

SC Farm Bureau
Ag in the Classroom
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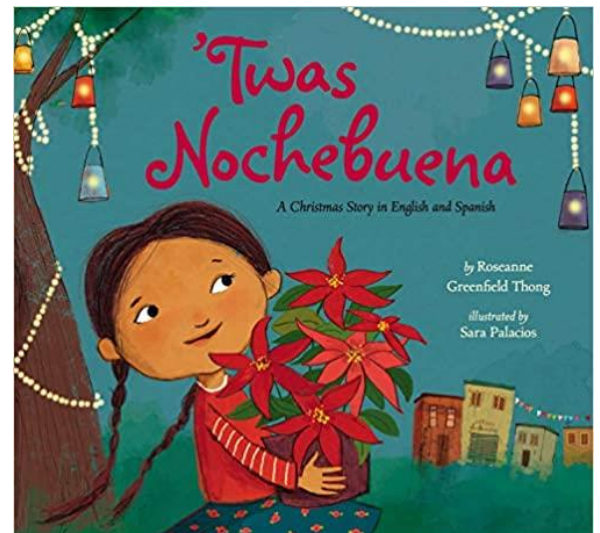
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'Twas Nochebuena

By: Roseanne Greenfield Thong

It's Christmas Eve, and you're invited to a *Nochebuena* celebration! Follow a family as they prepare to host a night filled with laughter, love, and Latino tradition. Make tasty *tamales* and hang colorful *adornos* (decorations) on the walls. Gather to sing festive *canciones* (songs) while sipping *champurrado* (hot chocolate). After the midnight feast has been served and the last gifts have been unwrapped, it's time to cheer, "*Feliz Navidad* and to all a good night!"¹

It is the perfect book to lead into a discussion about all the different foods that are part of students' winter holiday celebrations.



Did You Know? (Ag Facts)

- During the holiday season, many families in Mexico prepare tamales, which are a meat or chicken filling wrapped in corn dough. The tamale is then wrapped in corn husks and steamed.
- South Carolinian Joel Poinsett is credited with introducing the poinsettia to the United States.
- Christmas trees are becoming more popular in Mexico, but the nacimiento (nativity scene) is still the most important decoration culturally.

Discussion Questions

- What type of foods does your family enjoy during the holidays?
- Discuss your family's winter holiday traditions.

Scan the QR code or click here for ready to use slides.



Grade Level(s): K-2

Purpose: Students will explore different cultures around the world and compare worldwide communities with local communities.

Vocabulary:

- **agriculture** : the cultivating of the soil, producing of crops, and raising of livestock
- **community** : a group of people living in the same place
- **culture**: the customs, arts, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group
- **tradition** : the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation

Background Agricultural Connections: ²

People around the world have their own unique **traditions**, from daily household responsibilities and family holidays to religious and historical ethnic customs. Many of these traditions center around food and its preparation. Food is a central element of **culture** around the world.

For Americans, no Fourth of July celebration would be complete without a barbecue and watermelon. Thanksgiving isn't the same without turkey and mashed potatoes. However, it is important for students to understand that people in different countries have similar feelings about their own traditions and foods. Although their foods may be different, most are equally nutritious and based on the historical traditions of the region.

Today, most people are familiar with many different regional cuisines, and it is easy and convenient to eat foods produced in faraway parts of the country or even other parts of the world. However, it hasn't always been that way. For much of human history, people were limited to the foods that could be produced in their region. Before we had refrigerators and freezers to preserve food, and airplanes to transport food quickly around the world, people had to eat locally. Diets were based on the plants and animals that could thrive locally. The connection between geography, climate, and food production directly influenced the location and development of ancient civilizations. Many ancient civilizations were built on the banks of the rivers where soils were fertile and water for irrigation was readily available. Ancient civilizations practiced **agriculture** to meet their needs for food, fiber, and other materials. The second activity in this lesson will allow students to get a firsthand look at how geography affects **community** location and development.

Holiday Food Around The World ²

Materials:

- *Holiday Foods Around the World PowerPoint*
- *'Twas Nochebuena* by Roseanne Thong
- Venn Diagram

Procedures:

1. Begin by asking the students if their families cook any special meals for holidays. Allow the students to share what they eat for different holidays and why they eat that specific meal. Is it a meal that's unique to their family? Is it a common meal that most families in the United States eat?
2. Using the *Holiday Foods Around the World* PowerPoint, show the students examples of traditional foods other countries eat during different holidays. Use the following questions to guide a discussion:
 - a. Does anyone in class celebrate any of these holidays? (If students in class celebrate different holidays because of their culture or religion, allow them to share information about that holiday. Help encourage diversity in class and introduce students to other holidays and cultures.)
 - b. What types of foods were shown in the PowerPoint?
 - c. What ingredients do these foods contain?
 - d. Do you cook or bake with the same ingredients?
 - e. Would you try these foods? Why or why not?
3. Read *'Twas Nochebuena* and discuss traditions mentioned in the book. Important points to mention to students:
 - a. Mexico is a country south of the United States.
 - b. In Mexico, Christmas is celebrated from December 12th – January 6th.
 - c. Las Posadas is from December 16th – Christmas Eve and nine houses are decorated for a party. People go to one posada each night to sing, eat and celebrate. La posada means 'inn' and this tradition celebrates the Biblical story of Joseph and Mary looking for somewhere to stay.
 - d. Poinsettia flowers are known as 'la flor de nochebuena' or 'Christmas Eve flowers'.
 - e. Children often receive presents on January 6th which is called el Dia de los Reyes.
4. Have students (or complete as a group) compare/contrast with Venn Diagram how they celebrate their winter holiday with how the family in *'Twas Nochebuena* celebrated. Students may share with group or partner upon completion.

Poinsettias³

Materials:

- Poinsettia plant
- World map
- *Poinsettias* reader (located at the end of the packet)
- Newspapers to cover tables
- Red tempera paint
- Yellow tempera paint
- Paper cups, one per student plus extra
- Paintbrushes, one per student
- 9" x 12" green construction paper, one sheet per student
- Painting smocks
- Black markers, one per small group

Procedures:

1. Gather students together and show them the poinsettia plant. Pass it around so they can have a good look. Ask them what they notice about the plant, including colors, shapes, textures, etc. Explain that the bright red petals of the flower are not petals at all; they are leaves. In the middle they will see a cluster of yellowish flowers called cyathia.
2. Point out Mexico on the world map. Talk about Mexico's location in relation to the United States.
3. Read *Poinsettias* together as a class. You can either display or pass out a copy for each student.
4. Show students the poinsettia plant again. Tell them that they are going to make a representation of the bright red flower. Give each student a paint smock and a piece of green construction paper. Send students to their small-group tables. Walk students through the following directions before letting them begin the craft.
5. Have students write their name in the top corner of the construction paper using the black markers.
6. Give each student a paintbrush and a paper cup containing red paint. Ask students to paint one hand with the red paint and then press it on the top half of the paper, straight up at 12:00. Ask: How does the paint feel as you cover your hand?
7. Have students make three more prints with their painted hand, one print at 3:00, 6:00, and 9:00 with the palm prints overlapping. This will create the red leaves of the poinsettia.
8. Place the poinsettia prints aside to dry.

{After prints dry...}

9. Each group needs a cup of yellow paint. Ask each group member to recall one fact about poinsettias. As they talk, have them dip one finger in the yellow paint and make ten yellow dots in the center of their "poinsettia" to represent the cyathia.
10. Display students' work, or laminate to use as placements for holiday party.

Extension Activities:

- Make poinsettia punch – combine cranberry juice (14 oz.), ginger ale (20 oz.), and lemon juice to taste. Makes about 8 servings.
- Play the My American Farm interactive game [Where in the World?](#)

Suggested Companion Resources:

- [The Legend of the Poinsettia](#) (book)
- [The Night of Las Posadas](#) (book)
- [The Miracle of the First Poinsettia](#) (book)
- [Uno, Dos, Tres, Posada!](#) (book)

Sources/Credits:

1. Thong, Roseanne. *'Twas Nochebuena*, Penguin Random House, 2014.
2. Utah Ag in the Classroom
3. Scholastic

Suggested SC Standards Met:

English/Language Arts:

- K.RL.5.1 With guidance and support, ask and answer who, what, when, where, why, and how questions about a text; refer to key details to make inferences and draw conclusions in texts heard or read.
- K.RL.5.2 With guidance and support, ask and answer questions to make predictions using prior knowledge, pictures, illustrations, title, and information about author and illustrator.
- 1.RL.5.1 Ask and answer who, what, when, where, why, and how questions to demonstrate understanding of a text; use key details to make inferences and draw conclusions in texts heard or read.
- 1.RL.5.2 Make predictions using prior knowledge, pictures, illustrations, title, and information about author and illustrator.
- 2.RL.5.1 Ask and answer literal and inferential questions to demonstrate understanding of a text; use specific details to make inferences and draw conclusions in texts heard or read.

Social Studies:

- K.H.1 Identify similarities and differences between oneself and others.
- 1.G.2 Identify and describe the geographic location of South Carolina in relation to the rest of the United States through the use of various maps and geographic tools.
- 2.CG.1 Identify cultural and ethnic groups in the U. S., explore their characteristics, and communicate how civic dispositions build relationships between groups in a diverse society.



ISRAEL – CHRISTMAS

- What is Christmas?
 - Annual Christian festival celebrating Christ's birth, held on December 25th
- What do they eat?
 - Latkes
 - Fried potato cakes
 - Sufganiyot
 - Fried, jelly-filled donuts



UKRAINE – CHRISTMAS

- What do they eat?
 - Kutya
 - A dish sweetened with honey
 - Includes ingredients like wheat, poppy seeds, and nuts
 - Cannot be eaten until the first star appears in the sky



UNITED KINGDOM – CHRISTMAS FEAST

- Minced Pies
 - Pies filled with mincemeat and dried fruits
 - Original minced pies actually contained beef



SWEDEN – ST. LUCIA'S DAY

- What is St. Lucia's Day?
 - December 13th is the first day of the Christmas season.
 - The oldest daughter of each family dresses in a white gown with a red sash and crown full of candles
 - She takes a tray of saffron buns to her parents in bed
- What do they eat?
 - Saffron buns
 - Spiced sweet buns flavored with cinnamon



SICILY – FEAST OF THE SEVEN FISHES

- What is the Feast of the Seven Fishes?
 - On the eves of special holidays, Roman Catholics don't eat meat or dairy products
 - After fasting, they eat seven seafood dishes
- What do they eat?
 - Some dishes include salted cod, shrimp, and calamari



SCOTLAND – BURNS NIGHT

- What is Burns Night?
 - The Scottish poet Robert Burns is celebrated on January 25th
- What do they eat?
 - Haggis
 - Pudding cooked in sheep's stomach



ICELAND – MID-WINTER FESTIVAL

- What is Mid-Winter Festival?
 - A festival held each January and February
 - Celebrated by feasting on traditional Viking food
- What do they eat?
 - Smoked Lamb
 - Wind-dried fish
 - Harkal
 - Shark meat



Harkal

MEXICO – DAY OF THE DEAD

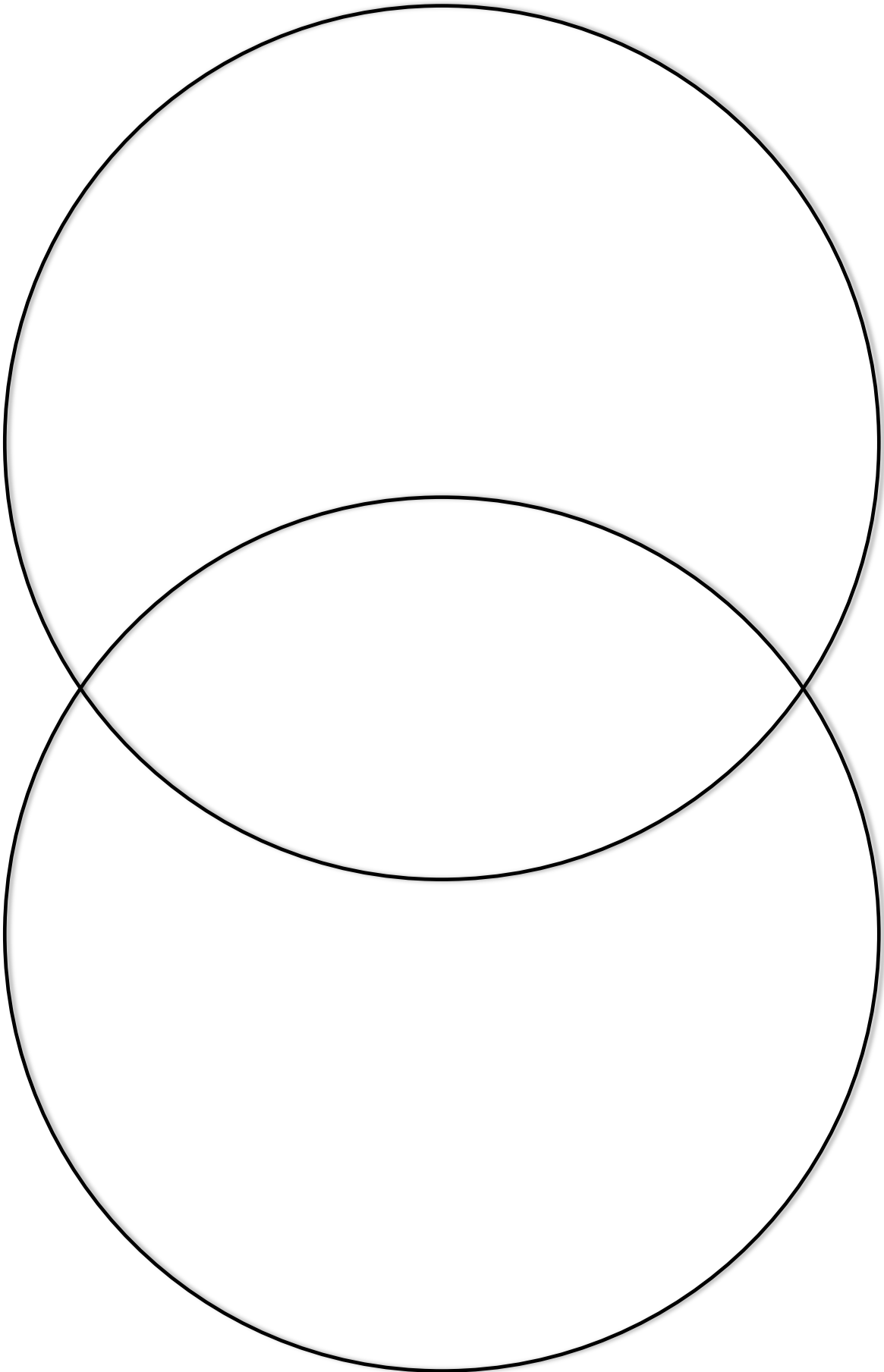
- What is Day of the Dead?
 - A celebration honoring loved ones who have passed away
- What do they eat?
 - Bread for the Dead
 - Loaves of bread baked in the shape of people and animals



INDIA – DIWALI

- What is Diwali?
 - Festival of Lights
 - Celebration of good over evil
- Besan Burfi
 - Fudge-like biscuits





Poinsettias

La flor de nochebuena, as the poinsettia is known in Spanish, was discovered in Mexico. It was a very important plant for the ancient Aztecs. The milk that drips from the leaves, stems, and flowers, when cut, was used for medicinal purposes, such as treating fevers. The pigment from the red leaves was used to dye fabric. After the Spanish conquest, the Spanish priests used the plants to decorate their nativity scenes, creating the plant's first link to Christmas.

Joel Poinsett, the United States' Ambassador to Mexico after Mexico gained its independence from Spain, was the poinsettia's greatest promoter. He cherished Mexico and fell in love with the flower. One Christmas, he sent the plants to decorate his mansion in Charleston, South Carolina. When he returned home several years later, he was astonished to find the entire town growing the Christmas flower.

Poinsett dedicated the last years of his life to making the poinsettia a symbol of Christmas throughout the world. Today, millions of poinsettias are sold each year during the holiday season.

*** In nature, poinsettias are perennial flowering shrubs that can grow up to ten feet tall.**

*** Poinsettias are commercially grown in all 50 states with California being the lead producer.**

*** December 12th is National Poinsettia Day, celebrated in remembrance of Joel Poinsett.**

*** The colored part of the poinsettias that most people think are the flowers are actually colored bracts, or modified leaves.**

