



FIRE AND LIGHT FESTIVALS



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:
139M-52R8-6PF2



1

Warm-up

What's the difference between each set of items? Use the pictures to help.

A



fireworks



a bonfire

C



a lamp



a lantern

B



a candle



a flame

D



a torch



a sparkler

1. Are any of these things important at festivals in your country?
2. At what time of year do fire and light festivals often take place?



2

Watch for main idea

Diwali is fire and light festival that is celebrated by Hindus in India and around the world. You are going to watch a video about Diwali (0:00-3:05). Before you watch, read the sentences and predict which answer is correct. Then watch to check your ideas.

1. The Indian festival of Diwali takes place in **late summer / early fall / late fall**.
2. The festival celebrates **the end of the rainy season / the victory of light over darkness / the birth of an important god**.
3. People decorate their homes with **flowers and coloured sand / flowers and paper flags / coloured sand and small statues of gods**.
4. **Families / Religious leaders / Neighbours** share holiday treats.
5. At Diwali, people also **buy new clothes / give food to the poor / spend hours praying for good health**.
6. In the cities, there are amazing displays of **lights and flowers / lights and fireworks / fireworks and dancing**.
7. At home, people enjoy **fireworks and sparklers / music and singing / special drinks**.

Is there anything in the video that surprised or interested you?

3

Read and speak

You are going to read about and describe three more fire and light festivals from around the world. Work in groups of three. Student A will read text 1, student B will read text 2 and student C will read text 3. Find this key information in your text and then share the information with your classmates.

1. The name of the festival
2. Where the festival takes place
3. When the festival takes place
4. Who takes part in the festival
5. What people do during the festival
6. Why people celebrate this festival

Work in groups of three to explain the festivals that you read about. Make sure you understand what your classmates are saying because you will have to answer some questions about the festivals.

Now answer these questions and explain your ideas – there may be several possible answers. You should also include information about Diwali in your answers.

1. Which festivals are religious?
2. Which festivals do people make things for?
3. Which festivals try to include everyone equally?
4. Which festivals are dangerous?
5. Which festivals are popular with tourists?



Text 1: Burning the Clocks



On 21 December, the shortest day of the year, thousands of people walk through the streets of Brighton, a seaside resort town in the south of the UK. Everyone in the **procession** is carrying paper lanterns. This is Burning the Clocks, a yearly **community** event that has been organised since 1994 by the arts charity Same Sky. It's free and absolutely everyone can join in – the event is carefully planned to include wheelchair users, young children and the elderly. It's also popular with tourists. Many of the lanterns show clocks, but others show local buildings, fantastic animals or even make comments about current news or give positive messages. Same Sky works with schools and other groups, including **the homeless**, to create the lanterns. They take many hours to create and each one has a personal meaning to the maker. At the end of the procession, all the lanterns are thrown onto a huge bonfire on the beach. This is followed by an amazing firework show. This event provides everyone in the community with an opportunity to celebrate the season without the need for shopping or eating and drinking too much.

Glossary:

procession → a line of people who are walking together as part of a festival or celebration.

community → the people who are living in one area and who share something like nationality, language, social group or interests.

the homeless → people who do not have a permanent place to live; they may sleep on the streets.



Text 2: Yi Peng



Imagine this: a huge crowd of people, locals and tourists, **gather** together. After music and prayer, they light candles inside paper lanterns and **release** them into the sky at the same time. Under the full moon, the rising lanterns look completely magical. This festival is Yi Peng, in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand.

The festival takes place during the twelfth month of the Thai **lunar** calendar (normally sometime in November). A similar festival, Loi Krathong, when baskets are floated on the water, can happen at the same time. Both are Buddhist festivals which allow people to let go of bad luck from the past year, and wish for better things in the next year, or even in the next life.

You can buy paper lanterns in local shops and most people write a personal wish directly onto the paper before they release the lantern. Watch your lantern carefully – if it rises into the sky before the candle finishes, then you will have good luck. Of course, your wishes will only come true if you behave well during the year.

It's also important to remember that any festivals where people release lanterns into the sky can be dangerous because they may start fires, confuse airplanes and be dangerous to animals who find the lanterns when they fall to earth.

Glossary:

gather → come together in a group

release → give something freedom to move

lunar → relating to the moon



Text 3: Saint Lucy's Day



The year is 304. Lucia, a young girl, is bringing food to a group of Christians, who are hiding in tunnels under the city of Rome. She wears candles in her hair so that her hands are free to carry more food. However, she is discovered and then killed.

This is the **origin** of St Lucy's Day. On 13 December, girls in Sweden dress in white dresses and red belts and place a crown of **evergreen** leaves on their head. The headpiece is then lit with real candles (if the girl is old enough) or electric lights. The "Lucias" walk at the head of a little group which can include Star Boys and even younger children dressed as gingerbread biscuit men. Swedes used to choose just one girl to be the "Lucia" for their school or town, but nowadays they avoid **competitions** like this and welcome everyone to join in. The children give out ginger biscuits and people also eat special pastries made with the spice saffron and drink hot sweetened wine or coffee.

The modern festival has been celebrated in Sweden and other countries on 13 December since the 1900s. However, the 13 December was traditionally the first day of winter in the old Julian calendar, so perhaps St Lucy's Day also has some much older seasonal origins.

Glossary:

origin → where or when something starts or begins

evergreen → keeping green all year, not losing leaves in the winter months

competition → an event where people are trying to win something or be the most successful



4

Talking point

Talk about these questions in pairs or small groups.

1. Which festival is most similar to something that happens in your country?
2. Which festival would you most like to experience?
3. What food and drink do you associate with autumn festivals?
4. Do you have a childhood memory of wearing special clothes for a festival?
5. Do you think it is important for festivals to include everyone in the community? Why/not?

5

Optional extension/homework

Imagine that you are experiencing one of the four fire and light festivals that you read about during the lesson. Write a Tweet to say what you're doing and how you're feeling. You can write 144 characters or about 30 words. Don't include the name of the festival.

Then read or show your Tweet to a classmate to see if they can guess which festival you wrote about.



Transcripts

2. Watch for main idea

- Shopper:** At any time of year, a visitor to India can be overwhelmed by its beauty and colour. But a visitor in late fall is especially fortunate. The temperature will have cooled down, the monsoons will have not yet begun and Diwali, the festival of lights, is at hand.
- Shopper:** Diwali is to many Indians what Christmas is to Christians. In essence, it commemorates the victory of the forces of light over the forces of darkness.
- Shopper:** To experience it fully, get up before dawn and head for the flower markets. Here, flower vendors work feverishly to create garlands of fragrant jasmine that Indians will use to adorn their homes. By dawn they'll be sold out.
- Shopper:** Next head for one of the temples, but go early. Later on in the day they'll be packed. On your way over you may see a curious sight - people hunched in front of their doorways pouring coloured sand on the ground. The sand takes the shape of a lotus blossom, a symbol of welcome and today millions of symbols of welcome will grace the nation's doorways.
- Shopper:** Indeed, Diwali is all about sharing. If you're staying in a private home, don't be surprised if the neighbours show up with plates of delicious holiday treats.
- Shopper:** It's also customary for families to go to the temples together on this day. They often dress in fine new outfits purchased especially for Diwali. And if their outfits inspire you, head for a sari shop. Shops are open on Diwali and Indian silks are justifiably famous for their beauty. They're just one of the ways India spruces up and gets into the holiday spirit.
- Shopper:** "So this is an occasion for all of us to rejoice and be with the family and enjoy all the good things in life. So we buy good clothes and make good food."
- Shopper:** And everywhere there are lights. If you head to major commercial districts throughout India, you'll find colourful displays comparable to Christmas lights in western cities. Some cities also put on spectacular public displays of fireworks like this one in Delhi. But no matter where you are, there are smaller more intimate fireworks displays. A long day of celebrations is coming to an end and it's going out with a bang.



Key

1. Warm-up

10 mins.

In this stage, the topic of fire and light is introduced, and students can review and extend some useful vocabulary in this lexical area, which they will see later in the lesson. Working with the whole class, demonstrate the first activity with question 1 (see answers).

Students can then work in pairs to find the similarities and differences between three more pairs of items. As you check answers, accept any reasonable ideas even if the grammar is not completely accurate, but make sure that all meanings are clear and that all items are pronounced correctly. Ask the class the follow-up questions and elicit a couple of brief answers from students. They will probably say that fire and light play a part in autumn and winter festivals, due to longer nights and colder weather. You could also ask them if they know of any fire and light festivals in other countries besides their own.

Answers:

A) Fireworks are colourful light shows in the sky - they are very noisy too! Bonfires are big fires often enjoyed by a whole community as part of a celebration. The word is also used to refer to when people burn rubbish in their gardens.

B) A candle is an object made of wax that provides light. The flame is the small fire at the top of the candle. Bonfires also have (larger) flames.

C) These items are very similar - they are both small devices for giving light. However, a lantern usually has glass to protect the flame and a handle, and often lights an outside space.

D) The word describes an object which needs batteries to provide light in an emergency (this is called a flashlight in American English). A sparkler is a type of small hand-held firework.

2. Watch for main idea

15 mins.

In this stage, students will watch a short video (3 mins) to arouse their curiosity and recover some information about a festival. Students should be able to answer the multiple-choice questions from prediction and watching and listening; reassure them that they don't need to understand all the details to benefit from this video, although they could watch it twice if they need to. Students can work in pairs to make predictions before watching; you may need to elicit or explain that *fall* is the same as *autumn* and that *victory* means *winning*. Then watch the video to confirm their ideas, before checking answers. Finally, ask the follow-up question to the whole class or let students answer in pairs.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. late fall | 2. the victory of light over darkness | 3. flowers and coloured sand |
| 4. Neighbours | 5. buy new clothes | 6. lights and fireworks |
| 7. fireworks and sparklers | | |

3. Read and speak

25 mins.

Set up the jigsaw reading task, which involves students reading one of three different texts and explaining their text to classmates who have read a different text. This provides an opportunity for students to read, speak and listen. Set up students with one of the three texts. Initially, students could either work alone or with a classmate who is



reading the same text. If working in same-text pairs, they can make sure they have located the key information in their text before regrouping in A/B/C groups to share their information.

Remind students to listen to each other carefully as they will have to answer questions about four festivals, including Diwali. If you can't make groups of exactly three students, just have one or two groups with extra members and ask them to work in pairs to take turns sharing the information about their text. Encourage students to listen attentively and ask questions if they don't understand. Discourage students from just showing each other their texts - this is a speaking and listening task.

You don't need to check answers at this stage – students will demonstrate comprehension in the next activity. However, this information will be helpful to have on hand, in case of student queries.

After sharing their information, students can remain in their groups of three and work together to answer the questions. After they have discussed the answers, hand out the other two reading texts to each student and allow them to read these to confirm their understanding and answers to the questions. Then go over the answers to the questions with the whole class, asking students to explain their answers – sometimes more than one answer is possible. If you need to go back to explain anything in the texts or check answers to the key information, you can do so at this stage.

Answers:

Text 1 - 1 Burning the clocks. 2 In Brighton, UK. 3 On 21st December (the shortest day of the year). 4 Everyone in the community. 5 Carry lanterns that they have made and then burn them in a big bonfire on the beach; watch fireworks. 6 It's an alternative to more commercial seasonal celebrations.

Text 2 - 1 Yi Peng. 2 In Chiang Mai, Thailand. 3 The night of the full moon, 12th lunar month, usually sometime in November. 4 Locals and tourists. 5 Buy lanterns, write wishes on them, pray, then release them. 6 To get good luck for the future.

Text 3 - 1 St Lucy's Day. 2 Sweden (and other countries). 3 On 13th December. 4 Mostly children. 5 Wear special clothes and give out biscuits. Eat pastries and drink wine or coffee. 6 To remember a Christian saint and celebrate the beginning of winter.

Discussion questions:

- 1) Diwali, Yi Peng and St Lucy's Day are all religious in origin.
- 2) People make sand decorations for Diwali and lanterns for Burning the Clocks. People also make special food for Diwali and St Lucy's Day.
- 3) There is a great emphasis on participation for everyone in St Lucy's Day and Burning the Clocks.
- 4) Yi Peng and St Lucy's Day sound like the most dangerous. For Yi Peng, lanterns may start fires, confuse planes and pose a danger to animals. For St Lucy's Day, it seems risky to wear real candles on your head. Diwali may also be dangerous if people are using fireworks at home.
- 5) Yi Peng and Burning the Clocks are popular with tourists. Diwali may also be popular, as the video implies that this is a good time to visit India.

4. Talking point

10 mins.

In this stage, students can activate vocabulary and offer personal responses to the topic. If possible, change the pairs around to keep energy levels high. The questions promote an informal discussion about festivals and celebrations. This is a common topic on IELTS and Cambridge speaking exams. Encourage students to share



opinions and experience in full sentences, including reasons and examples. Monitor students and offer support as needed. Round up answers at the end of the session and offer corrections as appropriate. If students are not responding to the discussion, you could substitute the extension/homework task.

Answers: students' own answers.

5. Optional extension/homework

3 mins to explain.

This task gives students an opportunity to react to the information they have read about the four fire and light festivals. They should be familiar with the rules of tweeting; you can change the brief to make the text longer if you like. Encourage students to use vocabulary from the lesson and the glossaries and remind them not to include the name of the festival in the Tweet, so other people can guess which one they are describing.