

Culture Sharing: Holidays and Special Days

Background:

This is an open-enrollment ESOL class for adults. It is free, non-graded and the students are intermediate to low-advanced level from many different countries and cultures. They meet twice a week for two hours. Their objective is to learn English skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. There are about 20 students representing 14 or so countries; the majority is Asian.

Purpose:

This lesson will give students an opportunity to share their unique culture with others in the class and to also learn about different cultures from others. They will use their English skills to work with other students from the same, or nearby, country. They will prepare and do a class presentation.

Rational:

Students come to this class to learn English, but they learn much more. They represent their native country; they are like ambassadors. They will have the opportunity to present aspects of their culture so that others will understand, respect and appreciate them.

Materials:

Provided by instructor: handouts of instructions, presentation schedule.

Available to the students: whiteboard and markers, overhead projector and transparencies.

Students can use poster board, photographs, books, Internet information, and any other supplies needed for their presentation.

Activities:

1. Introduce the lesson with questions and discussion of how holidays and special days are different in different countries. Have students talk to their partner about one or two of the holidays celebrated in their country. Then have them talk about these holidays in a group of four students.

2. Give students the handout explaining the lesson. Go over the directions. (See handout.)
3. Put students in groups: 5 Japanese, 2 Koreans, 2 Chinese, 2 from Thailand, 3 from Europe (Poland, Ukraine), 2 from the Middle East (Iran, Jordan), 3 from Africa (Sierra Leone, Somalia, Ethiopia), 3 from South America (Chili, Columbia) and 2 from Mexico.
4. Students will work together to begin to plan for their presentation.
5. Groups will choose a day to present, and add the date to the Presentation Schedule (attached).
6. Students will be given some class time to work on their presentation and they are encouraged to meet before or after class to plan.

Assessment:

Students will write a response to these questions:

- What did you learn about this country's holidays?
- What similarities or differences did you see between your country's holiday and the holidays of the country presented?

Grade Adaptation:

These students are not given letter grades. They do, however, take standardized pre- and post-tests when they begin the program and when they exit. They will be given feedback on the answers to the above questions. They will edit grammar errors. They will also share their writings with other students.

Getting To Know You....

Do you know about your classmates? Do you know about the countries they came from? Do you know where they are, what the weather is like, what their flags looks like? Do you know their histories? Do you know about their holidays and special days? Well, here's your opportunity to find out.

Each continent, each country, each region is unique, and yet they all have similarities and differences. You are all ambassadors for your home countries. You have a right and an obligation to enlighten others about your country, to promote it and to spread understanding and appreciation to help eliminate preconceived notions. This is your opportunity to teach your classmates about where you are from.

Some of you are from the same country; others are from the same continent. You will work in groups to plan and prepare a class presentation to teach us about the holidays and special days in your country. Each person in the group will have equal time to present information about his/her country.

Think about your holidays and special days. Work with your group members to prepare the presentation.

- You may include information about where, when, why and how these holidays are celebrated.
- You can include the holiday activities, clothes, food, etc.
- You can use the whiteboard, the overhead projector and transparencies.
- Your presentation can include pictures, photographs, posters, maps, information from the Internet, etc.
- You can provide handouts for the class.
- Your group will have 10 – 20 minutes for your presentation

Decide with your group when you want to present, and sign up on the Presentation Schedule.

You will have time to work some in class, and you should also set up times to get together before or after class to prepare.

Presentation Schedule

Holidays and Special Days

Mon. April 3

Wed. April 5

Mon. April 10

Wed. April 12

Mon. April 17

Wed. April 19

Mon. April 24

Wed. April 26

An example of a Japanese presentation

Japanese students may wish to do Golden Week as their holiday presentation. The students can use information from the Internet to explain the activities during this holiday week. Students can bring in dolls or pictures of dolls that are displayed at the Girl's Festival on Children's Day. They can bring in samples of sushi and other festive foods that are eaten. To show Greenery Day they can share pictures of cherry blossoms, plum trees, Japanese monkeys and deer and tell about the significance of pine trees. Below is a helpful website that students can use.

The Golden Week is a collection of four national holidays within seven days. In combination with well placed weekends, the Golden Week becomes one of Japan's three busiest holiday seasons, besides New Year and the Obon week.

Trains, airports and sightseeing spots get very crowded during Golden Week, and accommodation in tourist areas are booked out well in advance. Foreign visitors are advised to avoid traveling to Japan during the Golden Week.

The national holidays making up the Golden Week are:

- April 29
Greenery Day (Midori no hi):
April 29 used to be the birthday of Emperor Showa, who died in the year 1989. After his death, the day was changed into a national holiday for environment and nature, since the emperor loved plants and nature. From 2007, this national holiday will be renamed Showa Day, while Greenery Day will be moved to May 4.
- May 3
Constitution Day (Kenpo kinenbi):
On this day in 1947, the new post war constitution was put into effect.
- May 4
"Between Day" (Kokumin no kyujitsu):
According to Japanese law, a day which falls between two national holidays is also declared a national holiday, unless the "between day" is a Sunday, in which case it will be just a regular Sunday. From 2007, Greenery Day, currently celebrated on April 29, will be moved to May 4.
- May 5
Children's Day (Kodomo no hi):
The Boy's Festival (Tango no Sekku) is celebrated on this day. Families pray for the health and future success of their sons by hanging up carp streamers and displaying samurai dolls, both symbolizing strength, power and success in life. The Girl's Festival, by the way, is celebrated on March 3.

In 2006, the weekends are placed as shown below, creating a holiday of five consecutive days. Travel activity is anticipated to peak on May 3 with people leaving the large urban centers and on May 7 in the opposite direction.

Golden Week 2006

Mon April 24	Tue April 25	Wed April 26	Thu April 27	Fri April 28	Sat April 29	Sun April 30
Mon May 1	Tue May 2	Wed May 3	Thu May 4	Fri May 5	Sat May 6	Sun May 7

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