

Festivals around the world

Topic

Festivals

Learning outcomes

- Learn and practise vocabulary for describing festivals
- Read and understand important information from a short text about a festival
- Collaborate with others to present information about an invented festival

Age and level

13-17, Adults (B1+)

Time

50-60 minutes

Materials

- Texts A, B, C, D
- (Optional) Images of the following festivals (for example):
 - Snake Festival in Cocollo, Italy: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-48132701>
 - Land diving in Vanuatu: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_diving
 - Cheung Chau Bun Festival: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheung_Chau_Bun_Festival
 - May Day in the UK: <https://www.maypoledancing.co.uk/>

Introduction

This is an integrated skills lesson, in which students will discuss festivals. First, they will create a mind map of vocabulary used to describe festivals. They will then work in small groups to read different texts describing the reasons behind and the customs practised in four festivals from different parts of the

world. They will then share the information about their festival and discuss which one they would like to attend and why. Finally, they will work together to invent and describe an imaginary festival to celebrate a calendar event such as the middle of winter, the first day of autumn, etc.

Procedure

1. Lead-in (5 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put students into groups of 3 / 4. Ask them to discuss the questions: What is your favourite festival? How does your family celebrate it? Collect feedback from a few groups if you like, but it's not necessary. The aim of this activity is to get students thinking about the topic of the lesson and vocabulary related to festivals.
2. Vocabulary brainstorm (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write the word 'festivals' in the middle of the board and create a mind map to record vocabulary related to the topic of festivals. You can find out about mind maps here: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/knowning-subject/d-h/mind-map Ask students to suggest or introduce words related to different categories, as in the example below. As a minimum, introduce the words which appear in the texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What: (festival, celebration plus collocations: hold a festival, celebrate something) What happens: (procession, fireworks, music, musicians, band dance, dancers, decorate, wear costumes) Food: (sweets)
3. Preparation for reading texts (5-10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that students are going to read about four different festivals. Give the names of each festival: Snake Festival, Bun Festival, Land Diving Festival, May Day. If possible, show some pictures of festivals. You can search for suitable images of the festivals before the lesson. Ask students to guess where and why each festival takes place, and to guess what happens at each festival. <p>Note: If students are already familiar with one or more of the festivals, you could omit the text. Alternatively, you could write a similar simple text about other festivals which are new to your students.</p>

As an alternative, you could give students the framework provided with the texts and ask them to research an unfamiliar festival and complete the framework with what they find out. They can then form small groups and share information about the festivals (instead of completing the jigsaw reading).

**4. Jigsaw reading
(15 mins)**

- Divide the class into 4 groups: A, B, C, D. Give Text A to each student in Group A; give Text B to each student in Group B etc.
- In their groups, students read the texts together. They can help each other with any unfamiliar vocabulary and use dictionaries where necessary. You can also walk around and help.
- Each student completes the framework below the text.
- When the frameworks are completed, put students into new groups. Each group should contain a student from Group A, Group B, Group C and Group D.
- In their new groups, students share information about the festivals. They add information about all the festivals to the framework.
- If necessary, check answers with the class, or display the completed framework for students to check. The completed framework is available at the end of this lesson plan.
- Ask students to discuss which festival they would like to see most and why.

**5. Follow-up task
(15-20 mins)**

- Tell students to remain in the same groups of 4.
- Explain that each group should work together and invent a festival for one of the following events (or another special calendar event):
 - Midwinter
 - The first day of autumn (or any other season)
 - The longest / shortest day
 - A special harvest
- Groups use the same framework as before to structure their discussions:

Where?	
When?	
Why?	
What happens?	
Special food?	

- When the table is completed, groups can present their invented festivals. They can use their tables to give an oral presentation, or they could make posters / PowerPoint / online presentations. Alternatively, they could write short descriptions for display around the classroom or online.
- Students listen to / read about each other's festivals and say which they would like to attend and why.

Contributed by

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Answer key:

	Snake Festival	Land Diving Festival	Bun Festival	May Day
Where?	Cocullo, Italy	Pentecost Island, Vanuatu	Cheung Chau, Hong Kong	UK
When?	First Thursday in May (St Dominic's Day)	Every Saturday in May	Early May, around the time of Buddha's birthday	First of May
Why?	St Dominic lived in the village in 11 th century. Many people died of snakebites. He got rid of the snakes.	Celebrates harvest. Also story of a woman who jumped from a tree with a vine around her ankle.	Celebrates Pak Tai, who drove pirates and illness away from the island.	Celebrates first day of summer
What happens?	People put snakes on statue of St Dominic. They carry the statue through the town. There is music and fireworks.	Men build a wooden tower – 20-30m high. They jump off with vines around their ankles. People sing and dance below.	People pray for safety from pirates and illness. Procession with music and dances. Children are carried. People make 3 30m towers covered in buns. On last day, people climb towers to get buns. Fireworks.	Decorate streets and houses with flowers. Dancing around a tall pole. Choose a May Queen. In one village, two men dress as horses and sing. In another, people roll a big cheese down a hill.
Special Food?	Sweets and bread shaped like snakes.	(Doesn't say)	People are vegetarian for 3 days. People give away buns on the last day.	Cheese in one village.