

## A Magical Start to the Year



It turns out that January is a magical month. First, January 16 is Appreciate a Dragon Day. In Eastern cultures, dragons are powerful beings of wisdom, magic, and longevity, and their symbolism is often used by emperors and leaders. European cultures tend to view dragons as fearsome

fire-breathing foes. These winged beasts can fly, and perhaps this is why the word *dragon* comes from a Greek word meaning “I see clearly,” as if dragons can see the entire world from above.

Then January 19 is Brew a Potion Day. Potions are believed to heal, bewitch, or poison others. In olden days, traveling salesmen and charlatans would travel across the land selling snake oil panaceas, promising to heal any and every possible ailment. Even in modern times, we see television infomercials selling products guaranteed to clear our skin, regrow our hair, or clean our upholstery. **Chinese New Year**  
*January 29, Year of the Snake.*

If the magic of fantasy is too far-fetched for you this month, you could instead engage in another sort of magic: January 2 is Science Fiction Day. The mysteries of science can sometimes be even more baffling than dragons and potions. After all, who could have foretold rovers roaming Mars? A person falling to Earth in a 24-mile free dive from the edge of space? The ability to hold a computer in the palm of your hand? Of course, all of these achievements are mere science. For them to become science *fiction*, the scientific advancement must present some dreadful and unforeseen challenge.

This January, the biggest challenge may be to allow your imagination to take flight and consider dragons, potions, and scientific calamities. Then February will bring us firmly back to Earth.

## Birthdays you may know & Some signs you may not

Those born between January 1–19 are Capricorns, the Sea Goat. Those born between January 20–Feb.18 are Aquarius, the Water Bearer. Those born between February 19–March 20 are Pisces, the Fish. Those born from March 21–31 are Aries, the Ram.

Carol Walker (Resident) – January 1  
Diane Keaton (actor) – January 5, 1946  
Elvis Presley (musician) – January 8, 1935  
Garrick Davies (Resident) – January 9  
Bill Obayashi – (Resident) – January 10  
Vidal Sassoon (designer) – January 17, 1928  
Edgar Allan Poe (author) – January 19, 1809  
Christina Heid (Resident) – January 20  
Wayne Gretzky (athlete) – January 26, 1961  
Oprah Winfrey (TV host) – January 29, 1954  
Gene Hackman (actor) – January 30, 1930

Langston Hughes (poet) – February 1, 1902  
James Dean (actor) – February 8, 1931  
Toni Morrison (author) – February 18, 1931  
Sidney Poitier (actor) – February 20, 1927  
Steve Jobs (innovator) – February 24, 1955  
Elizabeth Taylor (actress) – February 27, 1932  
Diane Watson (Resident) – February 29

Liza Minnelli – March 12, 1946  
Albert Einstein – March 14, 1879  
Jerry Lewis – March 16, 1926  
Moms Mabley – March 19, 1894  
Marcel Marceau – March 22, 1923  
Aretha Franklin – March 25, 1942  
Warren Beatty – March 30, 1937

## Notable Quotable

*“I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward.”*

Winter/Spring

# Seasonal Newsletter

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## Celebrating January International Creativity Month

**National Hat Day**  
*January 15*

**Belly Laugh Day**  
*January 24*

## Celebrating February Black History Month

**Pancake Week**  
*February 17–23*

**Groundhog Day**  
*February 2*

**Thank a Mail Carrier Day**  
*February 4*

**Valentine’s Day**  
*February 14*

## Celebrating March Women’s History Month

**Dr. Seuss Day**  
*March 2*

**Quilting Day**  
*March 15*

**St. Patrick’s Day**  
*March 17*

## Down the Rabbit Hole in January

January is a significant month for *Alice in Wonderland* enthusiasts. Lewis Carroll, born Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, entered the world on January 27, 1832, and passed away on January 14, 1898. His famous tale, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, began in 1862, during a boat trip where he entertained the Liddell children with an improvised story. Young Alice Liddell, the inspiration behind the heroine, urged Carroll to write it down. After two years of writing, the book was finished in 1864 and published the following year, quickly becoming a literary sensation.

The book introduced the world to memorable characters like the Mad Hatter, whose tea party never ends, and the grinning Cheshire Cat, who can disappear at will. Carroll even invented a new type of poetry, the “nonsense poem,” one of the best examples of which is “Jabberwocky,” which appears in *Through the Looking-Glass*, the sequel to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

What makes *Alice in Wonderland* so fascinating is its mix of wordplay, logic, and fantasy. Carroll was not just a writer but also a mathematician, which explains the whimsical logic and puzzling riddles that fill the story. His love of paradoxes and mathematical theories shines through in scenes like the Mad Hatter’s tea party and the Queen’s curious rules for croquet. This blend of intellectual play and imaginative adventure is what makes *Alice* a timeless favorite for readers of all ages.

January is a perfect time to embrace the whimsical world of *Alice in Wonderland*. Lewis Carroll’s beloved tale, now over 150 years old, continues to captivate readers of all ages. The story has inspired countless adaptations, including theater productions, ballets, and even video games, cementing its place in pop culture. This January, whether by rereading the book or exploring a new adaptation, it’s worth revisiting Wonderland to marvel at the unique genius of Carroll and his enduring creation.

## Chasing Cherry Blossoms

It lasts for only two weeks, but what a beautiful two weeks it is. *Hanami* is the Japanese term for enjoying the spring beauty of blossoming flowers. The most spectacular show of all is the viewing of the cherry blossoms, known as *sakura* by day and *yozakura* by night. It begins at the end of March.

The practice of hanami began in seventh-century Japan, when wealthy elites and members of the Imperial court would gather to view plum blossoms. Soon, cherry blossoms became more regarded for their beauty. Before long, members of the “samurai class” joined in the viewing, and finally the practice became widespread among all people—rich or poor.

The blossoming of the cherry trees also ushers in an entire season of hanami parties. Many rush to parks and reserve spots, relaxing under the blossoming trees with blankets. The most popular spot in the country for hanami is Tokyo’s Ueno Park, where there are more than 1,000 flowering cherry trees. Japan’s best hanami location may be the mountaintop town of Yoshino, where thousands of cherry trees burst into bloom and a veil of pink flowers resembling clouds slowly floats down the mountainside.

America’s most famous version of hanami begins every March in Washington, D.C. In 1911, the city of Toyko gifted 2,000 cherry trees to the U.S. Sadly, those trees were infested with insects and had to be destroyed. But Tokyo mayor Yukio Ozaki was undeterred. He sent a new shipment of 3,020 cherry trees, which arrived in Washington on March 26, 1912. Visitors have flocked to Washington, D.C.’s Tidal Basin to enjoy the cherry blossoms ever since.



*Mount Fuji in Japan is framed here by a spring bloom of cherry and plum blossoms.*

## Stick to Tradition

Eating with two little sticks may seem like a taxing and complicated food delivery method, especially with forks, spoons, and knives available. Yet more than a billion people (a quarter of the human population) use chopsticks every day. This makes February 6, Chopsticks Day, a very big deal.

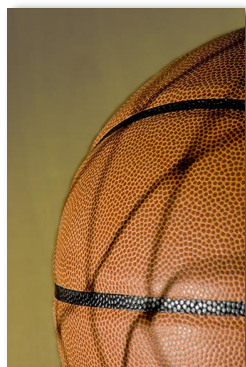
The old Chinese word for chopsticks is *kuaizi*, which means “quick little bamboo fellows.” However, not all chopsticks are made of bamboo. The material, shape, and length of chopsticks varies from place to place. They may be made of wood, plastic, metal, jade, porcelain, ivory, or even bone. Chinese chopsticks are slowly tapered with blunt ends, while Japanese versions are often shorter and more pointed. Also, not all chopsticks are used for eating.

In Japan, long *ryoribashi* and *saibashi* (12 to 16 inches) are used for cooking and dishing food, while shorter *hashi* are used for eating.

Chopstick users must also remember proper chopstick etiquette. It is impolite to spear food, and resting chopsticks should never point at another person at the table. But it is never impolite to ask for a spoon if necessary.

## Full Court Frenzy

The “Road to the Final Four” begins Tuesday, March 18. Sixty-eight of the country’s best men’s college basketball teams begin a three-week tournament known as March Madness, or the Big Dance. There are so many games that it takes different television stations to cover all the action. CBS, TNT, TBS, and TruTV often cover games simultaneously, and it’s not uncommon for viewers to watch multiple games on multiple televisions. The tournament is also crucial for college basketball programs aiming to bolster their national reputation.



## Brain Bending Fun



Rubik’s Cubes keep our minds sharp.

Just as exercise is healthy for the body, brainteasers are healthy for the brain. Flex your gray matter by answering some of these brainteasers below:

1. A man stands on one side of a river, his dog on the other. The man calls his dog, who immediately crosses the river without getting wet and without using a bridge or a boat. How did the dog do it?
2. In 1990, a person is 15 years old. In 1995, that same person is 10 years old. How could this be?
3. Before Mount Everest was discovered, what was the highest mountain in the world?

Is your mind too cluttered with irrelevant minutiae to solve January’s brainteasers? Never fear. Another little-known fact is that January 4 is Trivia Day, a day to demonstrate the remarkable benefits of random knowledge. Make some room in your head for these curious tidbits:

- *Dreamt* is the only English word that ends with the letters *mt*.
- Hydrox cookies debuted in 1908, four years before Oreos.
- Tigers have striped skin, not just striped fur. The pattern of stripes is unique to each tiger, similar to human fingerprints.

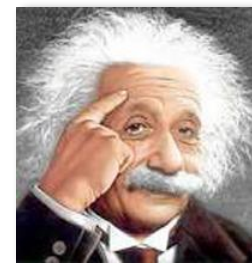
Answers: 1. He walked; the river is frozen. 2. The person was born in 2005 BC. 3. Mount Everest; it was the highest mountain even before it was discovered.

## Cookie Cravings

It’s the weekend you’ve been waiting for all year: February 24–25 is Girl Scout Cookie Weekend! The iconic flavors are all back: Thin Mints, Samoas, Trefoils, Tagalongs, Do-si-dos, and Lemon-Ups. Two other popular options this season are Adventurefuls, a brownie-inspired cookie with caramel-flavored crème, and a gluten-free option, Toffee-tastic, a buttery cookie packed with toffee bits.

This year, the price of Girl Scout Cookies has increased slightly to six dollars a box, which reflects rising costs. Every dollar goes toward supporting programs that help build our next generation of female leaders. The Girl Scout Cookie program continues to teach Girl Scouts five key life skills: goal-setting, decision-making, money management, people skills, and business ethics. Plus, scouts grow in courage, confidence, and character. There’s something extra sweet about enjoying these cookies while knowing you’re supporting such an impactful program.

## Celebrate the Unusual



January 10 is the day to hug the nonconformist in your life—it’s Peculiar People Day. The word *peculiar* is not an insult. Some of the most creative scientists and artists were known for their eccentricities. Albert

Einstein picked up cigarette butts off the street to collect tobacco for his pipe. Salvador Dalí gave lectures in a deep-sea diving suit to represent being submerged in the subconscious mind and walked an ant eater on a leash through the streets of Paris. Ben Franklin began his days with an “air bath,” standing in front of an open window to catch a breeze in his birthday suit. All of these people may have shared a trait that psychologists call “cognitive disinhibition,” a failure to ignore irrelevant information. While many filter out unhelpful information, creative types make offbeat connections all day long, leading to peculiarity, yes, but also wonderful innovations.