

May Day celebrations in Europe

Today, let's talk about how May Day is celebrated in some parts of Europe. For many, it is a traditional workers' holiday.

In Greece, one of the more popular activities on May Day is fire jumping. This is done after the sun sets. Women dance around the lit fire. The children wet their clothes and hair, before jumping over the fire. It is a symbolic act, to keep away winter and disease. Another popular tradition is picking flowers, and creating a May Day wreath, to hang on their doors. It is meant to bring people closer to nature.

In France, May Day is really a day off for its workers. French people like to give family and friends little sprigs, bouquets, or even whole plants of lily of the valley, for good luck. The more bell-like the flower, the better the luck.

In Germany, May Day is a trade union day. It is also when people dance around the Maypole. In Bavaria, a May Day tradition is Maypole climbing. This is when young men battle, to see who can climb to the top of the Maypole, the fastest. The task is made tougher by soaping it.

In the Czech Republic, May Day is a day for love. It is traditionally when lovers would come with flowers, to spend time on hills above cities together. It is when lovers kiss under a blooming cherry or birch tree. Tradition says, that a girl who is not kissed under it, would wither and die in 12 months.

On the eve of May Day, single men in Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, go into the wood to cut down a tall tree. They strip it and decorate it, with scarves, ribbons, and flowers, and erect it in the village square. It is guarded, as other men will come to steal it, as a form of village competition. If your Maypole is not stolen, the unmarried girls in the village can be given little presents. In the evening, everyone celebrates at a ball.

SPEAKING – WARM UP

Think of three things you know about May Day in your country. Go round the room swapping details with others.

LISTENING – WRITING - DICTATION

The teacher will read some lines of the article slowly to the class.

READING

Students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

SPEAKING - UNDERSTANDING

1) The article – Students check any unknown vocabulary or phrases with the teacher.

2) The article - Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- 1) What is the article about?
- 2) What do you think about the article?
- 3) Was this an easy or difficult article to understand?
- 4) Was this a boring or interesting article?
- 5) Discuss the article.

3) Article quiz - Students quiz each other in pairs. Score a point for each correct answer. Score half a point each time you have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A questions

- 1) What does 'wither' mean?
- 2) Who would wither? Why?
- 3) Where is Slovakia?
- 4) What is 'a ball'?
- 5) Where is Greece?

Student B questions

- 1) When is 'May Day'?
- 2) What happens in Greece on May Day?
- 3) What happens in Germany on May Day?
- 4) What is 'a wreath'?
- 5) Who goes into the wood? Why?

May Day is the first day in May. Traditionally, in many countries, it is the celebration of spring. The month of May was named after the Roman goddess Maia, which is itself a Greek word for mother, nurse or midwife.

May Day celebrations in Europe – 30th April 2017

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs. On the board write as many words about '**May Day**'. *One-two minutes.* Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs – write down three main points from the article. Discuss together.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

SPEAKING - ROLEPLAY 3

In pairs - *Student A* is in their home country. *Student B* is in another country. You are talking on a social network (Skype/Viber). Start a conversation about May Day traditions around the world, and in your country. *3 mins.*

WRITING / SPEAKING

In pairs, write down five things you know about **International Workers' Day**. Discuss how it was celebrated in the past. Compare to how it is celebrated today. Discuss together. *3 mins.*

The teacher will choose some students to read out their findings to the class.

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) What do you think about what you've read?
- 2) In your country, is there a public holiday on May Day (May 1st)?
- 3) How do you celebrate May Day?
- 4) What traditions do you have in your country, on May Day?
- 5) Would you like to jump across a fire on May Day?
- 6) Have you ever tried to climb a tree?
- 7) Do you know the flower lily of the valley?
- 8) Would you like to make a Maypole?
- 9) Have you ever tried to climb a greasy pole?
- 10) Have you learnt anything today?

SPEAKING – ROLEPLAY 1

In groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Discussion FM* radio studio in London. Today's interview is about: *May Day celebrations in Europe.*

- 1) Someone from France.
- 2) Someone from Greece.
- 3) Someone from Germany.
- 4) Someone from the Czech Republic.

The teacher will choose some groups to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

SPEAKING – ROLEPLAY 2

In pairs – How do people celebrate May Day today? Do they go to concerts? Do they take part in a fun run? Think of five other ideas of what to do on May Day. Write your ideas down. Talk about them. (Google, if necessary). *3 mins.* **Discuss** as a class afterwards.

SPEAKING - DISCUSSION

Allow 10 minutes – As a class.

May Day celebrations in Europe – discuss how we celebrated it in the past, how we celebrate it now, and how we might celebrate May Day in the future

The teacher can moderate the session.

DISCUSSION

Student B questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Would you send your lover flowers on May Day?
- 3) Would you steal a Maypole to win your village competition?
- 4) What other May Day traditions do you know of in your country?
- 5) What other May Day traditions do you know of in another country?
- 6) Would you kiss your lover under a cherry tree on May Day?
- 7) What is May Day to you?
- 8) Is May Day still a traditional workers holiday across Europe?
- 9) Has May Day changed over the years, in how it is celebrated in your country?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

GAP FILL: READING

May Day celebrations in Europe

Today, let's talk about how May Day is celebrated in some parts of Europe. For many, it is a traditional workers' holiday. In Greece, one of the more (1)___ (2)___ on May Day is fire jumping. This is done after the sun sets. Women dance around the lit fire. The children wet their clothes and hair, before jumping over the fire. It is a symbolic act, to keep away winter and disease. Another popular tradition is picking flowers, and creating a May Day (3)___, to (4)___ on their doors. It is meant to bring people closer to (5)___ . In France, May Day is (6)___ a day off for its workers. French people like to give family and friends little (7)___, (8)___, or even whole plants of lily of the valley, for good luck. The more bell-like the flower, the better the luck.

wreath / bouquets / activities / nature / sprigs / hang / popular / really

In Germany, May Day is a trade union day. It is also when people dance around the Maypole. In Bavaria, a May Day tradition is Maypole climbing. This is when young men (1)___, to see who can climb to the top of the Maypole, the fastest. The task is made (2)___ by soaping it. In the Czech Republic, May Day is a day for love. It is traditionally when lovers would come with flowers, to spend time on hills above cities together. It is when lovers kiss under a blooming (3)___ or birch tree. (4)___ says, that a girl who is not kissed under it, would (5)___ and die in 12 months.

On the eve of May Day, single men in Slovakia, as well as the Czech Republic, go into the wood to cut down a tall tree. They strip it and decorate it, with scarves, (6)___, and flowers, and erect it in the village (7)___ . It is guarded, as other men will come to steal it, as a form of village (8)___ . If your Maypole is not stolen, the unmarried girls in the village can be given little presents. In the evening, everyone celebrates at a ball.

wither / tradition / battle / tougher / competition / square / ribbons / cherry

GAP FILL: GRAMMAR

May Day celebrations in Europe

Today, let's talk about how May Day is celebrated (1)___ some parts of Europe. For many, it is a traditional workers' holiday. In Greece, one (2)___ the more popular activities on May Day is fire jumping. This is done after the sun sets. Women dance around the lit fire. The children wet their clothes (3)___ hair, before jumping over the fire. It is a symbolic act, to keep away winter and disease. Another popular tradition is picking flowers, and creating a May Day wreath, to hang (4)___ their doors. It is meant to bring people closer to nature. In France, May Day is really a day off for (5)___ workers. French people like to give family and friends little sprigs, bouquets, (6)___ even whole plants of lily of the valley, (7)___ good luck. The more bell-like the flower, the better (8)___ luck.

of / on / or / in / for / its / the / and

In Germany, May Day is a trade union day. It is (1)___ when people dance around the Maypole. In Bavaria, a May Day tradition is Maypole climbing. This is (2)___ young men battle, to see who can climb to the top of the Maypole, the fastest. The task is made tougher by soaping it. In the Czech Republic, May Day is a day for love. It is traditionally when lovers would come with flowers, to spend time on hills above cities together. It is when lovers kiss under a blooming cherry or birch tree. Tradition says, (3)___ a girl (4)___ is not kissed under it, (5)___ wither and die in 12 months.

On the eve of May Day, single men in Slovakia, (6)___ the Czech Republic, go into the wood to cut down a tall tree. They strip it and decorate it, (7)___ scarves, ribbons, and flowers, and erect it in the village square. It is guarded, as other men will come to steal it, as a form of village competition. If (8)___ Maypole is not stolen, the unmarried girls in the village can be given little presents. In the evening, everyone celebrates at a ball.

as well as / your / with / that / would / when / also / who

May Day celebrations in Europe – 30th April 2017



GAP FILL: LISTENING

May Day celebrations in Europe

Today, let's talk about how May Day is celebrated in some parts of Europe. For many, it is a _____ holiday.

In Greece, one of the _____ on May Day is fire jumping. This is done after the sun sets. Women dance around the lit fire. The children wet their clothes and hair, before jumping over the fire. _____, to keep away winter and disease. Another popular tradition is picking flowers, and creating a May Day wreath, to hang on their doors. It is _____ closer to nature.

In France, May Day is really a day off for its workers. French people like to give family and friends little sprigs, bouquets, or even whole plants of lily of the valley, for good luck. The more bell-like the flower, _____.

In Germany, May Day is a trade union day. It is also when people dance around the Maypole. In Bavaria, a May Day tradition is _____. This is when young men battle, to see who can climb to the top of the Maypole, the fastest. The task is made tougher by soaping it.

_____, May Day is a day for love. It is traditionally when lovers would come with flowers, to spend time on hills above cities together. It is when lovers kiss under a blooming cherry or birch tree. Tradition says, that a girl who is not kissed under it, would wither and die in 12 months.

On the eve of May Day, single men in Slovakia, as well as the Czech Republic, go into the wood to cut down a tall tree. They _____ it, with scarves, ribbons, and flowers, and erect it in the village square. It is guarded, as other men will come to steal it, as a form of _____. If your Maypole is not stolen, the unmarried girls in the village can be given little presents. In the evening, _____ at a ball.

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WRITING/SPELLING

WRITING / SPEAKING

1) On the board - In pairs/As a class, list **10 different things associated with May Day**. Talk briefly about each of them. *Five minutes*.

2) Sentence starters - Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- 1) May Day _____
- 2) I think _____
- 3) In Europe _____

3) Write down 50 words about: *May Day celebrations in Europe*. Your words can be read out in class.

4) Homework - Write and send a 200 word email to your teacher about: ***May Day celebrations in Europe***.

SPELLING

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards check your answers.

- 1) traditionally
- 2) wither
- 3) Slovakia
- 4) Czech Republic
- 5) decorate
- 6) competition
- 7) eve
- 8) ribbons
- 9) everyone
- 10) fastest

SPELLING

Use the following ratings:

Pass = 12

Good = 15

Very good = 18

Excellent = 20

- 11) popular
- 12) symbolic
- 13) disease
- 14) flowers
- 15) lily
- 16) valley
- 17) better
- 18) cities
- 19) would
- 20) blooming

May Day celebrations in Europe – *30th April 2017*