the Mari Lwyd between Christmas Day and Twelfth Night.

How Was the Mari Lwyd Tradition Celebrated?

A group of people would take the Mari Lwyd around the village, singing to gain admittance to houses. This practice is known as **pwncu**, and is a form of song battle between the group outside and the household. This would be followed by a feast of good food and drink to celebrate the new year.

It is said that if Mari and the gang are allowed into the house, she will bring the household good luck for the year ahead. The Mari Lwyd is a tradition known to be full of fun and mischief.



Where Was the Mari Lwyd Traditionally Celebrated?

People have traditionally celebrated wassailing and the Mari Lwyd in many areas of Wales including the villages surrounding Bridgend and Maesteg, Neath and the Swansea valleys, parts of Gwent and Ynys Môn (Anglesey).

Where Does the Name Mari Lwyd Come From?

It is said to have connections to the grey or white mares in Celtic mythology. Often these creatures could travel to the underworld – like Rhiannon's horse in the Mabinogion tales.

Is the Mari Lwyd Still Celebrated in Wales?

It has been revived in certain areas recently. The Mari Lwyd makes an appearance at the St Fagans Museum Christmas celebrations. It has also appeared in Pontcanna (Cardiff), Caerphilly, Pontypridd, Abergavenny, Flintshire, Trawsfynydd, Mallwyd, Dinas Mawddwy and Cardigan.