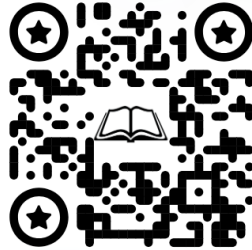


*May you find a path that fills your heart,  
and sanctuary wherever you go.*



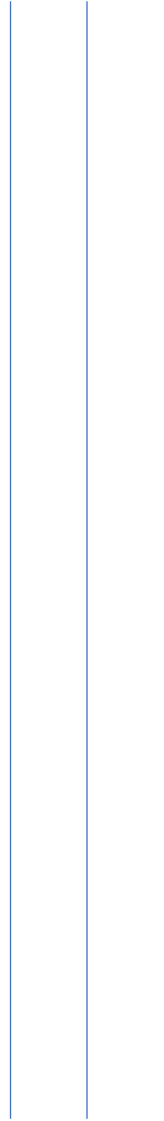
*Bright Blessings, and Safe Travels!*

Litha  
Litha

Litha



By Ryan Robinson



Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Shine down on me.  
 Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Light set us free.

Free to grow  
 Free to live  
 Free to learn  
 Free to know.

Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Shine down on me.  
 Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Light mountain, field, and sea.

Light with energy  
 Light with hope  
 Light with vigor  
 Light with glee.

Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Shine down on me.  
 Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Guide us to see

Warm our skin  
 Brighten our souls  
 Light our eyes  
 With hope within.

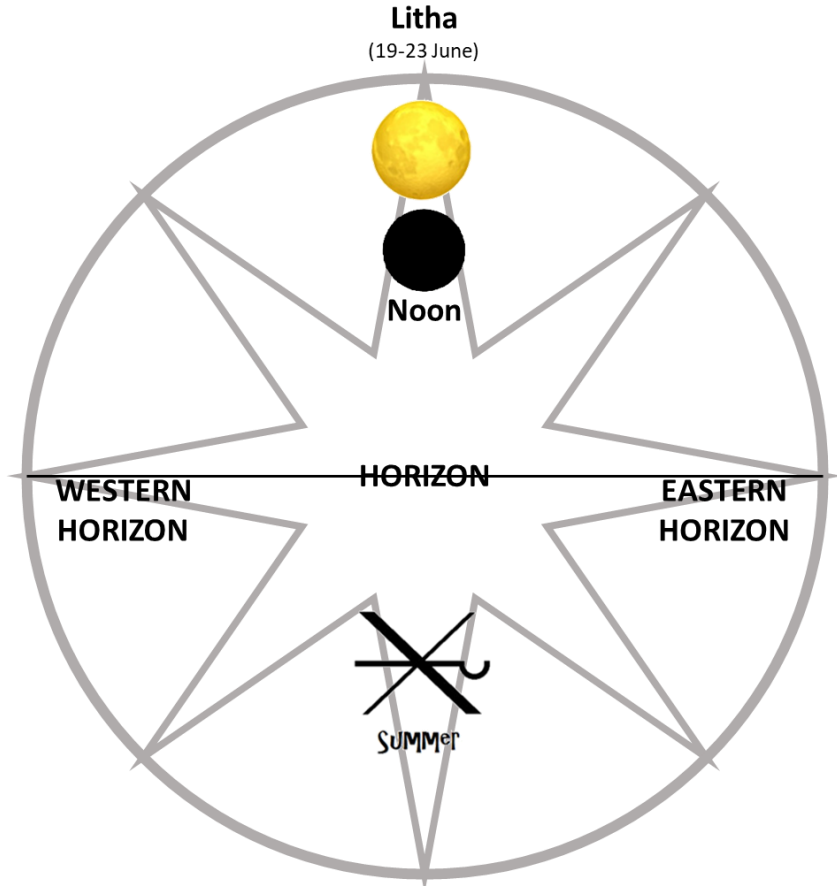
Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Shine down on me.  
 Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Lead us to be.

All the wonder  
 All the beauty  
 All the magic  
 In this world under

Wheel sun, wheel;  
 Shine down on me.  
 Wheel sun, wheel;  
 In shining glory.

Make spirits bright.  
 Oh summer sun  
 Of blessed Litha,  
 With fiery light.

As the sun spirals its longest dance,  
 Cleanse us  
 As nature shows bounty and fertility  
 Bless us  
 Let all things live with loving intent;  
 And to fulfill their truest destiny.



**Litha** – Adolescence, light, power, leisure, and conflict.

The Summer Solstice is a time of warmth and abundance. The long hours of sunlight make it an undeniable source of mental, physical, and spiritual energy. It is the height of the growing season; the cold of the year is long broken and the abundant sunlight feeds plants large and small.

The richness of this time can overflow. In parts of the world the increasing heat signals a start to the spread of draught, disease, and insects. Even the heat itself can bring discomfort and danger of overheating and sunburn. Further, summer is the traditional season of war and conflict.

This is also a turning point in the year. For the remainder of the year the days will grow shorter. While the heat of the season will rise, the festivals to come all herald the end of the growing season.

## Example Sunwheels

### What is Litha?

The summer solstice, called Litha in the Wheel of the Year, is the longest day and shortest night of the year. The extensive sunlight has many effects on the world, and all the living things in it. This is one of the great days for modern Druids; one of the best-known features is that this is the day sunrise passes between the heel stones of Stonehenge to reach the altar.

The growing hours of light over the preceding six months have warmed the world, and will continue to do so for weeks to come. Light has a mythic power to dispel ills of many types; and light is in copious supply on the summer solstice. Most of all, this is the height of the growing season. Plants and animals of all types benefit from the warmth and illumination.

While the solstice is a time of joy in colder parts of the world, elsewhere this warmth is already turning to a wicked heat. The Mesopotamians viewed the summer as a season of death and disease, full of insects and discomfort, the coming of which was feared. Regardless of the climate, this is the traveling season when traders, raiders, and even armies most freely moved.

After this moment, the days will grow shorter and the nights longer. While the heat of Summer will continue to build, every day will show signs of the march towards the coming Autumn and Winter beyond.



## Sunwheels

Sunwheels come from ancient sources going back thousands of years. There are two main types of sunwheels present in the archaeological record. The first is known as a solar cross, a circle bisected by a horizontal and a vertical line arranged in the shape of a cross. The other has three or more radial arms with bends. Unfortunately, the best known of these symbols is the version which was infamously misappropriated by the German Nazi party before World War II. While best known as a swastika, this symbol is also called a fylfot.

**Because of the swastika's association in the west with the Nazi atrocities of World War II, even those groups who have the strongest claims to use the image as a cultural symbol rarely use it in forms which bear a strong resemblance. Sunwheels related to the swastika must be used with the highest level of awareness, care, consideration, and sensitivity.**

Unfortunately, modern neo-Nazis and white supremacists also continue to try and lay claim to additional variations of these symbols. However, they are symbols sacred to many world religions extending into antiquity, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Greco-Roman, Asian, and Indo-European cultures and religions. The symbol even appears in the Americas as a sacred symbol for the Navajo, Apache, and Hopi among other native cultures.

With proper thoughtfulness, sunwheels are fitting symbols of the season.

## Beltane and Litha

The transition from Beltane to Litha is some of the prime growing season for the year. In the cycle of life, it represents the joy and wonder of early childhood giving way to passion and a desire for self determination. It is a time of wild abandon, and for learning lessons both wondrous and terrible. The verdant green of spring brightens to the brilliant golds of summer, the joy of innocence gives way to those of experience.

**Beltane** – Youth, fertility, unions, exploration, discovery, new beginnings, purification, and transition.

## Litha and Lughnasadh

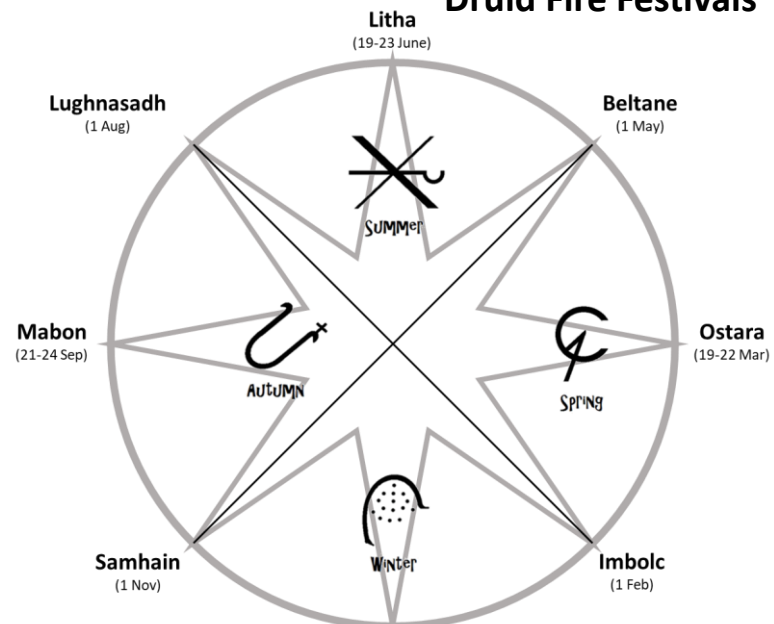
Elemental fire is at its height in the arc from the solstice to Lughnasadh, from the longest day to the hottest. The dog days of summer are the furnace in which we are forged. With the end of adolescence comes the beginning of adulthood. The growth granted and demanded of the human body by our biology slows, and then ceases as we enter a moment of calm and stability. The fruits we reap for the harvest festivals that start with Lughnasadh are the culmination of the seasons before. The choices we make in this transition are critical in setting the tone of the years to come.

**Lughnasadh** – Adulthood, wheat, ripening, reaping, life, and wealth.

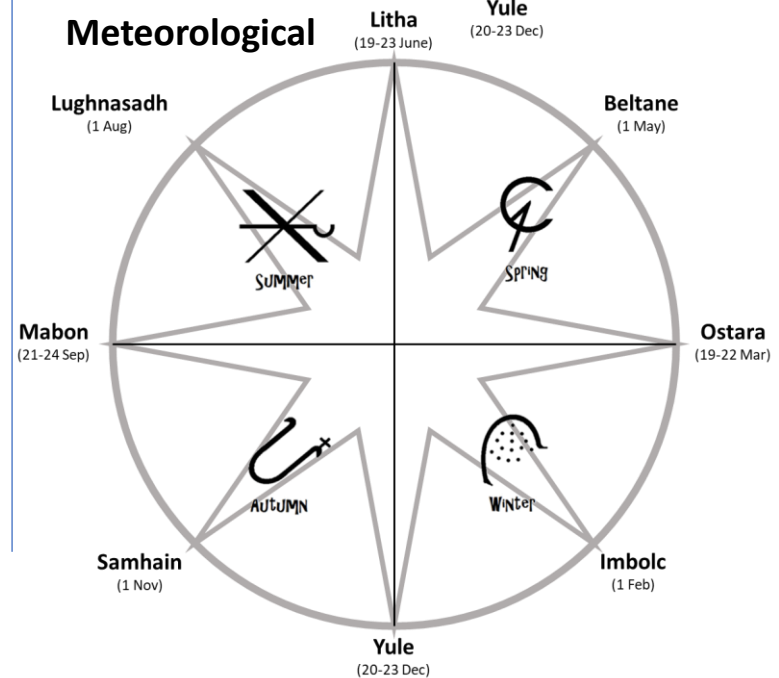
## Litha and Yule

The season of Yule may be the cutting wind, the cold earth, or the icy frost and snow, but Litha sits in the season of fire. Yule is stillness and waiting, while Litha may be indolence and rest, labor and construction, or the season of raiding and war. Yule is a time of need, the darkness and cold closing in with hunger. Litha is a time of want, where abundance surrounds us but we desire more.

**Yule** – Waiting, remembrance, stillness, and patience.



## Meteorological



## Decorating for Litha

The most obvious decorations for Litha are those that honor the bountiful light that characterizes the day. Sunwheels, sunflowers, dandelions, brightly colored candles, and other sun-associated objects are all ways to honor the light shining down.

Oak leaves, flowers, bonfires, and bees, especially swarming are also ways to honor and celebrate the characteristics of the season.

Pinwheels, flags and streamers call and celebrate the air as well as symbols of streams, rivers, and rains for the water that can be deeply desired in this fiery season.



## Bonfires

While we're familiar with the term bonfire as a word for large blazes, it comes from the Middle English bone fyre. The term originally denoted a large open-air fire on which bones were burnt, sometimes as part of a celebration. Related terms are banefire, while the Irish term for a bonfire is "tine chnámh," which literally means "fire of bones."

It may seem odd to light a large fire to celebrate the longest day and shortest night of the year. The summer is beginning and the warmth is rarely needed or desired for comfort. Especially at the high temperatures and long durations needed to burn bone.

The ashes from these fires were often taken the following morning and spread on the land as a rite for the fruitfulness of crops. This makes sense when you consider that wood ash is a good source of potassium and magnesium as well as many micronutrients needed in trace amounts for plant growth. Bone ash carries calcium and phosphorus, also highly beneficial to plant growth. If treated with sulfuric or phosphoric acid, the quality of this fertilizer can be improved.

When building a fire, wood will ignite at around 300°C (572°F) in typical conditions. The temperature of a bonfire gradually heats up to around 600°C (1112°F), but bonfires can reach 1000-1100°C (1832-2012°F). Bone blackens due to carbonization of the organic compounds at 400 °C (752°F). At 500°C (932°F) and above calcination occurs, which is required to produce bone ash, and is characterized by a grey and eventually white color.

## Celebrations for Litha

One of the best-known features of the summer solstice is its relationship to Stonehenge. On this day the sunrise passes between the heel stones to reach the altar. This alignment has marked it as one of the significant holidays for modern Druids.

The most common celebrations include gathering with friends and family, or retreating on vacations and holidays in the countryside. Wherever such gatherings are held, participants spend the day picnicking, barbecuing, and lighting bonfires.

Many types of water celebrations are taken on Litha. While some perform rituals, the most common are simply ways to enjoy the water, including visiting a beach or pond, fishing, and boating. More than one person has found the impromptu experience of dancing in a summer shower to be a sacred event.

The flying of kites is a way to celebrate the wind and air that can be a relief in the hot summer days.

Some practitioners use the abundance of energy and power at the solstice for fortunetelling rituals and making charms. Woven garlands may be blessed talismans or simple enjoyment of the season.

Mock battles are another way to honor the season. This may be celebration of ancestral raids or a retelling of myths like of the Oak King and Holly King. The sun of the solstice calls to activity and motion.



### Other Celebrations

The newest United States Federal holiday is Juneteenth. Celebrated on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June to mark the end of slavery in the United States. This holiday is formally named Juneteenth National Independence Day, but also called Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Black Independence Day, and Juneteenth Independence Day. While the Emancipation Proclamation was issued 1863, declaring more than three million slaves living in the Confederate states to be free, it was more than two years before the news reached African Americans living in Texas. Not until Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, did the state’s residents finally learn that slavery had been abolished.

Yoruba, and related religions and practices like Santería, recognize days of celebration for the Orisha throughout the year. Two of the major Orisha are celebrated around this time: Elegua, master of roads and paths and the primary means of communication to the Orisha, on June 13, and Ogun, the “god of iron,” a warrior and a powerful spirit of metal work, iron, rum and rum-making, transformation, mediation, and function, on June 29.

In ancient China, the solstice in June was observed by a ceremony to celebrate the Earth, femininity, and the “yin” forces. It complemented the winter solstice that celebrated the heavens, masculinity, and “yang” forces. According to Chinese tradition, the shortest shadow is found on the day of the summer solstice.

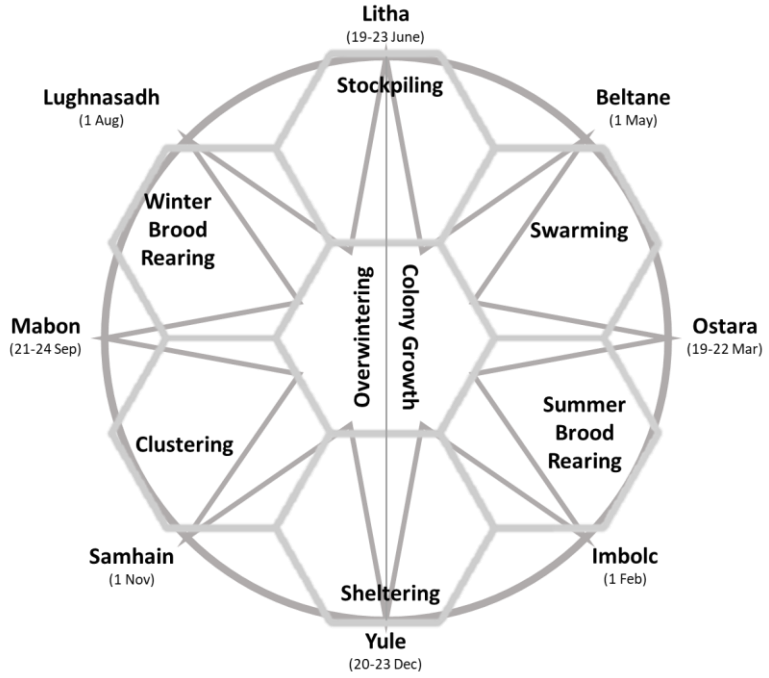
In ancient Gaul, which encompasses modern-day France and some parts of its neighboring countries, the Midsummer celebration was called Feast of Epona. The celebration was named after a mare goddess who personified fertility and protected horses.

Fairbanks, Alaska summer solstice celebration is about the “midnight sun.” There is a twelve-hour street fair with at least 30 acts of live music on the Saturday closest to the solstice. On the solstice itself, they hold a midnight sun baseball game which starts the first pitch at 10:00 pm and goes right through midnight. Only 140 miles south of the Arctic Circle, these celebrations prove that the sun doesn’t set in Fairbanks at the solstice.

Finland celebrates the summer solstice as Juhannus. Traditionally, ‘juhannus’ midsummer festivities were based on the god Ukko before being Christianized to a celebration of John the Baptist. This remains a special time to celebrate weddings and cast fertility or love spells.

The activity of the most commonly encountered types of bee -, honey bees, carpenter bees and bumble bees - depends largely on temperature and the seasonal patterns of flowers. Summer brood rearing starts at the end of winter and peaks in spring, resulting in swarming as colonies split. Colonies rebuild their worker populations and forage to increase their food stores through summer, stockpiling for the winter to come. At the end of summer brood rearing decreases, then ends in the autumn with the production of the winter bee cohort. As the winter starts, worker bees form a thermoregulating cluster inside the hive where they will shelter through the winter.

Litha is one of the high points of bee activity. Swarming is well underway and worker bees are collecting nectar. Depending on how rich the spring has been some honey may be available but, like all harvests, the full richness is still for seasons to come.





## Bees

These wondrous insects are a key part of a healthy life-cycle for crops and other plants. There are several species of bee native around the world. They have been domesticated since at least the time of the building of the pyramids in Egypt, 2600 years before the Common Era (4600 years ago). There is evidence of large-scale cultivation of bees indigenous to the Americas by Mayans in pre-Columbian times.

We talk frequently about the transformations of the livestock and crop cycles, how they relate to the wheel of the year, and to our life experiences. Bees are another significant marker. Their activity cycle is tied intimately with the pollination of plants and the production of crops. The wax they produce has been used by humans throughout history in making candles, soap, lip balms and various cosmetics, as a lubricant, and in mold-making.

The best known bee product, however, is honey. Cave paintings in Cuevas de la Araña in Spain depict humans foraging for honey at least 8,000 years ago. While mostly known as a food, in myths, folk medicine, and traditional practices honey was used both orally and topically to treat various ailments. This appears in the lore of ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Ayurveda (Indian) practice, and Chinese medicine.

Honey has long been used as a topical antibiotic and preservative by practitioners of traditional and herbal medicine. Its antibacterial effects were concretely demonstrated by the Dutch scientist Bernardus Adrianus van Ketel in 1892. Since then, repeated studies have shown honey has broad-spectrum antibacterial activity, although potency varies widely. Evidence has begun to show honey aids in the healing of burns up to 4–5 days faster and that post-operative infections treated with honey heal faster and with fewer adverse effects than with antiseptic and gauze. The World Health Organization recommends honey as a treatment for coughs and sore throats, including for children, stating that no reason exists to believe it is less effective than a commercial remedy and that it lacks the negative effects commercial medicines can have on children.

Each year, Latvians mark the solstice by celebrating the Jāņi Festival, which dates back to the Middle Ages. Ligo Day and Jāņi Day are on 23 and 24 June, the two days following the solstice, and are public holidays. Latvians travel from the city into the countryside, gathering to eat, drink, sing and observe ancient folk traditions relating to renewal and fertility.

Lithuania has long celebrated the shortest night of the year. Their ancestors, the Balts, celebrated Rasos by offering sacrifices to the pagan gods. While it was Christianized as Joninės, some have kept or recovered their pagan traditions and celebrate with big bonfires, fortunetelling rituals, dancing, garlands, and charms.

In St. Petersburg, Russians hold an annual White Nights festival. This event - starting in May and ending in July - celebrates the season. Summer solstice events include classical ballet and opera performances, carnivals, and music performances by famous acts. This includes the Scarlet Sails, the most massive and famous public event which is highly popular for its spectacular fireworks, numerous music concerts, and massive water show.

Since the Middle Ages Austria's southern region of Tyrol has celebrated by creating massive bonfires atop many of the mountains. These fires are lit as the sky goes dark after the longest day of the year, turning the mountaintops into beacons and creating a beautiful effect across the whole mountainous region.

In the Pyrenees through Spain, Andorra, and France, special beacons are ritualistically lit as night falls. People from different towns and villages carry flaming torches down the mountains to light traditionally constructed beacons. The descent is a special moment for young people, signifying the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The festival is considered a time for regenerating social ties and strengthening feelings of belonging, identity, and continuity. Celebrations include popular folklore and communal dining, and roles are assigned to specific people. Often, young unmarried girls await the arrival of the torchbearers in the village with wine and sweet pastries. In the morning, people collect embers or ashes to protect their homes or gardens.

Throughout Denmark bonfires are lit on the evening of June 23<sup>rd</sup> during Sankt Hans Aften (St. John's Evening) celebrations. Again, this holiday is based on pagan traditions. According to Danish legend the night of the summer solstice is full of evil, in which witches and their troll accomplices make their way to the Brocken, the highest peak in the Harz Mountains in northern Germany. To fend off this evil, the Danes light a fire crowned with a witch figure.

## Youth, Adolescence, and Adulthood

Many cultures draw some sort of line between the “innocence,” “ignorance,” and “immaturity” of childhood and a later life stage characterized by “reason” and “responsibility.” At its most simple, this line represents the division between childhood and adulthood. For certain cultures there even is a distinction between different stages of childhood.

Adolescence is a physical and psychological transitional stage. It is recognized as happening some time between the ages of 10 and 21. In different cultures and contexts, this time may be broader, lasting as late as 25 or 26, with some aspects of development lasting until 25-30. Others define it more narrowly; such as “the teenage years,” often focused between 13-18. Definitions of adolescence may simply be shifted somewhere within these ranges. The World Health Organization definition officially designates an adolescent as someone between the ages of 10 and 19.

Puberty is generally thought of as occurring during this time of life, and certainly characterizes it. However, increases in nutrition and changes in society mean that puberty now often begins earlier than classic adolescence, sometimes as early as 7-8 years old. Puberty includes a number of significant changes in the body and mind caused by changes and increases in hormone production. This causes the expression of a number of physical characteristics, including breast development, hair growth, etc. The major landmark of puberty is spermarche, the first ejaculation, and menarche, the onset of menstruation. In some societies, this is considered the sign of physical maturity and thus adulthood.

## Dog Days

While the solstice is the longest day of summer, from July 3 to August 11 is known as the “dog days of summer.” Light is in abundance at the solstice, but the heat of the year continues to increase over the days and weeks that follow.

Modern science tells us the abundant light of the season is responsible for the heat and the convection of the air is why the temperature shift is delayed. To the Greeks and Romans this heat occurred around the time Sirius, the “dog star” and brightest star in the constellation Canis Major, appears to rise alongside the sun. The Greeks and Romans believed the heat from this closeness is what made these days the hottest of the year.

Some direct effects of the excessive heat include violent storms, drought, or both. The heat also has its effects on people. Some associate this time with bad luck, lethargy, and madness in animals and humans. Violent crime rates can spike during this period as tempers become short. Ancient writings describe an increase in attacks by dogs during July and August. The 1564 *English Hope of Health* counseled that purging (bloodletting and induced vomiting) should be avoided during the “Dogge daies” of summer because “the Sunne is in Leo” and “then is nature burnt up & made weake.”

# War

In agrarian society, summer is the season of indolence and rest. The completion of planting leaves less to do until harvest with more usable hours. In the modern age, this has become is a season of construction, when the weather is most likely to be the best for breaking earth and raising structures.

For all these reasons, throughout history summer has been the season of raiding and war. Spring was dedicated to planting, fall to harvest, and winter provides only a few hours of daylight suitable for work. Meanwhile, reduced needs for labor in the fields during the summer freed that labor to seek wealth in other ways. Further, the logistical difficulties of moving sufficient supplies in other seasons can be staggering. In the spring, melting snow and rain often make dirt roads and fields impassible until they dry out. In the fall, rains can often have the same effect. And, while the winter will freeze the roads, the snow and ice that accumulates have a similar effect. The same weather conditions that make the season advantageous for building are beneficial to moving warriors and fighting.

In much of the world summer is the "fighting season." This is a time when combatants of all types could fight and have a chance to win. In ancient Rome the fighting season stretched from March 19 through October 19, seven months of "good weather" when they were not cold and did not have to deal with snow, ice or low temperatures. On these dates there would be grand festivals during which they would gather their weapons, perform repairs and seek replacements, and do rituals of purification, preparing for the season of war or peace.

One of the stories of the year for the Sumerians told that Nurgle, the god of war and plague, won his freedom from the underworld during the hot summer months. He would come to the living world with his raiders and pillage for the season until called home for the winter.

These patterns appear again and again, and are reflected in there being relatively few cultural celebrations in the summer compared to other seasons. Those traveling to trade or raid had few set days to celebrate. For those left home, the long days gave time enough for relaxation.

Because of the effects of puberty, particularly including the physical growth, adolescence is a time of power and flexibility for many. People come into their adult size and form but still have many of the benefits of healing and recuperation of youth, while lacking the full obligations, accountability, and consequences of adulthood. Another of the effects of puberty is changes in the brain that increase metacognition, the ability for an individual to not just consider an idea but the way they think about ideas.

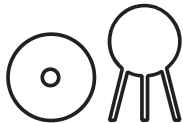
The result of all this is an ability to explore, experiment, and exercise self discovery. This leads people to "try on" different traits and expressions of personality and identity. These changes and sometimes results in adolescence being characterized by conflict with existing authority figures in their life. In extreme cases, this becomes a struggle between the child seeking autonomy for discovery and self expression while authority figures may infantilize and restrict them out of concern and desire to continue providing protection.

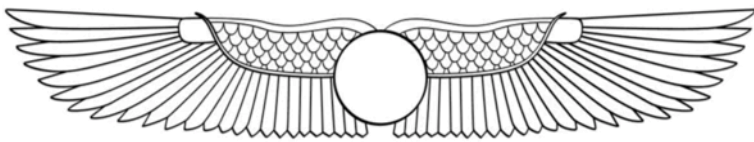
Physically, adolescence ends with the completion of puberty. Socially, adolescence ends with the some sort of official entry to adulthood, typically corresponding to the age of majority. However, few modern societies provide significant ceremonial, ritual, or formal recognition of that transition.

## Example Childhood Stage Definitions

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/pediatrics/health/stages>

- Baby: birth -1 year
- Toddler: 1 to 3 Years
- Preschool: 4 to 5 Years
- Childhood: 6-10 Years
- Adolescence: 12-18
- Young Adulthood: 19-25





## Light

With the prevalence of electric lights, it's hard to understand how dark the world can be. In the modern world we leave behind light by choice. We turn the lights off to go to sleep, watch a movie, or to get closer to nature. Even then, the abundance of illumination is so great that there's often light seeping in from elsewhere. Modern civilization is truly made of shining cities; an orange corona hovers under urban landscapes which can be seen from miles away.

Illumination at night was difficult and expensive before electric lights. Even the brightest moon provides too little light to safely or successfully perform many activities. So nighttime activities centered on fire; lanterns, torches, candles, and larger fires. Even the brightest gives less light and usability than a single 60 watt lightbulb. All of these carry risks of destroying entire buildings. The safest and cleanest sources of light were candles and lanterns. But, the cost of wax for candles or oil for lanterns was enough that all but the most wealthy counted candle stubs.

In this environment, the length of days and nights take on a different meaning. The solstice comes before heat of the year, but the extra hours of light increase the ability to travel, work, and perform other activities. In most ways, the length of the day was a measure of active hours. This is why ancient calendars may see Litha as the middle of the active summer and Yule as the middle of the somnolent winter.



## Rain

The solstice is clearly a time when the sun is dominant, the night time hours are at their shortest, and the temperature will continue to climb for some time yet. Especially in colder and temperate climates these manifestations of elemental Fire may be celebrated and rejoiced in unabashedly.

However, this is also a time to be aware of the element of Water. In many areas spring comes with showers and rain. However, as the temperatures climb, farmers of all kinds hope the rain continues. Few things are as fearsome as summertime drought. Even those who live in cities can experience the unremitting heat. Whether that heat is dry and wind-blown or the sweltering and stifling with humidity, few things are as welcome in summer as joyous as the relief of rain breaking free and bringing refreshment.

At the far end of this are the great monsoons of the world. In East Asia, a monsoon brings heavy precipitation during a short rainy season called Jangma, which lasts from mid June through the end of July and delivers enormous rainfalls.

The ancient Egyptian season of Akhet, or "inundation," was the season of flooding. The beginning of this season still starts the Egyptian, or Coptic, new year. During this time the Nile floods, covering the adjacent plains and restoring the nutrients in the soil there. After the water receded it was possible to plant and grow crops in the nutrient-rich soil. These floods occur because between May and August every year a monsoon brings vast amounts of water to the Ethiopian Highlands which is the source of the Nile.