



Teaching activities: Beyond Halloween – global festivals of remembrance

Level:	B1/B1+
Skills:	Reading, speaking
Interaction:	Individual, pairs, small group
Time:	45–60 minutes
Learning objective:	By the end of the session, learners will be better able to ask and answer questions about a text on festivals around the world.

In this lesson, learners first read about the origins of Halloween. They then explore four festivals from different cultural traditions: Gai Jatra, Día de Muertos, the Hungry Ghost Festival and Pchum Ben. Through a jigsaw reading activity, they exchange information about how these festivals involve spirits and remembering family and ancestors.

You can adapt the information exchange task to your learners by giving them one or two texts to increase or decrease the challenge.

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Teacher's notes and answer key

Activity and suggested timing	Notes	Answer key
Lead-in, 5'	Write these letters on the board: A E E H L L N O W Put learners in pairs. Ask: <i>how many English words can you make?</i> Set a time limit, say 2 minutes. Elicit some suggestions, praising any longer words. Ask if anyone found the mystery 9-letter word. Reveal the answer: 'Halloween'. Explain you're going to find out more about Halloween and other festivals.	
Objective, 5'	Share the learning objectives with the class, explaining what you are going to do. Give learners a couple of minutes to check understanding with their partner then clarify any questions in open class.	
Vocabulary, 5' <u>a.</u>	Give out the worksheet and ask learners to match the words to the pictures. Share answers, clarifying meaning if needed. Model and drill as necessary.	1. masks 2. a parade 3. lanterns 4. an altar
Reading, 10' <u>b.</u> <u>c.</u>	Draw learners' attention to the definition of 'spirit'. Ask learners to read the text quickly and answer the question <i>Has Halloween changed over time?</i> (yes) You could drill Samhain (<i>sow-en</i>) at this point. They read the text again and complete the text below it. Allow time to compare in pairs before taking answers.	Halloween began 2,000 years ago as the festival of Samhain. People thought spirits could come back from the dead. They protected themselves with masks. Samhain traditions became part of All Hallows' Eve which is now Halloween.



Activity and suggested timing	Notes	Answer key
Reading and speaking, 10–20' d. e. f.	Explain to learners they're going to read about different festivals around the world. Draw attention to the definition of <i>ancestor</i>. Put learners in pairs AA, BB and give them <u>one or two of the texts</u>. Demonstrate completing the table using information from the texts. Show making notes rather than copying lots of text. Note they won't be able to complete the whole table yet. Learners work together to complete one or two columns. Monitor to check pairs are completing the table accurately. <u>See answers below</u>. Extra challenge: Learners read about two festivals. Extra support: Give pairs one festival text to read about. Elicit the questions learners need to ask to get the missing answers. Accept multiple correct possibilities. Drill as necessary. Encourage learners not to write the complete question. Put learners into new pairs AB, AB so they can ask and answer questions about each other's festivals. They use the answers to complete the remaining column(s). Monitor and collect examples of successful and less successful contributions to use in feedback. Ask how the festivals are similar: in all the festivals people remember their family or ancestors.	Suggested questions: What's the name of the festival? Where do they celebrate [name of festival]? When does it take place? What do people do?
Feedback, 5–10'	Provide feedback on what learners did well and less well. Include skills such as taking turns and speaking clearly as well as language accuracy.	
Discussion, 5' g.	In pairs, learners discuss the questions. Elicit their ideas in feedback.	



Answers

Festival	Gai Jatra	Pchum Ben	Hungry Ghost Festival	Día de Muertos
Where/celebrate	Nepal	Cambodia	Asia: China, Singapore, Malaysia	Mexico
When/take place	August or September	September or October	August or September	November
What/do	Take part in a parade with a cow/play music, dance and laugh	Visit temples, pray and give food/spend time with family	Give food, burn money, light lanterns/leave an empty seat for spirits	Make altars with photos, flowers, candles, food and drinks



Student worksheet

Vocabulary

a. Match the pictures to the words.

			
1.	2.	3.	4.

an altar masks a parade lanterns

Reading

b. Read the definition and the text. Has Halloween changed over time?

Halloween: where did it begin?

For many people, Halloween is a time to dress up as ghosts or witches and play games like 'trick or treat'. However, it started very differently more than 2,000 years ago as the festival of Samhain (pronounced *sow-en*).

People believed that on 31st October the border between the world of the living and the spirit world was weaker, so spirits of the dead could return. They wore masks to protect themselves.

In the 8th century, the Christian festival of All Saints' Day was moved to 1st November. On this day people remember those who have died, and over time, some Samhain traditions became part of All Hallows' Eve (the evening before All Saints' Day), which then became the Halloween we know today.

spirit (noun) a person who has died that people believe has another form, similar to a ghost



c. Complete the text.

Halloween began _____ years ago as the festival of _____. People thought _____ could come back from the dead. They protected themselves with _____.
Samhain traditions became part of All Hallows' Eve which is now _____.

Reading and speaking

d. Read the text(s) about festivals and complete the columns you can.

ancestor (noun) a person related to you who lived a long time ago

Name/festival				
Where/celebrate				
When/take place				
What/do				

- e. Now look at the table again. What questions do you need to ask to find out the missing information?**
- f. Take turns to ask and answer questions and complete the rest of your table. In what way are the festivals similar?**
- g. Discuss the questions with your partner.**
1. In what ways are they similar or different to Halloween?
 2. Which festival do you think is most interesting?
 3. Would you like to go to one? Which one and why?



Materials

A1. Gai Jatra	A2. Pchum Ben
Gai Jatra, which means 'Festival of Cows', is celebrated in Nepal every year in August or September. It's a special festival for remembering family members who have died during the past year. According to tradition, a cow helps guide spirits on their final journey. Families take part in a colourful parade with a cow or a child dressed as a cow if they don't have a real one. Although the festival is about remembering people, it is also full of music, dancing and laughter. People believe that sharing happy memories can bring families together.	In September or October, people in Cambodia celebrate Pchum Ben. During this important festival, families remember their ancestors. They visit temples early in the morning to pray together and give food such as balls of rice. They believe these good actions can help bring peace to the spirits. Many people visit several temples in one day with their family. Pchum Ben is a time for families to spend time together and show respect for the past.

B1. Hungry Ghost Festival	B2. Día de Muertos
This festival takes place in China, Singapore, Malaysia and other Asian countries, usually in August or September. People believe that during this time the spirits of the dead can return to visit the living. Families remember their ancestors by giving food, burning money (but not real money) and lighting special paper lanterns. One interesting tradition is leaving an empty seat at outdoor performances for the visiting spirits. The festival reminds people to respect and remember their family and history.	Día de Muertos, or the Day of the Dead, is celebrated in Mexico on 1st and 2nd November. Despite its name, Día de Muertos is a colourful and happy festival when people remember family and good memories. People believe spirits can come back to visit, so they create beautiful altars for them. They decorate them with photos, flowers, candles and the favourite food and drinks of the person who has died. Rather than being a sad time, it is a celebration of life, family and special memories of people we love.