

Central Europe's Glorious Ball Season Starts

Long cold winter nights in Central Europe can be brightened up by receiving an invitation to a Ball. The annual Ball season in the region has now commenced and will continue until Ash Wednesday. The most famous Ball in the world has to be the Opera Ball in Vienna. Many call it the jewel in the crown of Balls. There are however hundreds of other Balls in the Austrian capital. Other famous Balls in Central Europe include the Prague Ball, the Czechoslovakian Ball and Budapest's Opera Ball. In Slovakia the Ball season sees two big Balls, the Bratislava Ball and the Opera Ball. The Ball season follows on from the 18th and 19th century traditions when Balls were highly popular, especially during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The idea of the Ball is to honour the traditional values of the city. The Ball itself is frequented by many artists, bankers and entrepreneurs, together with other local people, for whom the participation in a city Ball becomes a social prestige. The Ball is used as an occasion for the introduction of young ladies and gentlemen to society. The impressive cultural event is where many prominent people meet.

Dancing the waltz is an essential skill to have if going to a Ball. You'll need to dust up your dance skills, if you ever had any. Ladies will need to put on their floor-length evening dress. Gentlemen will need a tuxedo, shirt and bow tie. Then you can head out to one of the Balls taking place. If you don't feel like waltzing you can still go along, have a couple of drinks and enjoy the wonderful sights of the graceful dancers gliding across the floor. The clumsy ones are also good to watch as well! Gone are the days when you danced alongside an orchestra with your partner doing the waltz. Whilst this is still done at the top Balls today sees guest musicians and singers as well as DJ's playing some of the music. Social attitudes have changed. Historically a woman couldn't go alone to a Ball. A man had to ask her husband could he dance with her. Today you either receive an invitation or you buy a ticket to a Ball. Once there even the shyest people might be encouraged to take to the dance floor after a few drinks. The Balls do allow one to exchange business cards and gain contacts whilst still clinging to their main function - to entertain!

Category: Central Europe / Events / Balls

Level: Intermediate / Upper Intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Balls: Have you ever been to a Ball? If yes, which one? When? Where? How was it? Would you go again? If no, would you go if you had the opportunity? Explain.

2. Geography: In which countries will you find Vienna, Prague, Bratislava and Budapest? Draw a map on the board to show where they are then **look on Google maps** to help you.

3. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will slowly repeat the passage again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

4. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

7. Balls! What are your favourite top five Balls? List them below. Then add the top five cities for Balls. (You might need to use the internet for this!) Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Top five Balls	Top five cities for Balls
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Quick debate: In pairs. Students A thinks Balls are important in society today. Students B think otherwise and that they are old hat. Explain why.

9. Let's think! In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with the '**Balls**'. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

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10. Going to a Ball? You have been invited to go to a Ball. Think of ten things you might need to do to prepare yourself to be ready to attend the Ball. Compare and discuss with your partner.

1	6
2	7
3	8
4	9
5	10

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

11. Let's talk! Radio Vienna: *In pairs/groups.* You are in the Radio Vienna studio. One of you is the presenter; the other student(s) is/are one of the people listed below. Today's interview is the *Vienna Opera Ball*. (Imagine!) Try to get a balanced interview. *5 minutes.*

1	A tour operator	3	Yourself
2	A top Ballroom dancer	4	A journalist

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

12. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What is the jewel in the crown?
- 2) Name the Balls.
- 3) Name the cities.
- 4) Name the monarchy.
- 5) Name the dance.

Student B

- 1) Who goes to Balls?
- 2) What is an essential skill?
- 3) What do men wear to Balls?
- 4) Historically a woman couldn't do what?
- 5) What is a Ball an occasion for?

13. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Going to a Ball**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

14. Let's tell a story: Cinderella: In pairs/class: Discuss who Cinderella is? What is her story? (Prepare to tell it to the class) Who wrote her story?

The teacher can choose one pair to tell their version of the story in front of the class.

15. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) I like to dance _____
- b) The Ball _____
- c) The waltz _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) If you were going to a Ball what would you wear?
- 3) Would you go alone to a Ball? Why? Why not?
- 4) Can you Waltz or do any other dance?
- 5) Have you ever been to a masked Ball? If yes, explain.
- 6) Can you think of three famous Balls (in your country)?
- 7) Would you ever consider having dance lessons so you could do the waltz?
- 8) Are you any good and doing the waltz or any other dances performed at Balls?
- 9) Why do you think Balls are important today?
- 10) Which famous celebrity would you like to take to a Ball? Why?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Have you ever been to a Ball? If yes, describe.
- 3) What are smoking jackets/morning suits/tails/tuxedo's?
- 4) On receiving an invitation to a Ball why do most women say "I've got nothing to wear" when they have a wardrobe full of clothes?
- 5) Do you think social attitudes have changed in regard to Balls?
- 6) Have you ever worn a 'top hat and tails'?
- 7) Do you exchange business cards at social events? Why? Why not?
- 8) Do you think Balls have changed? Why? Why not?
- 9) Would you like to have attended a Ball in Vienna 100 years ago? Why? Why not? Explain.
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Organising a Ball

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

You work for a big company who are organising a large Ball. With your colleague(s) prepare some ideas for it. Think how you can launch and promote your Ball. Present your ideas to the class. Which presentation is best? Why?

Consider the following:-

Ball launch idea	Who will come?
Promotion idea	Programme of events
Name of Ball	Sponsor
Ball slogan	DJ / Band / Orchestra / Celebrity

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Long cold (1)_____ nights in Central Europe can be brightened up by receiving an (2)_____ to a Ball. The annual Ball season in the region has now commenced and will continue until Ash Wednesday. The most famous (3)_____ in the world has to be the Opera Ball in Vienna. Many call it the (4)_____ in the crown of Balls. There are however hundreds of other Balls in the Austrian capital. Other famous Balls in Central Europe include the Prague Ball, the Czechoslovakian Ball and Budapest's Opera Ball. In Slovakia the Ball season sees two big Balls, the Bratislava Ball and the Opera Ball. The Ball season follows on from the 18th and 19th century traditions when Balls were highly (5)_____, especially during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The idea of the Ball is to honour the traditional values of the city. The Ball itself is frequented by many artists, bankers and entrepreneurs, together with other local people, for whom the participation in a city Ball becomes a social (6)_____. The Ball is used as an occasion for the introduction of young ladies and gentlemen to (7)_____. The impressive cultural event is where many (8)_____ people meet.

invitation

Ball

prestige

prominent

popular

winter

society

jewel

Dancing the (1)_____ is an essential skill to have if going to a Ball. You'll need to dust up your (2)_____ skills, if you ever had any. Ladies will need to put on their floor-length evening dress. Gentlemen will need a (3)_____, shirt and bow tie. Then you can head out to one of the Balls taking place. If you don't feel like waltzing you can still go along, have a couple of drinks and enjoy the wonderful sights of the (4)_____ dancers (5)_____ across the floor. The clumsy ones are also good to watch as well! Gone are the days when you danced alongside an (6)_____ with your partner doing the waltz. Whilst this is still done at the top Balls today sees guest musicians and singers as well as DJ's playing some of the music. Social (7)_____ have changed. Historically a woman couldn't go alone to a Ball. A man had to ask her husband could he dance with her. Today you either receive an invitation or you buy a ticket to a Ball. Once there even the (8)_____ people might be encouraged to take to the dance floor after a few drinks.

attitudes

waltz

tuxedo

graceful

gliding

dance

shyest

orchestra

GAP FILL: LISTENING:

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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Dancing the waltz is an essential skill _____ a Ball. You'll need to dust up your dance skills, if you ever had any. Ladies will need to put on their floor-length evening dress. Gentlemen will need a tuxedo, _____. Then you can head out to one of the Balls taking place. If you don't feel like waltzing you can still go along, have a couple of drinks and enjoy the wonderful sights of the graceful dancers gliding across the floor. The clumsy ones are also _____! Gone are the days when you danced alongside an orchestra with your partner doing the waltz. Whilst _____ at the top Balls today sees guest musicians and singers as well as DJ's playing some of the music. Social attitudes have changed. Historically a woman couldn't go alone to a Ball. A man had to ask her _____ dance with her. Today you either receive an invitation or you buy a ticket to a Ball. Once there even the shyest people might be encouraged to take _____ after a few drinks.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Long cold winter nights in Central Europe can be brightened up by receiving an invitation to a Ball. The annual Ball season in the region has now commenced and will continue until Ash Wednesday. The (1)___ famous Ball in the world has to be the Opera Ball in Vienna. (2)___ call it the jewel in the crown of Balls. (3)___ are (4)___ hundreds of (5)___ Balls in the Austrian capital. Other famous Balls in Central Europe include the Prague Ball, the Czechoslovakian Ball and Budapest's Opera Ball. In Slovakia the Ball season sees two big Balls, the Bratislava Ball and the Opera Ball. The Ball season follows on from the 18th and 19th century traditions (6)___ Balls were highly popular, especially during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The idea of the Ball is to honour the traditional values of the city. The Ball itself is frequented by many artists, bankers and entrepreneurs, together with other local people, for (7)___ the participation in a city Ball becomes a social prestige. The Ball is used as an occasion for the introduction of young ladies and gentlemen to society. The impressive cultural event is (8)___ many prominent people meet.

many

whom

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there

other

where

when

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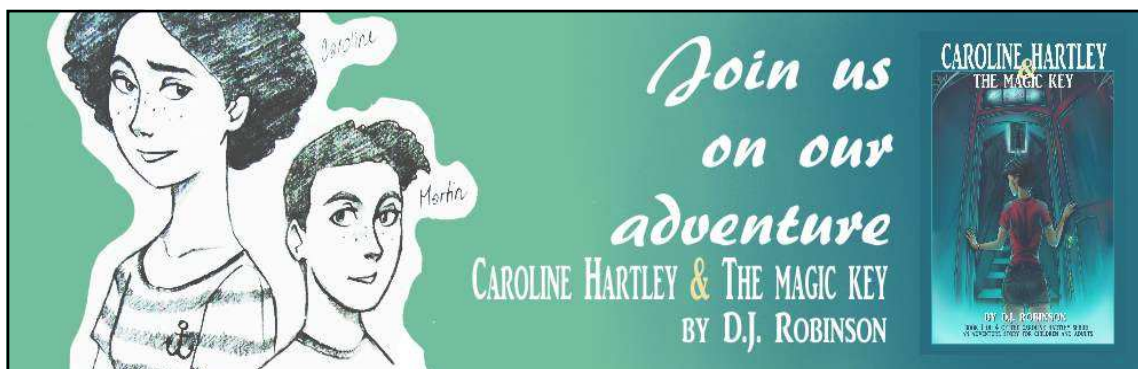
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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings:
Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20

1	invitation	11	participation
2	graceful	12	prestige
3	tuxedo	13	entrepreneurs
4	waltz	14	popular
5	monarchy	15	Czechoslovakian
6	historically	16	however
7	encouraged	17	impressive
8	clinging	18	prominent
9	shyest	19	traditional
10	business	20	occasion

LINKS

<http://www.wien.info/en/music-stage-shows/dance/ball-season>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinderella>

<http://www.austria.info/au/people-and-traditions/vienna-s-glorious-ball-season-1145354.html>

http://www.twincityjournal.eu/EN/vismo/dokumenty2.asp?id_org=600606&d=1441

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/thread.jspa?threadID=1948909>

<http://press.laterooms.com/news/19558109-dance-the-night-away-at-the-ball-season-in-prague.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budapest_Opera_Ball

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