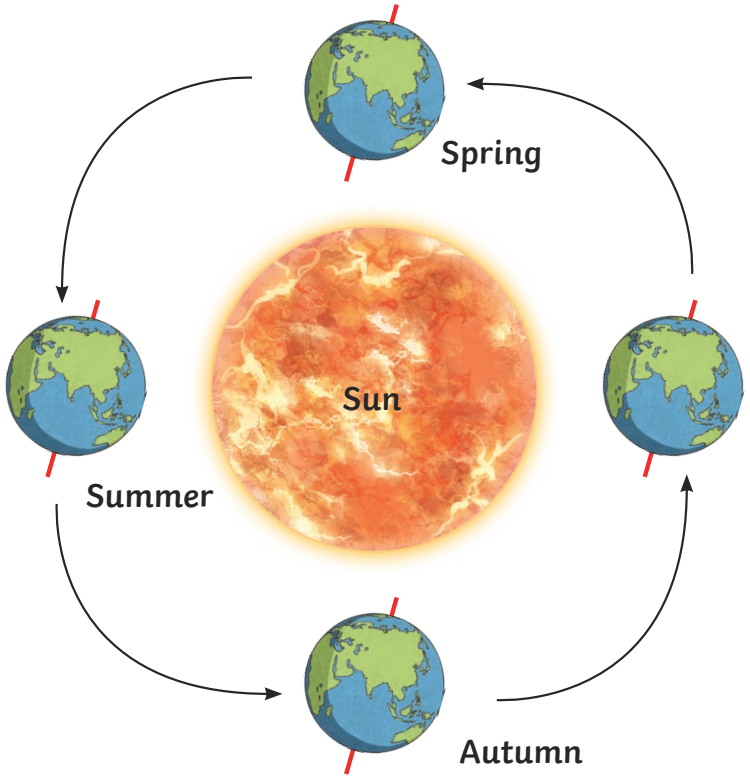
Summer Solstice

The equator is an imaginary line around the middle of the Earth. Countries above the equator are in the northern hemisphere. Countries below the equator are in the southern hemisphere.

Can you imagine a pole going through Earth from the North Pole to the South Pole? This pole would be the Earth's axis. The Earth spins round on this axis. The axis makes the Earth lean or tilt over.

The Earth moves or orbits around the Sun. This takes around one year. At different times of the year, some places on Earth are nearer to the Sun than others.

If you live in the northern hemisphere, Earth is tilted closer to the Sun in the summer, giving more light and heat.



This picture shows the seasons in the northern hemisphere.

Can you see how the northern hemisphere is tilted towards the Sun in summer?

What is the Summer Solstice?

The Summer Solstice happens when the North Pole is most tilted towards the sun. The Summer Solstice happens around 21st June. This is the longest day and shortest night of the year in the northern hemisphere.

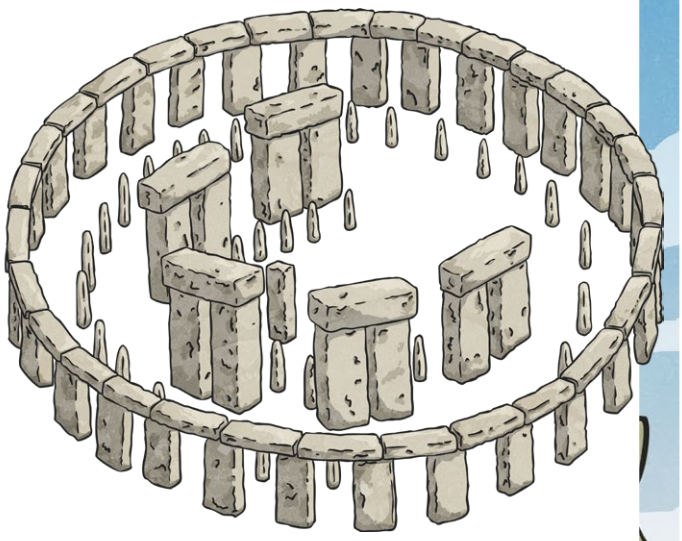
Summer Solstice in the Far North

Around the Summer Solstice, countries in the far north, like parts of Norway, Finland, Greenland and Alaska, have daylight all day long.

In the UK from mid-May to mid-July, the Shetland Islands and Orkney never get really dark as the sun only sets for a few hours.

Solstice Celebrations

For thousands of years, there have been solstice celebrations around the world. The hours of daylight and the seasons were important to the people who lived long ago. Today, bonfires and parades mark the Summer Solstice around the northern hemisphere.



In England, many people gather at Stonehenge, which is believed to have been an important place 4000 years ago. At the Summer Solstice, some of the stones at Stonehenge are in line with the rising sun.

On the Orkney Islands, Summer Solstice is celebrated at the ancient standing stone circle of the Ring of Brodgar.

Questions

1. What is the Equator?

2. Where can the northern hemisphere be found?

3. What is the Earth's axis?

4. How long does the Earth's orbit around the Sun take?

5. When does the Summer Solstice happen?

6. Why do you think people celebrated Summer Solstice long ago?

Answers

1. What is the Equator?
   The Equator is an imaginary line around the middle of the Earth.

2. Where can the northern hemisphere be found?
   The northern hemisphere can be found above the Equator.

3. What is the Earth's axis?
   The Earth's axis is an imaginary pole going through Earth from the North Pole to the South Pole. The Earth's axis is tilted.

4. How long does the Earth's orbit around the Sun take?
   The Earth' orbit around the Sun takes around one year.

5. When does the Summer Solstice happen?
   The Summer Solstice happens when the North Pole is most tilted towards the Sun. The Summer Solstice happens around 21stb June.

6. Why do you think people celebrated Summer Solstice long ago?
   OPEN - People celebrated Summer Solstice long ago because the hours of daylight and the seasons were important to them.