

**Cut into slips and pass out for youth to read aloud, in order of sequence:**

1. READ ALOUD: There is a huge difference between monotheistic religions (one-God religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and Earth-centered religions. Monotheistic religions tend to view time as linear: the world started with creation and the world as we know it will end at some time in the future. Native and Neo-pagan religions see time as circular and repetitive, with lunar (monthly) and solar (yearly) cycles. Their rituals show the continuity of nature's cycles, which traditional human societies depended upon for their sustenance and survival.

2. READ AND ANSWER: In your opinion, what makes losing the summer's daylight difficult or sad?

3. READ AND ANSWER: In your opinion, what is the gift that comes with longer nights and more darkness?

4. READ ALOUD: Neo-Pagans/Wiccans (people who practice adaptations of old Celtic religious traditions) call the holiday of Autumn Equinox, *Harvest Home*, *Mabon*, or the *Feast of the Ingathering*. This is a ritual of thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth and recognition of the need to share them to secure the blessings of the Goddess and God during the winter months. In the northern hemisphere, this equinox occurs anywhere from September 21 to 24.

5. READ AND ANSWER: Do you know any people who consider themselves Wiccan or Neo-pagan? Do you know if and how they celebrate days like the Equinox?

6. READ ALOUD: Among Wiccans, the most common seasonal story is about the relationship between the god and goddess. In this cycle, the god is born from the goddess at Yule (or winter solstice), grows more powerful at the spring Equinox (when the goddess becomes a young maiden again), and then the god and goddess fall in love at Midsummer and conceive a child. The god passes into the underworld at *Samhain* (pronounced *Sah-Win*) around Halloween, and is born again from his mother and bride at Yule.

7. READ AND ANSWER: In your opinion, why do you think this story contains fantastic and mythical elements? Why gods and goddesses and underworlds? Why not have a sacred story that makes sense in terms of a natural, scientific world if you're explaining natural, scientific things?

8. READ ALOUD: Some Wiccans honor *The Green Man*, a lesser god of the forest, by offering sacred drinks to trees, including: ciders, wines, herbed water, and fertilizer.

9. READ ALOUD: In Ireland and Britain, megalithic cairns (enormous stacks of stones) are scattered through the hills. They are designed so that light from the rising sun on the summer equinox lines up through certain openings and illuminates a sacred stone. You may have heard of Stonehenge, which is a huge stone calendar marking the solstices and equinoxes.

10. READ ALOUD: The Lakota may have used stone calendars in some communities; there are traces of what may be astronomical stone markings. But they relied more on mapping the sun against the constellations they saw in the sky. As the sun moves through different constellations, there are sacred Lakota stories of animals and people that the sun encounters.

11. READ AND ANSWER: Can you identify any of our culture's constellations, the ones we inherited from the Greeks?

12. READ AND ANSWER: At the Equinox when night and day are balanced, Wiccans reflect on those parts of their life needing better balance: work and play, wrong and forgiveness, planning ahead and living in the moment. What part of your own life needs better balance?

13. READ ALOUD: Different Lakota groups have different names for this month or moon cycle of September. The Lakota word most commonly used for this moon is *Canwape'gi'wi*. Names for this month include: *Tree-leaves Yellow Moon ...* and *Black Calf Grows Hair Moon...* and *Rice is Laid Up to Dry Moon...* and *Green Grass Fades Away Moon*.

14. READ AND ANSWER: If you were looking up and down your street or in your backyard, what name would you be inspired to give this month?

15. READ AND ANSWER: Do you find that you notice that nights are getting longer? When do you tend to notice the change?

16. READ AND ANSWER: If you were in charge of planning an Equinox party for your friends, what sorts of things would you do? Eat? Decorate with?