Some holidays are celebrated differently in Latin America and Spain than in the United States. *La Nochebuena*, or Christmas Eve, for example, is when most of the Spanish-speaking world celebrates Christmas. A nativity scene (*un nacimiento* or *un pesebre*) is a common decoration in homes. It may be small—the Dominican Republic is famous for its truly miniature figures—or large enough to fill an entire room or patio. But large or small, it is often very elaborate, with hills, trees, roads, little houses, and small mirrors to represent ponds. *El nacimiento* is usually the focal point of the festivities, with family gathered around to sing carols to the accompaniment of a guitar or a bamboo pipe or maracas. Colored paper lanterns, balloons, piñatas, and dancing are often part of the evening celebration.

*El Día de la Raza*, October 12, celebrates the blending of the Spanish and indigenous cultures that resulted from Columbus’s landing in the Americas. It is sometimes called *el Día de la Hispanidad*. In recent years, however, it has become of less importance than specific national holidays. *El Día de la Independencia* is, of course, celebrated on different days in different countries. For example, September 15 is the national holiday of four Central American nations: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Paraguay celebrates its independence from Spain on May 14; Argentina, May 25; Venezuela, July 5; Colombia, July 20; Peru, July 28; Bolivia, August 6; Ecuador, August 10; Mexico, September 16; and Chile and Costa Rica, September 18. The Dominican Republic celebrates its independence from Haiti on February 27; Uruguay, its independence from Brazil on August 25; Panama, its independence from Colombia on November 3. And Spain’s national holiday? *El Día de la Hispanidad*—October 12.
Another major fall holiday is el Día de los Muertos on November 2. This holiday—known as All Souls’ Day in English—is a day of remembrance for all those who have died. It is a very special celebration in Mexico. There are, of course, prayers, religious services, and visits to the cemetery, and families build special altars, called ofrendas, in their homes. These ofrendas are decorated with flowers and candles, but they are not at all solemn. Photographs of loved ones who have died are displayed among objects that they cherished or used most—a rocking chair, for example, or reading glasses, gardening tools, or cooking utensils. El Día de los Muertos is also celebrated by eating a sweetened bread—el pan de muerto—which is either shaped like skulls and crosses or decorated with them, and white sugar candies in the shape of skulls, crosses, coffins, and tombs. For children, there are white masks, tin or wire skeletons attached to strings, and even toy coffins that contain a skeleton that jumps out when a string is pulled.

In the calendar of the Catholic Church, almost every day is dedicated to one or more saints. A person’s “saint’s day,” or santo, is the day dedicated to the saint who has that person’s name (or one derived from it). For example, el santo for every José, Josefina, or Josefa is St. Joseph’s Day (March 19), and el santo for every Pablo, Paulo, Paulina, and Paula is St. Paul’s Day (June 29). Traditionally, part of a person’s name was determined by the saint’s day on which he or she was born. For example, if a girl whose family planned to name her María Luisa happened to be born on May 30—St. Ferdinand’s Day—she would likely be named María Luisa Fernanda to honor that saint. In fact, the traditional Mexican “Happy Birthday” song, Las mañanitas, is actually a song for a saint’s day. This custom is disappearing, however, and a person’s birthday and saint’s day are often not the same. In many countries, a person’s saint’s day is considered more important than a birthday. Even non-Catholics may celebrate their santo, for no one wants to miss out on his or her special day for a party and a few gifts. So truly every day is un día de fiesta en el mundo hispano.
In a traditional Latin American home, which of the following most closely compares with the Christmas tree in a traditional U.S. home?

A  la Nochebuena  
B  el nacimiento  
C  la piñata  
D  el Día de los Reyes

Which one of the following statements is true?

F  All of the nations of Central America have the same Independence Day.  
G  In the United States, the best-known national holiday among the Latin American nations is el Día de los Reyes.  
H  Of the nations of Latin America, all but two celebrate their national holiday within the five-month period from May to September.  
J  All of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America got their independence from Spain.

What holiday in the United States has the same underlying purpose as el Día de los Muertos?

A  the Fourth of July  
B  Memorial Day  
C  Labor Day  
D  Veterans’ Day

Complete this statement: Today a person’s santo is most often

F  a saint’s birthday.  
G  his or her own birthday.  
H  the day dedicated to the saint who has the same or a similar name.  
J  either March 19, May 30, or June 29.

October 12 was once a fairly major holiday throughout the Americas. Why do you suppose that in most countries the national holiday has become of greater importance than Columbus Day? Do you think this is a good thing or a bad thing? Why?

If you live far to the north or to the south of the equator, there are considerable differences in the way in which you might celebrate the end-of-year holidays. Explain why and describe at least three of those differences.
NOTICIAS DE CELEBRACIONES
Esta semana en San Antonio muchas familias celebran ocasiones muy especiales.

**Quinceañera**
Mirella Lugo Armas, hija de Humberto Lugo Díaz y Carmen Armas Garza de Lugo, celebra sus quince años el domingo 20 de julio a las 6:00 P.M. en el restaurante Casa Estrella. Hay una gran fiesta con una banda de música tejana después de la cena.

**Boda**
Dolores Lara Villarreal y Roberto Pastor Peña celebran su boda en la iglesia de San Antonio, el sábado 19 de julio a las 8:00 P.M. Después de la ceremonia hay una fiesta con música y una cena en casa de la familia Lara.

**Día del santo**
Santiago Paredes Sánchez celebra el día de su santo el viernes 25 de julio. Hay una comida en su honor en casa de sus abuelos a las 2:00 P.M.

**Graduación**
Ana Luisa Martínez Puente celebra su graduación de la Memorial High School el día 22 de julio. Después de la graduación hay una barbacoa para la familia y los amigos en el parque Fiesta Texas a las 4:00 P.M.

**Cincuenta años**
Roberto González Juárez y María Luisa Gallardo Correa de González celebran su aniversario de bodas el 25 de julio en el salón de fiestas La Suerte. Van a celebrar la ocasión con una comida deliciosa para la familia y los amigos.
1. Which of the celebrations has a party outside?
   A. cincuenta años
   B. graduación
   C. día del santo
   D. quinceañera

2. What do all of the notices of celebrations have in common?
   F. They all mention a meal.
   G. They all mention music.
   H. They all take place in the evening.
   J. They all mention a ceremony.

3. Which of these occasions is celebrated only in the Hispanic culture?
   A. boda
   B. cincuenta años
   C. quinceañera
   D. graduación

4. Which of the celebrations mentions the names of the parents of the honored person or people?
   F. graduación
   G. quinceañera
   H. día del santo
   J. boda

5. Which of these celebrations do you think might have more guests that are family members than friends? Why do you think these celebrations might be more for family members?

6. Clasifica las fiestas de 5 a 1. El 5 es para la fiesta más formal, y el 1 es para la fiesta menos formal. Explica tus clasificaciones “5” y “1.”