

Buddhist Festivals:

Songkran

Learning Objective:

To know how activities during a festival relate to the teachings of the Buddha.



How do you
celebrate on New
Year's Eve?



Discuss your ideas.

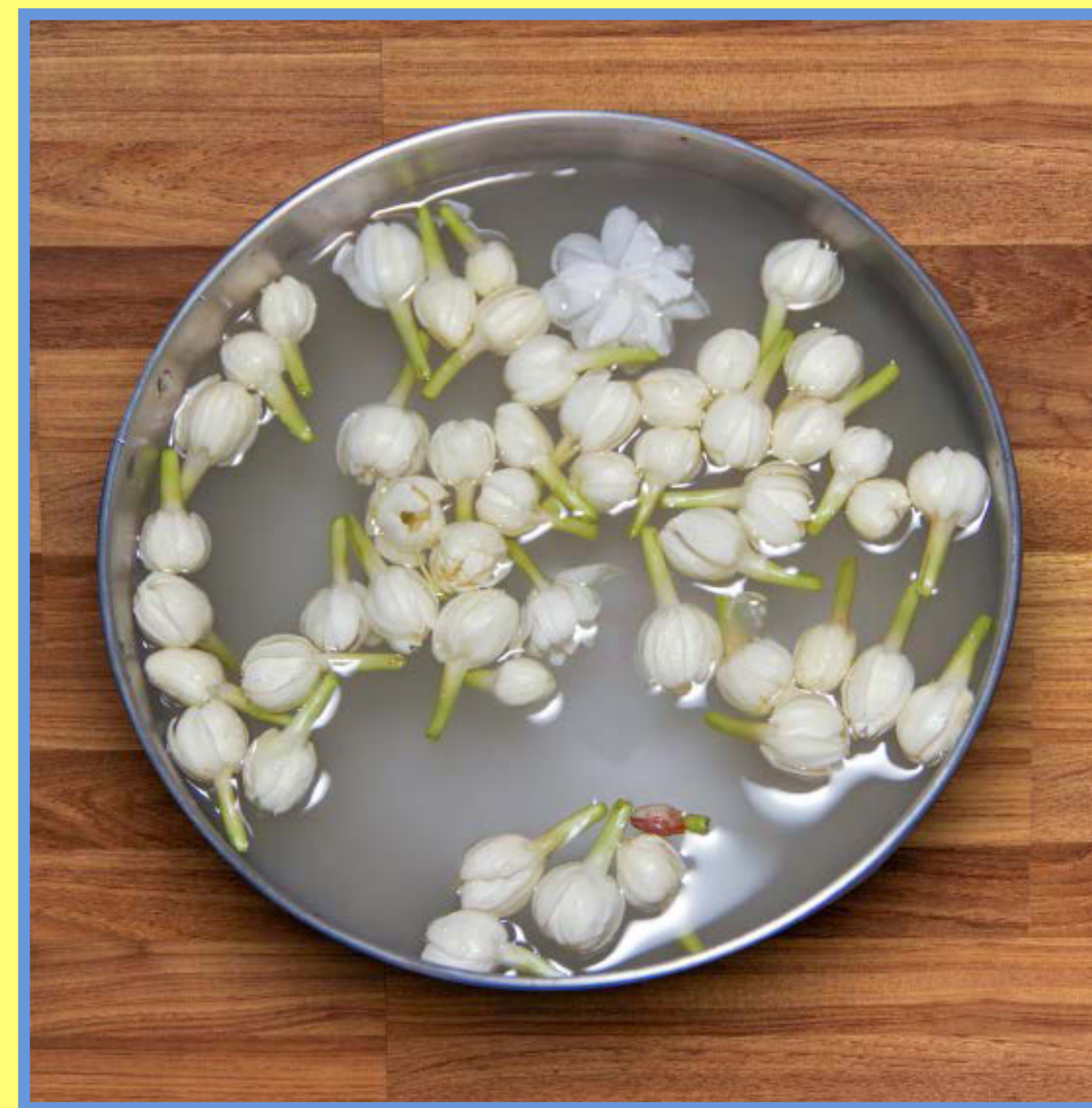
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In Thailand, New Year celebrations take place in April, during the Buddhist festival of **Songkran**. It marks the end of the rainy season, when the rivers are full of water.



Visitors at a temple pour water over statues of the Buddha. This is called 'making merit'.



These Buddhists are pouring water over the hands of a monk. During Songkran, many people 'spring clean' their houses using perfumed water.

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There are parades and street parties with music and dancing.

Have you noticed some similarities and differences compared to your New Year celebrations?

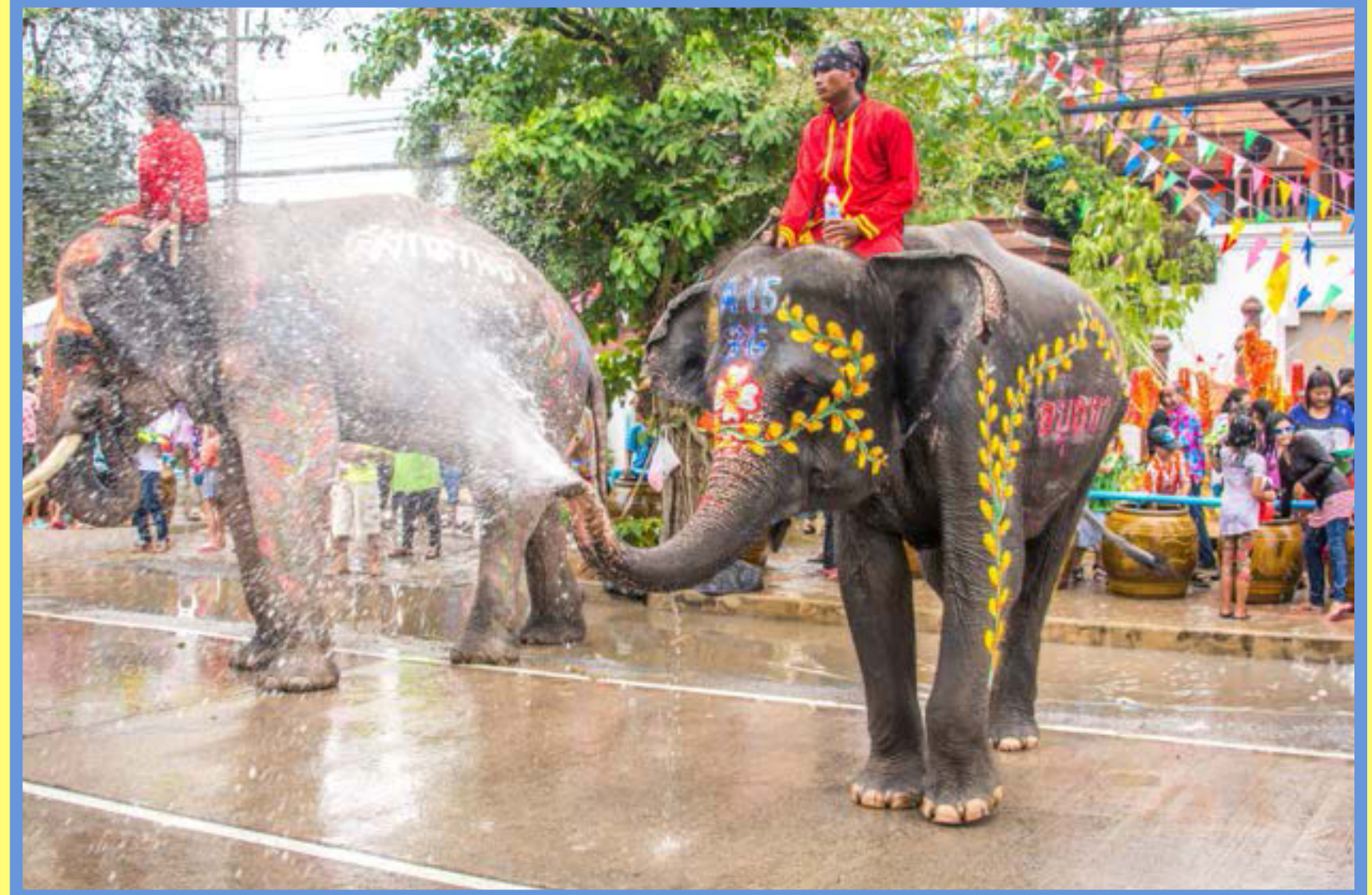
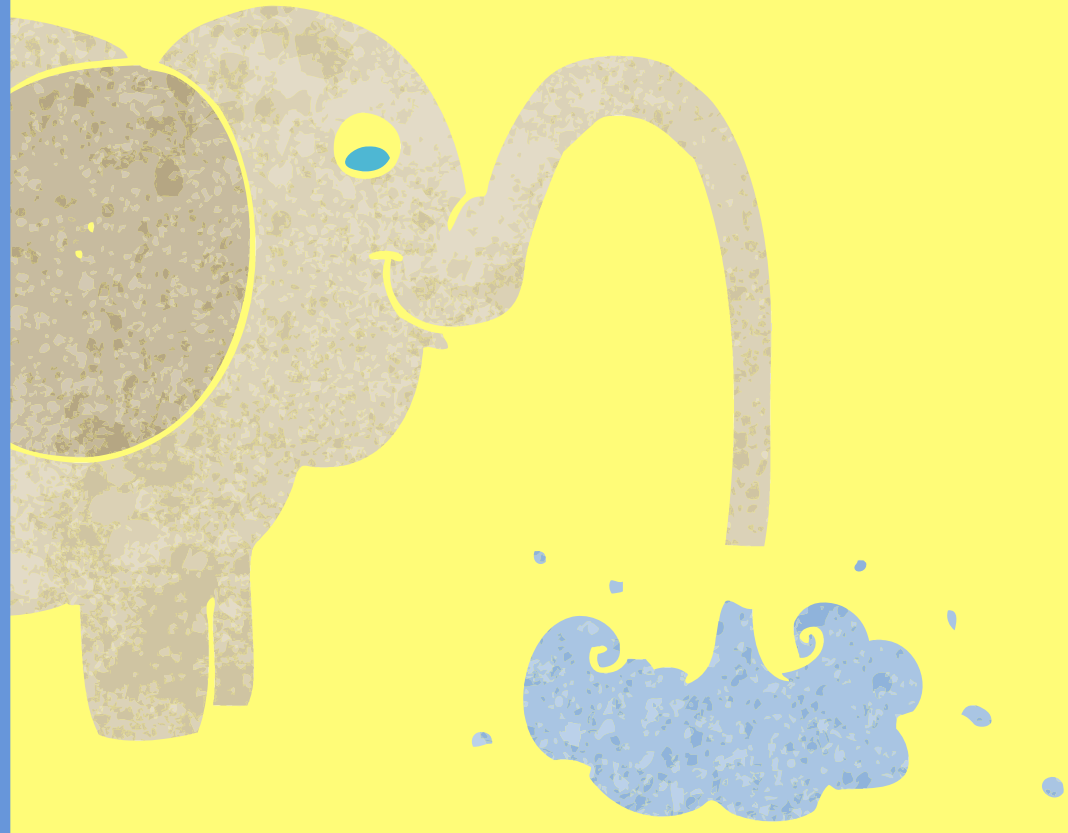


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Children make sandcastles and decorate them with flowers and flags. Thousands of people line the river banks to watch dragon boat races.



There are massive water fights in the streets! Even fire fighters and elephants join in!



Why do you think water is so important for Buddhists celebrating Songkran?

What ideas do washing with water represent?

Do these activities remind you of rituals in other religions you have studied?

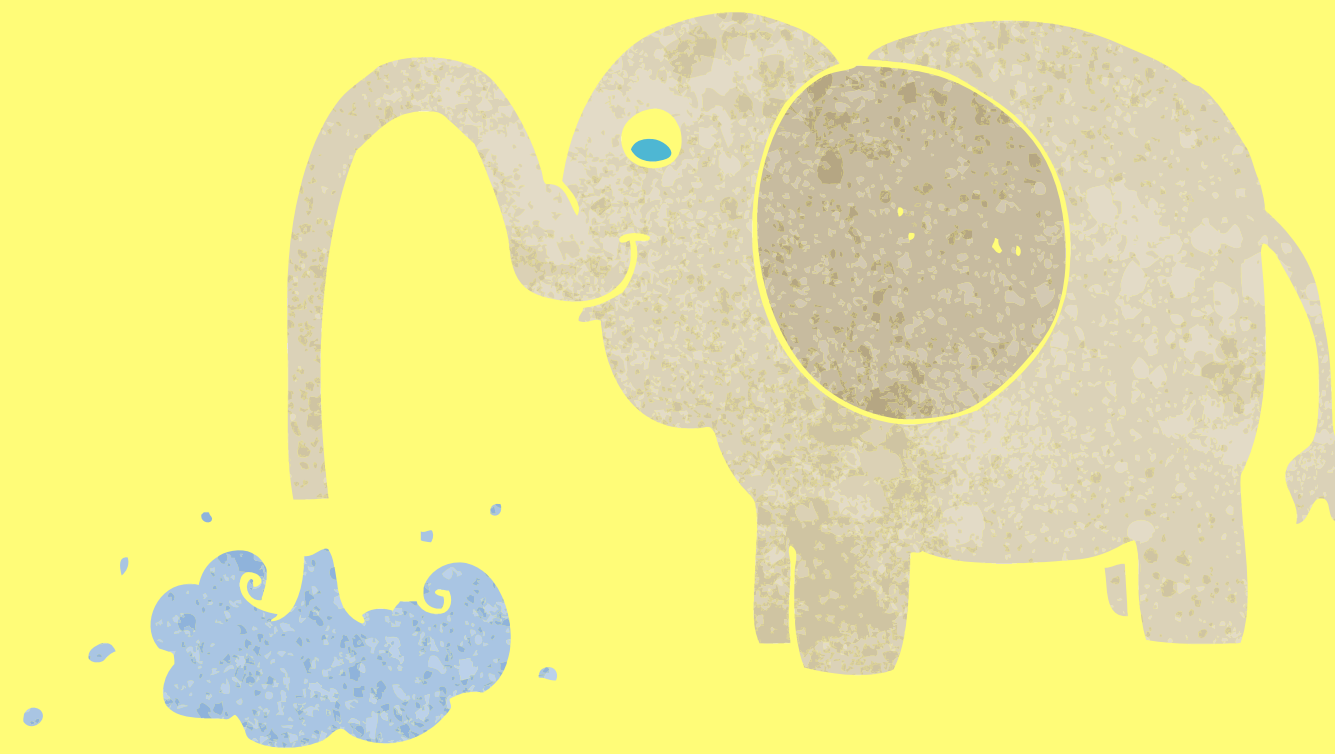
Discuss your ideas.

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All living things need water to survive. Buddhists give offerings of water as a symbolic gesture – giving water is a way of helping living things and reducing suffering.



The water that falls in the rainy season brings new life; trees and flowers grow new leaves and flowers; new crops are planted. Water reminds Buddhists of the circle of life, and the way that everything is constantly changing.



Washing with water reminds Buddhists that they can cleanse themselves, or rid themselves of suffering by meditating and studying the teachings of the Buddha. By doing this, Buddhists hope to achieve a special state of enlightenment: Nirvana.

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What is Nirvana?

After many years of travelling and studying, Siddhartha Gautama had still not found an end to suffering. He sat under a Bodhi tree and meditated for a long time. As he did, he began to gain a new understanding of everything around him. He no longer felt the pain and sadness he had before. Siddhartha had attained Nirvana and become the Buddha!



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The Buddha went on to teach others what he had learned. Buddhists believe that they can attain a state of Nirvana by studying his teachings.



Buddhists who attain Nirvana can break free from the cycle of rebirth (reincarnation). When they die, they go to a place called **Parinirvana**. The Buddha said it was a perfect world that words cannot describe.



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Today we will be learning more about how rituals involving water relate to the teachings of the Buddha.



Plenary

What have you learned about Buddhism? Talk to your partner about the significance of each of these offerings. How do they relate to the teachings of the Buddha?



water



candles



flowers