

# WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

By Dr. Joseph J. Jones  
English Department, University of Texas

(Printed in The Journal of Calendar Reform, Volume 22, **March 1952**, pages 73-75)

Professor J. W. Baldwin of the College of Education at the University of Texas, who assisted Dr. Jones in this interesting project, comments: "There are thousands of English teachers in our schools and colleges who will appreciate and benefit by the methods outlined in his report. It is safe to conclude that students master English composition at least as effectively when handling topics dealing with scientific and social progress as they do when the assignment touches topics of no such current significance. Assuming this is true, it is to be hoped that many English instructors will follow suit and assign such subjects as The World Calendar, in order to increase the value of instruction in writing good English."

**T**HAT information about The World Calendar is of interest to college students has recently been shown by an exercise in English composition at the University of Texas. The purpose of the project was to teach students how to handle a mass of collected data—how to select and maintain one controlling idea as the subject, how to eliminate or subordinate secondary facts, how to stress, supplement and illustrate primary facts, how to condense, summarize, supply transitions and all the other techniques that go with preparing a careful expository essay.

To this end the faculty prepared a set of "data sheets," which were placed in the hands of each student for study. The sheets contained 27 items of information about calendars and calendar reform, ranging all the way from two brief sentences to several paragraphs, and presented in scrambled sequence.

The result was entirely successful; interest in the subject was keen, as students found themselves being given a new kind of subject matter to think about. A great many, after studying the facts and drawing conclusions as to the desirability of adopting The World Calendar, were led to ask: "What are we waiting for?" It is the kind of exercise that can be recommended for use in either freshman classes or advanced exposition; the essay may vary from an informal few hundred words to a full-length research paper. A few extracts from our data sheets will serve to indicate the nature of the facts supplied to our students as a guide and beginning for their research and planning:

Item 1. Julius Caesar undertook calendar reform in 46 BCE. By this time, the calendar had become unmanageable.

Item 4. The movement for calendar reform is international in scope. Organizations like The World Calendar Association are advocating it in 36 countries. It was one of the most active projects before the League of Nations, and it is now before the United Nations where the Secretary General (Trygve Lie) has submitted a report on its merits.

Item 5. Advocates of The World Calendar point out that under the new arrangement “grasshopping” holidays will stay put. The common holidays in the United States, under The World Calendar, would occur on these dates and days: New Year’s Day, January 1 (Sunday); Independence Day, July 4 (Wednesday); Labor Day, September 4 (Monday); Election Day, November 7 (Tuesday); Thanksgiving, November 23 (Thursday); Christmas, December 25 (Monday).

Item 12. There is some sentiment in favor of moving certain midweek holidays to Monday. Among those more easily moved are Memorial Day and Election Day. Under The World Calendar, Texans would find Texas Independence Day, March 2, falling on Saturday and San Jacinto Day, April 21, would also come on Saturday. Among our numerous “minority” holidays, Cinco de Mayo would fall on Sunday, and “Juneteenth” on Tuesday.

**{Editor’s note -- With The World Calendar indefinitely tabled at the United Nations in 1956, the United States legislated that most holidays shall fall on Monday. Gregorian calendar confusion, thus camouflaged in convenience, only becomes less obvious. All Monday holiday dates continue to shift within the month and non-Monday holidays, “as usual”, float within the week.}**

Item 25. The Babylonians devised intercalary months to keep their calendars straight with the seasons. A period of days inserted to bring the calendar up to date is called an intercalation. The intercalary periods were inserted whenever the astronomers advised the king that the calendar had become irregular.

Item 26. The method of deciding upon the annual date of Easter was promulgated by the Council of Nicea in CE 325. The Council decreed that Easter should fall on “the first Sunday following the Paschal Full Moon, which happens upon or next after the 21<sup>st</sup> of March.” This sounds both arbitrary and capricious, although there was sufficient reason for it at the time. The pilgrims traveling to the great yearly Easter festivals [needed moonlight for their journeys](#). The Paschal Full Moon, by the way, is an ecclesiastical, not astronomical, designation.

Item 27. The World Calendar, the proposed improved system that has been approved by 17 governments, is the composite of many minds and many years of study and research. A Roman Catholic priest, the Abbot Marco Mastrofino, first suggested it in 1834. He advanced a plan for a 364-year, with the 365<sup>th</sup> day added as an extra day outside the week. By this simple method, every new year unfailingly begins with Sunday, and the calendar becomes perpetual—a reliable and steady instrument of time. The Abbot is the father of modern calendar reform. The World Calendar contains his stabilizing feature of one or two extra days, and is a simple and easy formula whereby forevermore every quarterly period of the year is identical in format. \*\*\*

\*\*\* A few items have been altered slightly from their original form in order to make this abridged presentation more complete.

Each student was asked to read and study the data sheets, and come to class prepared to offer suggestions for developing the theme. After class discussion, there followed a specific assignment—the writing of a paper on one of the three following subjects: I. *How Permanent Is Our Calendar?* Thesis: Our present Gregorian calendar is not a permanent institution, but only the latest of many modifications of the calendar. II. *What Is The World Calendar?* Thesis: It is a systematic and perpetual rearrangement of the present Gregorian calendar. III. *Why Should We Adopt The World Calendar?* Thesis: It offers numerous advantages over the present calendar in many divisions of human affairs.

It was pointed out that the three subjects, taken together, would make a single long and comprehensive essay, but that any of the three might be treated

separately. The students were asked, in the outlines they made to indicate, after each outline-heading, the numbers of the sections in the data sheets that should be used. This gave the instructor a quick indication of how much material the writer proposed to include, and it had the additional advantage of showing the student how he or she had brought order out of what was originally not a logical sequence.

Instructors reported good results from this exercise: students were genuinely interested in discussing the material—whereas certain exercises previously used had seemed too statistical and dry. The young writers were able to produce generally satisfactory papers on the basis of the data supplied, with a little additional research.

It was noted that the subject invariably had some personal appeal to the student—a result not often attained by the average subject which lends itself at all well to the purposes of this kind of exercise. Many of the students, not having heard of The World Calendar before, felt that in addition to working out a somewhat exacting assignment in composition, they had received some useful information.

It is suggested that other teachers might find a similar project workable and profitable on the basis of the pattern here outlined. There is of course much absorbing information available on numerous types of historical calendars, and comparison with The World Calendar will indicate immediately the desirable practical features of the latter. Application of the new calendar to local situations (such as the Texas holidays mentioned in Item 12 of the data sheets) adds a further dimension of student interest. The uniformity of the assignment enables an instructor to judge the papers objectively, and at the same time there is enough variety to avoid the monotony of most “prefabricated” exercises. Since each student has been over the same material, the resultant papers can be used for comparison and criticism in subsequent class meetings.

There are additional opportunities—especially in the use of visual materials and in oral presentation—which we did not develop in connection with this particular exercise. The kind of data a student handles in a longer paper, especially in the formal research-paper or technical report, often calls for tables and illustrations of a kind that this subject abounds in: neat and clear presentation (by drawing or precision typing) of The World Calendar itself; comparative tables of holidays; graphic methods of showing irregularities in the present calendar—all those and more might be introduced.

Similarly, classes in Speech or classes in English that stress oral English will find in The World Calendar question a source of interesting short talks and round-table discussions. There are not many topics that have as broad and as immediate an appeal; and the cultural values of looking into history in all parts of the world, not to mention the political values of studying the possibility of worldwide agreement on calendar reform as an opening wedge to other agreements, are plainly evident.

Whenever we can make our assignments more informative and more interesting to our students, we help ensure better work in return. The World Calendar, we have found, is a very good assignment to use. So much the better if it stimulates the student to do something toward bringing about this reform—through discussing it with parents and friends, and through letters to the State Department urging support to the plan in all international forums.

Link: [www.TheWorldCalendar.org/ASSETS/WhatAreWeWaitingFor.pdf](http://www.TheWorldCalendar.org/ASSETS/WhatAreWeWaitingFor.pdf)

E-mail to: [JCR@TheWorldCalendar.org](mailto:JCR@TheWorldCalendar.org)

Rev. 12 June 2006