

Name _____



New Year Traditions

Directions: Read the descriptions of New Year celebrations in two countries. Then, write a short paragraph comparing how each culture celebrates, focusing on what they share and how they differ.

Japan: In Japan, New Year's Day-called *Shogatsu*-is one of the most important holidays of the year. Families clean their homes before January 1st to sweep away the old year's troubles and welcome good luck. At midnight, temple bells ring 108 times, symbolizing the clearing away of human faults. People visit shrines, eat special foods like *mochi* (sweet rice cakes), and send cards to family and friends to wish them happiness and good health in the new year.

Scotland: In Scotland, New Year's Eve is known as *Hogmanay*. As midnight approaches, crowds gather to sing "Auld Lang Syne" and celebrate with fireworks. A unique tradition called "first-footing" begins when the first person to enter a home after midnight brings gifts such as bread, coal, or whisky-symbols of warmth, food, and good fortune for the coming year. Friends and neighbors visit one another throughout the night, spreading cheer and community spirit.

Writing Task: Write one well-organized paragraph comparing and contrasting how Japan and Scotland celebrate the New Year.

Use these guiding questions to help you:

- What traditions do both countries share?
- What is unique about each celebration?
- What values or ideas about the New Year do both cultures express?

Be sure to include a **topic sentence**, **comparison details**, and a **concluding sentence** about what these celebrations show about hope and renewal.