



Who Owns the New Year?

Read the passage and answer the questions. (CEFR B1–B2)

Class _____ No. _____ Name _____

1 Who decides when a year begins? Throughout history, the answer has usually been whoever held power. Julius Caesar rebuilt the Roman calendar partly because the priests in charge of it had been adding extra months to stretch the terms of their political friends. In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII corrected a calendar that had drifted away from the seasons, yet Protestant Britain refused to follow a Catholic reform for 170 years.



2 Changing the calendar was also a way to announce a new era. When Peter the Great moved the Russian New Year to January 1, 1700, he wanted his country to look more like Western Europe. In late 1872, Japan's Meiji government announced a switch to the solar calendar with only about 23 days of warning. According to the statesman Okuma Shigenobu, money mattered too: the old calendar would have added a thirteenth month in 1873, which meant one more monthly salary for every government official.

3 Even celebrations carry politics. The famous Vienna New Year's Concert began on December 31, 1939, as a wartime event under the Nazi government to raise money and lift spirits. Today it is broadcast to more than 90 countries as a message of hope. A date on the calendar may look neutral, but behind it there is always a story about people and power.

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- (A) Calendars have always been designed by scientists to match the seasons.
- (B) Decisions about when the year begins have often been tied to power and politics.
- (C) The Vienna New Year's Concert is the oldest New Year event in Europe.
- (D) Japan changed its calendar faster than any other country in history.

2. Why did Britain take 170 years to accept the 1582 calendar reform?

- (A) Britain was Protestant, and the reform came from the Catholic Church.
- (B) The new calendar did not match the seasons in Britain.
- (C) Britain was at war with Russia at that time.
- (D) The British government wanted to pay its officials less.

3. According to Okuma Shigenobu, what would have happened if Japan had kept the old calendar in 1873?

- (A) Japan would have lost its trade with Western Europe.
- (B) New Year's Day would have moved to the spring.
- (C) The government would have had only 23 days to prepare.
- (D) There would have been a thirteenth month, so officials would get an extra month's pay.

4. What can we infer about Julius Caesar's calendar reform?

- (A) It was the first calendar in the world to start the year in January.
- (B) It was mainly a religious decision made by the priests.
- (C) It partly aimed to stop the calendar from being used for political favors.
- (D) It was ignored by Rome for 170 years.

5. In paragraph 1, the word "drifted" in "a calendar that had drifted away from the seasons" is closest in meaning to

- (A) been copied
- (B) been printed
- (C) become popular
- (D) slowly moved

6. Why does the writer mention the Vienna New Year's Concert in the last paragraph?

- (A) To recommend a concert that readers should watch on TV.
- (B) To show that even a happy celebration can have political roots.
- (C) To explain why waltzes are played on New Year's Day.
- (D) To compare Austria's calendar with Japan's calendar.



Vocabulary, Paraphrase & Summary

Match the words with the definitions. Then rewrite and summarize.

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| 1. drift | a. not supporting any side in an argument or a fight |
| 2. refuse | b. to move slowly, little by little, away from the right place or position |
| 3. reform | c. to say or show that you will not do something |
| 4. era | d. a change that is made to improve a system or a rule |
| 5. statesman | e. a long period of history with its own special character |
| 6. salary | f. an important and respected political leader |
| 7. broadcast | g. money that a worker gets regularly, usually every month |
| 8. neutral | h. to send out a program on television or radio |

Paraphrase — say it in your own words

1. “Who decides when a year begins? Throughout history, the answer has usually been whoever held power.”

Hint: Change "whoever held power" to "the people in power" and use "In most periods of history".

2. “Changing the calendar was also a way to announce a new era.”

Hint: Start with "Leaders" and use the verb "show" or "tell people".

3. “A date on the calendar may look neutral, but behind it there is always a story about people and power.”

Hint: Use "Although" and replace "neutral" with "has nothing to do with politics".

Summary

Summarize the passage in about 50 words.



Debate & Opinion Essay

Prepare for a debate. Then write your opinion (100–150 words).

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Motion: Changes to the calendar are made mainly for political reasons.

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- Many famous changes came from rulers. Caesar, Peter the Great, and the Meiji government all used the calendar to control or reshape their countries.
- Protestant Britain refused a Catholic reform for 170 years, so politics and religion were stronger than science.
- Changing the calendar is a powerful message. It tells people that a new era has started and that the government is in charge.

Add your own reason:

AGAINST 反対

- The 1582 reform corrected a real problem. The calendar had drifted away from the seasons, so the main reason was scientific.
- Japan's 1872 change was partly about saving money on salaries, which is an economic reason, not only a political one.
- Farmers, traders, and churches need a calendar that matches the seasons, so practical needs push calendar changes more than politics.

Add your own reason:

Opinion	<i>I believe / I think that ...</i>
Reason 1	<i>First, ... For example, ...</i>
Reason 2	<i>Second, ... In fact, ...</i>
Counter	<i>Some people say ... However, ...</i>
Conclusion	<i>In conclusion, ...</i>