

**Youth Culture Lesson**  
**Finding Teachable Moments in Culture**  
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**Looking Back: New Year Gives Us Excuse to Celebrate and Learn**

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**What Happened:**

When we celebrate the New Year, most of us do so by going to a party, watching the ball drop in Times Square or—for those who can't stay up past midnight—blow a little noisemaker before going to bed early.

Before looking forward, many look back—handing out a variety of awards and compiling an assortment of lists to commemorate the best and worst 2011 had to offer.

*Time* magazine honored “The Protester” as its annual Person of the Year. *Sports Illustrated* saluted college basketball coaches Mike Krzyzewski and Pat Summitt as its Sportsmen of the Year. Media outlets are peppering newspapers, telecasts and the Internet with a variety of Top 10 lists: Top 10 movies, Top 10 musical artists, Top 10 news stories, Top 10 quotes...the list goes on. *Time* alone publishes 54 Top 10 end-of-the-year lists.

Then things can get silly. There's a list of the “Nine Funniest Texts” (on Mashable.com), the “Top 40 Protest Signs” (on BuzzFeed.com) and the “8 Worst Android Infections” (by TabTimes). BuzzFeed also offers “45 Things We Should Forget About 2011” (which makes you wonder why bother making a list), and National Public Radio published a list of “The 20 Unhappiest People You Meet in the Comments Sections of Year-End Lists.”

As strange as they can be, such lists remind us the turn of a New Year isn't just a time to look forward and make resolutions, but take stock of what we've done—well and poorly. As the old saying goes, those who don't know their history are doomed to repeat it.

**Talk About It:**

What would make your own list of Top 10 moments? What was the most memorable thing you did this year? When were you at your happiest? At your saddest?

What have you done in the past 12 months that you're particularly proud of? Did you work really hard in class, and has that work paid off? Did you stand up for a friend? Was there a time this year when you were particularly kind? Brave? Supportive? What about your friends or family? Did they do something worth honoring this year?

When were you the most ashamed in 2011? Talk about a time when you did something you weren't particularly proud of or would rather forget.

Did you feel God's presence in your life this year? When? How?

Overall, was 2011 a good year? A bad year? What made it that way? How can you make 2012 better?

**What the Bible says:**

"I thought about the former days, the years of long ago...I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember Your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all Your works and consider Your mighty deeds" (Ps. 77:5, 11-12).

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live" (Deut. 4:9).

"I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all Your works and consider what Your hands have done" (Ps. 143:5).