

FESTIVAL WORKSHEETS C and D  
Intermediate Plus

May Day Lesson

Teacher's Notes

**'May Day through the ages'**

- Level:** intermediate (-ish)
- Age:** teenagers and young adults
- Assumptions:** Ss know basic passive voice forms (Present Simple, Past Simple, Present Perfect)
- Aims:** to learn about May Day celebrations  
to practise reading comprehension  
to practise guessing meaning of words from context
- Time:** 1 lesson
- Preparation:** worksheets C and D - one copy for each student

**Exercise 1:**

The aim of this activity is to make sure that students understand the text. It might be preceded by explaining some unknown words. After you have done the exercise you may wish to follow it up with some writing practice and ask students to write their own true/false sentences.

ANSWERS: 1) F 2) T 3) F 4) T 5) F 6) T

**Exercise 2:**

This exercise can be used to give students practice in reading, understanding definitions and matching them with appropriate words from the text.

ANSWERS:

- 1) pimples
- 2) spring
- 3) goddess
- 4) bonfire
- 5) freckles
- 6) streamer
- 7) the Middle Ages
- 8) meadow
- 9) wreath
- 10) skip
- 11) pole
- 12) sword
- 13) telescope
- 14) labour
- 15) ribbon
- 16) election
- 17) dew

**'May Day through the ages'****Did you know.....???**

- ◆ May Day customs and celebrations are as old as the Roman festival of Flora, the goddess of spring.
- ◆ Celtic Druids held a feast in honour of Bel, the god of fire. At this time of year there were bonfires and men jumped through the flames to gain protection for the coming year.
- ◆ In the Middle Ages May Day was an important day. People got up very early in the morning- particularly young girls, who went to the fields and meadows to wash their faces with dew. Dew was supposed to make them beautiful for the following year. This traditional custom is still practiced in some districts. In some places girls rub dew on their faces to rid themselves of pimples or in other dew is believed to be a cure for freckles.
- ◆ In the 16<sup>th</sup> century maypoles and the election of the May king and queen were introduced. A typical maypole was a 60-100 feet high pole decorated with long coloured ribbons, streamers and wreaths. Dancers skipped round the maypole holding a ribbon each, singing old songs and wove their ribbons into a beautiful pattern all down the pole. Today many English towns and villagers still have a maypole and the villagers dance and sing round it.

Round and round the maypole  
Merrily we go  
Tripping, tripping lightly  
Singing as we go....

- ◆ Morris dancing was also a very popular May Day custom. Men danced wearing bells around their knees and carrying wooden swords.
- ◆ In 1661 - a 40.8 metre high maypole was erected in the Strand in London. It stood there until 1771 when Sir Isaac Newton bought it and used it to support his telescope.
- ◆ In 1889 - May Day was chosen as international Labour Day by the International Socialist Congress.

**'May Day through the ages'**

Exercises:

1. Read the text above and decide which of the following sentences are true (T) or false (F) and why.
  - 1) Flora is a Greek goddess of spring
  - 2) On May 1, young girls wash their faces with dew.
  - 3) The May Queen is usually 60 feet high.
  - 4) People dance and sing round the maypole.
  - 5) 'Morris dancing' men wear bells around their necks.
  - 6) May Day is international Labour Day.
  
2. Find words in the text above that mean:
  - 1) small red spots on your skin
  - 2) the season of the year which follows winter
  - 3) a female god
  - 4) a large fire that you build outside
  - 5) small brown spots on a person's skin
  - 6) a long piece of coloured paper
  - 7) the period of European history from about AD 1100 to AD 1500
  - 8) a field of grass
  - 9) a circle of flowers and leaves
  - 10) to move with little jumps and steps
  - 11) a long thin piece of wood or metal
  - 12) a weapon with a handle and a long thin metal blade
  - 13) an instrument in the shape of a tube with special glass inside it
  - 14) hard, physical work
  - 15) a long, thin piece of cotton, nylon
  - 16) choosing someone by voting
  - 17) small drops of water that form on plants, leaves etc during the night