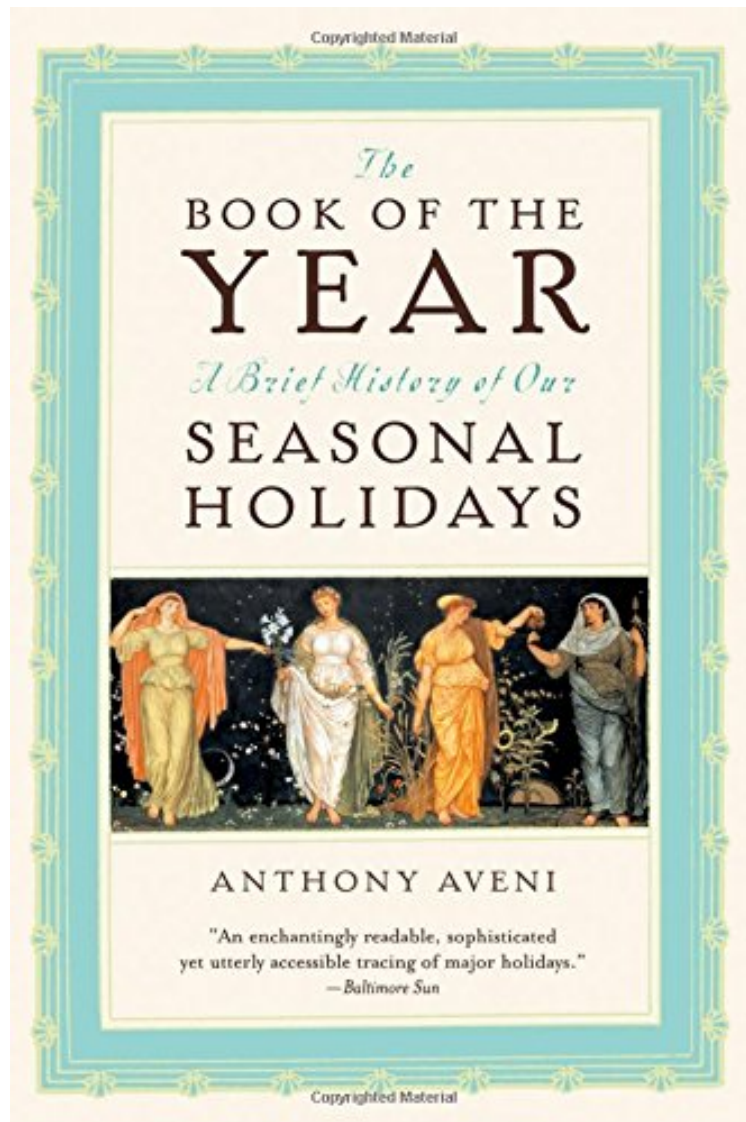


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## The Book of the Year: A Brief History of Our Holidays

*Anthony F. Aveni*

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**Anthony F. Aveni : The Book of the Year: A Brief History of Our Holidays** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Book of the Year: A Brief History of Our Holidays:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Helpful and Easy to Read Introduction to our HolidaysBy Arthur GeorgeThis is a useful introduction to the background of our seasonal holidays. It is written in colorful prose that is easy on the reader. It gives the reader a combination of some historical background to each holiday together with its more modern evolution. The author is an academic knowledgeable in the field, so what he says can be taken as more

reliable than what we read in similar books by others. Readers doing more serious research into the topic, however, will find the book frustrating because it does not cite to the sources of information except for quotes, because there are too many minor tangents, and because it is not that detailed and its information will quickly be duplicated and superseded by the other sources that a researcher consults. It would not be fair to rate a book according to criteria that deviate from what the book is designed to be, so in light of its fairly modest purpose and how it really did well at that, I give it 4 stars.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An interesting read - with several surprises for those of ...By Lee MAn interesting read - with several surprises for those of us who thought we knew the history of our iconic, American holidays. Know, in advance, that portions of the text may come across as irreverent.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Knowledge is PowerBy J. EmersonThis is book for those who want to know of and learn about how it became what it is. It requires an open mind for it contradicts everything as we know it, with regard to celebration and truth of the holidays. As a reminder, stay cool,,,

What is the connection between May Day and the Statue of Liberty? Between ancient solstice fires and Fourth of July fireworks? Between St. Valentine, the Groundhog, and the Virgin Mary? Why do people behave so bawdily during Mardi Gras? How has the significance and celebration of Christmas changed over the centuries? In *The Book of the Year*, Anthony Aveni offers fascinating answers to these questions and explains the many ways humans throughout time have tried to order and give meaning to time's passing. Aveni traces the origins of modern customs tied to seasonal holidays, exploring what we eat (the egg at Easter, chocolate on St. Valentine's Day), the games we play (bobbing for apples on Halloween, football on Thanksgiving), the rituals we perform (dancing around the Maypole, making New Year's resolutions), and the colorful cast of characters we invent to dramatize holidays (Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the witches and goblins of Halloween). Along the way, Aveni illuminates everything from the Jack 'O Lantern and our faith in the predictive power of animals to the ways in which Labor Day reflects the great medieval "time wars," when the newly invented clock first pitted labor against management. The calendar and its holidays, Aveni writes, function as "a kind of metronome that keeps the beat of human activity tuned to the manifold overlapping cycles of life," to the ebb and flow of birth, growth, decay, and death Vividly written, filled with facts both curious and astonishing, this engrossing book allows us to hear that beat more clearly and to understand more fully the rhythms we all dance to throughout the year.

From Publishers WeeklyWhy do we celebrate Easter by telling children that a rabbit will bring them eggs and candy? Why do we make New Year's resolutions? Why do we engage in rituals like bobbing for apples on Halloween, watching football on Thanksgiving, and giving chocolate on Valentine's Day? Aveni, a professor of astronomy and anthropology at Colgate, provides answers to these and many other questions in this delightful little book about the origins and modern development of our holidays. Our red-letter days, he contends, have evolved over the centuries as various cultures use them to reflect specific cultural concerns. For example, Halloween can be traced back to the Celtic festival Samhain, the official first day of winter in early medieval Ireland. On that day, spirits roamed the earth, revisiting their homes, pleading with their relatives for prayers, and eating a warm meal before they returned to their graves. While the modern celebration of Halloween resembles Samhain, Aveni argues that the holiday provides adults with an opportunity to cope with the fear of the unknown by allowing children to dress as ghosts, goblins and spirits. Overall, Aveni contends, we try to gain some control over nature and our lives by capturing the rhythms of the seasons on our calendars and by dividing our lives into segments governed by special days. Although not a thorough and definitive study of seasonal holidays, Aveni's book provides entertaining glimpses into the cultural evolution of holidays, and explores our human desire to make time work in our favor. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. "An enchantingly readable, sophisticated yet utterly accessible tracing of major holidays and why and where they arose....Anyone who digs into this lovely little book, I swear, will be quoting citations from it for the next generation."--Baltimore Sun"Delightful....Aveni's book provides entertaining glimpses into the cultural evolution of holidays, and explores our human desire to make time work in our favor."--Publishers Weekly"Anthony Aveni never ceases to amaze me with his ability to explain in charming, intelligent prose the many ways that human societies have been shaped by the rhythms and cycles of the natural world. In *The Book of the Year*, he's done it again."--Steven Lagerfeld, Editor, *The Wilson Quarterly*About the AuthorAnthony Aveni is the Russell B. Colgate Professor of Astronomy and Anthropology at Colgate University and the author of several books, including *Empires of Time* and *Conversing with the Planets*.