

The Vernal Equinox



Complete the story by adding *a/an, the* or – (nothing).

As 1) _____ earth tilts on its axis, 2) _____ northern hemisphere starts to emerge from the dark winter days into the warmer, brighter, fertile spring. Twice 3) _____ year, day and night become equal in length. In times past, these equinoxes marked occasions in which seeds would be planted and then harvested. The first of these, 4) _____ *Spring* or *Vernal Equinox* occurs on or about March 21st.

The ancient Saxon goddess, *Eostre*, who symbolized 5) _____ new life and fertility, was 6) _____ most important figure of this celebration, which was also known as *Ostara*. The pagan Anglo-Saxons used to make offerings of 7) _____ coloured eggs to 8) _____ goddess *Eostre*. They placed them in the grave during burials as 9) _____ symbol of rebirth. Egyptians also placed eggs in 10) _____ tombs and pagan Greeks placed eggs on 11) _____ fresh graves of their loved ones to ensure resurrection of the dead by the magic associated with the eggs.

It is believed that, during the *Vernal Equinox*, if you place 12) _____ egg upright on your kitchen work surface, it will remain upright due to the magnetic forces at work at this time of year. Those who have tried, and succeeded, remain convinced, but most scientists agree that there is 13) _____ very little reason to believe this to be any more likely to happen during 14) _____ equinox as at any other time of year.

The Vernal Equinox is 15) _____ time of renewal, both in 16) _____ nature and in 17) _____ home. Many people make time to do their *spring cleaning*. The tradition, dating back to pagan times, is designed to remove any negative energy accumulated over 18) _____ dark winter months and prepare the home for 19) _____ positive growing energy of spring and summer.

The Vernal Equinox and the Christian tradition of 20) _____ Easter are closely connected. As Christianity spread across 21) _____ Europe and 22) _____ Britain, the older symbols of pagan worship became incorporated into the new faith's holiday. The name *Easter* seems to have originated from the name of 23) _____ goddess *Eostre*, whose festival was originally celebrated with 24) _____ arrival of spring. The old rites honouring the planting of new seeds, the fertility of the land and its people, and the hope of 25) _____ new life arising in the world were replaced by solemn displays commemorating Christ and Christian beliefs.