

The Meaning Behind the Festival of Courage in Public Waldorf Schools

As public Waldorf schools, we draw from anthroposophical thought, particularly as described by Rudolf Steiner, on the connection between the Festival of Courage in Fall and Spring Faire in May as we understand these two events as a part of the Earth's "breathing process" over the course of the year. The Earth, like a living organism, has a cyclical rhythm of breathing, with Spring Faire representing the outbreath and the Festival of Courage representing the inbreath.

Spring Faire: The Earth's outbreath

- Expansion into the cosmos: Spring Faire, occurring in the spring, marks the "outbreathing" of the Earth's spiritual forces. During this time, the Earth's soul forces expand outward into the cosmos, reaching a peak in midsummer.
- Rising life forces: This outward movement is mirrored in the natural world by the resurgence of life in spring—the sprouting, flowering, and blossoming of plants.

Festival of Courage: The Earth's inbreath

- Contraction into the Earth: The Festival of Courage, celebrated in the autumn, marks the "inbreathing" of the Earth's soul forces as they retreat from the cosmos and contract back inward.
- Retreating life forces: This is reflected in the natural world by the fading of the leaves and the ripening of fruits, as the life forces of nature recede inward.

The human and spiritual connection

- Inner courage: While the Earth and nature die away on the surface in autumn, the Festival of Courage calls upon humanity to find inner light and strength to face the spiritual "dragons" of darkness and ignorance that become more prominent as the outer world grows darker.