

- 1** Where does the story of the Easter Bunny come from? Read the text to find out.



# THE Easter BUNNY

*Easter is a spring festival which is celebrated in many countries around the world. There are various traditions associated with Easter, and one of these is having an Easter egg hunt. People say that the Easter Bunny hides Easter eggs for children to find. But where does this story come from? The origins of the Easter bunny are a bit mysterious, but there are two traditions that experts believe led to the creation of this unique legendary character.*

## Eostra

One theory about the origin of the Easter bunny is that it comes from the ancient pagan festival of Eostra. Many pagan festivals celebrated the changing seasons, and the festival of Eostra was when pagan groups would celebrate the arrival of spring. They did this by worshipping Eostra, the goddess of new life.

So what does a rabbit have to do with this? Well, in spring, lots of animals give birth to their young. Rabbits, in particular, tend to have lots of babies, and so they symbolise new life and abundance. For this reason, the rabbit became the animal symbol of the goddess Eostra. In one story, Eostra even transformed an injured bird into a rabbit to save it, and the rabbit laid eggs for her in order to thank her!

Rabbits are also associated with other aspects of spring, such as rebirth and renewal. Due to all these associations, the rabbit eventually became a symbol of good luck, too. That's why some people say a rabbit's foot will protect them from harm and bring them good fortune.

## Osterhase

Most history experts agree that the Easter bunny originates from the German folk tale of the Osterhase which began in the 16th century. According to the story, a woman used to play a game with her children to celebrate Easter. She would paint eggs in different colours and hide them in her garden for her children to find. In the story, the children went into the garden one Easter morning and saw a rabbit hopping away. They decided that the rabbit was the one that had hidden the eggs, and the legend of the Osterhase began!

Eventually, the story spread to villages and towns all over Germany, and children started to make little nests for the Osterhase to hide eggs in. When German immigrants came to the United States, instead of nests children would make baskets to collect their eggs from the garden. This tradition is still popular among children who celebrate Easter today!

- 3** **ICT** Find information about the origin story of another Easter tradition (e.g. *Easter eggs*, *Easter egg hunts*, etc.). Present the information to the class.

- 2** Read the text again and do the quiz below. Which tradition ...

- ... began in the 1500s?  
A Eostra  
B Osterhase
- ... comes from an ancient festival?  
A Eostra  
B Osterhase
- ... includes the rabbit as a symbol of spring?  
A Eostra  
B Osterhase
- ... turned into a tradition people still follow today at Easter?  
A Eostra  
B Osterhase
- ... involves a story about an animal being turned into a different animal?  
A Eostra  
B Osterhase
- ... is connected to a Christian holiday?  
A Eostra  
B Osterhase

