*The Gregorian Calendar* by R. Kramer

**September 2, 1752 was a great day in the history of sleep**.

That Wednesday evening, millions of British subjects in England and the colonies went peacefully to sleep and did not wake up until twelve days later. The *British Calendar Act of 1751* declared the day after Wednesday the second to be Thursday the fourteenth.

Prior to that September evening, the official British calendar differed from that of continental Europe by eleven days – that is, September 2 in London was September 13 in Paris, Lisbon, and Berlin. The discrepancy had sprung from Britain’s continued use of the Julian calendar, which had been the official calendar of Europe since its invention by *Julius Casear* (after whom it was named) in 45 BC.

Caesar’s calendar, which consisted of eleven months of 30 or 31 days and a 28 day February (extended to 29 days every fourth year), was actually quite accurate; it erred from the real solar calendar by only 11 ½ minutes a year. After centuries though, even a small inaccuracy like this adds up. By the sixteenth century, it had put the Julian calendar behind the solar one by 10 days. (The “Real Solar Calendar” is the Earth and its relative location to the Sun).

In 1582, *Pope Gregory XIII* ordered the advancement of the calendar by 10 days and introduced a new corrective device to curb further error: century years such as 1700 would no longer be counted as leap years, unless they were divisible by 400, like 1600 or 2000. A leap year is when a day must be added in order to stabilize the calendar year to the solar year.

This system has been very effective, and is still in official use in the United States. The Gregorian calendar year differs from the solar year by only 26 seconds -accurate enough for most people, since this only adds up to one day’s difference every 3,323 years.

**The Year Zero**

The Gregorian Calendar was created by the pope, so naturally it followed Christian ideals. Therefore there are two time periods in the Gregorian Calendar: BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini). The BC time period counts backwards from the birth of Christ and AD counts forward from Christ’s birth. There is no year zero. Also in BC, the larger the number, the further it is away from Christ’s birth, so it will be further back in time. For example, 100 BC is further back than 10 BC, as it is 100 years before Christ as opposed to just 10 years.

**What are BCE and CE?**

Many years after the development of the Gregorian Calendar, historians felt that using Christian ideals for time was not fair to all religions. Therefore, a secular (non-religious) method of calculating time was created. BC would be replaced by BCE (Before Common Era) and AD would be replaced by CE (Common Era). BCE and CE follow the same timeframe as BC and D. the “Common Era” just happens to begin on the day of Christ’s birth. Nevertheless, BCE and CE allow for a more secular representation of the Gregorian Calendar.

Questions on the Back.

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.**

1. Who created the Julian Calendar and when?
2. Why is the Gregorian Calendar based off the life of Jesus Christ?
3. What is a leap year?
4. If someone is born in 50 BCE and died in the same month in 10 CE, how old were they when they died?
5. Which person was born first, someone born in 150 BCE or someone born in 145 BCE?
6. If a person was born in July of 15 BCE, how old would they be if they were still alive today?
7. Why was the idea of the Common Era developed?
8. Would you be younger if you were born in 2001 AD or 2001 CE?
9. Create a timeline and order these dates. 100 BCE, 30 CE, 50 BC, 1000 AD, 2011 CE