

The egg story : 6 / [British Egg Information Service].

Contributors

British Egg Information Service.

Publication/Creation

[London] : [British Egg Information Service], [1990?]

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/r2rfgryx>

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THE EGG STORY

6

EGG TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

EASTER EGGS

● The Easter we know is a Christian festival. It is a time when people remember the story of how Jesus was killed, and rose again from the dead. This happened in spring, so Christians celebrate at this time of year.

● Eggs are a special symbol of Easter in many countries of the world. It is easy to see why. A fertilised egg hatches into a baby bird, so it makes a symbol for the new life that comes to the world at spring time.

● The custom of giving eggs at Easter is very old. The first Easter eggs were just ordinary hard boiled eggs, painted or dyed. In some places in the north of England this is still done.

● In Germany, there is a tradition that green eggs are eaten on the Thursday before Easter. The people dye the eggs by boiling them with spinach.

● In Greece, people used to dye eggs red for Easter, but now they dye them all colours. The eggs are used in a special Easter greeting. Each person carries an egg and when two people meet they knock the eggs together, saying 'Christ is risen'.

● In some countries, children play a game, a bit like conkers, using hard boiled eggs. Two players each hold an egg in their right hand, and knock the pointed ends together. The idea of the game is to crack the other person's egg first. The winner is the person whose egg has cracked the most others, but has not cracked itself.

● Egg rolling is another old Easter game. Children roll eggs down a grassy slope, to see whose gets to the bottom first, or to try to hit other eggs.

● In many countries, children get up very early on Easter day and hunt for eggs, which their parents have hidden in the house and garden. The eggs are usually chocolate, but they used to be dyed or painted hard-boiled eggs.

PANCAKE DAY

● Pancakes are traditionally eaten on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent starts, so that people can finish up all the spare food in their larder before the great fast begins.

● In the 4th century, it was forbidden for people to eat eggs during Lent and this may be what started the practice of decorating eggs in Britain, because although people could not eat the eggs the hens kept on laying.

EGG SUPERSTITIONS

● In China, eggs are a symbol of life and re-birth, and so to announce the arrival of new babies families paint eggs bright red – the colour of happiness. This will ensure good luck for the new born child.

WHERE DOES THE RHYME HUMPTY DUMPTY COME FROM?

● A long time ago, during the Civil War, King Charles I's army had to cross a large river to attack his enemy's castle which meant that many of his men would be in danger of drowning, so a wheeled machine was invented that could be rolled down the hill at such a speed that it would just fly over the river. The machine was called Humpty Dumpty. But by the time the machine was ready to be used, the enemy had widened the river, so that when Humpty Dumpty was rolled down the hill it collapsed into the middle of the river drowning many of the soldiers.

FURTHER TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Make an Egg Tree by hanging decorated eggs from painted branches. Sit an owl in the branches, and hang a bumble-bee egg or two. Use plainly coloured half-egg shells, strung together, to make a snake.



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Decorating eggs

Traditionally the eggs that people could not eat up before Lent were hard-boiled and given to children to play with and paint.

Wonderful decorations can be made with eggs. The eggs should be blown or hard-boiled before starting.

To blow an egg

Pierce both ends of the egg with a needle.

Carefully enlarge holes, then push a skewer through to break the yolk.

Hold the egg upright (round end uppermost), put a basin beneath and blow into the top hole.

The liquid egg will fall into the basin.

Wash the shells and leave to dry. Treat them carefully, they're fragile.

Drawing and painting

Use inks, pencils, crayons, watercolours, felt pens with materials such as wool, paper, foil and scraps of material to create characters like clowns, mice and owls.

Etching

Dye an egg a deep colour using household dyes. Dip a pen or other pointed instrument into lemon juice or vinegar and etch a pattern.

Remember not to use any harmful substance such as poster paints or household dyes on the shells if you are using hard-boiled eggs which are to be eaten.

