

SPRING CELEBRATIONS: TRADITION, CHANGE AND IDENTITY

CAMBRIDGE C1 ADVANCED
READING, SPEAKING, AND WRITING

Warm-Up – Spring Celebration True or False

<p>Decide if the statements are TRUE (T) or FALSE (F). If you think a statement is false, correct it</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Holi is celebrated mainly in Japan. ____ Easter is a Christian festival. ____ Nowruz marks the Persian New Year. ____ Hanami celebrates the arrival of cherry blossom season. ____ Easter always takes place on the same date each year. ____ All spring festivals are purely religious events. ____ Holi involves throwing coloured powder at people. ____ Nowruz existed before Islam. ____ 	

Vocabulary Focus – Phrasal Verbs & Fixed Expressions

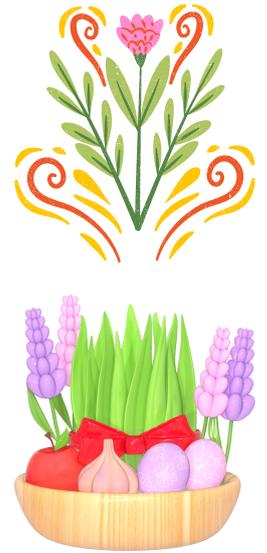
A. Match the beginnings (1–8) with the endings (a–h).

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> fade pass carry go dress bring mark be rooted 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> down in together away the occasion on up all out 	
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B. Replace the definitions in bold with the correct expression from Exercise A.

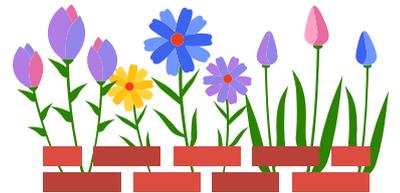
1. Some traditions **gradually disappear** over time.
→ Some traditions _____ over time.
2. Festivals are often **transmitted** to younger generations.
→ Festivals are often _____ to younger generations.
3. Many celebrations **originate in** ancient rituals.
→ Many celebrations _____ ancient rituals.
4. Communities often **make a huge effort** when preparing festivals.
→ Communities often _____ when preparing festivals.
5. These events **unite** local communities.
→ These events _____ local communities _____.
6. People sometimes **wear special clothes** for religious ceremonies.
→ People sometimes _____ for religious ceremonies



C. Conversation Questions. Fill in the question with the correct expression from exercise A. Then ask and answer in pairs.

1. What kinds of events do people usually organise to _____ of something important in your country?
2. Is it important to _____ traditions even if their original meaning has changed?
3. Do you often _____ for spring traditions in your community? If so, what clothes/ costume do you wear?

Reading – Part 8



Five people talk about spring celebrations in their countries

A – Lucía (Spain)

I grew up in Seville, and for me, Easter has always meant Semana Santa. As a child, I would stand with my parents late at night watching the processions pass slowly through the streets. I didn't really understand the religious symbolism at the time, but I remember feeling the intensity of the atmosphere — the silence, the music, the almost overwhelming solemnity.

Now that I'm older, I see it differently. Tourism has grown enormously, and sometimes it feels as though the event is being performed as much for visitors as for locals. Even so, my family remains deeply involved. My uncle is part of a brotherhood, and those roles are passed down from one generation to the next. However much it evolves, it still feels like something that defines us



B – Daniel (United Kingdom)

Where I live in the UK, Easter feels less religious than it probably once was. I know it's a Christian festival, but in my experience, most people are more focused on chocolate eggs and a long weekend than church services. The changing date often confuses people, including me



Over the past few decades, I've definitely noticed how commercial it's become. Supermarkets seem to go all out promoting Easter weeks in advance. That said, I wouldn't say it's meaningless. My family always gets together for lunch, and that sense of connection still matters, even if the religious side has faded into the background.

C – Ananya (India)

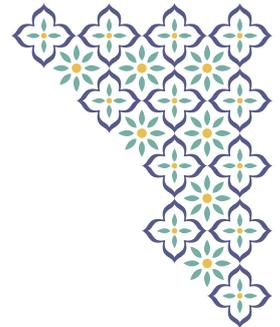
Holi has always been my favourite festival. I grew up in Delhi, and every year my friends and I would wake up early, ready to throw coloured powder at anyone we saw. For one day, it genuinely felt as though the usual social rules didn't apply. People from different backgrounds mixed freely, and everyone seemed equal



Of course, Holi has religious origins, and my grandparents still talk about the mythology behind it. But for me, what stands out is the sense of renewal — as if you're washing away negativity and starting again. Some people complain that organised events and ticketed parties are changing it, but when I'm covered in colour and laughing with friends, it still feels authentic.

D – Farid

In my family, Nowruz preparations start weeks before the actual spring equinox. My mother insists on cleaning every corner of the house — she says it symbolises a fresh start. Setting up the Haft-Seen table is my favourite part. Each of the seven items represents something different, like prosperity or rebirth, and as a child I used to ask what they all meant.



What fascinates me most is how this tradition has survived for so long. It existed long before Islam and has continued despite enormous political and religious changes. When we gather with relatives, I feel connected not just to my family but to generations before us. It's more than a celebration; it's part of who we are

E – Yuki (Japan)

Every spring, I make time for hanami. Even in Tokyo, where life moves quickly, people slow down to sit beneath the cherry blossom trees. I usually go with friends, and we bring food and spend hours talking while the petals fall around us.



There's no strong religious element for me. What I feel instead is something quieter — an awareness that the blossoms will only last a short time. That fragility makes the moment more meaningful. From the outside, it might just look like a picnic season, but for me it's a reminder of how temporary everything is

After Reading – Global Comprehension Check

Before doing the exam task, speak about the following questions in class:

1. Which celebration seems the most religious?
2. Which celebration seems the least religious?
3. Which writer seems most concerned about change?
4. Which celebration focuses most clearly on renewal?
5. Which festival appears the most philosophical?



Reading – Part 8 Multiple Matching

<p>For questions 1–12, choose from the people (A–E). The people may be chosen more than once.</p>	
<p>Which person:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. implies that their early understanding of the event was limited? 2. disagrees with those who think the celebration has shifted from being genuine to somewhat staged? 3. claims that although religious participation has declined, the event still fulfils an important social function? 4. presents the festival as temporarily suspending established social hierarchies? 5. refers to a practice that symbolically represents abstract concepts? 6. highlights the survival of the celebration despite major societal transformations? 7. characterises the event as reflective rather than overtly spiritual? 8. indicates that commercialisation has intensified in recent decades? 9. describes a preparation that symbolises renewal before the event itself? 10. suggests the event is symbolic of something fleeting? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____ 8. _____ 9. _____ 10. _____

Writing – Informal Email Reply (220–260 words)

You have received this email from your English-speaking friend:

Hi! I'm thinking of visiting your country in spring next year. I'd love to experience a traditional celebration rather than just see tourist attractions.

Is there a spring festival you'd recommend? What's it like? Has it changed much over the years?

Let me know!

Jamie

Write your reply.



Answer Key

Warm-Up – True / False

1. **F** – Holi is celebrated mainly in India.
2. **T**
3. **T**
4. **T**
5. **F** – The date changes every year (March or April).
6. **F** – Many have religious origins, but some are cultural or seasonal.
7. **T**
8. **T**

Vocabulary – Answer Key

A. Matching

1. fade → **away**
2. pass → **down**
3. carry → **on**
4. go → **all out**
5. dress → **up**
6. bring → **together**
7. mark → **the occasion**
8. be rooted → **in**

B. Rephrasing Answers

1. Some traditions **fade away** over time.
2. Festivals are often **passed down** to younger generations.
3. Many celebrations **are rooted in** ancient rituals.
4. Communities often **go all out** when preparing festivals.
5. These events **bring together** local communities.
6. People sometimes **dress up** for religious ceremonies.

Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of events do people usually organise to **mark the occasion** of something important in your country?
2. Is it important to **carry on** traditions even if their original meaning has changed?
3. Do you often **dress up** for spring traditions in your community? If so, what clothes/ costume do you wear?

Reading – Part 8 Multiple Matching

1. **A** – She says she didn't understand the symbolism as a child.
2. **C** – She acknowledges criticism but insists the festival still feels authentic.
3. **B** – He notes religion has declined but emphasises family and social connection.
4. **C** – She describes social rules disappearing and everyone feeling equal.
5. **D** – He explains that objects on the Haft-Seen table represent abstract ideas.
6. **D** – He mentions the festival surviving major political and religious changes.
7. **E** – She presents the celebration as reflective rather than religious.
8. **B** – He says commercialisation has increased in recent decades.
9. **D** – He describes cleaning the house as symbolising a fresh start.
10. **E** – She links cherry blossoms to the idea of impermanence

Sample C1 Informal Email Response

Hi Jamie,

That sounds like a great idea — spring is actually one of the best times to visit. If you're hoping to experience something traditional rather than just the usual tourist attractions, I'd definitely recommend coming during Semana Santa, which takes place in the week leading up to Easter.

The celebration is deeply rooted in religious tradition, but even people who aren't particularly religious tend to get involved. Throughout the week, different brotherhoods carry large religious statues through the streets in processions, often late at night. The atmosphere can be incredibly moving — there's music, candlelight and an almost complete silence in the crowd. It's something that really brings people together.

Although the core traditions have been passed down for generations, the festival has changed in some ways. Tourism has increased significantly, and the city tends to go all out to accommodate visitors. Some people feel it's becoming more commercial, but I wouldn't say its meaning has faded away. For many families, taking part is still a way of marking the occasion and maintaining a connection with the past.

If you decide to come, I'd suggest planning well in advance — it gets busy! But I think you'd find it a fascinating experience.

Let me know what you think!

Best,

[Your Name]