

Your Shortcut to... Easter

It's a sacred time in the Christian calendar, where eggs and bunnies become symbols of new life, and families around the globe gather together to celebrate. This is your Squiz Kids Shortcut to Easter—the podcast where we dive into the who, what, when, where, why and how of the big news stories. I'm Christie Kijurina.

And I'm Bryce Corbett.

Hey Bryce, wait a minute, you've got a little something... right there on the corner of your mouth. Oh, and a bit on your cheek. And what's this? A pile of shiny foil wrappers?

Oh, those? I, uh, have no clue what you're talking about.

Bryce, did you eat all of the Easter eggs I left here earlier?

Me? No, of course not. Well, maybe just one. Or two. But there should still be some left, somewhere...

[sigh] They were supposed to be part of a surprise Easter egg hunt I had planned for later.

Well, in that case, I can tell you that I found them and they were extremely tasty!

Hmm, I guess that's one way to look at it.

But Christie, with Easter coming up, it's got me thinking. Why do we search for eggs, of all things? And why is it an Easter bunny that delivers them, not a chicken? What's the real story behind Easter?

They're all excellent questions, Bryce. How about we hop on a journey to discover the answers?

Today, we're diving into the chocolate fountain to unwrap WHY people celebrate Easter, to discover WHERE all those Easter symbols like eggs and bunnies originated, and to explore HOW different cultures put their own unique twist on this egg-citing holiday. So adjust your Easter bonnets, because here we go!

Listen carefully - there's a Squiz at the end!

WHY

Absolutely, Christie! I've always been curious. Easter's fun, but there's got to be more to it, right?

You've hit the nail on the head, Bryce, and it turns out the seasons play a role in this story. Long before Christianity, various cultures celebrated the marvels of nature through festivals dedicated to their gods. One such celebration was held by the Anglo-Saxons at the beginning of spring in the northern hemisphere. They honored Eostre, the goddess of spring and fertility, with a festival.

Eostre, you say? That sounds suspiciously like Easter. And I guess the eggs we find everywhere during Easter symbolise new beginnings, right?

Exactly, Bryce! You're connecting the dots beautifully. Eggs symbolise new life, which ties into the Christian celebration of Easter as well. Christians believe Jesus Christ, whom they worship as the son of God, was crucified, buried, and then miraculously rose from the dead three days later.

That's quite the comeback story!

It really is, and it's a story worth celebrating.

The historical records from the Romans, who were meticulous about documentation, suggest these events took place around 30CE. Given that spring celebrations were already popular, it made perfect sense for early Christians to commemorate Jesus's resurrection during this season.

That's clever! Plus the Passover festival, a significant Jewish celebration, happens around the same time. Since the early Christian community had Jewish roots, it seems like the ideal time to celebrate.

So it was a time of spiritual significance and festivity, making it a natural fit for the early Christians to mark Jesus's resurrection. But, Christie, what's the deal with the chocolate and bunnies we see everywhere during Easter? Where did they come from?

WHERE

So, you're wondering where all these fascinating Easter symbols come from? Truth be told, Bryce, it's a bit of a mystery.

Well this is going to be a pretty short podcast. I'll just pack up my stuff.

Bryce, who doesn't love a grand celebration? Easter is definitely one of my favorites, but ever wondered why it's celebrated by so many people around the world?

So, they went vegan? That means no eggs too, right?

Yes, so as Easter approached, people began decorating eggs to give them as special gifts when Easter finally arrived!

Ah that makes sense! And, remember back to the goddess Eostre? Wasn't her sacred animal the hare, which is cousin of the rabbit?

Your piecing it all together perfectly, Bryce. And it was in Germany that hares and Easter seem to have come together. There, a tradition emerged about the "Osterhase," a mythical egg-laying hare who brought eggs to well-behaved children.

So, the Easter bunny could be like the Osterhase's long-lost cousin!

Right you are! And since hares make nests rather than burrows, that's probably how we got the idea for Easter baskets.

But don't forget, different countries have their unique twists. In Switzerland, it's a cuckoo bird bringing the eggs, while in parts of Germany, a fox plays the role, and in other European regions, it could be a rooster or a stork. But Christie, you've overlooked one crucial element [What's that, Bryce?]- the chocolate!

Well, like the other symbols, no one is really sure, but, in the USA in the 1890s a storeowner decided to make a giant, 1.5-metre-tall chocolate bunny as a shop display, and it really caught on.

Woah! That's one big bunny! It really seems like Easter has inspired a variety of traditions worldwide. So, how, Christie, do people around the globe celebrate Easter?

HOW

Bryce, there are so many ways that Easter is celebrated around the world, but at its heart, it remains a profound Christian tradition. It commemorates a pivotal moment: Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection. Christians believe that when Jesus was crucified and placed in a tomb, three days later, when the women took spices to Jesus tomb, the stone at the entrance was rolled away and an angel revealed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Absolutely, Christie. This remarkable event is preceded by Holy Week, a solemn period leading up to Easter Sunday.

And thanks to those meticulous Roman record-keepers, we understand that the crucifixion happened on a Friday, now observed as Good Friday, giving us a day off to reflect and prepare for the celebration.

Right, and that brings us to Easter Sunday, celebrated on, well, a Sunday!

The exact date wiggles around between March 22 and April 25. It's the lunar calendar and the appearance of the full moon that determines when we dig into our Easter treats.

So, on Easter Sunday, families gather together and head off to Church and then dig into that sweet sweet chocolate that the Easter Bunny, or Cuckoo, has brought them.

But the celebrations don't stop at chocolate bunnies, Bryce. Easter has some quirky and fascinating traditions with roots in ancient times. [Oh, do tell!] For instance, in Poland, Easter Monday is celebrated as 'Wet Monday,' where everyone gets drenched in

water for purity and fun. It's a day of laughter and soggy surprises, with everyone armed with buckets and water guns.

That's got nothing on the Czech Republic where boys playfully whip girls with ribbons, again to keep them healthy, and then the girls are required to give the boys a chocolate egg as a thankyou. Someone's definitely got the better deal here!

Flying high in Bermuda are the colorful kites, symbolising Christ's ascension; In Bulgaria, people gently tap decorated eggs against each other to see whose egg remains uncracked; and Mexicans add a twist with confetti-filled egg piñatas for a burst of joy.

While in Australia, Christie, we have the good ol' Easter Bilby, because Bilbys are endangered here and rabbits are kind of a pest (I hope the Easter bunny's not listening!). So, Christie, there you have it, Easter is not only one of the holiest times for Christians but also a time for joy, reflection, and, yes, the perfect excuse to bite the head off a chocolate bunny.

THE S'QUIZ

"This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening...

1. What is the name of the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Spring and fertility? (Eostre)"
2. In which country do cuckoo birds deliver the Easter eggs? (Switzerland)
3. What is Easter Monday known as in Poland? (Wet Monday)

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for joining us as we explored the who, what, how, where, when, and why of Easter. Teachers, there are a whole heap of excellent classroom resources related to this topic on the Squiz Kids website and there's a link to them in the episode notes.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day!

Over and out.