

HOW TO TEACH ALL YEAR ROUND

LIKE A PRO

65 TOP SECRETS TO HELP YOU TEACH THROUGH THE YEAR & ENJOY IT

JANUARY

NEW YEAR
NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH
MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
JAZZY JANUARY LESSON IDEAS

FEBRUARY

FANTASTIC FEBRUARY LESSON IDEAS
SUPER BOWL
ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

MARCH

MAGNIFICENT MARCH LESSON IDEAS
ST. PATRICK'S DAY

APRIL

NATIONAL HUMOR MONTH
FOOL'S DAY
ARBOR DAY
EARTH DAY
EASTER

MAY

MARVELLOUS MAY LESSON IDEAS

AND MUCH
MORE...

AWESOME LESSON IDEAS
FOR EVERY SEASON &
ALL MAJOR HOLIDAYS:
YOUR STUDENTS

WILL BE
ASKING
FOR MORE!

MUST-HAVE

THE BOOK
YOU'LL BE USING
365 DAYS
A YEAR

IT'S THAT GOOD



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Fabulous Fall Activities for the ESL Class

FOR THOSE IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE, THE RETURN TO CLASSES IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE ARRIVAL OF FALL. AS STUDENTS AND TEACHERS GET INTO THE FULL SWING OF CLASSES AND BUSY SCHEDULES, WE ALSO START LOOKING FORWARD TO APPLE PICKING, BONFIRES, AND BACKYARD FUN WITH LEAVES.

Why not bring some fall fun into the ESL classroom? Here are some suggestions for fabulous fall activities.

FABULOUS FALL ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

1 FAMILY TREE

This is a great way to either teach or review family vocabulary. Have your students draw a tree trunk with bare branches, or draw your own template to photocopy. Hand out small brown leaves you've previously cut out from brown construction paper, of approximately 2 inches in length, and have students write the names of their family members and who they are, for example, "Karen – sister". Students paste the leaves onto the branches, with grandparents at the bottom closest to the trunk, and younger members of the family on the outer branches. You can then have a "show and tell" session and ask students to show their family trees to the class and talk about their families.

2 APPLE PRINTS

You'll need to gather these items: red apples (one for every two students), foam trays, red tempera paint, and white construction paper. Cut cross section of the apples and give each student one apple half. Make sure they understand these are not for eating. Students place one apple half on red tempera, then stamp it onto a sheet of construction paper. You may choose to use them as fall decorations for the classroom, make pretty fall cards, etc...

3 OUTDOOR FUN

Why not have a lesson outdoors and enjoy the fall foliage? There are lots of things you can do outside before it gets too cold and learning opportunities abound in a simple exploration of the school yard.

- Tree vocabulary: roots, trunk, bark, branches, leaves, twigs, seeds, pine cones, etc.
- Tree bark rubbings: head outside armed with some sheets of thin drawing paper and crayons. Students choose trees with rough bark, and stick their sheets of paper onto to trunk (use adhesive tape or thumbtacks) for some invigorating rubbing!
- Fun with leaves: there are countless crafts you can do with leaves: leaf rubbings are great fun, students may also collect leaves for a collage, or simply have a competition to see who grabs the most and have them practice their counting in English.

FABULOUS FALL ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER LEARNERS

1 FALL PREPARATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

Discuss all of the things students and teachers did to prepare for the return to classes. Remind students that just as they took the time to prepare to go back to school, there are lots of animals that are now making their preparations for the winter. Discuss with students what some of these preparations are, introduce and practice key vocabulary (geese, moose, deer, squirrel s, etc.) and what they do in the fall (migrate, gather acorns, hibernate, etc).

Now's a great time to discuss with them, if you haven't already, what they hope to accomplish in the coming year. Have them make a list of

resolutions for the new school year, something like:

make new friends
learn lots of new words in English
read more difficult texts in English
understand a movie without having to read subtitles, etc.

2 INTERVIEW MOTHER NATURE

Briefly discuss with students the figure of Mother Nature, and what her role is in the change of seasons. Have each student write a series of interview questions for Mother Nature: they can get as creative as they like, and ask things like:

What is your favorite season?

Is your job difficult or easy?

Do you ever have a vacation?

Why do leaves fall from trees in autumn?

Why do birds fly south?

What's your favorite animal and why?

What's your favorite tree and why?

Each student then swaps questions with a classmate and answers the questions. Remind them that in most cases there may not be a "correct" answer, they may be creative with their answers as well.

3 RECOMMENDED VOCABULARY

Use this vocabulary list to make your own crossword puzzles, word searches, fill in the blanks exercises, and more. You can ask students to match pictures to words, or animals to actions, etc.

This is the recommended list of fall vocabulary, but you may use or add as many words as you like depending on your students' level:

Animals:

Goose/geese

Deer

Bird

Crow

Moose

Squirrel

Bear

Turkey

Foods:

Apple	Corn
Pear	Pumpkin

Actions:

Bury	Gather
Harvest	Hibernate
Lay	Mate
Migrate	Rake

Miscellaneous:

Brown	Orange
Red	Yellow
Chilly	Cold

Colors	Country
Crops	Grain
Hay	Leaf/leaves
Maple	Scarecrow
Sweater	Vegetables
Farmer	Fur

4 RECOMMENDED READING

A great way to complement any of these activities is with some reading. These are just a couple of recommended books for fall reading, but there are plenty of others available at Amazon.

- *It's Fall (Celebrate the Seasons)* by Linda Glaser, for ages 4 to 8, is a great choice for reading aloud.
- *Autumn Orange (Know Your Colors)* by Christianne C. Jones, for ages 4 to 8, allows children to explore the main color of the fall season.

FALL IS A TRULY MAGICAL SEASON. WE CAN FEEL HOW THE AIR TURNS COOLER AND SEE HOW THE LANDSCAPE CHANGES BEFORE OUR VERY EYES. SOONER THAN WE THINK, WE'LL HAVE TO HIDE INDOORS, AND IN SOME PLACES EVERYTHING WILL BE COVERED BY A BLANKET OF SNOW. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES THE SEASON OFFERS AND FALL INTO SOME FALL FUN!

MORE Fabulous Fall Activities for the ESL Class

FALL IS CERTAINLY A SPECIAL TIME OF YEAR. THERE ARE AS MANY ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR ESL AS CLASS AS LEAVES ON A TREE.

So, to follow up on the previous article, we present even MORE activities you can do with your students for a fun-filled fall season!

MORE FALL CRAFTS:

1 NOCTURNAL ANIMAL MASKS

Fall nights are filled with the sounds of nocturnal animals. So, help your students get into a nocturnal mood with some owl and raccoon masks! You'll need paper plates, construction paper, glue, scissors, and string. You'll find the instructions in this Autumn Activities worksheet (busyteacher.org/3817-fabulous-fall-fun-autumn-activities.html), as well as the template you can photocopy and hand out to your students. When they're done, students put on their masks and reproduce the sounds these animals make.

2 FALL GARLANDS

Making Christmas garlands is fun, and they're certainly colorful, but how about something that celebrates the fall season? For these very organic garlands, your class will need acorns, small sticks or twigs, and pine cones. You also need to bring twine, rope or a hemp cord, plus a glue gun. Make different garlands, perhaps one made entirely of pinecones, or another with all three elements. Tie the pinecones to the cord, and glue the acorns and sticks – try out different shapes with the sticks, for example a series of crosses. Decorate your classroom for a very seasonal look!

3 AUTUMN LEAVES

Everything changes in the fall, including our free time activities. In this combination craft/writing task, students will share what they like to do in the fall through a small poster.

Give each of your students a piece of construction paper and several pieces of paper shaped like leaves of different colors. Students choose how they will map out the information. For example, they may take a big red leaf and write, "Things I Do in the Fall" and add smaller leaves surrounding this one with the activities they enjoy. Another one may write, "Things I collect in the Fall", and add smaller leaves with words like acorns, leaves, twigs, pine cones, etc. In the end, each student will have their own poster to share with the class!

4 PLAY DOUGH FALL FOOD

Who doesn't like playing with play dough? Bring play dough of different colors (you can make your own with food coloring). Show students how to make different fall foods like corn, pumpkin, apple, etc. Want to see a great way to make a play dough blueberry pie? Check out Play-Doh's Fresh Ideas gallery for step-by-step instructions (hasbro.com/playdoh/en_US/Fresh-Ideas.cfm).

MORE FALL GAMES:

5 RED LEAVES ARE FALLING DOWN

This is a fun musical game you can play with your youngest ESL learners. Download a copy of this fall worksheet (busyteacher.org/3599-8-fall-lesson-activities-for-your-esl-class.html) and photocopy the last five pages: My Autumn Leaves Book. Each of the pages features a particular color, so instruct your students to color the leaves on each page in the color indicated. Then, get ready to sing a song. Sing the words in the booklet to the tune of London Bridge is Falling Down. Hold hands with a student and raise them up high to form a "bridge". The remaining students form a line and pass under the bridge as you sing the song. When the song ends, you both lower your arms and catch one of the students, who'll have to replace the other as part of the bridge.

6 GOING NUTS!

Students will take turns tossing assorted nuts for points. Cut out long rectangles of construction paper or poster board of different lengths: 10 inches, 20 inches, 30 inches, and so on, depending on how many circles you want. Take each one and loop to form a circle. Form concentric circles over a large cardboard marked with different number values. Students who toss a nut into the center get 50 points for their team. Then, the next circle is 30 points and so on.

7 VEGETABLE SOUP

Put your students' memory and cooking skills to the test! Bring a large pot to class and tell your class they will help you make vegetable soup. Have an assortment of plastic veggies ready for them to choose from. A student takes one vegetable, names it, and places it in the pot, saying, "We're adding corn." The next student must add another vegetable but also remember the previous, "We're adding corn and pumpkin." Students continue adding vegetables until one of them makes a mistake.

8 Ways to Celebrate Grandparent's Day in ESL Class

IT IS NOT UNCOMMON FOR ESL TEACHERS TO PLAN ACTIVITIES FOR MOTHER'S DAY OR FATHER'S DAY, BUT WHAT ABOUT DEAR, OLD GRANDPA AND GRANDMA? GRANDPARENTS HAVE A VERY SPECIAL PLACE IN OUR HEARTS.

Whether your students have any grandparents still living or not, and no matter how old your students are, Grandparent's Day should always be celebrated as a reminder of the many wonderful things they did or still do for us. Here are some great activities to try with your class:

HOW TO CELEBRATE GRANDPARENT'S DAY IN YOUR ESL CLASS

1 A SPECIAL GIFT

Make gifts for grandma and grandpa (or any senior citizen) that will be special, not because of the item itself, but because it will be made from re-used and recycled materials. Bring out your box of odds and ends, and give your students several options to choose from depending on the materials you have available in it. From decorated photo frames to colorful jewelry, it's not important what they make. Your goal is to help them understand that just because something is old it doesn't have to be discarded.

2 WHEN MY GRANDMA WAS MY AGE...

Young learners don't realize just how different things were when their grandparents were their age. And even older students may have difficulties grasping this. Put together a list of questions that each student must ask a grandparent or any other senior citizen. Some of the interview questions may be:

What did you do in your free time?

What toys did you have/play with?

Did you watch TV and if not what did you do instead?

What things did you have in your bedroom? Etc.

Students return to class and report their findings. They may be surprised to find out that their grandparents had no TV and listened to radio programs instead of watching cartoons. Have the class share and discuss what surprised them the most.

3 WHAT IS A GRANDPARENT?

Explore what a grandparent is and does. This is a great activity for intermediate to advanced learners. Give your students some old magazines and ask them to look for pictures of people who look like grandparents. What are they doing in the picture? What do they look like? What makes them think they are grandparents? Continue with a discussion on what it means to be a grandparent. Do all grandmothers bake pies? Do some work? Do all grandfathers stay home making repairs around the house? Or do some teach in universities?

4 HOW DO YOU SAY IT IN YOUR LANGUAGE?

Ask students to share how they say "grandmother" or "grandfather" in their own language. Extend the discussion to where they are from. Where are they are now? Are their grandparents' lives different from theirs in their country of origin and how so?

5 WHAT DOES YOUR GRANDMA/GRANDPA DO/DID BEST?

Students may say their grandma makes or made the best cookies or the prettiest sweaters. Or that their grandpa is the best fisherman and catches the biggest fish. Encourage students to use comparatives and superlatives.

6 GRANDPARENTS OF THE FUTURE

Ask students to write an essay imagining what it will be like to be a grandparent in the future. What technology will they use to keep in touch with their grandchildren? How will they travel? Will they live to be over a hundred? Will they be more active than their own grandparents now? Will there be cures for some of the health problems their grandparents currently have?

7 FAMILY TREE

Grandparent's Day is a wonderful opportunity to talk about families and create a family tree. You may use this Family Tree worksheet (busyteacher.org/5807-creating-your-family-tree-worksheet.html) or instruct students to make their own by drawing it themselves. Another very creative way to do this is to use real twigs and have students add construction paper leaves to their "trees".

8 A SONG FOR GRANDMA AND GRANDPA

NationalGrandparentsDay.com has a wonderful video (nationalgrandparentsday.com/Video.html) you can share with your students. Play the video, or simply have them listen to the song. As they listen, they must take notes on some of the things that children love about their grandparents or enjoy doing with them. The student who gets the most correctly wins. You may also choose to give them the lyrics (nationalgrandparentsday.com/SongLyrics.html) to read as they listen and fill in gaps.

KEEP IN MIND THAT EVEN IF YOUR STUDENTS MAY NO LONGER HAVE THEIR GRANDPARENTS WITH THEM, THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO HONOR THEM AND ANY OTHER SENIOR CITIZEN THEY MAY KNOW.

You may also choose to make your Grandparent's Day lesson a reminder of how important it is to respect our elders and just how much we can learn from them.

How to Teach the Halloween Lesson You Can Be Proud Of

THEMED CLASSES CAN ALWAYS BE FUN AND EVEN HELP THE CLASS THINK OF SOMETHING ELSE OTHER THAN LEARNING A LANGUAGE.

Focusing on topics might spark a certain interest, and this can help in letting the language itself flow. Holidays such as Easter, Christmas and Hanukkah are all interesting topics. Depending on the country you are teaching in, Halloween itself may not be known so well.

Originally a Celtic holiday from pagan times, Halloween is now a huge holiday in the United States, Canada and is still celebrated today in its native country, Ireland. If you want to plan a class like this, you will need a couple of ideas. It can be interesting to look over the different practices in different countries.

Along with this, it is also interesting to note that there are other holidays similar to Halloween. One of the most well-known is the Mexican Day of the Dead, where people will honour their ancestors. In the Catholic Church, Halloween (or Samhain, as it was called in Celtic times) is celebrated as All Hallows Eve. Indeed, there are a lot of options for people to choose from when it comes to learning about this holiday and many interesting themes to choose.

Here are just a few ideas:

HOW TO TEACH THE HALLOWEEN LESSON YOU WILL BE PROUD OF

1 HISTORY

It might be a good idea to go over various different historical references to Halloween. Look up on the Internet for various texts which are available. Try and find one that will fit the class's timeframe. Get the stu-

dents to read it in turn, and jot down any vocabulary which might be new to them. This is usually a great time to introduce them to a wide range of new vocabulary (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halloween) which they may not normally come across. It can also be a lot of fun to discuss what historical traditions are common in their own country.

2 QUIZ

Before the planned Halloween class, tell the students to do as much research on the topic of Halloween and other similar holidays as they can. Setting up a quiz can be a lot of fun and is often a great way to end before a term break. Divide the class into two competing groups and organize a series of questions. Competition is often a great thing, as the students will become a lot more involved in the learning process. New vocabulary will be used and incorporated into their regular speaking sessions.

3 SCARY STORY

All children love a good story, and a ghost story is quite appropriate for this time of year! If teaching children, it could be a great idea to get them to read a scary story. Be sure that it is age appropriate. There are plenty of books out there from which a story can be read, or indeed, go on the Internet and see what free materials are available.

Another great idea would be to have the students act the story out. This can be similar to working with role plays. The children can have a lot of fun pretending to be monsters, ghosts and all other kinds of things that go bump in the night. Even the teacher can sit back and enjoy a little production that is being put on!

4 PRESENTATIONS

Since Halloween itself is such a big and varied holiday, it might be a good idea to get your students to do some research on the topics. Have them get as much information as possible before coming to class the next day. Then, divide them into groups and get them to do presentations on what they discovered. Perhaps try and assign specific tasks to different people. One group could do a small presentation on how Samhain was practiced back in the Celtic times, or someone could do a piece about Mexico's Day of the Dead.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE POSSIBILITIES ARE LITERALLY ENDLESS. TRY AND MAKE THE HALLOWEEN CLASS AS MUCH FUN AS POSSIBLE!

Usually holidays are a time of celebration, and there is no reason why celebration and learning can't go hand in hand. For those who are teaching in countries where this holiday isn't widely celebrated, it can be a great opportunity for the students themselves to learn about another aspect of English speaking culture.

Spooky Halloween Fun for Your ESL Class

THERE PROBABLY ISN'T A YOUNGSTER WHO IS NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO HALLOWEEN.

And most adults want to join in the fun too! Halloween is a great holiday to celebrate in the ESL classroom, as well as one of the best times to let loose and unleash all of your potential for creativity.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY JACK?

Your goal as an ESL teacher is probably to take advantage of the celebration of Halloween to provide your students with some cultural background into this holiday that is increasingly celebrated in other parts of the world these days, and not just in the US. One of the activities that is central to the celebration of Halloween is the pumpkin carving.

A brief history – No matter what your students' level is it's recommended that you give them a little bit of background on this tradition that some may not understand. This Wikipedia entry offers useful information on the history and tradition of the Jack o'Lantern that you may adapt and adjust to your students' level.

Pumpkin carving - No Halloween lesson is complete without your very own Jack o'Lantern. Whether you choose to carve the pumpkin in class with older students (make sure you do the carving no matter how old your students are), or bring one you've carved at home, this worksheet is a wonderful collection of templates you can choose from. If you prefer to do the carving at home, you may at least give your students the chance to vote on their favorite template. They'll be amazed to see how it looks on a pumpkin!

RIVETING READING

There are lots of great scary stories you can read with your students, but by far the best are Edgar Allan Poe's classic tales of horror. The Fall of the House of Usher and The Tell-Tale Heart are stories that have chilled numerous generations to the bone. Here are some suggestions for a lesson plan for The Black Cat, probably the most appropriate choice for Halloween, and it's also one of the shorter stories. There are several options to choose from, depending on your students' level and the time you have for this activity.

- Here you'll find a fantastic printable copy of the story: enotes.com/black-cat-text/the-black-cat?start=1 - the online version has some of the most unusual words underlined and provides synonyms that aid student comprehension. Also available in PDF file.
- First, give your students a brief intro to Edgar Allan Poe, for instance, when and where he lived, and when he wrote the story. Ask your students what makes a story scary.
- This is a great story to read out loud to the class. You can even set the mood with a Jack o' Lantern. You could either read it yourself while your students follow the text, or have them take turns reading, but it'll probably be easier for you to convey the right mood, plus the reading won't take as long.

You can read it on one sitting, or in parts, that's entirely up to you. Just make sure you: 1) warm up, 2) introduce new vocabulary, 3) give your students post reading comprehension questions, and the level of difficulty in the questions depends on your students' level.

HAUNTING WRITING

Halloween is perfect for writing tasks! Young students love scary stories, and most will be easily inspired to create their own. Try any of these Halloween writing activities to turn your ESL learners into masters of horror.

Pumpkin writing (busyteacher.org/3334-pumpkin-halloween-writing-lesson-plan.html): This fantastic worksheet provides different types of writing tasks for elementary students, some of which involve writing a story about the last pumpkin left in the patch from a pumpkin's point of view, and instructions on how to make a Jack o' Lantern. Students write in the pumpkin templates, and you display their work on a wall or bulletin board.

Prompted writing: Give your students a writing prompt like: "I was trick or treating with my friends, and we lost track of time. It was a dark and foggy night, and we never noticed we were wandering too far. Suddenly, we realized we were lost. There was a dark, creepy abandoned house on the corner. As we tried

to figure out which way to go, the door slowly creaked open. We were very curious to see more, so we went up the front steps, and we looked inside. We saw..." Ask them to complete the story (you may choose to give them a minimum of 300-500 words, or ask them to complete a full page).

Trick-Or-Treat Goblin: This activity actually combines crafts and writing for a complete Halloween lesson. First, each of your students makes his or her own Halloween goblin. Then ask them to write a story in which the goblin is the main character. The story can be funny or scary, but it must be told from the goblin's point of view.

Movie review: Ask your adult learners to write a review of a horror movie they have recently seen, or one of their favorites, perhaps a classic like Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho. They should include main characters, plot, and their opinion of the film.

CREEPLY CRAFTS

Spiders on a Web and Bats: Pass out some black construction paper and white crayons, and tell your students they'll be drawing some creepy crawlers by tracing their fingers. Or you could have them trace their fingers to draw bats. See the worksheet (busyteacher.org/3471-spiders-on-a-web-halloween-activity.html) for the procedure and great display suggestions.

Give them chills with Thriller! Who was not spooked when Michael Jackson's famous Thriller video came out? Although it takes a lot more to spook children these days, this video is an all-time classic for Halloween. This lesson plan (<http://busyteacher.org/2716-michael-jackson-thriller.html>) is perfect for getting teens more motivated, or for adult learners, with whom you can discuss all things supernatural. First, warm up by reviewing everything they know about werewolves or other supernatural beings. Then, have them watch the video once and ask them to give you a brief summary. Finally hand out the worksheet and complete the tasks with audio only.

HAVE SOME GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED SPINE-CHILLING FUN!

10 Ways to Give Thanks

This November

When the crisp fall mornings make us think of turkey and mashed potatoes, our thoughts also turn to giving thanks. Being thankful for what we have is a healthy and beneficial attitude, so why is so far from most of our minds for the rest of the year?

With the following ideas for giving thanks, you can encourage your students, and perhaps yourself, to be thankful on more than just the fourth Thursday in November.

HOW TO GIVE THANKS THIS NOVEMBER

1 WRITE A SHORT NOTE

Encourage your students to tell their friends and family how much they mean to them by writing a short note of thanks and appreciation. In the note, your students should say why they are appreciative of that person and how he has affected their lives.

2 PERFORM

None of us would be here if it were not for the generations who came before us, bringing us life and freedom. You and your class can show thanks to the more mature generations by volunteering some time in a retirement home. Senior citizens will be charmed by a program that your students put on which includes music, acting or other talents. Take some time after the performance to talk to the residents and let them share some life stories. If you like, your students may want to write about their experiences in the retirement home, and you can compile these stories into two copies of a class book – one for you and one for the retirement home.

3 GET OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

Get out of the classroom for some communing with nature as the autumn air turns crisp. After spending some time in the quiet and calm of fall, gather your students and ask each person to share something for which they are thankful in the natural world. If you are near a location with vibrantly colored trees or

scenic beauty, you may want to give your students some time to walk, hike or otherwise explore the world around them before your time of sharing.

4 THINK ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

It is easy to overlook our health when we have no major problems, but each day we live is a day to be thankful for. Challenge your students to show thankfulness for their healthy bodies by doing something nice for the skin in which they live. That may be organizing and participating in a 5K, pampering your skin, watching what you eat, or doing some other activity which brings greater health to your body!

5 KEEP A THANKFULNESS JOURNAL

You can help your students raise their awareness of how much they have to be thankful for by encouraging them to keep a thankfulness journal. For each day in the month of November, challenge your students to list three things for which they are thankful. By the end of the month, they will be able to read back on their lists and realize that they have a great number of things for which to be thankful.

6 FORGIVE SOMEONE

Though it is not always easy, human beings show resilience and strength in their ability to forgive others who have hurt them. Your students can show thankfulness for this amazing capacity of the human spirit by choosing to forgive someone this November. Whether it was as small as being forced out of a seat on the subway or as large as being betrayed by a friend, if you and your students make the choice to forgive someone, you will reap more benefits than you can realize.

7 SHOW APPRECIATION

When we get in the habit of thinking beyond ourselves, we begin to see all the good that others around us are doing. Help your class show appreciation for organizations committed to the greater good by making a donation this

November. Your class can host a food drive for local food banks that are always in need of extra food for the holidays. Simply place a large box in a public area with a sign explaining the food drive and then deliver the donations to the food bank.

8 VOLUNTEER

Volunteering is a great way to give of ourselves and show thankfulness for the ones we serve. You can inspire your students to show thanks to the people around them by providing the opportunity for volunteer service. By arranging rides to or details about an organization in need, your students will be more willing to commit time and energy to serving a cause!

9 THANK THE WORLD

With all the damage that the earth sustains, we are lucky she is in such good condition. Help your students show thankfulness for the world around them with some eco-service. This may mean doing some recycling, planting trees or picking up litter on the side of the road. Whatever it is, know that through our acts of global kindness, future generations will also have the earth for which to be thankful.

10 SPEAK TRUTHFULLY

One of the greatest things we can do to show our thankfulness for the loved ones around us is by speaking truthfully. By meaning what we say and saying what we mean we respect and honor the people who love us and therefore show that we are thankful for the role they play in our lives. Be intentional this year about speaking truthfully to the ones around you, and both of you will reap the benefits!

NOVEMBER DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE ONLY TIME IN OUR LIVES THAT WE GIVE THANKS, BUT IT CAN BE THE STARTING POINT FOR A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE.

Through these small measures, you and your students can come to appreciate the world around you and express your thankfulness for it.

Remembering Our Heroes:

Selected Activities for Veteran's Day

Veteran's Day is a time in the United States for remembering those who have served their country in military duty.

Many men and women have given their time and their lives to fight for the freedom and safety of the ones they love and others they have never met.

On this day of remembrance and honor, take a closer look at what our countries and our veterans mean to all.

SELECTED VETERAN'S DAY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

1 VETERANS AMONG US

If you are not new to teaching internationals, you will not be surprised to know that many of your students are military veterans. Many countries around the globe require their young men to serve a short amount of time in military service. Some nations require the same commitment from their young women. Break your class into groups of about four or five to discuss the topic of required military service. Does their home country require military service? Did they participate in it if their home country does require it? Encourage each person to share from his or her experience. Then have each group list as many advantages and disadvantages they can think of for mandatory military service. Close out the activity by asking each of your students to write a short opinion piece on whether they agree with or disagree with mandatory military service.

If you know someone who has served in the military and is willing to talk about his or her experiences, invite a veteran to your class to speak. He can share interesting stories from his time serving in the military, or he may want to talk about the type of training he went through to become a serviceman. Encourage your students to have some questions prepared to ask your speaker after his presentation. You can then encourage your students to write thank you notes to the speaker for sharing with your class.

2 PATRIOTISM REIGNS

What does it mean to be patriotic? Does it mean flying a national flag in

front of your house or never questioning the government? Ask your students what they think it means to be patriotic. After that, list as many symbols of patriotism as you can think of. You should include items like the flag, and eagle, the White House and any others you and your class can think of and symbols that may be used in your students' home countries. Then have each of your students choose one of these symbols from a country other than his own to research. How did it become a symbol of patriotism? What does it mean to people today? In what situation is it used? Ask your students to share this information in a poster that shows as well as explains the symbol. Then give each person a time in front of the class to share what he or she learned.

How many patriotic songs do your students know? Make a list of as many as you can think of, and then hand out the lyrics from the Star Spangled Banner. Do your students know the history of how those lyrics came about? If not, share with them the story of Francis Scott Key (usflag.org/francis.scott.key.html). Then give each student an opportunity to share his or her home country's national anthem. Do they know the history of that song? If not, this is a good time to do some research. You may want to divide your class according to their home countries for group work. Then have each group share the information that they learned with the class. You can also create a bulletin board display with pictures and information from your students' reports.

3 WAR TIME CONTROVERSY

Your students can make some personal connections with a veteran of one of the most controversial military movements in U.S. history in this interview with a Vietnam veteran (<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-postwar/6153>), recorded by Sharon Raynor. In the interview, John Luckey, an army photographer, brings up some controversial issues he encountered during his time in Vietnam. Perhaps the most significant controversy is the different treatment that black and white soldiers faced during and after the draft. Luckey states that at one point in the war, though African Americans made up only eight percent of the soldiers in that war, they accounted for twenty-three percent of the casualties. Though that statistic is

not entirely accurate, it does reflect an attitude that was predominant among military leaders at that time. In your students' opinions, should there be restrictions for applicants to military service? If so, what should they be? Should soldiers with certain conditions be assigned to more dangerous missions? Should race, age, sexual orientation or religion play any part in military service? Have each student make a list of the top ten restrictions he might impose on applicants to the military. These will probably include physical limitations as well as other criteria. Then group your students in threes or fours to share their lists of who they would restrict from military service. Was there any agreement between the lists? Was there any disagreement? If so, what were the points students could not agree upon? Have each student explain to his group why he chose the criteria he did and see if anyone has a change of opinion.

4 SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

In this brutally realistic portrayal of war, a troop of soldiers sets out to save the life of the only remaining brother from a family of four. In so doing, members of the troop sacrifice their own lives in order to save the life of Private Ryan. This is just one example that shows how a man may sacrifice his own life for the lives of others. As your students remember the veterans who have served their countries, ask them to think about giving their lives for the life of another. Would they be willing to do that? If so, for whom would they be willing to die? In a free writing session, ask your students to take a stand on whether it is noble to give one's life for another or whether it is too much to ask of anyone. Each student should take a position on the topic and then support it with specific examples, facts, personal experiences or experiences of others. Instead of or in addition to a time of writing, you can stage a class debate on the topic.

IT CAN BE A HUMBLING EXPERIENCE TO THINK OF THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED AND THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES TO ENSURE OUR FREEDOM.

When Veteran's Day brings to mind the sacrifices of men and women around the world, your students can be sure to give the due respect and remembrance to these soldiers.

How to Teach a Perfect Thanksgiving Lesson

SOME OF YOUR ADULT ESL STUDENTS MAY BE FAMILIAR WITH THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY, WHILE SOME MAY SIMPLY BE AWARE THAT THERE IS A HOLIDAY BY THAT NAME CELEBRATED IN THE US, BUT HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE ACTUAL CELEBRATION ENTAILS OR HOW IT ORIGINATED.

Young learners may see, every now and then, a typical Thanksgiving meal in an American children's movie or TV program, but they won't most likely get a whole lot of background info. Give your young students the opportunity to learn about this important American holiday. Although they may not get the chance to sample a delicious turkey dinner with all of the fixings, we have got the recipe for a perfect Thanksgiving lesson!

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP WITH A THANKSGIVING POEM

Students who may know little about Thanksgiving may have the idea that it's about getting together with the family to eat. The best way to start a Thanksgiving lesson is by conveying the real spirit of the holiday. Use this Thanksgiving Poetry Worksheet (busyteacher.org/3228-thanksgiving-poetry-worksheet.html) to accomplish this. First, students read the poem. Then, you ask them what it's about. They should tell you it's about being thankful for everything we have. Ask them to underline or read out loud the lines that reference this (I am thankful for shoes on my feet and food in my stomach...). Discuss with students the things they are thankful for, you may have them complete the worksheet too.

2 GATHER YOUR INGREDIENTS

Tell your students that American families gather for Thanksgiving to celebrate everything they are thankful for, and they put together a wonder-

ful feast for this celebration. Tell your students they will gather some of the typical foods and ingredients used to prepare a Thanksgiving meal. Prepare a scavenger hunt with flashcards or pictures that include these foods and ingredients. Add some flashcards that have no relation to either Thanksgiving or meals (i.e. furniture, school supplies, technological devices, etc.) Hide the flashcards around the classroom (if possible outside in the school yard) and ask students to collect only those that are foods or relate to food preparation.

Students count how many they found, and you may ask each if they can name the ingredients or foods they found. Supply the right word whenever needed. Ask your students which they would use for their own Thanksgiving dinner.

3 SPICE IT UP WITH SOME THANKSGIVING VOCABULARY

Give your students a brief overview of how this celebration originated and the main points of the first Thanksgiving. Teach them as many new words as you deem they'd be comfortable learning and make the historical account appropriate to their level. Use Thanksgiving clipart (busyteacher.org/3736-kids-thanksgiving-clipart.html) and Thanksgiving borders (busyteacher.org/3813-3-thanksgiving-borders.html) to illustrate the new words. Have them practice their new words by filling in the blanks in a brief written account of the first Thanksgiving.

4 ADD A HANDFUL OF ACTION TO SHAKE THINGS UP

Play spelling catch to review how the new words are spelled. Hold a bean bag in your hands, call out a word, and toss the bean bag to a student. He or she says the first letter, then tosses the bag to a classmate who has to continue with the second, then

tosses the bag to another, and so on. When someone makes a mistake or can't recall the next letter, he or she has to sit down. The last student left standing wins!

5 SERVE UP SOME FUN THANKSGIVING WORKSHEETS

From crossword puzzles to word search activity sheets, great sites like Teachnology (teach-nology.com/web_tools/work_sheets/) allow you to easily custom design your own. There's also a great collection of Thanksgiving activities available at BusyTeacher.org that you can use with your class.

6 END YOUR PERFECT THANKSGIVING LESSON WITH THE PERFECT THANKSGIVING SONG

What better way to end a great lesson than with a hilarious Thanksgiving song (busyteacher.org/3786-best-thanksgiving-song-worksheet-except-for-the.html)! Students listen to the song, fill in the blanks in the lyrics, and finally write a letter of apology to all of the turkeys who end up on the Thanksgiving table.

WHY IS THIS THE PERFECT THANKSGIVING LESSON?

Because it's prepared with a dash of reading, a sprinkle of new words, a teaspoon of history, a pinch of music, a cupful of action, and heaps of wholesome fun!

How to Teach a Thanksgiving Lesson

WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH IN A COUNTRY WHERE ENGLISH IS NOT THE NATIVE LANGUAGE, STUDENTS WILL OFTEN BE INTERESTED IN THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEIR COUNTRY AND ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES.

Holidays are a great opportunity to teach students about other countries or to create holiday themed activities. For very young students, drawing a turkey based on tracing one's hand and teaching them the word turkey may be as far as you get in a Thanksgiving lesson. For beginning students, some Thanksgiving related vocabulary and matching exercises may be appropriate. The lesson described in this article can be adapted for different levels but is structured for classes of intermediate and advanced students.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WARM UP

Any common warm up or review activity would be appropriate prior to a holiday lesson however you can also use this time to see what your students know about the holiday you plan on discussing or about the countries that celebrate it. If you are from the United States, ask you're students if they know where you are from and maybe talk about what the weather is like there this time of year.

2 INTRODUCE

Asking your students "Do you know what day it is today?" or "Do you know what holiday is on November 25th?" will get them thinking about the date. Thanksgiving is not celebrated in most parts of the world so you can tell your students some fun facts about Thanksgiving and how it is celebrated in the United States. For example, you can explain that the date changes but it is always on Thursday. If you are more familiar with the Canadian Thanksgiving, teach your students about that instead.

3 LISTENING

Conducting a listening exercise where students answer true or false or multiple choice questions will give you the opportunity to read a passage about Thanksgiving that is appropriate for your students. Things such as popular foods, traditional activities, and simplified historical facts would be good pieces of information to reveal at this stage.

4 VOCABULARY

Most holidays come with new vocabulary. Giving your students an extensive history lesson would not be appropriate for most levels but giving them certain vocabulary such as turkey, pumpkin pie, celebrate, etc would be beneficial. Advanced students could also handle vocabulary such as Native Americans, Pilgrims, etc and be given slightly more background on the holiday. On the same worksheet used above, you can have a matching exercise where students match new vocabulary with images. You can also use Thanksgiving borders (busyteacher.org/3813-3-thanksgiving-borders.html) to help convey the message. Assuming you used all the new words in the reading passage, students should be able to guess the meanings of words based on their context.

5 PRACTICE

Use a practice activity to combine what students are learning with your holiday. If you have recently studied the structure "I like to..." have students write a few sentences about foods they like to eat. Then have students work in pairs. Students can take turns asking and answering "What do you like to eat?" If you have recently covered degrees of comparison, have students rank Thanksgiving foods in order of how much they like or think they would like them. Then they can practice making sentences similar to "I like pumpkin pie the most." or "I like pumpkin pie more than turkey."

6 PRODUCE/DISCUSSION

You can ask your students if they have any holidays similar to Thanksgiving or if some of the activities or foods are similar to holidays they celebrate. Conduct a short activity where students can discuss Thanksgiving, other holidays, and ask questions.

7 CREATE

Often as children we have certain craft activities associated with holidays too. Even if it is not appropriate to conduct these craft activities in your classroom, your students may be interested in them. At the end of a Thanksgiving lesson you can tell students what your favorite part of Thanksgiving is or tell them Thanksgiving related activities you remember doing as a child. If you have no first hand experience with the holiday, you can still tell them what your favorite traditional Thanksgiving food is or tell them about a craft activity children would do on or around Thanksgiving.

Students often enjoy learning about holidays and how they are celebrated. Giving cultural lessons such as this one will help break up the monotony of grammar structures and ESL topics while still practicing structures you are teaching in normal lessons.

Ready for Thanksgiving? Things That Make Your Lesson a Success

IF YOU HAPPEN TO BE TEACHING IN THE UNITED STATES, OR INDEED HAPPEN TO BE A UNITED STATES NATIONAL TEACHING ABROAD, THEN THERE IS NO REASON WHY YOU SHOULDN'T GIVE A CLASS ON THE CONCEPT OF THANKSGIVING TO YOUR STUDENTS.

Often this can be a great way to end a class before a break by teaching them a little bit about another culture. Learning language is important, but so is learning about the culture from which it comes. It might be interesting, even, to plan an entire class based around various holidays common in English speaking countries and discuss their origins. This could include the likes of St Patrick's Day, Easter, Christmas and lesser known ones such as Guy Fawkes Night.

Classes focusing on the history, or on different types of celebrations, are often a great way of expanding the students' knowledge of another culture. If you are teaching in a school with children, it might even be a good idea to have a miniature Thanksgiving dinner. Thanksgiving itself falls on the second Monday of October in Canada, and in the United States it is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. If you happen to be teaching in either the US or Canada, giving a little background history to the class might be a great way of helping them integrate into the new culture which they are now living in.

HOW TO TEACH A PERFECT THANKSGIVING LESSON: TIPS AND TRICKS

1 ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Telling the story of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower is often a good idea if you have younger students. All children love story time, so take some time out to let them relax and just listen. If one is not familiar with Thanksgiving

(as teachers from Australia, South Africa, Ireland and Great Britain may not be), then do a bit of research on it first. You might even want to get the children to draw pictures, and write the story under them (tip: try these great Thanksgiving borders (busyteacher.org/3813-3-thanksgiving-borders.html!)). Showing them the pictures visually and telling the story will surely be educational and entertaining.

2 MINI PLAY

Another great idea might be to throw a miniature play for the class. Of course this is going to depend on time constraints. Along with the students, have them write up a small script for the play and choose the actors. Try and include everyone, making sure that they all have a line. This will usually depend on the size of the class, of course. It can be a lot of fun for the kids, as well. In the classes leading up to the actual play, taking a few minutes near the end to rehearse will also serve to be a great filler.

Again, depending on your time constraints this may or may not be possible. Either way, it is often the same as a glorified role play but the children can still have fun whilst engaging in this activity.

3 QUIZ

This can be for both adults and children. A quiz can be a great way to get the class to compete, hence getting and keeping their attention. The more heated the quiz becomes, and the more involved the students are, the more frequently they will slip into English. Of course, beforehand it might be a good idea to give them a brief overview of what Thanksgiving is. Explaining the story or, better yet, printing off a text about the history of this holiday will help with reading skills, and of course there will always be new vocabulary for the students to learn. After learning

the facts, collect the sheets and divide the class up into two groups.

If you happen to be teaching children, then there is nothing like the idea of a reward which will make them that little bit more enthusiastic. Some people are naturally competitive, so there will undoubtedly be many who will happily throw themselves into the game. With regards to children, however, always be sure to play fair and that there is no cheating going on.

WHAT HAS BEEN PRESENTED HERE ARE ONLY A FEW IDEAS OF HOW ONE CAN TAILOR A CLASS TO TEACH ABOUT A SPECIFIC HOLIDAY.

They can be altered to suit anything: Halloween, Christmas or even New Year's. Sometimes students just need to relax and have a bit of light-hearted fun. Inciting a bit of competition will also help them to use their English skills more creatively.

7 Thanksgiving Crafts and Games Your Students Will Be Thankful for

WE ALL HAVE HOPES, DREAMS AND DESIRES. BUT DURING THANKSGIVING, WE DON'T FOCUS SO MUCH ON WHAT WE HOPE TO HAVE, BUT RATHER WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE, WHICH WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL FOR.

So, this Thanksgiving instead of having your ESL students hope and dream about more fun activities in class, give them some they can truly be thankful for!

THANKSGIVING CRAFTS:

1 TUBE TURKEY

This project makes beautiful centerpieces for your students to take home for Thanksgiving dinner. You'll need to supply each of your students with a toilet paper tube and a copy of this template (busyteacher.org/3423-turkey-paper-tube-zoo-project-for-your-young.html). Those who finish their turkeys may complete the writing task and describe their animal: Where does it live? What does it eat? They may even create a story for it.

2 WAX PAINTING SECRET MESSAGE CARDS

Students will have the pleasure of finding out what a classmate is thankful for with this project they can later make into great Thanksgiving cards. Give each of your students some white poster board or card paper, and a white wax crayon. Students carefully write something they are thankful for with the white crayon – naturally it will be very difficult to read. Each student passes their paper to another classmate. Give them some diluted poster paint and a paintbrush. As they brush the paint over the paper, their classmate's message is magically revealed!

The messages are shared with the class (Maria is thankful for having so many great friends.), and each paper is then returned to its owner. They may fold the paper into a card, write Happy Thanksgiving on the front, and decorate it as they please.

3 THANKSGIVING SCRAPBOOK

There is no better time than Thanksgiving to not only count our blessings, but also share them with others. For this project, your class will create colorful scrapbooks to remember everything they are thankful for. Give your students plenty of colored paper, scissors, crayons and markers, plus lots of magazines they can cut pictures from.

For their scrapbook cover they will write the title, "This year I'm thankful for..." On the following pages they will add all of the things they are thankful for using magazine cut outs or by drawing their own pictures on each page. They may wish to add pictures of places they visited, sports or things they learned to play, or general good times they had with their families.

4 A BIRD IN THE HAND...

There's a popular expression in English that goes, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush", which means we should be thankful for what we do have, rather than focus on the possibility of more. Ask your students how this expression can be applied to Thanksgiving. Then, show them how they, too, can have "a bird in the hand". Show them how to trace a hand on a piece of paper. The thumb will be the head and the fingers will be the feathers of their bird, which in this case will be a turkey. After they trace their hands, they draw other details and color their turkeys.

THANKSGIVING GAMES:

5 THANKSGIVING YUMMY BINGO

Looking for a fun Thanksgiving Bingo to play with your class? Then, look no further! Download this Thanksgiving Yummy Bingo worksheet (busyteacher.org/3222-thanksgiving-yummy-bingo.html), kindly provided by Hallmark and have tons of fun with your class.

6 THANKSGIVING TIC TAC TOE

How about giving the ol' Tic Tac Toe game a Thanksgiving theme? It's as easy as pumpkin pie! Simply download this Thanksgiving full-color clipart file (busyteacher.org/3736-kids-thanksgiving-clipart.html) and print some into small Tic Tac Toe-sized squares – try to have at least five of each image you choose, for example five pilgrim hats and five turkeys. Draw the typical 3x3 grid on some poster board. Students use the images instead of the Xs and Os. For a bigger challenge, you may require them to answer a question correctly before they can place their card on the board.

7 PIN THE SNOOD ON THE TURKEY

What's that funny-looking thing that hangs below the turkey's chin? Why, that would be the snood, and won't your students have a grand, ol' time trying to pin it onto a turkey. Put up a poster of a turkey without the snood and have your blindfolded students take turns trying to pin it in the right place for some hilarious fun!

AND AREN'T YOU THANKFUL YOU'VE GOT A SITE LIKE BUSYTEACHER ON YOUR SIDE, ALWAYS SUPPLYING FRESH IDEAS WHEN YOU'VE GOT NONE AND NEW WORKSHEETS WHEN YOU'RE TIRED OF USING THE SAME OLD, SAME OLD?

This Thanksgiving, head to our Thanksgiving section, where you'll find turkey templates, colorful clipart and more!

How to Teach Thanksgiving

Using Flashcards

THANKSGIVING IS A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY TO SHARE WITH YOUR ESL STUDENTS.

Most of them may not understand what it's about, but whether they'll be joining the festivities or not, this is a great opportunity to teach them the real meaning behind the holiday: giving thanks for the blessings we've received this year. But first things first. You'll have to cover the basics and teach your students some essential Thanksgiving vocabulary.

Here's how you do it with the use of flashcards:

HOW TO PROCEED

1 CHOOSE OR MAKE YOUR OWN FLASHCARDS

The first thing you'll need to do is get your set of Thanksgiving flashcards ready. If you haven't already got one, there are some wonderful flashcards you can download and print for free at MES-English.com or ESLFlashcards.com. You may also choose to make your own with Thanksgiving clipart (busyteacher.org/3736-kids-thanksgiving-clipart.html). Print 2 copies of the same set of cards.

2 INTRODUCE THANKSGIVING VOCABULARY

As always, it's recommended that you introduce new vocabulary in context. Tell your students about the very first Thanksgiving, make sure you tailor the story to your students' level: you don't want to make it too easy or too hard to understand. As you tell the story "flash" each flashcard to illustrate a new word. The story should go something like this:

"The Pilgrims (show flashcard of Pilgrims) left Europe due to religious persecution, and they arrived to the New World on a ship called the Mayflower (show flashcard of Mayflower) in 1620. Their first winter in the New World was very harsh and many of

them died. But the native Indians (show flashcard of Indian) helped them and taught them how to plant crops like corn (show flashcard of corn). The fall harvest (show flashcard of Fall harvest) was very successful, and the Pilgrims had enough food for the coming winter. They decided to celebrate with a day of thanksgiving with a feast, and they invited their Indian friends to join them."

Show more flashcards with the typical foods and ingredients used to prepare a Thanksgiving meal today.

3 REVIEW THANKSGIVING VOCABULARY

Show your students each flashcard once more and have them repeat the new words, correct pronunciation if necessary. After all of the new vocabulary has been reviewed, randomly pick a card and ask a student to either use it in a sentence or ask a question with the word.

4 PRACTICE THANKSGIVING VOCABULARY

Use the story of the first Thanksgiving and give students worksheets to help them practice the new words they've learned. Depending on your student's level, these may be a simple gap-filling exercise or more complex reading comprehension questions.

5 HAVE FUN WITH THANKSGIVING FLASHCARDS

Now's the time to play games with your flashcards! If you have two sets of cards, turn them over for a fun memory game where students have to find the pairs. Or try this for a great version of Go Fish:

For a small group of students, shuffle the cards and give each of your students 4 - 5 cards (the number depends on the total number of cards and number of students in the class. For a large class you may want to divide them into smaller groups and

have extra sets of cards). Put the rest of the cards in a draw pile. Students take turns asking questions using the new words: "Have you got a turkey?" If the student asked has the matching card, he or she must hand it over. If there is no match the student who asked takes a card from the draw pile. The goal is to make as many pairs as possible.

And don't forget the classic game of Bingo! Ask your students to make their own Bingo cards by choosing some of the new words and writing them down on their cards. Then, simply draw the flashcards out of a bag and call them out (or better yet, ask your students to tell you what they are!)

6 HAVE STUDENTS PRODUCE SOMETHING USING THANKSGIVING VOCABULARY

Give your students an assignment in which they can use the new words they've learned. Little ones may simply draw a picture of the first Thanksgiving or color these wonderful Thanksgiving coloring sheets (busyteacher.org/3781-thanksgiving-characters-1.html). Older students may be asked to write about the first Thanksgiving from a Pilgrim's point of view, while others write from the Indians' point of view.

Finish up by asking them what they are thankful for. And don't forget to count your blessings, too! After all, you have the most wonderful, rewarding job!

Creative November Lesson Ideas

IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO THEME A CLASS.

This is especially true if you are teaching a particular type of English, such as business English. By working on a specific theme, the students can get a break from what they normally learn. It can also be a great way to introduce some interesting new concepts to the class, and can have great conversation starts. Particularly if you are talking about the likes of festivals, there may be a lot of funny stories to tell. This will indeed help to boost the student's talking time, and cut down on teacher talking time especially if you ask. When teaching children, this can be an excellent time to go more in depth about certain things such as the seasons, and of course the weather. Since all children love story telling, this might be an excellent way to get them excited about learning English.

TRY THESE CREATIVE NOVEMBER LESSON IDEAS WITH YOUR NEXT CLASS!

1 THANKSGIVING IDEAS

Whether you're teaching in the United States or abroad, this is always a good way of sprucing up a class. Thanksgiving isn't known to everyone around the world, so you might have to do a little bit of explaining in this regard. Telling a brief story to the students, letting them know the basic history of it, will allow them to understand any further exercises which are based around the topic. Printing off an article from the Internet is usually a good idea, although the length of it will depend on the time constraints you're working under. Be sure to give everyone their turn to read, and jot down any vocabulary that the students may not be familiar with.

When it comes to children, there is a lot we can do. Most children probably won't be interested in reading long articles, so it is important to approach this in a different manner. As stated before, story-telling is probably a brilliant asset. Again, remember, the point is to be creative: have the child make different scenes from the story of the Pilgrims' journey on the Mayflower.

Get them to colour them in and, if possible, see if they can write down a few words beneath the pictures to help with the story (you may want to use these Thanksgiving borders (busyteacher.org/3813-3-thanksgiving-borders.html)). The children probably won't even think of this as a lesson, as most will revel in art! You could either post the pictures on the walls of the classroom, or perhaps photocopy pages into a scrap book and give them to the students to take home.

2 SEASONAL CHANGES AND REVISION

With lower level learners of English, this can be a great opportunity to work with teaching conjunctions, comparatives and superlatives: The weather is colder than the summer. It was warmer during the summer.

Often, students will need time to go over what they had learned in the past, in order to refresh their memories. Making comparatives with the differences between winter, fall and summer are also a good idea: The fall is cold, the winter is colder, but December is the coldest.

Incorporating games in the class can also help, particularly if it is coming up to the holiday. Students around this time tend to get agitated and don't really concentrate, therefore it is important to keep their minds focused on the task at hand. These are often quite popular ways of helping the students to relax but remain focused at the same time. Here is one game idea related to the upcoming season.

3 CHRISTMAS SONGS

For the majority of learners, music tends to be a helpful way of learning. But now it is time to turn the tide. A "fill in the gaps" activity might work with an older crowd, as it can get everyone loosened up. Find a popular Christmas song and print out the lyrics. Be sure to pass it around to everyone in the room. Remember, however, to keep certain grammatical points out so that the students have to figure it out for themselves. If they are having trouble, you try and elicit the word as

much as possible.

4 NOVEMBER AROUND THE WORLD

The United States has a lot of important dates during November, such as Thanksgiving and Veteran's Day. But it is also important to try and learn a little about the culture you are working in at the moment. Perhaps ask the students what big events are available in their country. In Germany, for example, Carnival begins on the eleventh of November and usually celebrated until February. If you are teaching in a country like Germany which has festivals like this, do some research on the topic.

It is possible that the students will know more, so don't be afraid to ask. Presenting basic facts first is a good idea, but then getting the individual students to tell you their own personal stories about this time of year will help them to practise speaking the language, and you could learn something new!

It's a Secret: 5 Activities You Can Do On Election Day

THIS NOVEMBER, ELECTION DAY IN THE UNITED STATES FALLS ON NOVEMBER 6. FOR MANY OF YOUR STUDENTS, THE IDEA OF VOTING AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT MAY BE VERY NEW AND MIGHT ALSO BE CONFUSING. To help them connect with their host culture on this important day in U.S. government, try one or more of the following activities with your ESL class.

5 ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO ON ELECTION DAY

1 TAKE A VOTE

Begin the activity by playing a few rounds of the game *Would You Rather?* If you have never played this game with your ESL class, it can be an easy way to get your students to share their opinions. You play the game by getting all of your students on their feet and then posing a question that starts with the phrase “would you rather.” For example, you might ask, “Would you rather have popcorn or candy at the movies?” For each option, point to one side of the room. Explain to your students that they should move to the side of the room which represents their answer. Then ask a few students to volunteer the reason behind their answer. Not everyone in your class will have a speaking role in this activity (unless you make that happen), but everyone will be participating. This also gives you the chance to call on certain students who might not otherwise offer an answer during class.

After playing the game, ask your students how it felt to be on the side of the room with the majority of the class. Then ask those students who were in the minority how they felt. Encourage your students to share the reasons for their feelings.

After this public vote of sorts, introduce the topic of secret ballots. Explain that in this type of voting no person knows what another person has voted. Give your students some questions to discuss in small groups like the following: Why is voting done by secret ballot? What might happen if votes were not secret? How could we hold a secret ballot in our class? What would be the benefit of doing that? Close the activity by having your students write an opinion piece on the positive or negative effects of keeping voting a secret matter.

2 TAKE A TRIP

The voting process can seem intangible to anyone who has not experienced it directly. Any way that you can help your students make a personal connection with the process of voting will help them understand and appreciate it more. With that in mind, Election Day, or the day before Election Day, is an opportune time for a mini-field trip to the voting poles. These polls are often set up in schools, so if your school is hosting on Nov. 6, see if you can get a volunteer to meet with your class on Nov. 5. Have the volunteer explain to your students the step-by-step process of how a person votes. Allow your students to take notes if they would like, then go back to your classroom and review what the volunteer said. You can take that time to go over any vocabulary your students may not have understood. Then have your students work in pairs or individually to write a process paragraph about how someone votes. This will cement in their minds the process as well as challenge them to write in process style.

3 TAKE A STANCE

Every candidate up for the vote takes a stance on certain issues. The sum of his opinions is his platform, and it is that platform that voters use to determine their votes. Challenge your class to come up with some issues that candidates might include in their platform. These can be issues that are of interest in the current election or others that are not currently “hot topics”. Then have your students decide on a final list of about ten issues that are important to the class. Give your students some class time to think about their own stance on each of the issues at hand. Each student should take a stance on each issue and build his platform. Then present the class with three fictional candidates who are up for the class vote. Give each of the candidates a random assortment of positions on the ten issues, and then ask your students to compare and contrast how the candidates’ platforms match up to their own. Finally, have each student vote for one of the candidates by secret ballot to see which candidate wins the mock election.

4 TAKE A CHANCE

Now that students have looked at

a wider selection of issues, have each person select one issue that is most important to him or her. Encourage your students to do some research on the issue and how it affects the public and the politics of voting. Have each student determine where most voters stand on that issue, then challenge your students to write a speech on that topic as if they were the politicians up for the vote. In the speech, your students should explain the issue at hand, their stance on the issue, the reasons they are taking this position and why the opposition is wrong (a refutation). As a follow up activity, have each student create a poster entitled “Vote For Me” in which he outlines why he would be the best candidate for the job of class president or state senator or any other role you choose.

5 TAKE A LOOK

The most important election in the United States happens every four years when the presidential term comes to an end. This election will come around again in 2014. In the meantime, candidates will prepare their election campaigns and raise funds. Most will be unsuccessful. As a research project, have each of your students do a report on a past president of the United States. There are many to choose from. In the report, ask your students to share what major accomplishments that president made during his presidency and any major problems he faced. Your students should also say how that president affected the future of the USA. Finally, have each student include some brief information on a candidate that ran against that president but did not win. You may want to designate a bulletin board to display the information on the president and the candidate he defeated.

THOUGH ELECTION DAY MAY BE FIRST AND FOREMOST A TIME TO DO ONE'S CIVIL DUTY, IT CAN ALSO BE THE SPARK BEHIND AN INTERESTING AND VARIED UNIT FOR YOUR ESL CLASS.

Whether most of your students are exchange students who are not familiar with the U.S. government or they are immigrants who have or will become citizens of the U.S., they will benefit from a closer look at American government and the process of election.

ESL Activities for the Great

American Smokeout (Nov. 15)

Smoking can be a controversial issue for some people, especially if they choose to smoke. However, most efforts centered around smoking promote kicking the habit. This year, November 15 is the Great American Smokeout – the American Cancer Society’s annual quit smoking day.

On this day each year, smokers are encouraged to quit the habit or at least make a plan to quit. The goal is to grow a healthier nation, free of smoking related disease. Whether your students smoke or not, these activities will get them thinking about smoking and evaluating whether the pay offs are worth the risk.

TRY THESE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT ESL ACTIVITIES ON NOV. 17

1 MONEY IN THE BANK

The average smoker spends about seven hundred dollars a year on cigarettes. Practice using conditional structures by asking your students what they would do with an extra \$700. Have your students create a wish list during a time of brainstorming, and challenge them to be as creative as possible. Then break your class into pairs or small groups. Review the conditional structure with your students by giving them an example, “If I had \$700 I would buy lunch for all of my students.” Make sure your students know they should use the past tense for the if clause and would plus the simple form of the verb for the main clause. Then invite your students to share with one another what they would do with the extra money. If you like, have your students choose one of their options and imagine it detail. Then have them write a descriptive paragraph starting with the conditional sentence they practiced. The paragraph should then go on to give strong details about the scenario. If you like, have your students illustrate their paragraphs and display them on a bulletin board with the title “A Pack of Possibilities.”

2 BLACK AND WHITE AND READ ALL OVER

Though not as common as they were several years ago, readers still see advertisements for cigarettes. In these ads, the habit is portrayed as cool, sexy, sophisticated or tough. Ask your students to collect some cigarette advertisements to bring in to class. Post the ads around the room with a piece of paper under each one, and give your students some time to look at the ads and comment on them by writing their comments on the piece of paper. Students should try to recognize what strategies the advertisers are using to promote smoking and to which emotions they are trying to appeal. After looking at ads, show your students some cigarette packages bought in Canada. There, companies print graphic pictures of detrimental health conditions due to smoking. Again, post these pictures and ask your students to respond. Once everyone has had enough time to look at all the ads and cigarette packages, ask which one they feel is most effective. Do the ads make them want to smoke? Does the packaging discourage them from smoking? Have each student choose to design either a smoking advertisement or a nonsmoking advertisement. Each person can use some of the techniques he or she saw in the professional ads or use his own. When all the ads are finished, post them around the room and ask your class to vote on which one they think is most effective. Award a prize to the winner.

3 ASK THE PUBLIC

Do your students have an accurate understanding when it comes to the public’s opinion about smoking? If your students are old enough to do some field research, you can give them time on the street conducting surveys to anyone who has a few minutes to spare. First as a class, brainstorm some questions you would like to ask the general public about smoking. They may include questions like, “Do you think people should be allowed to smoke in public? Should smoking be illegal in public places? Should people who smoke have to pay more for health care?” Once you have a large list, direct a class discussion to narrow down the pool of questions to the five most important, and ask each student to predict how the public will answer each of the questions. Then type up the survey and

make five copies for each student in the class. Each student should then take those five surveys and find volunteers in the public who are willing to take them. They may choose to go to a coffee shop, grocery store (with permission) or public park. Your students should use this as a chance to practice their conversation skills. Once your students have finished their interviews, have them bring the results back to the class where you can compile all the data together. What is the majority opinion on each of the questions? Were your students’ predictions correct? Ask your class if any of the answers surprised them, and ask if any answers were just as they expected.

4 IT’S THE LAW

Allegheny County, Pennsylvania recently passed a law which makes smoking in restaurants throughout the county illegal. This action is being taken by many areas of the country and being considered by many more. Do your students agree or disagree with this change in societal acceptance? Hold an informal debate either as a class or in groups of about five students each on whether smoking should be banned from public places. Whether your students support or refute the proposition, make sure everyone gives reasons for his answer. After the discussion, ask your students what the best arguments on each side of the issue are and whether anyone changed his mind after the group discussion.

Follow up this activity by asking your students to write a formal letter to the local government official either supporting the current law on smoking in public or recommending that the current law be changed. Students will first have to determine what the local smoking laws are. After writing the letters, have your students mail them and share any response with the class.

YOUR STUDENTS MAY BE TOO INGRAINED IN THEIR HABIT OF SMOKING TO QUIT, OR THEY MAY BE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE STARTED. Either way, this November, encourage your students to give the habit a second thought, and maybe they will become healthier people because of it!

Be Ready for World Hello Day (Nov. 21) with These ESL Activities

Some people might consider themselves friendly; others might consider themselves shy. Either way, your students should be encouraged on a daily basis to use their language skills to interact with the people around them. They do not have to be alone in their efforts of reaching out, though. World Hello Day is an opportunity for everyone, all throughout the globe, to make an effort at reaching out to one another, taking steps towards world peace.

The primary means to achieving this personal connection is by simply saying hi. Encourage your students to participate in World Hello Day with the following activities that get them speaking to others and making meaningful connections with the people around them!

CELEBRATE WORLD HELLO DAY WITH THESE ESL ACTIVITIES

1 THE MEANING OF HELLO

Your students will find a simple, concise but straightforward explanation for the origin of World Hello Day on its official website (<http://www.worldhello-day.org/>). Give your students the simple comprehension questions listed below and then let them access the web site. If you do not have computers in the classroom, print the information from the site and distribute to your students. By reading about the origins of the day and the intention behind World Hello Day, your students will gain appreciation for what a simple hello can do to change the world.

When is World Hello Day?

When was World Hello Day started?

Why was it started?

What is the purpose for World Hello Day in today's world?

How many people should you say hello to?

What prestigious people have realized the value of World Hello Day?

Instead of encouraging force, World Hello Day encourages what?

2 SAY HELLO

The goal of World Hello Day is to get participants to say hello to ten different people throughout the day. Challenge your students to speak up in a context in which they may not feel very comfortable by saying hello to ten people on the street. If your school is located in an urban area, give your students some time walking around the city, perhaps to a coffee shop or newsstand, to say hello to ten people. Ask your students to note how those people responded, then debrief the experience in groups of four or five students. Did some respond positively? Did others respond negatively? What do your students think the world would be like if everyone, everyday, made an effort to greet ten people that they ran into? What can they as individuals do to make the world a friendlier place? Ask your students to make some predictions as to what the world would be like if everyone made an effort to say hello to more people every day.

3 HELLO OUT OF THE BLUE

Take the World Hello Day opportunity to say hello to someone you might not normally see by writing a personal letter to someone you care about. Start by reviewing the differences between a personal letter and a business letter. These differences include both structure and style. Then go through the parts of a personal letter: the heading, the greeting, the body, the complimentary close, the signature and the optional postscript. Encourage your students to think of someone that they care about whom they have not spoken with for some time. Then give the class an opportunity to write a personal letter to that person. Review how to address an envelope, and then drop the note in the mail. Though not the most common means of communication in the 21st century, most people still enjoy a hand written letter when it shows up in the mailbox! Some of your students may even receive a response in return.

4 HELLO IN ANY OTHER LANGUAGE

Give your students a chance to share some of their own culture by teaching the class how to say hello in their native languages. Every student will get the chance to be teacher for five minutes when he models the pronunciation and writing of his native hello and translates it directly into English. (For example, ni hao would translate directly to "you good?" but would translate in context to hello.) Once everyone has shared a bit of his native language, have students compare the different ways to say hello. How much variety is there among the global greetings? Do they get different feelings from different ways to express a greeting? If they could not use English or their native language, which other language would they use? Why?

5 WHAT DOES PEACE MEAN

Peace can be a charged subject, especially if you teach students from war torn areas of the world. Break your class into small groups to discuss the topic of peace, but be sure to be sensitive to each other's position on the subject. What does peace mean to each person? What are symbols of peace? What can individuals do to promote peace throughout the world? Have groups of four to five students discuss these questions together. After discussing peace, have each group come up with a list of at least five actions that average citizens can do to promote world peace. You can display these actions on a bulletin board with an image of the globe in the center. Are any of them practical? Achievable? Ask your students to write about the steps that they can personally take towards making the world a more peaceful place.

SOMETIMES IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE, BUT ONE PERSON REALLY CAN CHANGE THE FACE OF THE WORLD. HELP YOUR STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR OWN POTENTIAL BY ENCOURAGING COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE THEY MEET EVERY DAY.

By saying hello and trying to promote world peace, all global inhabitants will benefit!

Ready To Use Holiday Crafts for the ESL Classroom

DECEMBER IS IN FULL FORCE AND YOUR STUDENTS ARE STARTING TO GET LOST AMONG DREAMS OF SUGARPLUMS DANCING IN THEIR HEADS.

It is also a time when teachers may need to think about creative craft projects for their class to make, either for gifts or just because the semester's material is almost completed. Creative expression is fun for your students, but if designed correctly, it can also be used to further your students' language skills. These holiday crafts do just that as they take advantage of one of December's most popular traditions.

TRY THESE READY TO USE DECEMBER CRAFTS WITH YOUR ESL CLASS

1 GREETING CARDS

One activity that many people participate in as the year comes to a close is sending greeting cards to their friends and family. In today's world, many people have so many things going on in their lives that the yearend holidays are a good excuse to get in touch with people they may not have talked to all year! Most do this with greeting cards. To start the unit, bring in a collection of greeting cards for your students to preview. You may choose to bring cards that represent several different occasions or keep your examples within the holiday card genre. Challenge your students to note some similarities and differences among the cards. Some cards may be written in verse, others in pros. Some may mention specific holiday and others give more general greetings. Ask your students to come up with some people to whom they might like to send a holiday card. They may list family, friends, famous individuals or people they do not know such as volunteers serving in the military. After each person has a list, ask him or her to choose one person from that list to send a special, individualized holiday card. Then it is time to get out the leftover art supplies that you have been collecting throughout the year and let your students' creativity flow! You should have different colors of card stock, fabric scraps, glitter, glue, construction paper, paint, markers and any other supplies you have available in your art closet.

Encourage your students to be creative in decorating the front of the card and the inside if desired. Make sure your students understand that they should write an original message inside the card. It is best to write a rough draft on another piece of paper first before putting the final version in the card. Once the art portion of the card is complete, each person should write the final message inside the card. If you like, provide envelopes for your students and teach them how to address the envelope to its recipient in preparation for mailing.

2 POST OFFICE POSSIBILITIES

Every year, the post office sells postage stamps designed for the holiday season. There is generally a religious themed stamps as well as a non-religious stamps, and most people use them to mail their holiday cards. Since your students have already designed and created individualized holiday cards, challenge them to design a postage stamp that anyone might use to mail their holiday cards. You can have each person design the stamp on a standard piece of paper using crayons, pencils or markers. After each person has drawn his stamp, he may want to perforate the edges with a hand held hole puncher so it better resembles a stamp. You can then display the stamps on a bulletin board in your classroom titled "We're Going Places". If you choose to do so, you can take digital pictures of your students' stamp designs which can be used to print custom postage stamps. There are several web sites (including zazzle.com and stamps.com) licensed by the U.S. Post Office that will take your uploaded image and create legal postage stamps that can be used in the U.S. mail. You may want to have your students read the FAQ about photo stamps before they design their own.

Once all the designs are done, you can order these stamps yourself or e-mail the digital images to your students' parents with an explanation and a link to a site where they can order stamps for themselves. If anyone does order stamps based off his design, ask that he bring in one of the stamps for the class to see.

3 HOLIDAY CARD WREATH

Now that your class has created their own cards and thought about how to mail them, it is time to think about the cards they will receive. Many people display the holiday cards which they receive in their home as decoration. You can create a greeting card holder for your classroom that can serve as both a card display and a reading center for your students' free time. To make a card display that looks like an evergreen wreath, have each student in your classroom paint one or more spring loaded clothespins green, in one of two shades of green. You will need a total of forty-two clothespins for the wreath, half in each color. Before class, you will need to cut the hook off a wire hanger and bend the remaining wire into a circle. Make a hook on one end of the wire (so you can hang it later) and leave the other end open. Then after your students have painted the clothespins and allowed them to dry, string the clothespins on the metal ring alternately with green and red wooden beads. You will want to string the clothespins through the wire circle between the two wooden "arms" of the clothespin so the pinched end faces the outside of the circle. These will hold the cards in place around the outside of your wreath. Finish your wreath by bending the open end of the wire around the end with the hook and adding a large red bow in front of the hanging hardware.

As your students send or receive greeting cards, encourage them to bring the cards in and add to the class collection. When your students have free periods, they can remove the cards and read the messages that are printed inside of the cards and then replace them on the wreath. Your students will be getting reading practice as they enjoy the season's greetings!

HOLIDAY CRAFTS CAN DO MORE THAN SATISFY AN ART REQUIREMENT FOR YOUR CLASS. THEY CAN SERVE AS USEFUL LANGUAGE TEACHING VENUES FOR YOUR ESL CLASS.

Not only that, they are fun for everyone in class. So get out the glue and glitter and have fun making, sending and collecting holiday cards this winter.

How to Teach a Christmas Lesson Adult Learners Will Never Forget

CHRISTMAS IS A HOLIDAY THAT ADULTS ENJOY AS MUCH AS CHILDREN.

The preparations, the shopping for gifts, the cooking, and the singing is not hard for a grown-up to get into the spirit of Christmas. So, with this in mind, why not give your adult ESL learners a Christmas lesson they'll never forget? This is a great opportunity for students who come from different backgrounds to share things about their culture and learn from others. It's also a wonderful way to practice all four skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

And here's how you do it:

HOW TO PROCEED

1 TALK ABOUT WHAT WE USUALLY DO TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

Ask students what they usually do during the holiday season, how they prepare for Christmas, and what they do on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. If you have students from different countries, ask them what they will be doing for Christmas this year. Will they be doing anything differently? Will they try out something new? What do they usually do in their country of origin?

2 TALK ABOUT CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Ask students who are familiar with other customs to tell the class about them. Do they know about Christmas celebrations in other countries? Which countries? Are they very different from typical North-American or European customs? Has anyone ever been to a South American country for Christmas? Or any country where it was hot, and there was no snow for Christmas?

Take as long as you want, but make sure students are fully engaged in the discussion.

3 READ ABOUT CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

There are a lot of websites where you can get this information, but Santa's Net has a wonderful collection of traditions from around the world. Choose a few and print them out for your class, or have them read the pages directly on a computer or laptop. Don't forget to introduce key vocabulary before reading. At BusyTeacher.org, we have some great worksheets in our Christmas section, like the Christmas Traditions around the World worksheet and the Christmas Traditions Quiz, which are great post-reading activities.

4 WATCH A CHRISTMAS VIDEO

Now that your students are more familiar with Christmas vocabulary and traditions, they should be ready to watch a Christmas video! Choose one that is appropriate to your students' level. Highly recommended for upper-intermediate to advanced students is The History Channel's Christmas Unwrapped: The Truth about Christmas, a fascinating documentary about the true origins of many modern day Christmas symbols and customs. At FanPop.com you can watch all five parts of the video, but the first 10 minutes gives you plenty of information to work with. There are also several other videos to choose from. Don't forget to provide short pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing activities.

5 GIVE THEM A SPEAKING TASK

The speaking task should relate to the video they've just watched. Give them roles to play out: One student could be a famous historian and another the interviewer who asks questions about the origins of some Christmas traditions. Or, one student could be travelling to a foreign country and another student offers information on how Christmas is celebrated there.

6 GIVE THEM A WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Here are some suggestions for Christmas writing assignments, which you may adapt to your students' level:

Give them writing prompts to begin a Christmas story: "Sally took the last batch of gingerbread cookies from the oven. Suddenly,..." etc.

Give them an essay topic "Is Christmas more about shopping than the birth of Jesus these days?... Describe a Christmas memory from your childhood... What is Christmas really about?"

Assign the writing task for homework if you're short on time.

7 WRAP UP THE LESSON WITH A CHRISTMAS CAROL!

Choose any Christmas carol or song where several typical Christmas traditions and activities are mentioned, like making a snowman, riding sleighs, roasting chestnuts, etc. Ask students to listen to the song and identify which of these activities or traditions are mentioned.

EVERYONE KNOWS IT'S EASY TO PLAN A CHRISTMAS LESSON WITH KIDS, BUT DON'T LEAVE YOUR ADULT ESL LEARNERS OUT OF THE HOLIDAY FUN! THEY MAY NOT HAVE COLORING PAGES, CRAFTS, OR CROSSWORD PUZZLES, BUT THEY'LL ENJOY THEIR CHRISTMAS LESSON JUST THE SAME!

Top 10 Christmas Songs for ESL Classes

In the northern hemisphere, there are lots who dream of a white Christmas, whereas in the south of the world the holiday season is best enjoyed by the pool while sipping cool drinks. No matter where we are in the world for the holidays, two things remain the same: we all look forward to getting together with family and friends, and we sing Christmas songs.

Some Christmas carols have become so popular and so well-loved, they've been translated to several languages, and are sung in countries where snow and hot chocolate have nothing to do with Christmas. For students of English as a second language, there are songs that are timeless classics, which should definitely be taught as another way to make students more familiar with English-speaking cultures.

HERE ARE THE TOP 10 CHRISTMAS SONGS FOR ESL CLASSES.

Here you'll find some classic, traditional carols and some modern favorites. We've provided some background information on each song, which you may share with your students, together with lyrics and some suggestions for activities.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 JINGLE BELLS

This is probably the single, most popular Christmas song ever, although it was originally written for Thanksgiving. Bogglesworld (bogglesworld.esl.com/christmas_carols.htm) offers a short version that is perfect for ESL classes.

2 SILENT NIGHT

This classic carol was actually originally written in German, but is now sung in over 44 languages. About.com (esl.about.com/od/holidayresources/a/sc_silent.htm) offers the lyrics and a short list of vocabulary you might want to go over before listening to the song in class.

3 JOY TO THE WORLD

And what a joy indeed it is to lead your class in this happy hymn! For lyrics and list of recommended vocabulary words, go to About.com (esl.about.com/od/holidayresources/a/sc_joy.htm).

4 WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

This 16th century English carol has stood the test of time and remains a very popular Christmas song to this very day. Lyrics also available at Bogglesworld (bogglesworld.esl.com/christmas_carols.htm).

5 O CHRISTMAS TREE

This song was originally a traditional German carol called "O Tannenbaum" (fir tree in German). Although the best known version is from the 19th century, the original melody dates back to the 16th. Lyrics in both English and German are available at SongsforTeaching.com (songsforteaching.com/christmas/ochristmastree.php).

6 RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER

Who can name all of Santa's reindeer? Few probably can, but there's one name that stands out among young and old: Rudolph, the reindeer that was at first ridiculed for his big, red nose, but later saves the day as he deftly leads Santa's sleigh through the fog. Lyrics are available at About.com (esl.about.com/od/holidayresources/a/sc_rud.htm), but don't forget to try the activities recommended at ESLKidStuff (eslkidstuff.com/ChristmasGames.htm): there's a pin the tail on the reindeer game that is sure to provide lots of holiday fun for the little ones.

7 WHITE CHRISTMAS

When we think "White Christmas", we think "Bing Crosby". The song written by Irving Berlin has actually made it into the Guinness Book of World Records as the all time best-selling

single. Here is a wonderful worksheet for beginners, guaranteed to put their listening comprehension to the test: busyteacher.org/1784-christmas-song-white-christmas-bing-crosby.html

8 I SAW MOMMY KISSING SANTA CLAUS

This fun song reached the number one position on the charts in 1952. The story is as endearing as any Christmas tale: an unsuspecting child endeavors to sneak up on Santa Claus and finds him (presumably his father) kissing his mother underneath the mistletoe. Here's a great worksheet based on the cover recorded by the Jackson 5: busyteacher.org/1788-christmas-song-i-saw-mommy-kissing-santa-the.html

9 ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS YOU

One of the most recent additions to the list of holiday classics, this song was released in 1994 in Mariah Carey's Merry Christmas album. Lyrics and activities are available in this worksheet: busyteacher.org/1060-all_i_want_for_christmas.html

10 DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS

This is the perfect song to raise awareness among your students of the hardships others may face in other parts of the world. In 1984, Bob Geldof wrote this song and put together a group of English and Irish artists, called Band Aid. All proceeds from this song went towards relief for the famine in Ethiopia. The video and lyrics are available at Engleo.com (www.engleo.com/2009/12/do-they-know-its-christmas.html).

SOME OF THESE SONGS ARE GREAT LEAD INS FOR DISCUSSION, OTHERS ARE SIMPLY FUN TO SING. WHETHER YOU MAKE YOUR OWN WORKSHEETS OR USE THE ONES WE'VE PROVIDED, MAKE SURE YOU GIVE YOUR STUDENTS PLENTY OF NEW THINGS TO LEARN WITH THESE WONDERFUL HOLIDAY CLASSICS!

10 Fabulous Christmas Crafts for ESL Learners

EVEN THOSE ESL TEACHERS WHO ARE NOT ARTISTICALLY INCLINED MUST ADMIT THAT NO CHRISTMAS LESSON IS COMPLETE WITHOUT FUN CHRISTMAS CRAFTS.

They are as important as the stories you read and the carols you sing. The good news is that even though arts and crafts may not be your strong suit, there are plenty of fun, simple crafts that any teacher can do. So, this holiday season, gather your supplies and get crafty with your ESL students.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS STAND-UP CARDS

Making Christmas cards in the ESL classroom is an absolute classic, but why have your students simply fold a white sheet of paper in half and draw in it, when you can use these fabulous templates! This worksheet includes printable templates for five stunning cards – an absolute must-have this holiday season! Each card includes some of the typical Christmas greetings, but you may choose to not print them and have students write their own personalized Christmas wishes.

2 POINSETTIA ORNAMENT

You'll need some red and some yellow construction paper, plus glue and tape. Cut strips of red and yellow construction paper, of approximately 3 inches wide. Take one yellow strip and loop it into a circle. Tape the two ends together. This is the center of the poinsettia. Cut the red strips into tear shapes. Glue these "leaves" around the yellow middle with the pointy side facing out (to resemble poinsettia leaves). Loop another yellow strip through the center, which can be used to hang the flower as a decoration.

3 DOUGH ORNAMENTS

You'll need one cup of salt, one cup of water, 3 cups of flour, food coloring, paint, brushes, glitter, and Christmas cookie cutters. Mix the in-

redients to make the dough. Students make their ornaments with the Christmas cookie cutters. Use a sharp pencil tip to make a hole at the top of each. Let dry for a couple of days, then, they're ready to be painted and decorated with glitter!

4 PINE CONE ORNAMENTS

You'll need some pine cones, white, red, or green paint, glue, and anything you may want to use for decoration, like glitter, sequins, garland, etc. Dip the pine cones in paint, and once they're dry, have students decorate them. Tie some string or ribbon to the top to hang, or paint the bottom brown to make them look like Christmas trees.

5 SNOWMAN PICTURE MAGNET

Ask students to bring pictures of themselves. Cut out a snowman shape out of white construction paper. Paste the student's face where the snowman's face should be. Students "dress" their snowmen by cutting out hats and scarves out of construction paper. Decorate with pompons, cotton balls, glitter, etc...Glue a magnet onto the back, and your students will have a great gift for their parents.

6 JINGLE BELLS

You'll need two small jingle bells per student, pipe cleaners, clear plastic cups, and stickers or other things for decoration. Show students how to string the bells with the pipe cleaner. Show them how to twist it into an 8. The top half of the 8 goes through a hole in the cup and the bottom, with the jingle bells, is inside the plastic "bell". Students decorate their bells.

7 EDIBLE CHRISTMAS TREES

You'll need some sugar ice cream cones, green-colored icing, sprinkles, and gum drops, plus plastic knives and paper plates. Give each student a paper plate, a plastic knife, and an ice cream cone. All they have

to do is place the cone with the tip pointing up, and start decorating their Christmas trees! They can be taken home, but they will probably not make it there!

8 CHRISTMAS ANGELS

You'll need white construction paper and skin tone paper, plus yarn in different hair colors and pipe cleaners. Students trace both hands on white paper for the angel's wings, and they trace one shoe foot on skin tone paper for the body. The heel of the foot is the head. Students glue the "wings" onto their angels, then, draw faces and glue the yarn for hair. Make a halo with the pipe cleaner, and decorate wings with glitter.

9 CHRISTMAS WREATH

A great way to display class spirit on your bulletin board! Have each student trace one of their hands on green construction paper and cut it out. Glue the hands, fingers out, in a circle to make your wreath. Students decorate with glitter, sequins, garland, etc., they can get as creative as they want in their group effort.

10 REINDEER TREAT HOLDER

You'll need some brown paper or plastic cups, light brown, dark brown, black, and white construction paper, and red pompons, plus glue. Students draw and cut out one pair of antlers from light brown paper, then, one pair of ears from the dark brown paper. Next come two white circles for the eyes and two smaller black circles for the pupils. They glue everything onto the paper cup and finish with the red pompon nose. Fill each of your students' cups with treats to take home!

Let's not forget that you may take the opportunity to accomplish some of your ESL goals. Before getting started on each art project, share with your students some background information on what you'll be working on, like the poinsettia or reindeer.

Christmas Lessons: Try Reading!

8 Top Christmas Books for ESL

CHRISTMAS TIME IS A GREAT TIME TO CUDDLE UP WITH A GOOD BOOK BY THE FIRE.

Although you won't be able to get a good fire going in class, you might still be able to recreate this cozy atmosphere with some good reading nonetheless. And there is no better opportunity to get your students acquainted with some classic Christmas stories and some vocabulary that relate to the season.

HERE ARE SOME RECOMMENDED CHRISTMAS READINGS:

1 SANTA READING

Want to give your students some background information on Saint Nick? Where does the name Santa Claus come from? Here are some worksheets for elementary and upper-intermediate students. Each of the two stories comes with pre-reading, reading, and post-reading tasks, so the hard part has already been figured out for you!

2 CHRISTMAS READING AND VOCABULARY

This worksheet is just packed with information! Students at an intermediate level and above have a chance to read about some of the things that are most commonly associated to Christmas in the northern hemisphere, including things like candy canes and mistletoe. Use these short texts for all types of reading activities. And don't forget to make use of the handy vocabulary list on the last two pages.

3 TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

This classic poem provides some great Christmas reading for students of all ages, although the vocabulary may be hard for beginners to understand. It is perfect for reading out loud, indeed, not a creature will be stirring as you read these captivating verses.

But before reading make sure you engage students' attention in a warm-up and go over some of the more difficult vocabulary. There's a copy of the poem available at About.com (esl.about.com/od/holidayresources/a/r_twas.htm), which includes the vocabulary list. EnglishGateway (bit.ly/SQIVBM) also has a great lesson plan that you can use, which even includes a link to an audio file for the poem so you may combine listening and reading activities. If you wish to purchase this book, you'll find it at Amazon: *The Night Before Christmas*

4 A CHRISTMAS CAROL

There is no story that is more popular during Christmas time than *A Christmas Carol*. Although it is a bit long to read in just one class, you may choose to read it in parts over the course of several lessons. ESOLE-Books (christmascarol.solebooks.com/) offers a simplified version of Dickens's classic novel in six easy to read parts, each of which is accompanied by a vocabulary list and suggested activities. It's a great option considering that reading the original is not a very feasible endeavor.

5 WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?

Written by Michelle Medlock Adams and illustrated by Amy Wummer, this book is perfect for the little ones. The book simply answers the question with beautiful art and engaging rhymes. Try asking your young learners, "What is Christmas?" before reading, and then see how their answers and the book's compare. Available at Amazon.

6 LEGEND OF THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Written by Rick Osborne and Jim Griffin, this book for children 4 to 8 explores the origins of the custom of hanging and leaving gifts in stockings, and emphasizes the importance of giving through very realistic illustrations. Also available at Amazon.

7 MY LIFE AS REINDEER ROAD KILL

(*The Incredible Worlds of Wally McDoogle #9*)

Perfect for the pre-teen set, this book written by Bill Myers is just another in the series titled *The Incredible Worlds of Wally McDoogle*, but one where Wally embarks on a special holiday adventure. Tremendous fun for the kids and easy to read. Read over the course of the month, or assign as homework.

8 A MAINE CHRISTMAS CAROL

Written by Phillip Harris, this book is the ideal reading assignment for teens in advanced levels. Although the premise is similar to that of Dickens's classic, in this book there is no Scrooge but rather a troubled 16-year old who is visited by his father's ghost, who tries to steer the young man away from drugs. Assign it as reading over the holidays, and discuss upon your return to classes.

FROM WELL-LOVED CLASSICS, TO NEW FAVORITES, SHORT WORKSHEETS OR ASSIGNED READING OVER THE HOLIDAYS, WE RECOMMEND YOU GIVE YOUR STUDENTS SOME FORM OF READING FUN FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON. IT'S A GREAT CHANCE FOR THEM TO BRUSH UP ON THEIR READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS, PICK UP SOME NEW VOCABULARY, OR SIMPLY EXPLORE WHAT THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS ALL ABOUT.

How to Teach a Christmas Lesson with Video

Whether you choose Christmas stories, carols, or crafts to share with your ESL students during this very special time of year, don't forget to also include a Christmas lesson with video! Video lessons are a great way to help your students hone their listening skills, and videos are perfect for showing how English-speaking cultures celebrate Christmas. Here's how to teach the perfect Christmas lesson with video:

HOW TO PROCEED

1 DECIDE WHAT YOU'LL BE SHOWING THE VIDEO FOR

Will you be showing the video:

- to show your students typical American Christmas customs?
- to teach some Christmas vocabulary?
- to practice listening comprehension?
- to simply have fun?

It's important to identify your goal, as it will guide you towards picking out the right video, one that will help you accomplish this goal.

2 CHOOSE YOUR CHRISTMAS VIDEO

Fortunately for us, there is a large variety of Christmas videos we can use in the ESL classroom. Some classic favorites include:

- Frosty the Snowman
- How the Grinch Stole Christmas
- It's a Wonderful Life

Then, there are the versions of A Christmas Carol, like Mickey's Christmas Carol. If you don't have a copy of any of these on DVD, go to Fan-Pop.com, where you'll find these and other Christmas videos (bit.ly/nYkd3) that you may watch with a small group of students online. You have 101 videos to choose from, including feature films, TV specials, cartoons, music videos, and even TV commercials. Decide whether you want to focus on

Christmas traditions, vocabulary, or listening comprehension, and choose the one that best suits your language goals, your students' ages, and English level.

3 GIVE YOUR STUDENTS PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

For any Christmas video, it's a good idea to teach Christmas vocabulary first. You can use any of our wonderful worksheets in our Christmas section for this purpose, don't miss out on this fabulous Christmas Materials Package (busyteacher.org/3966-christmas-materials-package-2010-tons-of.html), just packed with activities, but also very useful picture flashcards. The best activities to teach Christmas vocabulary are word searches, crossword puzzles, or any other vocabulary-focused activity. Depending on the video, you may also wish to introduce other relevant vocabulary words. If on the other hand, your goal is to teach Christmas customs, begin by asking students what they usually do for Christmas in their country of origin.

4 GIVE YOUR STUDENTS VIEWING TASKS

These vary depending on the length of the video and your students' level. Some possible viewing tasks may include comprehension questions, matching exercises, or a gap-filling exercise. It is recommended that your split longer videos into sections, pause the video at the right times, ask students to complete a task, then continue to the next section of the video.

5 GIVE YOUR STUDENTS POST-VIEWING TASKS

Some of these tasks may include:

- Retelling the story through a comic strip
- Telling the story in one tense, then retelling in another tense.
- A writing task that is appropriate to the story, for example, for

any video with A Christmas Carol theme, ask students to write a paragraph about what the Ghost of Christmas Past (or Present or Future) would have shown them.

- Ask students to write a dialogue, like a conversation where Scrooge tells his nephew about the amazing visitors he had and what they showed him. Students then act out their conversation.

6 END THE LESSON WITH A FUN GAME OR ACTIVITY

A Christmas lesson should invoke the holiday spirit, so reward your students with some fun games after they've completed their tasks. This Christmas Holiday Trivia Game (busyteacher.org/3838-christmas-holiday-trivia-game.html) is absolutely perfect for this! Christmas Bingo is another great option. And don't forget your youngest learners might enjoy some quiet time with some fun Christmas coloring pages (busyteacher.org/3431-18-christmas-coloring-pages.html). Now's also a great time to sing some popular Christmas carols and songs. If you don't know which ones to pick, simply sing those that were featured in the video you watched. Watch Frosty the Snowman, and teach your young learners the song!

WHETHER YOU CHOOSE TO SHOW THEM AN ORIGINAL CLASSIC LIKE, IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, OR A NEW FAVORITE LIKE THE MADAGASCAR PENGUINS' CHRISTMAS CAPER, HOLIDAY VIDEOS GIVE YOU A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO NOT ONLY TEACH YOUR STUDENTS A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT OTHER CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS, BUT ALSO SHARE A MEMORABLE LESSON WITH THEM.

How to Teach a Perfect Christmas Lesson

CHRISTMAS IS ANOTHER EXCELLENT HOLIDAY TO PLAN A CULTURAL LESSON AROUND.

It is a holiday in many countries and the traditions associated with it vary quite a lot from one country to another. It can be fun for students to learn how Christmas is celebrated in English speaking countries and compare that to how it is celebrated in their country or even just how traditions differ from family to family.

THE INGREDIENTS OF A PERFECT X-MAS LESSON

1 WARM UP

Find out what your students know about Christmas already by eliciting things from them such as the date and Christmas related vocabulary. Students may know that it is a religious and not just commercial holiday however the focus should be on how people celebrate Christmas and not the religious background. Telling students that some people go to church on Christmas would be appropriate while telling them about The Nativity would most likely not be. Once some vocabulary and other information has been written on the board, continue on to your introduction.

2 INTRODUCE CHRISTMAS VOCABULARY

At this point, introduce anything else needed for the lesson that your students have not come up with on their own including more Christmas vocabulary and facts. A slideshow or flashcards would be ideal for this because it is incredibly difficult to explain gingerbread houses and chimneys to ESL students without images to refer to. Use choral repetition to practice the pronunciation of new vocabulary words and encourage students to ask questions about Christmas and how it celebrated.

3 DISCUSS CHRISTMAS

From your introduction, you can move into a discussion about Christmas. Ask students if they celebrate Christmas with their families and if so, ask what activities they do or foods they eat on this particular occasion. Often this will vary a lot from one family to the next. If you are teaching in a country where Christmas is not celebrated, ask students to talk about an important holiday in their country. Perhaps some of the traditions or foods are similar to Christmas celebrations in other parts of the world so do a short comparison activity on the board.

4 PRACTICE

There are lots of fun activities you can do in a Christmas lesson. You can create worksheets with Christmas crossword puzzles, matching or fill in the blank exercises to practice new vocabulary words. You can have writing exercises where students write about their ideal Christmas or make Christmas cards for family members. If possible include lots of fun holiday images or print Christmas worksheets in color or on colored paper to make them more festive. Some schools might allow a white elephant gift exchange but make sure this is an acceptable activity before mentioning it to students. Gift exchanges can be lots of fun and are easy to conduct, simply ask students to bring in one gift each and give them a low maximum gift value about a week in advance.

5 LISTENING PRACTICE

Use Christmas carols or stories to create listening exercises for your students. Worksheets for Christmas songs will usually consist of fill in the blank exercises and perhaps a translation of the song so that students can understand its meaning. If the song is simple enough, provide translations for only a few key vocabulary words and have students volunteer to translate the song one line at a time. You can teach classes to sing the song

you selected too. When using Christmas stories, the best activities would require students to take turns reading portions of the text aloud, answer comprehension questions about the passage, and lead into a discussion.

6 CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCHES

While there is not a lot of educational value to word searches, it can be handy to include one on your holiday themed worksheets so that students who finish the exercises quickly have something to entertain them while slower students finish their work. Students usually enjoy word searches and when studying new vocabulary words, it can make students focus on how to spell them.

CULTURAL CLASSES CAN BE VERY ENJOYABLE. STUDENTS ARE OFTEN EAGER TO LEARN ABOUT HOLIDAYS OR SIMPLY JUST EXCITED TO HAVE A BREAK FROM SCHOOL. IN CLASSES LEADING UP TO A SCHOOL HOLIDAY, GETTING STUDENTS TO FOCUS CAN BE A CHALLENGE SO DECORATING THE CLASSROOM AND CONDUCTING HOLIDAY THEMED ACTIVITIES CAN PUT THEIR ENTHUSIASM TO GOOD USE.

Jazzy January Lesson Ideas For Creative ESL Teachers

JANUARY IS GENERALLY KIND OF A LOW POINT IN THE YEAR FOR STUDENTS BECAUSE IT FOLLOWS A LONG SCHOOL HOLIDAY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET STUDENTS INVOLVED IN FUN ACTIVITIES AND REALLY ENGAGE THEM IN LESSONS DURING THIS MONTH. DOING DIFFERENT TYPES OF LESSONS AND STRAYING A BIT FROM THE TEXT-BOOK MATERIAL EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE WILL FORCE THEM TO THINK ON THEIR FEET.

Here are some lesson ideas for the month of January.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 WINTER VACATION

Give students the opportunity to share what they did on winter vacation with the class. Design activities that allow them to either write a summary of their holiday to read aloud or answer interview questions with a partner or in a group. You can focus on like for your beginners using a structure similar to "I like to eat/make/play pie/cookies/games on Christmas." For intermediate and advanced students you can focus on past tense, for example "I ate pie on Christmas." or present perfect tense, "I have eaten pie every Christmas for 10 years." You could also turn this into a simple game by creating Bingo sheets with Christmas themed pictures. Have students walk around the classroom asking and answering questions based on the pictures until a few students have gotten Bingo. If that is too easy, tell students that they must check off all the pictures to complete the activity.

2 NEW YEAR'S

Since any cultural lessons in December would be focused on Christmas, take this opportunity to talk about how people around the world celebrate New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. Tell students some basic information about how three to five other countries celebrate New Year's and have students compare

these celebrations with how they celebrate the holiday. They can compare things such as what foods are traditionally eaten. Another thing you can do is talk about New Year's resolutions (busyteacher.org/3999-my-new-years-resolutions-worksheet.html) and then have students make a list of two or three things that they would like to accomplish this year. If these resolutions are based on learning English, you can keep them on file to refer to later. If they are not, you can ask students to submit a copy of their answers anonymously and then in a later class tell them which resolutions were the most and least common.

3 CONDITIONALS

If the winter weather has gotten everyone down, have a lesson where students can dream up brighter alternatives. Have students practice conditionals by giving them sentence starters such as "If it were sunny, I would ~." You can simply start the lesson with the first section of the example sentence and then call on students to get some different endings. Sometimes imagining things can be difficult for students but it is important to give them the opportunity to be creative. Some students really excel at this type of activity and will enjoy it immensely. Your sentence starters can become more and more outlandish as the lesson progresses. You could also have a worksheet with the first half of several sentences and ask students to fill in the second half of the sentences on their own. You could end the lesson with an activity where you give students the weirdest sentence starter yet and ask them to work in groups to finish the sentence and tell a little story.

4 DISCUSSION

For advanced classes you can have a discussion lesson about Martin Luther King Jr. whose birthday is celebrated towards the end of January. You can choose to talk about his life, how he is remembered, or both. Students may find this topic challeng-

ing so it is important to introduce some key vocabulary at the beginning of the lesson and prepare a short reading so that students will have some background on the topic before starting a discussion. Some schools prefer not to bring certain topics into the classroom so be sure that this material is acceptable before introducing it to your students.

5 LETTERS

While a little unusual, the second week in January is Letter Writing Week so let students try composing letters in English. You can have students do this either in groups or individually. If you can arrange for them to have pen pals that would be great but if not, they can write letters to you, students in their class, students in other classes of yours, or as diary entries. It is important to talk about letter format before having them start this activity and devote some time to sharing letters with the class if appropriate at the end of the lesson.

SOME CREATIVE JANUARY THEMES AND TOPICS THIS MONTH WILL KEEP YOUR CLASS FOCUSED ON THEIR LESSONS AND HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP THEIR CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS.

Celebrating National Hobby Month in Your ESL Classroom

ARE YOU A COIN COLLECTOR? ARE YOU FASCINATED WITH STAMPS? DO YOU LIKE VIDEO GAMES OR COOKING OR TENNIS? WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING WE LIKE TO DO WITH OUR FREE TIME, OUR HOBBIES.

January is national hobby month, and what better excuse do you need to bring the world of hobbies into the ESL classroom? Besides, as the cold mornings usher in colder afternoons, what better activity is there than submerging yourself in a hobby?

HOW TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH (JANUARY) IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 WHAT IS YOUR HOBBY

Everyone has a hobby, and the range of hobbies in the world is just about as diverse as the number of people on the globe. Start your hobby fun by brainstorming with your students all the hobbies they can think of. These might be hobbies that they have, that people they know have or just hobbies they have heard of. Some will be common, like collecting stamps or bottle caps. Others will be far more unique, like making cheese from scratch or practicing wilderness survival. Hopefully, by the end of the activity your students will accept that almost any activity can be a hobby. With that in mind, put your students into groups of about three students each to write a definition of the word hobby. Have groups share their answers before going to the dictionary for an official definition.

Once your class has an extensive list of hobbies, ask your students to share a little information about each of their hobbies. Encourage your students to share how they practice the hobby, why and when. Then give the class a few minutes to ask questions about the hobby. If any of their hobbies are not on the list, be sure to add them.

2 TAKE UP SOMETHING NEW

Using the list that your class brainstormed, tell your students that to celebrate national hobby month, you would like each of them to try a new hobby. The first step for each person will be to determine what hobby he or she would like to try. Hopefully, your list is extensive enough that their new hobby will be on it, but do not limit your students if something is not on the list. Then give your students some time to do a little internet research about the hobby they have chosen. If he decides to learn to crochet, your student should look on line for information on how to begin. If she wants to take up martial arts, she should look into the different types and choose the best fit for her.

As your students choose and then try out their new hobbies, ask them to keep a journal of the experience. At each step, ask your students to record what they are learning and how they feel. By the end of the month, have each person write an overall review of the hobby learning process including whether he or she intends to continue with the hobby or move on to a new one. If your students are willing, put their projects into a hobby library in the classroom where other students can read about their experiences and evaluation of the process. Someone else may want to try the hobby and would benefit from the information his classmate has shared.

3 COLLECTIVE COIN COLLECTING

One of the most common hobbies is coin collecting. Also known as numismatics, collecting coins can offer a tangible link with the past, but for ESL classes, it can also be a link to the globe. Tell your students that you are starting a class coin collection. Make sure your students understand that they should not contribute any coins of great value, and then invite each person to bring in one or more coins for the collection. Particularly

useful in the class collection will be the coins from their home countries. As each person brings in a coin, give him or her a few minutes in front of the class to describe the coin and its origin. Then add that coin to the class collection. You may want to put all the coins in a large jar and allow your students to peruse the collection during free study periods. Another option would be to display the coins on a bulletin board that your students can look over when they have time. You can attach the coins to the board with rubber cement or silicone glue which you will be able to peel off once it is dry. Also, ask each person to bring in one or more pennies, and keep them in a separate container.

You can create a learning center with the coin collections by typing up some activities, laminating the sheets and then making them available with the coins. Try activities like comparing and contrasting two coins using a Venn diagram or having students survey what years the coins were minted. You can also use the collections for creative writing by asking students to write about a person or object portrayed on one of the coins. Ask your students some discussion questions like what they can tell about the country by what is printed on its money and what monetary system a particular country uses. Your students may have to speak with one another to get the answers to these questions particularly if coins are written in different alphabets or writing systems.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS HOBBIES IN THE WORLD AND COUNTLESS ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO AS A CLASS FOR NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH.

As your students explore new ways to relax and enjoy themselves, try your hand at something new, too, and share your experiences with your students. When you do, they will be more likely to share their own learning process.

Teaching Argument Through the Writings of Martin Luther King

For many instructors, studying the writings of Martin Luther King is confined to the month of January, perhaps to the week leading up to his birthday. In a way, this is good — at least Martin Luther King is actually remembered on the day bearing his name, unlike with some national heroes. But it is also a loss because King was a masterful rhetorician who knew how to use words to move his audience. Indeed, he had to be as he had committed himself to the monumental task of extending rights to unrecognized groups of people and to do it without using violence. He had to accomplish his goals with words, not fists. Studying his writing therefore is to analyze how arguments are built.

POINTS FOR INSTRUCTION

1 Start with the familiar (to most): Study the “I Have a Dream” Speech. What major claim is Dr. King making in this speech? What is his dream? How does he support the claim? Take a look at King’s use of appeal. Do you see the appeal to logic? To emotional? To ethics?

2 For the rebuttal, look at “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” The letter itself is a series of rebuttals to the accusations leveled at him in the letter to which he is responding: “You have been influenced by the argument of ‘outsiders coming in... I was invited here. ...I have basic organizational ties here... Anyone who loves inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.’” To the accusation that he is a criminal, he points out that the laws he broke were unjust laws, and the specific law for which he was jailed, picketing without a permit, he made every attempt to follow by obtaining a permit, but was thwarted.

3 After examining the major parts of an argument, for further practice move to a less familiar work, such as “When Peace Becomes Obnoxious,” written in response to a young African American woman leaving the University of Alabama due to the harassment she was receiving and the “peace” that resulted once she was gone. King employs a number of tactics in analyzing the opposition and its “blame the victim” mentality.

4 King often used quotes to support his cases—often the Bible because of his training. Who else does he quote? Why? How well does he support his case? For example, look at how, in “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” he quotes the Supreme Court Case *Brown v. the Board of Education* as well as philosopher Martin Buber on the topic of segregation to make his point.

5 King uses other rhetorical strategies as well. For example, look at how he uses parallel structure in the “I Have a Dream” speech. “Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice.” Also note does the use of repetition. It is with the repetition of “I have a dream” and “dream” and “American dream” that he structures his speech. Because a speech is originally meant to be heard, not read, the speaker must use such devices to structure the speech for the audience and give it a sense of purpose and direction.

6 Students should also study the extended metaphor King uses in “I Have a Dream” with “We’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check... America has given the Negro people a bad check... But we refuse to believe

that the bank of justice is bankrupt.” The use of this metaphor is another way King structures his speech.

7 Does King use descriptive imagery at all to build his case in “I Have a Dream”? What pictures does he paint? Note particularly the use of “the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation” and “the sweltering summer of the Negro’s legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality.”

8 Take the opportunity of introducing argument to also introduce logical fallacy. Show how they apply to King, and how he often took apart the logical fallacy of his opposition to make his argument: e.g., in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” to the critics of his civil rights activities, “You deplore the demonstrations that are presently taking place in Birmingham. But I am sorry that your statement did not express a similar concern for the conditions that brought the demonstrations into being.”

9 Students may sometimes need to be taught that the use of “Negro” is of course historic, and King’s usage was the standard term in his time. Today the more appropriate term is “African American.” This can be taught in the context of word choice. Some words, like swear words, can alienate an audience. Inappropriate racial terms can have the same effect -- while choosing more appropriate terms, words familiar to and accepted by the audience, can get people to listen. The words we choose do matter.

FURTHER EXERCISES

1 After having examined the ma-

For parts of argument of claim, support, appeals, have students write their own “I Have a Dream” or “Letter from—” speeches. Practice the use of different forms of argument: make a claim, support it, use different appeals, etc.

2

In “When Peace Becomes Obnoxious,” King showed how something we usually think of as positive, like peace, can at times be negative. Can you do the same? Write a short essay showing how the positive can sometimes be negative (or the negative sometimes positive).

3

Certainly King argued intelligently, but his passion for his cause is also apparent. That passion also helped because he harnessed it to build his argument. How does that passion come through in his speeches? Can you write something you feel strongly about? How can you show it? Volunteers can later give their speeches, showing their passion for their cause.

KING IS MOST OFTEN REMEMBERED, RIGHTLY, FOR HIS LABOR IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.

However, in going beyond that history, King can also be remembered as a skilled rhetorician.

A New Year's Lesson Learners Will Remember Throughout the Year

NEW YEAR'S DAY HAS COME AND GONE, AND MOST OF US ARE STILL ADJUSTING TO HAVING TO REMEMBER WHAT YEAR IT IS NOW. JANUARY IS A GREAT MONTH TO FOCUS ON NEW BEGINNINGS AND GOALS FOR THE YEAR THAT HAS JUST STARTED. AND IT'S ALSO A GREAT TIME TO DO THIS WITH YOUR ESL LEARNERS.

Here are some suggestions for a New Year's lesson your students will remember throughout the year.

1 BRING ON THE RESOLUTIONS!

There's no better way to start the year than on a positive note. Discuss with students the concept of resolutions: what they are, why people make them, why people break them, etc. Brainstorm the types of New Year resolutions adults usually make: lose weight, quit smoking, eat healthier foods, etc...

Ask your students if they have they made any resolutions yet. If they have, they may choose to share them with the class. If they haven't, they may come up with some resolutions of their own. Try using this great My New Year's Resolutions Worksheet (busyteacher.org/3999-my-new-years-resolutions-worksheet.html) to inspire more positive thoughts, and help them hone their writing skills, too!

Then, how about practicing predictions with will and won't?

2 GET CRAFTY!

Although it's not a holiday that typically inspires arts and crafts, there are some fabulous projects that will get your students' creative juices flowing.

- New Year's craft for young ESL learners: Ask your students to draw two pictures: one of something they enjoyed in the year that has just passed, like a special trip or event, and another of something they are looking forward to or hope to accomplish.

- Create your own class calendar: Teach or review the names of the months in English. Divide the class into 12 groups, give each group a calendar template (busyteacher.org/teaching_ideas_and_techniques/classroom-posters/), and assign each a month to work on. Each group has to decorate and create a page for their month. Put all of the pages together and use this very special class calendar to jot down birthdays, holidays, and special events.

3 OUR NEW YEAR IS NOT THE ONLY NEW YEAR

Some of your students may be aware of the fact that other cultures celebrate the New Year in different dates. But now's a good time as any to discuss these differences.

- Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year, which was celebrated this past September. The year 5771 began on September 8 at sunset. Ask the Jewish students in the class to share how they celebrate the New Year.
- Chinese New Year will be celebrated on February 3, and so the Year of the Rabbit or the Hare will begin. Surely your students know their zodiac sign, but how many know their Chinese zodiac sign? Wouldn't it be fun for them to find out? Use these wonderful Chinese New Year coloring pages (busyteacher.org/4019-chinese-new-year-13-coloring-pages.html) with your youngest learners.

4 NEW YEAR'S GAME: PICTURE THIS RESOLUTION

Hand out 4 to 6 slips of paper to each student and ask them to write a New Year's resolution on each. Mix them up and put them in a bag or hat. Divide your students into two teams. Each student has to take a resolution from the bag and draw it on the board, without using any words or speaking at all. His

or her teammates have to guess what the resolution is. The team that guesses the most wins.

5 NEW YEAR'S READINGS

A great way to finish a New Year's lesson is with some in-class reading. Try any of these suggested titles:

- Happy New Year Everywhere! – by Arlene Erlbach, illustrated by Sharon Lane Holm. This book geared towards children between 4 and 8 provides lots of colorful illustrations and information on how New Year's is celebrated in over 20 countries.
- New Year's Day (True Books) - by Dana Meachen Rau. Children ages 9 to 12 get a little more background information on the history of New Year's Day, going all the way back to when Pope Gregory XIII set it for January 1st.
- Celebrating Chinese New Year – by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith, photographs by Lawrence Migdale. For children 4 to 8, this is a great book to complement any activities you may have lined up for your class in reference to Chinese New Year.

IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE SO YET, TAKE THE TIME WITH YOUR CLASS TO LOOK BACK ON THE YEAR THAT JUST PASSED AND CHECK ON THE LEARNING GOALS THEY MAY HAVE SET AT THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. IF THEY DIDN'T SET ANY BACK IN SEPTEMBER, NOW'S A GREAT TIME TO DO SO.

Fantastic February Lesson Ideas

NOW THAT EVERYONE HAS RECOVERED FROM THE HOLIDAYS AND HAD TIME TO SETTLE BACK INTO THE ROUTINE, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT YOUR STUDENTS ARE A BIT REFRESHED FROM THE TIME OFF AND START THE MONTH BY INTRODUCING SOME NEW TOPICS.

If you find yourself short on interesting lesson ideas, especially towards the end of the month, consider the activities from this article.

5 FANTASTIC FEBRUARY LESSON IDEAS

1 VALENTINE'S MADNESS

Valentine's Day is the topic of choice for this month's cultural lesson but what you decide to do with it is up to you. Lesson plans range from focusing entirely on the holiday itself to Valentine's Day themed lessons that still revolve around the material your students are studying in their textbooks. If you are progressing through your course material well, consider using a class period for fun Valentine's Day arts and crafts and vocabulary practice. With adult classes a discussion on love and romance may be more appropriate but even they will appreciate decorations, candy, and some simple themed activities. Falling in the middle of the month, Valentine's Day creates a nice break in the month's schedule so make the most of it.

2 FEBRUARY MAD LIBS

For a good laugh, have students do a Mad Libs activity. You can even use another February theme, such as Valentine's Day, to create the story. Mad Libs test students' knowledge of parts of speech. You can have students work individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Give students a list of numbers with parts of speech written next to them and have students think of an appropriate word for each. Once students have completed the list, check it to ensure that they chose appropriate words. Once the list is corrected, students can transfer their words into the blanks of a story and

read the completed story aloud to the class. These usually end up being really silly stories so hopefully your students can appreciate the humor.

3 POLAR BEAR DAY – WHY NOT?

Polar Bear Day is February 27th. It is a great time to ask students some trivia questions about polar bears and the arctic. You can even introduce the topic with the question "Why don't polar bears eat penguins?" The answer is that polar bears live near the North Pole while penguins live near the South Pole. You can also talk about global warming with students at almost any level. With lower level learners use simple sentences and worksheets to structure the activities or discussion. With advanced students elicit what students know about global warming, talk about its impact globally and locally, and have students imagine how this will impact people in the future.

4 LEAP YEARS ARE FUN

February is the time to discuss leap years, months, and calendars. Ask if anyone in your class was born on February 29th. The level of your students will determine how detailed you get in your introduction. You could have a technical approach to the subject and talk about why leap days are necessary every four years. This might take the form of a short informative lecture but you could use it in to lead into a discussion on what other ways we could use to make this adjustment. On the other hand, you could get creative and ask students to dream up what they would do with an extra day if they could do anything they wanted. This would make a great writing activity.

5 BLACK HISTORY ACTIVITY

February is also Black History Month in the United States. If you are teaching in the United States, you can incorporate this into your schedule by doing a special lesson or project based around this theme. If you are not teaching in the United States, you could still cover this topic but it depends on your school and your stu-

dents. It may be difficult to properly explain the background material to very young or beginner students and you do not want to turn the class period into a history lesson. For adult and advanced classes you may choose to give some historical information and then lead a discussion.

ANOTHER THING YOU CAN DO IN FEBRUARY IS ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE STILL COMFORTABLE USING THE MATERIAL COVERED BEFORE THE BREAK BY DOING A REVIEW.

Despite being so short, February often feels like the longest month of the year. People who live in colder climates have had enough of winter and just want spring to arrive. Make sure to brighten the atmosphere in your classroom by encouraging students to keep up the good work and set a good example by staying positive.

10 Activities You Can Do for the Super Bowl [FEBRUARY]

THERE ARE SEVERAL SPORTS THAT ARE POPULAR IN MANY AREAS OF THE WORLD.

Football is not one of them. Still, with Super Bowl Sunday coming up on Sunday, February 3, 2013 your students will still have fun with these fun activities that get them thinking and talking about the big game!

TRY THESE 10 ESL ACTIVITIES FOR THE SUPER BOWL

1 EXPLAIN THE GAME

Since most of your students, if not all, have not grown up in the USA, they probably do not understand the game of football. Bringing in a guest speaker is a perfect way to challenge your students' listening skills as well as give them information about the less than familiar game. Ask a local student who also plays football or a football coach from your school or a nearby school to come and explain the game to your class, and then give your students a chance to ask questions. You may want to have some game clips ready to play for illustration as well!

2 RIDE THE ROAD

Each year, the NFL puts together a documentary, which usually airs just before the Super Bowl, called "The Road to the Super Bowl." It explains how each of the teams came through their seasons to reach the big game. Why not give your students a treat by showing them the documentary? If you can, watch it live. If you cannot, just show the program for a previous year. Then ask your students if they can explain how a team makes it to the Super Bowl and how they progress through the football season.

3 TAKE A TRIP TO CANTON

If you are lucky enough to teach near Canton, OH brave the crowds with a field trip to the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Since most classes would not be able to take such a trip, travel through cyber space :) and explore the museum's web site. Allow your students to explore and then ask them to share some interesting facts they learned and what they enjoyed most about the "trip."

4 PLAY SOME PAPER FOOTBALL

You may not want to bring your class out into the chilly weather with an oblong ball they may never have held before, but that does not mean that you cannot play football with your class. Have them read the instructions (<http://bit.ly/QZENTC>) for playing paper football, a favorite past time of many students in study hall. This web site explains how to fold the ball and how to score points. After everyone has read the information and folded their balls, let pairs of students play the game on their desks. You may even want to hold a tournament and see which of your students has the best paper ball skill.

5 CREATE YOUR OWN FANTASY TEAM

A popular hobby among sports fans today is to create fantasy football teams. To create a fantasy team, a person chooses players from many different teams and uses their real game statistics to put together a fantasy game score. Have your students put together their own fantasy teams. They can be in football, for a business or company, for a dinner party or any other group activity. Your students can have members that are both living and dead for their fantasy event. Then have each person share with another student what his fantasy team is like and why he chose the people that he did.

6 TAKE A SURVEY

Just how many people know the teams that will be playing in the Super Bowl? Are most people in your city sports fans? Which team is most popular in your area? For the answers to these and other questions that your class writes, create a Super Survey and ask people in public to take the survey. This will give your students conversation practice as well as educate them on America's sport and its popularity in their area.

7 PLAY YOUR OWN GAME

With football as inspiration, have groups of students work together to create their own games. Challenge the groups to include one element of football – the ball, the field or the goal posts –

and come up with a unique way to play. Then have each team present their game to the rest of the class, explaining the rules and how they integrated the piece of football's equipment.

8 NFL PLAY 60

The NFL is encouraging kids to play sixty minutes each day with their NFL Play 60 advertising campaign in hopes of improving the general health of America. Have a little brainstorming fun with your class and think up all the ways you could play or exercise for 60 minutes. Challenge yourselves to come up with at least 60 ways to get your 60 in each day.

9 CHEER ON THE TEAM

What better way is there to support your team than to cheer? Your students can view some popular football cheers at teamcheers.com (teamcheers.com/cheers/?cat=29). Play some of the cheers for your class so they can get a general feel for cheers and how they are performed. Then challenge groups of students to write and perform their own cheers in front of the class. Your students will have to focus on rhythm and rhyme, and the rest of the class is sure to get a kick out of each performance!

10 AND NOW A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR

Even if viewers are not interested in the game on Super Bowl Sunday, they just might be watching for the commercials. The Super Bowl attracts some of the highest quality commercials that also have great entertainment value. You can watch this year's commercials as well as those from previous years online. You may want to watch these commercials in your class for listening practice or just for fun. Even if you don't watch the game, these mini films just might make your day!

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO KNOW A LOT ABOUT FOOTBALL TO ENJOY SUPER BOWL SUNDAY. The near holiday status of the day in the United States affords many activities you can do with your ESL class, both for language development and for fun. So pick a team this year and cheer them on, and don't forget to enjoy yourself in the process!

Love Activities for ESL Classroom that will Melt Your Students' Hearts

WHEN FEBRUARY ROLLS AROUND A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY TURNS TO LOVE, AT LEAST, HIS GIRLFRIEND HOPES HE STARTS TO THINK ABOUT VALENTINE'S DAY.

There are many things traditionally associated with Valentine's Day. Besides the hearts, candy and flowers, Valentine's Day is a time to think about love and relationships, even for those who are not romantic the rest of the year. These activities will give your class a chance to talk about love in context and let them use their sense of humor while they do.

TRY THESE LOVE ACTIVITIES IN YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 JUST ASK

Love is a journey that can start in some of the strangest places. Some people meet their significant others at bars, through mutual friends, on the back of a roller coasters and just about any other place you can think of. Regardless of where two soon-to-be lovers meet, there is always a first date. With that in mind, why not use Valentine's Day as an excuse for some first date role-playing in your ESL classroom. Of course, each of your students will act differently on a first date, but everyone can have fun when the date happens in front of the rest of the class! You may want to start the activity by brainstorming a list of conversation topics that would be appropriate for a first date to help get your students in the mood, and then let the magic happen.

If you want to take the fun up a notch, simulate The Dating Game in your classroom. Have one person sit on one side of a partition. This person will be the one who is choosing the other with whom he or she will go on a date. On the other side of the partition, have three potential date partners. You may want to give these students certain personalities to role-play (e.g. nervous person, adventurous person, self-inflated person, etc.). The first person should list several questions he or she would like to ask the potential date partners. Then, she asks them

one at a time and has the three people on the other side of the partition give answers. When time is up (usually around ten minutes of question and answer), she chooses the person with whom she will go out without ever having seen him.

2 HOW DO I LOVE THEE?

In English, the word 'love' is used in many ways. We use it to explain how we feel about people – romantically, in friendships, as relatives. We also use it to describe items that we like, such as food or games. Using an English only dictionary, have your students look up the word 'love' and read each of the definitions listed there. In small groups, have your students take one definition at a time and talk about the exact meaning of love in that definition. Then you can ask each group to list some people or items that a person may love in that specific way. You can also ask the groups to write some example sentences for each definition of love. As an extension activity, you may want to ask each student to write about someone or something that he or she loves in one of those ways. In a paragraph, your students should explain how they love that person or thing and how that love is different from the other types of love.

3 LOVE AND A SONG

Love songs are popular all over the world, and everyone has their favorites. It seems that no matter what a performer's style of music is, he always has some type of love song in the mix. There are some musical groups, though, that are most popular all over the world. One of the world's most well known musical group is the Beatles. Their songs have been popular for decades, and your students have probably heard some or most of their most popular tunes. Give your students a test of their musical knowledge as well as their language skills by creating a cloze activity with lyrics from some of the Beatles most famous love songs. You can copy the lyrics (beatles-lyrics.org/) to your favorite songs, like "All You Need is Love," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "When I'm Sixty-Four," "Can't Buy Me Love" or any other songs

that appeal to you and your students. To prepare the exercise, cut and paste the lyrics to a song into another document and replace every fifth word with a blank and see how many blanks your students can fill in without listening to the song. Then, play the song and let them check their answers and fill in the ones that they missed. This type of exercise tests general grammatical knowledge, but using song lyrics will also test understanding of rhyme and rhythm.

4 ROSES ARE RED

One of the most common love poems starts with "Roses are red, Violets are blue..." These lines have appeared on homemade greeting cards for as long as many people can remember. Give your students a chance to finish this classic love poem on a Valentine for someone they know. Tell your students that they can finish the poem any way they like as long as the meter and rhyme are completed correctly. Of the two lines that they will write, the first should contain four syllables and does not need to rhyme with any of the other lines. The second line that they write should also have four syllables, but it should rhyme with the second line. Have your students create an illustration to go with their short poem and post them around the room. The class will enjoy seeing how many different ways the simple poem can be finished!

ONE OF THE MOST PLEASURABLE EMOTIONS IN LIFE IS LOVE, AND VALENTINE'S DAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE IT.

With these activities on love, your students can learn more about the word and more about how people can love one another, no candy or flowers required!

10 Most Popular Valentine's Day Activities For All Levels

While Valentine's Day has religious roots, these are not as commonly observed as they once were and the holiday has become a different celebration altogether. Now this is an occasion to share a romantic dinner, tell your family how much you love and appreciate them, send someone flowers, and eat chocolate. While more of a commercial holiday, students may be interested in learning about it if it is not commonly celebrated or is celebrated differently in their country.

BEGINNER VALENTINE'S ACTIVITIES

1 MAKE VALENTINE'S DAY CARDS

While most of the Valentine's lesson will be taken up with an arts and crafts type activity, younger students and beginners will enjoy this and you can give them some practice listening to directions such as fold, cut, and glue. Rather than have your class create the same valentine, let them choose the types of materials and patterns they want to use but be sure to show them some examples. English will be the focus of the last stage of the lesson when students have to write a message on their cards. Introduce some simple classic Valentine's Day messages.

2 VALENTINE'S WORD SEARCHES

Word searches can be helpful when introducing new vocabulary because they force students to focus on spelling while masquerading as a game. This is way more enjoyable than repeatedly writing words out or spelling them aloud.

3 VALENTINE'S DAY FLASHCARDS

Make flashcards for newly learned Valentine's Day vocabulary. This is another arts and crafts type activity. Have students color different images and then, with assistance, present their words to the class. You can hang these around the classroom for students to refer to and to display their artistic achievements.

INTERMEDIATE VALENTINE'S ACTIVITIES

4 VALENTINE'S DAY LISTENING

Do a listening activity using a romantic song. Where you are in your textbook may determine which grammar point you would like to focus on and thus influence your song selection. Students can listen to the song, fill in the blanks, answer some comprehension questions, and then discuss the song's meaning.

5 READ VALENTINE'S DAY POEM

Have students list, in a poetical way, the things they hold dear. At this stage, writing a poem might be too challenging, but starting off with "I love" and then simply listing items should be within their ability level. Students can read their work aloud towards the end of class.

6 VALENTINE'S DAY CROSSWORD

Prepare a crossword puzzle to focus on Valentine's Day vocabulary. Students can also be given images to match with each word or perhaps you can use images instead of words as clues. Check the answers aloud as a class.

INTERMEDIATE & ADVANCED VALENTINE'S ACTIVITIES

7 VALENTINE'S DAY AROUND THE WORLD

Talk about how Valentine's Day is celebrated around the world. For example in the United States, it is more common for women to receive Valentine's Day presents while in Japan, men receive gifts on Valentine's Day while women receive presents on White Day, in March. You can lead into this discussion with a reading or simply by asking students what they know about the holiday and giving them some in-

formation to keep in mind.

ADVANCED VALENTINE'S ACTIVITIES

8 WRITE VALENTINE'S DAY POEMS

Have your students compose their own poems. You can introduce this topic with one as simple as "Roses are red, violets are blue, sugar is sweet, and so are you." Students can decide to write a Valentine's Day themed poem or not. Depending on the ability of your students, you may want to introduce a few examples and have students follow the rhythm or meter of one of them.

9 VALENTINE'S DAY DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

Prepare a related topic of discussion. You can choose a short romantic story or talk about the ways people express love or affection towards the various people in their lives. Certain topics will be more appealing to the students in your class so make your selection accordingly.

VALENTINE'S DAY ACTIVITY FOR ALL LEVELS

10 VALENTINE'S DAY COSTUME PARTY + FOOD

If your school allows it, you might consider bringing in small chocolates or candy hearts for your students to enjoy. If you bring in candy hearts, there is even an English component to them so you can discuss the different messages. This may or may not be appropriate for all classes. You can also encourage students to wear red, white, and pink to get them in the holiday spirit.

VALENTINE'S DAY IS A GOOD DAY TO MAKE YOUR CLASSES JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE SPECIAL. Despite being the shortest month of the year, February often seems to just drag on so brightening up your classroom for a day or week might be just the ticket to cheering everyone up.

7 Crafts with HEART that Practice Language Skills

Each year with the lead up to Valentine's Day comes the influx of hearts – on our candy, in our cards, in decorations and nearly every other place you might look. Of course, February is a good time to do some heart inspired crafts in your classroom to coordinate with the international holiday, but you do not have to sacrifice your language practice to do these fun and artistic activities.

ST. VALENTINE'S CRAFTS IN YOUR LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

1 CONVERSATION HEARTS

Pick up a bag of conversation candy hearts. Then put your students in groups and give each group a handful of the candies. Encourage your students to read the messages on the hearts and share their thoughts about those messages with each other. Would they ever say those things to a person in whom they were interested? Have they used any of the lines before? Are there some more appropriate for friends or family rather than a romantic interest? Using these hearts for inspiration, have your groups make a list of other messages that could appear on the hearts. Finally, break out the construction paper, glue and glitter and ask each student to make a large conversation heart of his own. You can string these through your classroom or post them on a bulletin board titled "Things We Love to Think About." You can even encourage your students to give one to someone that they like and see if the sentiment is returned.

2 BIT BY THE LOVE BUG?

Have you ever heard the expression 'to get bit by the love bug'? Have your students ever heard the expression? Introduce them to the phrase and then tell them that you are going to make love bugs for Valentine's Day. Each person will need a tongue depressor, two larger wooden hearts, two smaller wooden hearts and two craft eyes. Provide your class with paint or markers to decorate the wood pieces and then glue the smaller hearts onto the larger hearts. Then glue the points of the large hearts and the eyes to the tongue depressor. The hearts should resemble wings on

the body of an insect. Ask your students to think about what would happen if they were bitten by a love bug. Then have each person write a paragraph about getting bitten by a love bug to display on a bulletin board with his or her love bug.

3 CHAIN OF HEARTS

Decorate your room and let your students be creative at the same time by creating a Valentine's Day paper chain. In fact, the chain will be made from white, red and pink pipe cleaners. Give your students the pipe cleaners and ask them to shape them into hearts, linking each new heart with the last heart on the chain. As your class works on the chain, ask them what they think the phrase "everyone love everyone" means. Does it mean that the relationships have to be romantic? Is loving someone the same thing as agreeing with a person? Is loving a person the same thing as respecting a person?

4 RIGHT FROM THE HEART

For a free form Valentine's Day craft, have your students draw or paint while you play songs about love. You can choose your favorite love songs, but think about the type of music your students enjoy when making your selections. Then play two or three songs and let the creativity reign. Once the music and the pictures are done, ask any willing student to come to the front of the room and explain his or her picture, why he drew or painted what he did and what it means. You can also ask the class how they incorporated the music or words from the song into their pieces.

5 START WITH A HEART

Have you ever seen the little figures that can be drawn starting with a fingerprint? Take that idea to heart and ask your students to fashion a heart into an animal, person or living creature. You can start with cut out construction paper hearts or with a heart stamp that you can get at a local craft store. Then, to make the creatures, you will need to have a variety of craft supplies available for your students. Once your students have made their creatures, ask each person to write a short story using their creature as the main character of their story.

6 HEART MOSAIC

Give your students a variety of heart cut outs to mix and match to form a mosaic picture. The key to getting your students to use their language skills for this craft is to give each person a set of unique hearts that no one else in the class has. For example, you may give one person large white hearts, another small pink hearts, and another small red hearts. If students want to use another size or color heart in their design, they will have to ask the student who has those particular hearts. You should also require each person to use at least three different types of hearts in their creation.

7 HEART SHAPED JOURNAL

You may want to give your students some heartfelt writing inspiration for the holiday, and you can use an easily constructed heart shaped journal to do it. Using a template and several decorative papers, have your students trace and cut out a handful of hearts the same size. Next, each student should fold the hearts in half and then stack them together, each unfolded heart inside the previous one, lining up all the folds. Use a hole puncher to put two holes on the seam of the hearts (keep them folded if you do not have a long enough hole puncher) and then tie the sheets together with a piece of yarn. You should feed the yard through the holes on the inside and then tie it into a bow along the seam of the journal. Your students can then use the heart journal for their next writing assignment. Try giving them a writing prompt that has to do with love.

LANGUAGE TEACHERS HAVE A GREAT CHALLENGE AND A GREAT BENEFIT WHEN IT COMES TO EDUCATING THEIR STUDENTS.

The challenge comes because language is so integral to a student's ability to learn. The benefit is that almost any activity you do in class can and should use language, so when you are looking for Valentine's Day crafts for your students, you can still challenge them to improve and increase their language skills. These ideas are only the beginning of what you can do with your ESL students for Valentine's Day, so take some inspiration here and have fun with your students on February 14th!

Valentine's Day Any Day

WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD 'VALENTINE', DO YOU THINK OF HEARTS, CANDY AND CARDS?

Do you think about those same things when you hear Feb. 14? Who says Valentine's Day is the only time to talk about love? We can tell the people we care about how we feel any day of the year.

Don't wait until Valentine's Day to let your students express how they feel about someone close to them with the following love-ly activities.

HOW TO HAVE A LOVE-THEMED ESL LESSON

1 LOOKING IN

There are countless books about love that appeal to young children. These books may address romantic love, but more likely they will show love for one's friends and family. You probably already know which ones are your class' favorites, so read them again to get in the mood for love. You can also ask your students to bring in books from home that deal with the topic of love. If they are written in the students' native language, ask for as much translation as the child can give or just show the pictures to your class and guess together what the story might be.

Along with all the books, many songs address the topic of love. Play selections from some songs about love with your class. You might want to use "All You Need Is Love" by the Beatles or some other piece that appeals to the age group you teach. There are countless songs about romantic love, but try to find other examples for your students. You can also have them talk about different kinds of love in small groups. Have your class brainstorm all the different kinds of love that they can think of, for example romantic love, friendship love, parental love, brotherly love, etc.

As a final example of love, bring in a selection of cards that express different types of love. You can include romantic cards, but be sure to have examples of friendship and family in

some of your cards. Ask your students if they notice any common phrases throughout the cards. Are there any phrases they see multiple times? If so, make a list and talk about what type of love that expression is used for.

2 SPEAKING OUT

After your class has talked about the generalities of love, ask your students to think about someone specific that they love. It can be a parent, relative or friend. Group students and allow them to share with each other some information about that person. They may want to explain how they know that person, what makes them care for that person, and a favorite memory of that person. Allow your students to ask questions of one another. Once your students are almost finished, have each person talk about what that person likes.

Using the information from the discussion time, your students should design a card for the person they have been talking about. They can think about colors and hobbies that the person likes. Have your students write a practice draft on regular paper. They may want to model their cards after some of the ones you showed your class. Make sure the cards are available to your students when they are planning their own. Once each person is satisfied with what he or she wrote, have your students make a final draft on a folded piece of card stock. They can then decorate the card with pictures and art materials.

Let your students share their cards with each other in their small groups. Students will enjoy getting a look at the personalized card since they know so much about the recipient from the discussion time. Then provide your students with envelopes and show them the correct way to address them. If possible, give each student a stamp and mail the cards. If your students have chosen to write to loved ones out of the country, you may want to send a letter home explaining that the class made personalized cards and that Mom and Dad should mail the card to the appropriate person. Ask your students to let the class know if they get

any response from their everyday-valentine. You may even want to make a chart or graph that shows how many responses the class received.

VALENTINE'S DAY IS A FUN OCCASION FOR YOUR STUDENTS, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL FEBRUARY TO LET YOUR STUDENTS EXPRESS THEIR LOVE. GIVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY AT AN UNEXPECTED TIME OF THE YEAR TO SHOW SOMEONE THAT THEY CARE. AFTER ALL, LOVE IS ALL WE NEED.

Valentine's Day Lesson Do's and Don'ts

As with any lesson plan, the details can make a big difference in how your students respond in class and how comfortable they are using new material. Keeping that in mind, there are lots of things you can do to make your Valentine's Day lesson go smoothly and encourage students to get in the holiday spirit.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR YOUR PERFECT VALENTINE'S LESSON

1 DO HAVE FUN.

Plan to include some simple games or creative worksheets in your lesson. Crosswords and word searches are a good way of introducing or reviewing relevant vocabulary. You can also use a love song for a listening activity to focus on new words or to lead into a discussion.

2 DON'T EMBARRASS STUDENTS.

Steer clear of controversial topics, don't ask students personal questions such as "Do you have a boyfriend?" and choose age appropriate activities. Love and romance can be a difficult subject to cover especially with younger students so keep it light and enjoyable for everyone.

3 DO INTRODUCE VALENTINE'S DAY VOCABULARY.

This will probably be the best opportunity you get to teach students words like cupid, arrow, and romance so make the most of it. Focus on Valentine's Day specific words and elicit vocabulary during your introduction to see what students already know.

4 DON'T TELL STUDENTS ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL LIFE.

Students may ask questions about your relationship status but it is best to remain noncommittal. If you are

married, you can simply tell them that without divulging any details.

5 DO WEAR APPROPRIATE COLORS.

Wearing Valentine's Day colors will at the very least amuse students but it can also make them more aware of how special this lesson is. You can even encourage students to wear clothes that are red, pink, and purple if your school doesn't have a uniform.

6 DON'T IGNORE THE HOLIDAY.

Even if you do not have time to devote a whole class period to Valentine's Day, say something about it and use it as the theme of your lesson anyway. Some students may expect something special and would be disappointed if you did not even touch on the subject.

7 DO USE VALENTINE'S DAY CLIPART

like hearts and cupids on your lesson materials even if the lesson is about a different topic.

This way you can still incorporate the holiday into your lesson without losing any precious class time. For students that finish exercises early, you can have them complete a short Valentine's Day word search for extra credit.

8 DON'T HAVE STUDENTS MAKE VALENTINES FOR ONE ANOTHER.

This can make students uncomfortable and ends up being a popularity contest. Unless this is a tradition at the school, make cards for family members instead. If you must do a Valentines exchange in the classroom, conduct the activity like a Secret Santa: have students make cards, say something nice about the recipient, and hand them in anonymously. Then you can pass them out and everyone will

go home happy.

9 DO GIVE OUT CANDY, DECORATE, AND WRITE IN RED MARKER.

These things do not take a lot of energy but really add to the atmosphere of the classroom. Students will appreciate these gestures. Make sure that you are allowed to give students food before bringing candy into the classroom.

THESE ARE JUST SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND THIS FEBRUARY 14TH. A GOOD VALENTINE'S DAY LESSON WILL BRIGHTEN EVERYONE'S WEEK AND HELP MOTIVATE STUDENTS.

Chilling ESL Fun for Frigid Months

WITH THE ONSET OF THE NEW YEAR COMES A REMINDER THAT WINTER IS JUST BEGINNING.

Whether there is snow on the ground or just a chill in the air, it is time to pack on some layers and snuggle up with a warm cup of hot chocolate. So on those days when you just want to enjoy some warm fuzzies with your class, try one of the following winter themed lessons.

WINTER ESL ACTIVITIES TO TRY

1 WINTER ACTIVITIES

What activities can you do in winter that you cannot do at other times in the year? Some of your students may struggle with this question if they come from areas of the world where winter does not include snow and ice. Still, challenge your students to brainstorm a list of all the activities that bring a fun feel to the cold weather. You will want to list items like build a snowman, ice-skate and go sledding. If your students get stuck, encourage them to think of the winter sports that are showcased in the winter Olympics.

Then ask by a show of hands how many people have done each of the activities. Ask volunteers to talk about the experience or share stories. For those students who have not done each of the activities, ask if they would like to do them and to speculate on what it might be like. If you want to treat your class to a little winter fun and you have the resources, let them try their hand at the Wii game Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games.

2 A SENSE OF WINTER

Winter is unlike any other season. The cold feels different. The snow looks different. The wildlife sounds different. Even what we eat tastes different. All this change, though, is a good excuse to add to your students' vocabularies. Either working in groups or

as an entire class, ask your students to take a sheet of paper and divide it into five columns. At the top of each column, write one of the following senses: sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. Then take each sense one at a time and brainstorm a list of words that can be used to describe what is special about winter. For sight, your students may say that the snow is white, unblemished, pure, glistening, sparkly or any of many other adjectives. You can encourage your students to use a thesaurus to find additional words or even use a dictionary. List as many words that have to do with sight as possible before moving on to the next sense. Then do the same for sound, smell, taste and touch. Once your class has five lists of descriptive words, it is time to put them to use. Ask each person to write a description of a winter activity that she has done using as many of the sensory words the class compiled as possible. The goal is to describe in such detail that the reader feels as though he is present. As they write, your students should include descriptive words that connect with each of the five senses, and they should aim to use more specific descriptions.

If your students are new to winter and have not done one of the winter specific activities, ask them to write about an activity that they would like to try and to write about how they think it would feel.

3 WINTER VERSE

Your students have listed activities unique to winter and they have written about them descriptively, now it is time to see how others have written about the season. Give your students a collection of poems about winter. You can use this selection or provide them with others that you like. Take turns reading one line at a time of each poem. As you do, your students will get a feel for the rhythm of the words and the lines. Move around the classroom taking one line per person and stopping to discuss each poem

after it is read. You may want to ask your students to share how the poem made them feel and what they pictured in their minds as they listened. Also, as your students read, ask them to underline or copy certain phrases or lines that stick out to them. They might stand out because of unexpected use of English or simply because the lines are likable. Then have your students copy those lines onto large strips of paper and post on a bulletin board with the title "Winning Winter Words". You can also invite them to illustrate the lines they have chosen and post them as well.

WINTER IS A SPECIAL TIME OF YEAR. THE HOLIDAYS COME AND GO, BUT THE BRISK AIR OF A CHILLY WORLD STICKS AROUND UNTIL SPRING CAN NO LONGER HOLD HERSELF BACK.

As you go through the winter months this year, why not take some time with your class to experience all the special qualities that winter has to offer.

There may never be a better time than now.

How To Teach a Perfectly Fresh and Colorful Spring Lesson

AS SPRINGTIME ROLLS AROUND THE TWO WORDS THAT POP INTO MIND ARE “FRESH” AND “COLORFUL”.

Fresh flowers. Fresh air. Fresh opportunities. And with all of this surrounding freshness and color, we are tempted to bring some of it into the ESL classroom, right? Here's how you can teach a perfectly fresh and colorful spring lesson:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES TO TRY THIS SPRING

1 TURN YOUR CLASSROOM INTO A SPRING MEADOW!

To get your students into the right mood for spring, decorate your classroom accordingly, either with or without their help, depending on how much time you have and whether you wish to have the classroom decorated beforehand or not. Your best course of action is to surprise them with a fully decorated classroom and give them a project to add the finishing touches. Remember to include:

- A spring bulletin board – light, bright colors should abound, with plenty of flowers and animals
- Fresh flowers on your desk and some new plant pots, preferably for the window sills
- As many spring posters or decorations as you can find or have time to prepare and place throughout the classroom. TeacherStoreHouse.com (bit.ly/QTua12) has bulletin board sets, two-sided decorations, and punch-out accents at very affordable prices and with free shipping for orders over \$79 (get several teachers to order and save a bundle!).

2 INTRODUCE SPRING VOCABULARY

Before diving into any spring activities and general fun, make sure you teach the vocabulary words you want your students to learn. In this Spring Is in the Air word search (busyteacher.org/4800-spring-is-in-the-air.html),

students learn words like watering can, wheelbarrow and rake. This Spring Vocabulary worksheet (busyteacher.org/4317-spring-vocabulary.html) puts little ones' alphabetizing skills to the test, and finally give your students this colorful spring worksheet (busyteacher.org/4317-spring-vocabulary.html) for some matching fun.

Oh, and if you want to create your own list of spring vocabulary to teach your students, don't forget you have BusyTeacher.org's very own Word Search Creator available to you (busyteacher.org/wordpuzzle/).

3 SPRING INTO SOME READING

Once your students have become more familiar with some spring vocabulary, they'll be ready to listen to a spring-themed story. Here are some great options - all of which are available at Amazon.com:

- It's Spring by Linda Glaser – Explore the season through the eyes of a young boy. The text is engaging and simple - ideal for children under six.
- Everything Spring by Jill Esbaum – Children of all ages will absolutely love the full color National Geographic-quality photographs of baby animals, flowers and plants.
- Splish, Splash, Spring by Jan Carr – Three kids and a dog explore the delights of the season, including spring showers – ideal for children under six.
- How Robin Saved Spring by Debbie Ouellet – A charming tale that tells the story of Lady Winter and Sister Spring - appropriate for children over six and those with an Intermediate English reading level.
- Poppleton In Spring (Scholastic Reader Level 3) by Cynthia Rylant - Poppleton is an adorable pig that decides to tackle some spring cleaning, of all things - great for

young children under eight who are familiar with the past tense.

- Ordinary Things: Poems from a Walk in Early Spring by Ralph Fletcher – This enchanting book presents 33 poems, all of which evoke classic spring imagery and experiences – recommended for teens and young adults who are at an upper intermediate to advanced level.

4 ENJOY SOME SPLENDID SPRING CRAFTS

You'd be crazy not to want to bring in the season's burst of color into your classroom, right? Why spend money on flowers when your students can make some that are equally lovely? Why just talk about how things grow in the spring when you can help your students witness it for themselves? Check out our ideas for 6 Splendid Spring Crafts (<http://bit.ly/z1xFyY>) and choose one. Or several!

5 TAKE IT OUTSIDE

Spring is the best season for outdoor activities, and lessons, too! What better way to end your perfectly fresh spring lesson than with a picnic outside? And for more ideas, be sure to read our article on outdoor English lessons (see next page of this book).

USE SOME OF THESE IDEAS, OR USE THEM ALL, IF TIME ALLOWS. JUST MAKE SURE YOU GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A TASTE OF WHAT THE SEASON IS ALL ABOUT, NO MATTER WHERE THEY ARE.

We recommend that you tailor your spring lesson to your particular location in mind, after all, spring in the southern US is a little different from spring in New England or Canada. Enjoy the season as it is meant to be enjoyed, hopefully with some outdoor fun.

Spring Is All Around: How To Teach Outdoors English Lessons

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN WHEN THE FLOWERS BEGIN TO BLOOM, SNOW BEGINS TO MELT AND WRITERS TEND TO START USING ALL SORTS OF DONE-TO-DEATH CLICHÉS.

It's also a time of year when the weather begins to become more clement, creating a unique opportunity to throw away the whiteboard markers and head outside for some super-creative lesson plans that both teacher and student will thoroughly enjoy. Heading outside isn't only fun, but it also gives the chance to teach a highly-focused lesson while offering students the chance to learn vocabulary through a wide range of realia - ESL jargon for real life things. Spring allows teachers with a real chance to liven up their lessons and to experience the great world around us. Here's some cool ideas for your class that you can use with your classes outdoors.

SPRING IDEAS FOR OUTDOORS ENGLISH LESSONS

1 GO ON A LOVELY PICNIC

A picnic is a fantastic idea for any kids class as it gives them the chance to escape the classroom and get some fresh air. As they run around, chase each other and have a good time, you can play some activities and games with them to help expand their vocabulary. 'I spy' is a great game for younger kids outside, allowing them to use a wider range of vocabulary in the classroom. A picnic allows you to take a walk with your students and practice outdoors vocabulary that they would usually learn in a textbook. A picnic in a park allows you and your students to take a leisurely stroll around while expanding on the vocabulary such as various flowers, hobbies, animals and anything else that can be found in a park.

2 GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A CULTURAL TREAT AND TAKE THEM TO A RESTAURANT

With the permission of parents and your school, take your students to a restaurant that specialises in western cuisine. This is great as it helps them with the vocabulary that is related to western food. Students should always be encouraged to use and order in English. Going to a restaurant, practicing the ordering phrases and vocab is a fun way for students to finish a unit on food and dining, as it gives the students a chance to practice in a real-life situation. It also gives them the chance to gorge on some high cholesterol, fatty French fries, burgers and hotdogs.

3 INTRODUCE YOUR STUDENTS TO A SUMMER SPORT

The perfect way to reward your students for all the hard work and effort put in during the bitterly cold winter is to take them outside and introduce them to a summer sport that is played in your home country. Cricket and baseball are two sports that are often played in the west during the warmer months that work a treat for teenage students. While competing with each other, they will learn vocabulary relating with sport, as well as some culture from your country.

4 PLAN AN EXCURSION TO THE ZOO

Brilliant for younger learners, a field trip to the zoo makes for the ultimate day out. Students could be given a task such as find out about a certain animal and describe it using a range of adjectives. For lower level learners, an activity eliciting whether an animal 'can' or 'can't' do something is also beneficial. A trip to the zoo would usually be a whole day out, and the inclusion of a picnic for lunch wouldn't go astray.

5 DO AN OUTDOOR SCIENCE ACTIVITY

If you have the outdoor space available to you, one little gem of an activity teach your students to make bottle rockets. An activity like this works on

so many levels, as it involves a fair amount of planning and construction, which also involves using a large amount of vocabulary. The fun part is taking the students outside and holding a competition to see which flies the highest.

6 GO SHOPPING

These days, many language centres are conveniently placed in locations where there is a lot of pedestrian traffic. In recent years, many have begun to crop up in shopping malls everywhere. While the crowds can sometimes cause the teacher a major headache having to go there every day, it leaves the option open for an excursion to the numerous shops around, casually chatting with the students and getting them to describe the various shops and items that they sell in English. With older students, a novel way to finish off this short excursion is to stop by a coffee shop, sit down over a cappuccino and build the all-important rapport with your students.

7 RELAX, LISTEN AND DESCRIBE

Ideal for students of all ages, this simple activity is ideal if you want to get the students outside without the luxury of time. Once outside, the teacher must instruct the students to close their eyes for a minute-or-so, and describe all of the sounds that they can hear. This activity works for a variety of different topics, from animals, to describing a city, and is a great warmer activity at the start of a unit.

BY GETTING OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM, YOU DON'T JUST ONLY PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH A FUN ACTIVITY, BUT YOU GIVE THEM A REALISTIC EXPERIENCE THAT PROVIDES THEM WITH AN INSIGHT INTO CULTURE AND THE REAL WORLD – SOMETHING THAT CAN'T BE LEARNT FROM A TEXTBOOK.

Magnificent March Lesson Ideas

MARCH IS AN INTERESTING POINT IN THE SCHOOL YEAR AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE VARIES DEPENDING ON YOUR LOCATION.

In countries such as Japan, students will finish their studies for the year while in Korea early March brings the beginning of the new school year. For countries with a schedule similar to the United States, March is popular because of spring break and the winding down of the school year.

Your activities for the month will depend heavily on the school system you are a part of. Reviews before finals or class introductions and ice-breakers may be appropriate depending on your situation. If you are unsure of what to do during this month, see our new March worksheets collection or consider some of the activities from this article.

MARCH LESSON IDEAS YOU COULD TRY

1 MARCH MADNESS

Even if you are not a basketball fan, you can use the method of eliminating teams used during sports events such as March Madness and the World Cup in your lessons. This may take a bit of planning to set up but the basic idea is that you start off doing activities in small groups where each team has only one competitor. The winning teams then incorporate the losing team members into their groups so that for the next activity, groups twice their original size compete against one another. Essentially at the end of the whole competition half the class will win and the name of their team will have been carried forward from the first activity.

It is not exactly what happens in sports competitions but it is better than having students completely eliminated from educational activities. In a class of forty students, you may choose to start with sixteen groups of two or three, which will be quickly narrowed down to eight, then four, then two, and finally to one winning team with about twenty members. In this example four activities would be needed to successfully complete the competition so

perhaps you could conduct one activity per lesson or even one activity per week.

2 CELEBRATE WOMEN

March is National Women's History Month with March 8th being particularly important because it is International Women's Day. This is a great opportunity to give students a short writing assignment. Ask students to write about the most important women in their lives. If you think students may struggle with this, ask them to talk about any role model and don't restrict their choices to one gender. It is a great way for students to share their experiences and will give you the chance to learn more about them.

3 MARCH DISCUSSION

Some interesting discussion topics for this month may include talking about the Ides of March, Julius Caesar, March 15th being the first day of the Roman New Year, or the fact that March is named after the Roman god Mars, god of war. Depending on what students already know about your proposed topic, you can create a short article for them to read before the discussion lesson. Prepare for the discussion by creating a number of questions about the article as well as tangential topics that give students the opportunity to talk about their own experiences. If you have a large class, consider having students work in smaller groups to discuss the questions.

4 SAINT PATRICK'S DAY

The best holiday this month to use in a cultural lesson is Saint Patrick's Day which is on March 17th. While this is a religious holiday, it has evolved into a general celebration of Irish culture. You can talk with your students about how people celebrate this holiday in church and outside of it. Be sure to mention green, shamrock, and leprechauns especially if you are working with young learners. Some other great St. Patrick's Day activities are St. Patty's Day Sayings, Irish Listening & Vocab Lesson Plan (busyteacher.org/2553-saint-patricks-day-listening-and-vocabulary.html),

and the St. Patrick's Day Rhymes (busyteacher.org/2011-st-patricks-day-rhymes.html). See our next article in this book -- 'A St. Patrick's Day ESL Lesson That Shines Like a Pot o' Gold!' for more engaging holiday activities for this day.

Your approach to the holiday lesson will depend heavily on the age of your students and their interests. This particular day is also Submarine Day so if you can find a good educational reason to play "Yellow Submarine" (busyteacher.org/2803-the-yellow-submarine-by-the-beatles.html) in your classroom, this would be a good day for that.

5 INTERNATIONAL EARTH DAY

International Earth Day is on March 20th which makes it the perfect time to talk about recycling, pollution, and the environment. You can introduce vocabulary related to the environment to beginners or lead a discussion with advanced students about the environmental issues that are most important today. If you want to take the time to do a craft activity with young students, have them make paper by ripping used sheets of paper into small pieces, mashing them in a bit of water, and pressing the pulp into screen molds to dry. At a later date, use the paper students made to create something else like greeting cards or decorative ornaments.

MARCH ACTIVITIES, LIKE ALWAYS, SHOULD FOCUS ON ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO SPEAK ENGLISH AND ENGAGING THEM IN LESSONS.

There are always reasons for students to be distracted but creating material that is interesting to them will help them concentrate on what you are teaching. Remember to provide students with a range of activities that focus on speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

A St. Patrick's Day ESL Lesson

That Shines Like a Pot o' Gold!

MAYBE AT SOME POINT IN OUR YOUTH WE WONDERED, 'IS THERE REALLY A POT OF GOLD AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW?'

Although pots of gold are hard to come by these days, we can offer our ESL students a lesson that is as good as gold: a St. Patrick's Day lesson that teaches them a great deal about this popular holiday and gives them a chance to improve their language skills.

Here are some suggestions for activities. Use some, or use all, but make sure you give your class a taste of what St. Paddy's Day is all about.

CREATIVE ST. PATRICK'S DAY ACTIVITIES

1 IT'S SO EASY BEING GREEN!

It is customary to wear green on St. Patrick's Day, so ask your students to wear something green to class. If they don't have green shirts, they can wear green hats, belts, sweaters, or any accessory or item. Don't forget to do the same and decorate the classroom with green streamers, shamrocks, leprechauns, posters, etc.

2 FROM SLAVE TO SAINT

St. Patrick's story is a fascinating tale, one that your students will surely enjoy. Give your students this St. Patrick's Day worksheet (busyteacher.org/2117-saint-patrick.html) where they will learn about not only the life of the patron saint of Ireland, but also some interesting facts about the country and information about Irish symbols and leprechauns.

3 PUT SILK ON A GOAT AND IT IS STILL A GOAT

One of the things that Irish mummies do best is give sound advice - or at least their idea of what sound advice is. The above is an old Irish saying -

what does it mean? Ask your students to put on their thinking caps and figure it out. Then, give them more from this list of witty Irish sayings (busyteacher.org/2157-irish-sayings.html) to think about. This is a great activity for adult students who may have heard similar sayings from their grandparents in their own native language.

4 CATCH A LEPRECHAUN

Give your younger learners the chance to catch their very own leprechaun (and perhaps obtain their pot of gold!) Give them this Leprechaun Marionette (busyteacher.org/2005-leprechaun-marionette.html) to color and put together. Then, play a lively Irish jig, and have your little ones put on a small show with their leprechauns.

5 WHEN IRISH EYES ARE SMILING!

Hand out copies of the lyrics to When Irish Eyes Are Smiling (contemplator.com/ireland/irisheye.html). Listen with your class and discuss: what is the song saying about the Irish? What feelings are evoked in the song? Or choose any from the list available at IrishSongs.com.

6 THE GIFT OF GAB

This is a great St. Patrick's Day activity for advanced students. You'll need to prepare three things: a bag containing your student's names in slips of paper, cards that prompt students to convince someone of something, and a small rock.

The cards may say something like:

- Convince your mother to let you stay out late on a school night.
- Convince your father to let you borrow the car for a weekend trip to the beach with your friends.
- Present to your teacher a very convincing excuse for not doing your homework.

Show your students the rock and tell

them you have managed to procure a piece of the famous Blarney Stone. Tell them the fascinating story of the stone that is located in the battlements of Blarney Castle - whoever kisses it, is bestowed with the gift of gab, in other words, great eloquence when it comes to flattery and coaxing. Next, tell them you have put their names in a bag, and as you draw a name from the bag, the student must kiss the stone, then draw a card from the pile. They must do as the card indicates and act out the role play with another student. Finally, the class votes on who indeed received 'the gift of gab' and was the most convincing.

7 FIND THE POT OF GOLD

Your students may think they'll find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but they're wrong. They'll find one at the end of this St. Patrick's Day board game (busyteacher.org/2006-saint-patricks-board-game.html)! Students roll the die and move across the board. Who'll make it first? To make the game a bit more challenging, or simply more suitable to older children, tell them that before they can move the number of squares indicated on the die, they have to answer a question correctly. Ask them to explain a new vocabulary word, or answer a question about St. Patrick, give them a sentence in present that they have to switch to the past tense - or future.

IF TIME ALLOWS, AND DEPENDING ON YOUR STUDENTS' AGES AND LEVEL, COMBINE SEVERAL OF THESE ACTIVITIES OR ADAPT THEM TO SUIT YOUR NEEDS. WHETHER YOU SING IRISH SONGS AND DANCE A JIG, OR SIMPLY DISCUSS THE VARIOUS IRISH SYMBOLS, MYTHS AND LEGENDS, TEACH YOUR STUDENTS THAT BEING GREEN IS FUN - THE IRISH WAY!

5 Ways to Be a Wee Bit Irish: St. Patrick's Day Activities

WHAT BETTER EXCUSE THAN ST. PATRICK'S DAY FOR EACH OF US TO EMBRACE OUR INNER IRISH.

Wearing green and making shamrocks, though, are likely activities we've done time and time again. If you are looking for a fresh way to celebrate the Irish this year, try these unusual and perhaps unexpected activities with your classes this week.

HOW TO BE (SLIGHTLY) IRISH

1 ST. PATRICK'S DAY BREAD EXTRAVAGANZA

Bread is one food that every nation seems to have, but it still emerges with a unique personality with each country you visit. If you don't mind a little time in the kitchen, use St. Patrick's Day as an excuse to travel around the entire world with your taste buds through a bread extravaganza.

Irish soda bread is very easy to prepare and hard to get wrong. Use your own recipe or one of the many available online. You can also sample Indian naan, British scones, southern cornbread, a French baguette and Mexican tortillas, all readily available in larger supermarkets. This is also a great time to get mothers involved if you teach younger students. Picking up a loaf of bread from the store is something that almost anyone is willing to do. With your bread, your students can also sample some of the different bread accompaniments like hummus, jam, butter or cheese. Just keep in mind that some students may have allergies, and be sensitive to them when selecting the elements for your smorgasbord.

2 LET'S GET SUPERSTITIOUS!

What is it that makes the Irish so lucky? Well, maybe it's because of their traditions. Offer your students some ideas of their own with the following good luck and bad luck super-

stitions from the United States. Don't tell them which should bring bad and which good luck, but let them decide together in groups. Allow them to offer reasons behind their decisions and then share the correct answers.

- Walking under a ladder (bad)
- Opening an umbrella in the house (bad)
- Having a black cat cross your path (bad)
- Carrying a rabbit's foot (good)
- Nailing a horseshoe above the doorway (good)
- Crossing your fingers (good)
- Finding a four leafed clover (good)
- Throwing salt over your left shoulder (good)
- Stepping on cracks (bad)
- Breaking a mirror (bad)

3 PLAY SOME TRADITIONAL IRISH MUSIC!

St. Patrick's Day is a great opportunity to practice some listening and speaking with an Irish band. If you know anyone who plays Irish music, then you know that many Irish songs have simple refrains designed for audience member participation. Invite some live music to your class or use some of the Irish tunes readily available on the internet and allow your students to sing along with the refrains, green beer optional.

4 POPULAR SONG TITLES

We all know Irish eyes are smiling, but can your students fill in the blanks of these popular music titles as they review vocabulary for body parts? Try playing some or all of the songs and see if they can fill in the blanks.

- When Irish (eyes) Are Smiling – Bing Crosby
- (Eye) of the Tiger - Survivor
- Dancing (Cheek) to (Cheek) - Fred Astaire
- Put your (Arms) Around Me – Natasha Bedingfield
- Hold your (Head) Up – Argent

- Can't (Smile) Without You – Barry Manilow
- Let Your (Hair) Down – The Temptations

5 COUNTRIES AND THEIR SPORTS

Though not the nation's official sport, boxing is one of the most favored past times in Ireland. Have your students match the official national sports with their corresponding country. After telling them the answers, why not get some fresh air and a little exercise with a bat and ball as you play America's national pastime: Baseball.

Table Tennis	China
Field Hockey	India
Cricket	England
Cross Country Skiing	Norway
Wrestling	Turkey
Golf	Scotland
Basketball	Lithuania
Baseball Rep.	Dominican
Archery	Bhutan
Yacht Racing	Anguilla

NO MATTER WHAT YOUR ETHNIC ORIGIN IS, ST. PATRICK'S DAY IS AN OCCASION FOR CELEBRATING AND ENJOYING LIFE.

Have fun with your students and allow them to share experiences from their own cultures whether through sports, food or music. Finally, remember, we can all be a little bit Irish on March 17!

St. Patrick's Day:

Last-Minute Lesson Ideas

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY ON MARCH 17TH IS A HOLIDAY CELEBRATED AROUND THE WORLD.

Although it was originally created as a religious holiday, it has evolved into more of a celebration of Irish culture. People today still recognize its religious importance, however, that is no longer seen as the most significant aspect of this day. Some cities get into the festive spirit by having parades and Chicago even dyes the Chicago River green. Meanwhile, people celebrate by drinking Irish beer, eating corned beef, and wearing green clothing. Saint Patrick's Day has spread so much that many countries around the world, especially those with large Irish populations, now organize special events.

If you have time, consider dedicating a lesson or part of a lesson to this topic. Focusing on age appropriate material will ensure that everyone enjoys the lesson.

TEACH ST. PATRICK'S DAY LESSON THE 'IRISH' WAY

1 STARTING ST. PATRICK'S DAY LESSON

Many students may not know about this holiday so try to elicit material from students to give you an idea of what you should cover in your introduction. Telling students things they already know will bore them and after you lose their attention, it could be challenging to get it back. Your introduction as well as the activities you choose to use will depend a lot on the level of your students and what they are interested in.

Try to keep your introduction short while providing students with the information they will need to complete the exercises you have planned. If there is a lot of material, use it as a reading activity to get the students more involved.

2 CHOOSE YOUR ACTIVITIES CAREFULLY

With younger students, consider St. Patrick's Day flashcards to introduce related vocabulary. If you have a small class, consider allowing students to color images and present vocabulary words to the class. Find or create a short, simple story for your class. Fairytales are popular with young students and allow them to use their imaginations so include something about a leprechaun (see our Leprechaun Marionette worksheet (busyteacher.org/2005-leprechaun-marionette.html), for example) to tie it in with the Saint Paddy's day theme. Perhaps your students can even create a story of their own (and maybe write one – here's a great St. Patrick's writing lesson plan for that - busyteacher.org/4544-leprechaun-elementary-writing-lesson-plan.html).

Flashcards or slideshows can help you introduce and practice new words with beginners. If you are not in a class with young learners, be sure to provide students with some reading and writing practice as well. It is important to include a variety of exercises in every lesson. You can practice vocabulary, tell students some information about the holiday, and ask some comprehension questions to start off with. If possible practice structures that students have been working on to give them further practice while relating everything to the holiday.

You will need to introduce less vocabulary with classes of intermediate and advanced learners. Intermediate students would do well listening to or reading an article or story and answering comprehension questions while advanced learners would get more out of answering discussion questions. If St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in the country you are in, have students talk about their past experiences celebrating it. Perhaps students have traditions of their own.

With all groups, simple activities such

as word searches, crosswords, or double puzzles with scrambled words and a scrambled secret message can be lots of fun especially if you finish your planned activities early or for students who finish tasks faster than others. You could even give out extra credit points for students who complete the sheets in class or as homework.

3 ENDING ST. PATRICK'S DAY LESSON

At the end of class it is important to review the new material you have covered. Ask students to give you a summary to see what they have retained and be sure to prompt them for anything that you feel has been left out. Students might not see some of this material again but making the lesson memorable will ensure that they retain it longer.

SAINT PATRICK'S DAY MAY NOT BE THE MOST IMPORTANT HOLIDAY OF THE YEAR BUT IT MAKES FOR A GOOD THEME AND A FUN CULTURAL LESSON. AS WITH ANY HOLIDAY, IF YOUR SCHEDULE DOES NOT ALLOW YOU TO DEVOTE AN ENTIRE CLASS PERIOD TO THE TOPIC, YOU CAN ALWAYS JUST USE IT AS A THEME FOR YOUR LESSON INSTEAD. THIS IS A GOOD COMPROMISE BETWEEN A CULTURAL AND IGNORING THE HOLIDAY ALTOGETHER.

April is National Humor Month

WHY DID THE TEACHER CROSS THE ROAD? SHE WAS TRYING TO GET TO SOME EXCELLENT LESSONS TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL HUMOR MONTH THIS APRIL.

Most people would agree that starting their days off with a laugh can make the whole day better, and April is a good time to try it with your students. National Humor Month gives us all a reason to laugh and celebrate humor in daily life, and here are some ways you can do just that in your ESL class today.

HOW TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL HUMOR MONTH THIS APRIL

1 GOOD MEDICINE

They say that laughter is good medicine. Perhaps some of your students have a story to tell which supports this parable, or maybe someone has evidence to support the contrary. You can give everyone in your class a chance to share when you make small conversation groups to discuss whether or not humor is good medicine. Ask each person to share his opinion and then give reasons to support his answer. Have your groups work together to list 10 ways laughter could improve a person's health. Then using those answers, role-play with your class. Have one person play the part of someone who is sick (let the person choose his ailment) and have the other person make suggestions how humor or laughter might help him.

2 READ UP ON HUMOR

If your class consists of adults, you may want to share this article with them on 19 Ways to Enhance Your Sense of Humor (bspn.com/2008/12/01/19-ways-to-enhance-your-sense-of-humor/). The article offers advice like smiling more, writing funny captions on photographs, and reading the comics every day. After having your students read the article at home, pair each person with another student to discuss whether or not he thinks each of these suggestions would help improve someone's sense of humor.

Then try some humor inducing activities with your class to celebrate the month. In your classroom, designate a bulletin board for funny comic strips. Encourage your students to read comics online or in the paper and cut out any they think are funny. Then post those comics on your bulletin board. Your students can read these during free periods during the school day. You can also bring in some silly pictures or, even better, pictures you have been taking of your students in class. Give everyone a set of photos and encourage them to write a funny caption at the bottom of the picture. Remind your students that they should use complete sentences, but they should also keep their captions short. Collect the captions and make copies of the best ones for your students to vote on. Who has the greatest sense of humor among your students?

3 STRESS RELIEF

Sometimes humor can be one of the best tools for relieving stress, and we are all familiar with what feeling stressed is like. You and your class can take some inspiration from the Red Nose Institute whose mission it is to help alleviate the stress of our military by sending red foam clown noses to troops overseas. The organization collects and purchases noses and sends them to military personnel serving our country. They encourage the service providers to share the nose with someone who might enjoy its frivolity. You can do the same with the students in your class. Give each person a red clown nose, a pair of groucho Marx glasses or some other silly item to either use themselves or pass along to someone who might need some cheering up. Then ask each of your students to note how others respond to them and their gifts. After everyone has given the funny item to someone else or worn it in public himself, bring your class back together to discuss how the silly item improved someone else's day.

4 WHO'S LAUGHING NOW?

Several comedians have made their mark on American pop culture, and George Carlin is one of the better-known comics of our time. In this

interview he offers on pbs.com (pbs.org/bfki20), Carlin talks about how Danny Kay inspired him as an actor and a comedian. You can show your class the two-minute segment as an active listening exercise. The site provides a complete transcript of the two-minute interview with Carlin, which you can modify for a cloze listening exercise with your class. Simply copy the transcript into a text document and replace every fifth word with a blank line. Then challenge your students to fill in the blanks as they listen to the video. You may want to play it more than one time for your students. Then give them the complete transcript so they can check their answers. This exercise will test not only your students' listening skills but also their overall grammatical knowledge.

If your students respond well to the activity, pbs.org offers several interviews with comedians (pbs.org/wnet/makeemlaugh/) along with the transcripts of the interviews, and you can use them to make additional cloze exercises for your students.

EVERYBODY LIKES TO START THE DAY OFF WITH A GOOD LAUGH, SO GIVE YOUR STUDENTS A CHANCE TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT LAUGHING AND HUMOR CAN OFFER OUR DAILY LIVES.

These activities will get them talking about humor and doing what they can to brighten their days as well as the days of others.

Awesome April Lesson Ideas

WHILE EASTER MAY BE THE LARGEST HOLIDAY IN APRIL, THERE ARE ACTUALLY SEVERAL NOTE-WORTHY MINOR HOLIDAYS THAT YOU CAN USE AS TOPICS IN YOUR ESL CLASSES TOO.

As the weather warms up, assuming you are in a country with four seasons, students may start to get a little restless so you want to keep this in mind when planning your lessons. Encourage learners to be more active by letting them move around during class: this will help them stay engaged in lesson topics and make them more eager to participate.

APRIL LESSON ACTIVITIES YOU SHOULD TRY

1 APRIL FOOL'S DAY

It might be a bit dangerous to mention April Fool's Day to your students before the first of the month but assuming they are generally well behaved, you may not be the subject of their pranks. Besides giving a short introduction on this special day, you can use it as a theme for your lesson: see our article 'Foolproof Fun Lesson Activities for April Fool's Day' further down this book.

This holiday lesson is also perfect for practicing the "If ~, then ~." structure with your class and students will find it amusing to come up with ridiculous then clauses. For example give students the beginning of sentences like "If I change the time on my dad's clock, ~." and ask them to either brainstorm consequences or match sentence beginnings with appropriate endings. While a very unique holiday, try not to spend too much time simply discussing April Fool's Day. It serves much better as a theme than as a lesson topic.

2 SPRING

During the winter, everyone looks forward to spring so now that it has finally arrived, celebrate it! With very young learners consider introducing some basic spring vocabulary and doing a simple craft activity that either makes flowers or uses flowers (see our article '6 Splendid Spring

Crafts for the ESL Classroom' here: busyteacher.org/4916-6-splendid-spring-crafts-for-the-esl-classroom.html). With other students you can talk about topics such as spring break activities and destinations, flowers blooming, and a range of other spring related topics based on the interests of your students. Beginners and even intermediate learners would probably appreciate a short study break too and enjoy completing a craft activity to decorate the classroom with. Adding some spring colors to your walls will brighten the room for the whole season.

3 EASTER

Easter is such an important religious holiday that it is likely some of your students observe it in more than just the commercial sense. With learners at any level, you can encourage students to explain what they know about the holiday before giving your introduction. By cleverly crafting your questions, you should be able to elicit a lot of information from them and get a good sense of their experience with the holiday. Take a poll of the class to see who goes to church on Easter and what foods are most common for Easter dinner. Easter egg hunts, if you can add some educational value, are also lots of fun but be sure to ask for permission if you want to give your students candy.

3 POETRY MONTH

April has the distinction of being Poetry Month. In order to talk about this topic with students, consider dedicating a lesson to rhymes and poetry. These two topics are ideal because students can think about pronunciation first and formats second.

First choose a simple word such as cat and ask students to come up with as many rhyming words as possible. Repeat this several times. You can also create a worksheet with pairs of words where students have to decide whether the two words rhyme or not. You should encourage students to say words aloud to help them decide.

Next, talk about poems and introduce some common poem structures. Po-

ems can be very hard for non-native speakers to write so choose one or two poem structures that are very free form and do not require a certain number of syllables per line. If your students are quite advanced, you may consider more challenging poem structures. Ask students to write their own poems. You can even tie this in with another topic by asking students to write poems about spring, trees, or Easter but this can also make the activity more challenging.

At the end of class ask students to volunteer to read their poems aloud and give them some feedback.

4 ARBOR DAY

Arbor Day is observed by a number of countries under a variety of names and in completely different months. In the United States it is the last Friday of April. Use this as a chance to discuss topics such as the disappearing rainforest with advanced learners and the many benefits of trees with beginner and intermediate students. If you would like to talk about poetry too, read "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein and discuss the story with your students.

THESE ARE JUST A FEW LESSON IDEAS FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL. THERE ARE A LOT OF OTHER SPECIAL DAYS IN THIS MONTH TOO INCLUDING SOME FAMOUS BIRTHDAYS. DEPENDING ON THE AGE OF YOUR STUDENTS AND THEIR INTERESTS, YOU MIGHT CONSIDER DISCUSSING OTHER TOPICS WITH THEM INSTEAD OF THE ONES INCLUDED HERE. APRIL HAS SO MUCH TO OFFER IN TERMS OF LESSON TOPICS, WHAT YOU FOCUS ON IS UP TO YOU.

Top 7 Ways to Celebrate Arbor Day with Your ESL Students

I am the Lorax, I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. – Dr. Seuss

ARBOR DAY IS AN OBSERVANCE THAT IS CELEBRATED THROUGHOUT THE US THE LAST FRIDAY IN APRIL WITH THE PURPOSE OF ENCOURAGING TREE PLANTING AND CARE.

It's also celebrated in nations across the globe, most observances taking place in different times of the year. Want to join in the celebration? Here are several ways in which you can celebrate Arbor Day with your ESL students:

HOW TO TEACH ARBOR DAY

1 RESEARCH A TREE

Ok, so your class is not a Botany class – you're supposed to teach ESL. But you're also supposed to provide the English skills that will be essential for them to get around in English, either in a distant or immediate future. Researching and presenting information are some of these skills. At BusyTeacher.org, we have a great worksheet available with Arbor Day Lesson Ideas (busyteacher.org/5245-arbor-day-lesson-ideas.html) and one of these activities proposes that your students research one tree. Make it as simple or as challenging as your students' level will allow.

ArborDay.org has a fantastic Tree Guide (arborday.org/trees/treeguide/) that is an excellent source for advanced students. Assign each of them a tree and ask them to fill out the report complete with drawing.

2 CRAFT SOMETHING TREE-RRIFIC

EnchantedLearning.com has a wonderful page, filled with Arbor Day crafts (enchantedlearning.com/crafts/arborday/), and provides the ideal way to celebrate the day with your youngest learners. Show them how to

make a miniature Japanese garden or surprise the littlest ones with this magical leaf drawing (enchantedlearning.com/crafts/Leafcraft.shtml). Family trees are also a classic, whether you choose the twig or paper kind.

3 SAVE THE TREES WITH THE LORAX

Published four decades ago, the message conveyed by *The Lorax*, rings true today as much as it did back then. Children love the funny names and strange characters and adults cherish the straightforward moral of the story: the blatant disregard for the well-being of our environment will only lead to its destruction. Introduce vocabulary that is related to the story like, sustainable, environment, biome, habitat, biodegradable, recycle, etc. and read the story. Discuss with your students what each of the characters represents and see if they can tell you what the moral of the story is.

For some after school fun, take your students to Seussville.com and show them *The Lorax's Save the Trees Game* (seussville.com/games/lb_lorax_trees.html). Your students won't soon forget the lovable character and his message.

4 WATCH IT'S ARBOR DAY CHARLIE BROWN

Available in VHS format or DVD (1970s Collection), *It's Arbor Day Charlie Brown* is a great video option and nothing but classic Peanuts fun: watch with your students the mayhem that ensues as Charlie Brown's baseball field is filled with trees for the Arbor Day celebration. There are lots of things to be learned from the Peanuts gang, and they can certainly learn from Sally Brown's mistake, as she boldly states that Arbor Day "is when all the ships come into the Arbor".

5 TEACH BY MAGIC!

How about a magic trick to surprise your students? Do YOU think

you can make a 5-foot tree out of your daily newspaper? This video available at TeachbyMagic.com (teachbymagic.com/Teachers/Login.aspx?Video2Remember=481) provides step-by-step instructions on how to pull it off yourself. The message? Each newspaper that is recycled saves over 500,000 trees. Your students will love the trick, plus it'll help drive the message home.

6 DISCUSS: THE USES OF TREES

To introduce the topic, start by reading *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. Ask students how the tree was used in the story. Students brainstorm more ways in which trees are used. Note: The story written by Shel Silverstein, although beautiful, is not recommended for very young or overly sensitive children as it is very sad. Still, it delivers a very powerful message and one that you might want to share with your students.

7 PLANT A TREE!

Clearly, the single best way to celebrate Arbor Day is to plant a tree in the school yard, if possible. Make of it a fun-filled event with tree bark and leaf rubbings, a picnic or an outdoor party. See if you can plan it with some of the other teachers, so that each class can plant their own tree together.

EVERYTHING YOU TEACH YOUR STUDENTS AS AN ESL TEACHER IS VALUABLE.

Everything - from basic verb tenses like the present continuous to more complex ones like the past perfect. But never forget you have the ability to teach them so much more. And that's what Arbor Day is all about: communicating just how important it is to care for our trees and the environment they need to thrive. Because we will never thrive without them, the Lorax himself would agree.

Heal the World: Earth Day

Activities for Your ESL Class

TEACHING ENGLISH IS TREMENDOUSLY REWARDING, RIGHT? BUT WHAT IF WE WERE TO TEACH OUR ESL STUDENTS TO BE RESPONSIBLE, TO TAKE CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT WE SHARE WITH ALL LIVING SPECIES? HOW MUCH MORE REWARDING WOULD THAT BE?

Now's your chance! Earth Day is near, and there's no better time to use the language skills your students are acquiring and use them to help save the environment.

EARTH DAY ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR ESL CLASSROOM

1 VOCABULARY THAT SAVES THE DAY

Start by going over essential vocabulary, anything that relates to the environment or recycling practices like paper, glass, plastic, organic, recycle, etc. Make sure you introduce vocabulary in context through examples that clearly illustrate the meanings of the words. Then review these words by using the Earth Day Word Search, Natural Disasters Word Search, The Environment Word Search - all available at BusyTeacher.org, or make your own with our fabulous Word Search Creator!

2 THE THREE RS

One of the keys to successfully helping the environment is recycling, but more specifically, there are three factors that help us focus our efforts: reduce, reuse and recycle. Take the time to teach your students about the importance of the three Rs and illustrate how each works.

- Teach students what it means to reduce something. Tell them that if they eat 3 candies instead of 10 per day, they are reducing the number of candies they eat, and therefore reducing the amount of sugar they consume. In this case, the concept of reducing is linked to making less garbage. Give your students an example. If they buy lots of small juice boxes they make a lot of garbage. If they buy one big juice box and refill washable bottles, they're making less garbage. Ask them to come up with more examples of ways to reduce garbage.

- Teach students what it means to reuse something. If they fill a plastic bottle with water instead of throwing it away, they are reusing it. The concept of reusing is linked to using an item more than once. Give them an example. If the supermarket gives you your groceries in a plastic bag, you can keep the bag and use it the next time you go to the market. Ask students to provide more examples of reusing.
- Most students understand what it means to recycle, but go over the concept nevertheless - ask them what things they recycle at home or in their city. The concept of recycling is linked to turning something that was once useful into another useful item. Give them examples of materials that may be recycled like paper and glass. Ask students what other materials may be recycled.

Finish up with the recycling game. Prepare a bag full of "garbage": empty plastic bottles, sheets of newspaper, and plastic fruits or vegetables, as well as toy foods, perhaps hamburgers and hot-dogs. Set up three bins clearly labeled paper, plastic, organic (or use pictures for little ones). Divide students into two teams with the big bag of garbage between the two. Students take an item from the bag and place it into the right container. After the garbage has been sorted out, go through the contents of each container with your students and see if any items have been placed in the wrong bin. Congratulate your students! They are now prepared to separate garbage and recycle useful materials.

Finally, set up different bins for paper and plastic in your classroom, and tell students that from now on everyone will help out the environment by separating garbage.

3 THE ENERGY GAME

Can kids learn anything from a simple board game? They sure can! This Energy board game (busyteacher.org/3306-the-energy-game.html) was ingeniously designed to teach kids a lesson or two about the responsible use of our resources. Find out who wins the game and saves the environment in the process!

4 LESSONS LEARNED

A great way to review everything learned in class about the responsible use of resources is to give students this wonderful Happy Earth Day Coloring and Activities Book (bit.ly/VKPnIn), where they once more see the ways in which they can help the environment on a daily basis.

5 ECO-WEBSITES

There are several websites targeted to children of all ages, whose goal is to teach them about the environment, the effects of contamination and pollution, and the things we can do to help. Introduce your students to these websites and encourage them to continue exploring them at home. (Note: Although these sites are for kids, your students may not have the right English reading level to navigate them on their own. Still, they contain valuable material that should not be too difficult to understand if it's presented with your guidance.)

- EcoKids (ecokids.ca/pub/kids_home.cfm) has been proclaimed Canada's environmental destination for kids. There are games that illustrate the consequences of acid rain, for example, drawing contests, and even wonderful printable coloring pages featuring Canadian wildlife.
- The Green Guide for Kids (bit.ly/Vya1Uk) has a fantastic page you can read with your class about the three Rs. Instructions are clear and easy to read, and it even provides your students with an important mission (if they choose to accept it).
- The Environmental Kids Club (epa.gov/kids/) is sponsored by the US Environmental Protection Agency and provides valuable learning resources for kids. Among its many features, children get to visit Recycle City and see ways in which things are reduced, reused or recycled.

WE MUST NEVER UNDERESTIMATE OUR STUDENTS AND THE CONTRIBUTION THEY CAN MAKE. They just have to be given the chance to prove that they can be responsible, too. And don't forget to set the example! Show students what you do on a daily basis to protect the environment and they will surely follow suit!

How to Make Your ESL Classroom Green for Earth Day

CHILDREN LEARN BY EXAMPLE. ALTHOUGH IT MAY SOUND LIKE A CLICHÉ, IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE.

As their ESL teacher, like it or not, you're also responsible for setting a good example. If you haven't been conveying to your students the importance of conserving and protecting the environment, there's no better day than Earth Day to start.

And the best way to get started is by setting up a green classroom. You'll be contributing to helping the environment as a group, and your students will be oh, so proud.

Here are some ideas for setting up your green ESL classroom:

HOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR ESL CLASSROOM GREEN

1 SET UP RECYCLING BINS IN THE CLASSROOM

Place different bins for different types of garbage and make sure that those for aluminum and paper are clearly labeled. Set up an entirely different bin for scraps of paper, tissue, yarn, etc. that may be used for future art projects. Encourage them to use these bins on a daily basis.

2 MINIMIZE THE AMOUNT OF PAPER YOU USE

If you really set your mind to it, you can effectively use less paper in the classroom.

For example, if you're going to use construction paper for an art project, you might want to give each student half a sheet instead of one whole sheet of paper. To capitalize on the learning potential, give every other student in the class one sheet of paper and ask them to cut it half and share it with a classmate. As soon as they ask why, tell them that they won't need more for this project and half a sheet is enough. They'll be learning

the value of using our resources wisely and that sharing is often the best way to achieve this.

3 TEACH STUDENTS TO REUSE MATERIALS

One of the three Rs, or factors that are essential to recycling efforts, is reuse. Ask your students to bring materials from home, which may be reused in class, like toilet paper rolls, egg cartons, milk cartons, boxes, paper or plastic cups, etc. Show students that these items that are so easily discarded can be reused to make beautiful things or even make a positive contribution to the environment. Help your class plant some seeds in everyday containers that would have otherwise ended up in the trash. They'll be amazed to watch their plants grow!

And there are plenty of other things they may be taught to reuse as well. Instead of bringing disposable plastic bottles to class every day, buy a refillable, washable bottle, and encourage your students to do the same.

4 HAVE A SWAP DAY!

For Earth Day, tell your students to bring something they no longer want to use or need, like a book bag, pencil case, school supplies, even books. Students swap items they no longer need or want for others. Designate one day every month, say, the last Friday of the month, for swapping.

5 MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM TRULY "GREEN"

To inspire your students to actively participate in the activities you propose, make sure the symbol for recycling is visible throughout the classroom. Put up lots of posters of plants, trees, flowers - remember it's spring so it's a great time to do this! Also, make sure you turn off the lights and all electric equipment when they are not in use, thus contributing to the "green" state of mind.

6 ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE BUYING

Are your students aware that they can buy notebooks and pads made of recycled paper? What about other products that are environmentally-friendly? Have non-toxic, environmentally-friendly school supplies in your classroom and encourage your students to buy the same. By supporting the efforts of companies that recycle or produce non-toxic materials, you'll be contributing to a good cause AND keeping a good company in business.

7 SET UP A GREEN READING CORNER

Set up a bookshelf with books that convey a solid environmental message and teach kids things they can do at home to protect the earth's resources. This *Tree Counts* by Alison Formento is a great book to read to your class and keep on your bookshelf throughout the year. Also recommended are *We Planted a Tree* by Diane Muldrow and *Compost Stew* by Mary McKenna Siddals.

YOU CAN TRY ANY OR ALL OF THESE INITIATIVES, BUT ABOVE ALL, LEAD BY EXAMPLE. IF YOU DON'T ACTIVELY TAKE PART IN RECYCLING EFFORTS, IF YOUR STUDENTS DON'T SEE YOU REUSING THINGS, YOUR COLORFUL BINS WON'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE.

Make sure your students understand that, yes, your classroom is an ESL classroom, but that doesn't mean it can't be a green classroom.

Hop Into These Egg-cellent ESL Easter Crafts!

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT EASTER IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE IS THAT IT HAPPENS IN SPRING.

The main theme behind the religious celebration is rebirth, and spring is the one season where we see rebirth all around, in plant and animal life. Try these fabulous crafts and get them egg-cited about Easter!

EGG-CELLENT ESL EASTER CRAFTS YOU SHOULD TRY

1 EASTER EGGS WITH TONS OF TEXTURE AND COLOR!

Try making these Easter eggs for a true burst of color! You'll need:

- Materials in an assortment of colors, for example, colored cotton balls, painted macaroni, buttons, pipe cleaners, or anything really that provides a great deal of texture.

Tip: to color your cotton balls, place them in a plastic bag (but fluff them out and make them wispy, first), then add some drops of food coloring and one capful of rubbing alcohol. Seal the bag and massage the cotton balls till they're evenly colored. Open the bag to dry. Repeat with as many colors as you like. To paint macaroni or any small pasta, place them in a bowl and add some tempera paint. Mix till all of the pasta is evenly colored, then scoop it all out into a cookie sheet, previously lined with aluminum foil. Spread out the pasta as much as you can so the pieces don't get stuck to each other as the paint dries. Repeat with as many colors as you like.

- Glue
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Double sided tape

Give your students an egg template and show them how to cut out an egg out of construction paper. They apply double sided tape or glue. They stick the colored cotton balls, painted macaroni, or your materials of choice, arranged as stripes across the egg,

polka dots, or any way they like!

2 CHICKS WITH HANDPRINT WINGS

This is a very original way to put some wings on chicks. You'll need:

- Construction paper in white, black, orange and yellow
- Glue
- Black marker
- Scissors
- Paint brush
- Yellow finger paint

Have your students cut out an oval-shaped body for the chick out of yellow paper and glue onto another sheet of paper. They cut out the beak, head feathers and legs out of orange paper and glue everything onto the chick. They cut out two circles for the eyes out of white paper and two smaller ones out of black paper for the pupils. You paint your students' palms yellow and have them stamp them onto the sides of the chicks' bodies for the wings.

3 PAPER CUP BUNNY TREAT HOLDERS

The kids make them and YOU fill them up with treats or small chocolate eggs! You'll need:

- White paper cups
- White pipe cleaners
- Pink pompoms
- White, black and pink construction paper

Have your students cut out large bunny ears out of white construction paper, and pink inner ears to glue on those. Stick them on the back of the paper cup. Show them how to make the eyes out of white circles and smaller black circles for the pupils. Have the children glue two pipe cleaners for the whiskers and a pink pompom for the nose.

4 WHAT'S HATCHING?

This is another easy but very colorful Easter craft that allows children to get as creative as they like. You will

need:

- White construction paper
- Tissue paper in a variety of colors
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers
- Hole puncher
- Paper fasteners

Ask your students to draw and cut out an egg from the white construction paper. You may wish to give them a template. Then, give them some tissue paper they can either cut up or roll up into little balls that they can glue to decorate their eggs. With their scissors they cut the egg across in a zigzag pattern. Punch a hole through both ends on the same side and use a paper fastener so the children can open and close the hatched egg. Have your students cut out a chick with the template, color it, and glue it to the back of the egg.

5 COTTON BALL BUNNY

As cuddly and soft as a real bunny, your students will love taking this fuzzy friend home with them. You will need:

- White and pink construction paper
- White cotton balls
- Scissors
- Glue
- Pink pompoms
- White and pink pipe cleaners

Children cut out a big circle for the bunny face and large bunny ears out of white construction paper. They cut out the smaller inner ears out of pink construction paper. They glue the ears to the back of the circle. Have your students put glue all over the circle and add the cotton balls, one next to the other till the whole face is filled with them. Then they add eyes out of white and black construction paper, and whiskers and a mouth out of pipe cleaners.

THERE IS NO QUESTION YOUR STUDENTS WILL BE THRILLED TO TAKE THESE CRAFTS HOME AND SHOW THEM OFF TO THEIR FAMILIES.

Exciting Easter Lesson Plans for Every Level

EASTER IS THAT FUN CULTURAL HOLIDAY LESSON THAT OFTEN FALLS SOMETIME IN APRIL. THE DATE VARIES FROM YEAR TO YEAR SO BE SURE TO CHECK YOUR CALENDAR WHEN LAYING OUT YOUR SCHEDULE FOR THE TERM.

Much like Christmas there are two important aspects of the holiday: there is the religious side of it and also the commercial side. As Easter is the most important event of the Christian calendar, this would be the best holiday to include a bit of religious background while there really is not much of anything to talk about on the commercial side besides the Easter bunny and Easter egg hunts. Be sure to include a variety of activities regardless of the level of your students.

HOW TO TEACH AN EASTER LESSON TO DIFFERENT LEVELS

1 ALL LEVELS

There are several activities you can do with learners at any level. Generally it is good to start off by eliciting related information from students to see what they already know, introduce any other material they will need to complete the activities you have planned, and then introduce and practice specific vocabulary words. Once you have completed this introduction, your plan will heavily depend on the level of your students.

2 YOUNG LEARNERS

With young learners remember not to try to do too many activities in one class period. For Easter, consider introducing some new vocabulary words. Use flashcards with large, colorful images to practice. Start by using choral repetition to drill the words and then do a short individual practice activity. Next you could do an Easter egg hunt. Instead of giving your students candy, include miniature versions of your flashcards in the eggs. Now have students sit in a semi circle while you read a very simple Easter

story. Whenever you reach a vocabulary word, hold up the picture flashcard and have all the students who found that picture in their eggs, say it aloud. You may have to read the story more than once for students to understand it. Afterwards you can ask some questions about the story to test comprehension. If there is still time at the end of class, consider asking students to complete a worksheet. Usually at this stage, students will not be writing in English but you can ask them to match items with one another or with numbers. For instance, if you say “bunny three”, students should draw a line between the image of a bunny and the number three.

3 BEGINNERS

With beginners who are not considered young learners, you will be able to do more activities such as include a writing exercise in your lesson plan. After introducing key vocabulary, an Easter song would be a great listening exercise. Many ESL teachers have posted Easter songs online so you are free to use those in your lessons or make your own. Depending on the age of your students, you may decide to have them complete a fill in the blank worksheet during the song or learn the lyrics so that they can sing a long. Talk a little bit about the meaning of the song and check the answers as a class if you created a worksheet. Asking questions about the song and your Easter introduction will be a good comprehension check. At the end of the lesson an Easter theme word search (busyteacher.org/5047-easter-worksheet.html) or crossword puzzle would be excellent for extra vocabulary practice.

4 INTERMEDIATE / ADVANCED

Intermediate and advanced learners will be able to handle the introduction of more challenging vocabulary but since this is a cultural lesson, try to limit yourself to about ten new words. Depending on the age of your stu-

dents, you may decide to use a story or an article for a reading activity. Ask students to read silently and then take turns reading sentences aloud. The topic will depend on your students but the history of the holiday or a short fictional Easter story might be appropriate. Talk about the pronunciation and meaning of any unfamiliar words and phrases. As a follow-up you can prepare a worksheet for intermediate learners or conduct a discussion with advanced learners. For a short writing activity you can ask students to summarize the article in their own words or write a brief essay about a related topic. As a final vocabulary review, give students an Easter themed crossword puzzle to end the class on a fun note.

EASTER IS A GREAT CULTURAL HOLIDAY TO TALK ABOUT IN CLASS BECAUSE THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT ASPECTS YOU CAN CONSIDER USING FOR YOUR LESSON.

What you include and how you present and practice the material should be based on your students especially their interests, ages, and level.

5 Easter Games and Activities Your ESL Class Will Never Eggs-pect!

ANOTHER MAJOR HOLIDAY ROLLS AROUND AND YOUR STUDENTS KNOW YOU'LL BE UP TO SOMETHING.

You've had special lessons for Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas, so they'll be expecting the Easter crafts, new vocabulary, and worksheets, as well as the reading, writing and speaking activities. They'll also be expecting the Easter games. They know full well that any games you play in class will be somehow related to an ESL component, that there will be some focus on grammar or new vocabulary. Because they know that in an ESL classroom, you rarely play games just for fun. Want to surprise your class? AND give them opportunities to learn?

Try these Easter games, and you'll have your students eagerly lining up to play. And learn!

5 EASTER GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR ESL CLASS

1 EASTER BUNNY SAYS

Simon Says is a classic Total Physical Response activity, and one that young students enjoy, so why not play it for Easter but with a twist? Or with a hop, rather? First, get your students outfitted with some bunny ears (teach them how to make some and stick them onto plastic headbands) and bunny tails (make some of out cotton and stick with double sided tape). Some of the instructions may be:

- Easter Bunny says hop left/right!
- Easter Bunny says touch your bunny ears (make sure they touch the right ones!)
- Easter bunny says shake your cotton tail!
- Etc..

This is a great way to review the part of the body and introduce new Easter-related vocabulary.

2 EASTER FACES

This is a fabulous way to review face vocabulary and put their listening

comprehension to the test. This activity requires some previous preparation at home. First, you'll have to prepare some eggs. Make a hole on either end of an egg, blow out the inside, and rinse. In class, give each of your students an egg and tell them to get their markers ready. Give them step by step instructions on what they have to draw:

- Draw two big eyes.
- Draw a big nose.
- Draw a smiling/frowning mouth.
- Draw eyebrows/glasses over the eyes.
- Etc.

Walk around the classroom and check to see if they followed your instructions correctly.

3 ROLL THE EASTER DICE

Roll some custom made dice for a fun speaking task! Print out two copies of a dice template, available at Sparkle-Box.com. On each side of each dice write the usual one to six numbers plus a different word - include as many Easter-related words as you can, but add some interesting ones: bunny, eggs, basket, hunt, break, spring, hop, etc. Each student rolls the dice and has to say a sentence using the two words they rolled - if they succeed they get the number of points they rolled (the two numbers added). You may choose to make it a bit more challenging for older students. Give them more difficult words to use, or tell them they have to make short story based on those two words. The best story wins!

4 EASTER EGG AND SPOON RACE

A classic among relay races, you may choose to adapt this one to suit your students' ages. You may use uncooked eggs, hard-boiled ones, plastic eggs, or even chocolate eggs. Divide students into two teams. Each team member races to the finish line. The winning team has to come up with ten Easter-related questions that the losing team has to answer.

5 WORDY EASTER EGG HUNT

Do you feel that sometimes your students lack the words to say what they want to say? Here's your chance to provide some through an Easter egg hunt. First, write Easter related words in small slips of paper. Place each slip inside a plastic egg. Hide the eggs throughout the classroom or outside, if you can, and invite your students to participate in this exhilarating egg hunt. Once they've collected them all, they open their eggs and take out the slips of paper. Their task is to write a story using the words they found in their eggs.

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE A FUN EASTER LESSON, FILLED WITH GAMES THAT ARE RICH IN LEARNING POSSIBILITIES? NO MORE EGGS-CUSES!

We've given you some great ideas for games that will not only keep your students engaged and thrilled to participate- they ensure they'll put on their thinking caps (or bunny ears!)

Celebrate International Children's Book Day: Activities for Any Age

APRIL 2ND EACH YEAR MARKS THE BIRTHDAY OF HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON IN 1805 AND THE CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK DAY.

Since reading is an integral part of any ESL program, you can easily tie the celebration into activities you might already be doing in class. Here are some ideas you can use to celebrate the world of children's literature available to your classroom.

HOW TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S BOOK DAY IN YOUR CLASSROOM

1 TRADITION

Ask your students to share a traditional story from their home cultures. Start by giving them some examples of traditional stories from your native country. You may want to offer a tall tale or a legend as an example to spark your students' creativity. Then provide a few minutes for students to gather their thoughts and list the events of the story in note form before sharing it with the class. If you have books of international stories available or have internet access in your classroom, these can also help your students come up with their ideas. Then have each person share his story with a small group of students in the class. After listening to all the stories, each group should choose one to perform for the class in skit form.

Your students will enjoy hearing about other cultures and seeing their classmates' skillful portrayals of the stories in front of the class. You may also want to make available to your students books of traditional stories from around the world. Many collections of national fairy tales are available for free download from reading apps. If your students are younger, try reading some stories from *The Barefoot Book of Earth Tales* by Dawn Casey and Anne Wilson, which retells traditional stories from around the world. It also

includes activities that tie into the traditional tales.

2 CULTURE

For teachers of adult ESL students, your class may not be most appreciative of read along picture books, but that does not mean they are useless in your classroom. Start by showing your students a book from the Child's Day series, such as "In an Indian Village" by Prodepta Das, or another picture book that shares the life in the day in another country. Then challenge your students to make a similar book that would show a child what a day in his or her home culture might be like.

Encourage your students to think from the perspective of a child and what a child's life might look like. Your students can write their stories and then use person pictures or images they find online to illustrate their stories. If you have talented artists in your class, encourage them to draw their own illustrations. Then offer to share the books with a group of younger students, either in your school or at a nearby day-care. Have your students read their books to the children and answer any questions those children might have about their cultures. In so doing, you promote cultural understanding in today's younger generation and help encourage the young audience to have a global perspective.

After your class reads their books to the children, lead a discussion back in your own classroom about the experience. What did your students enjoy? What did they find difficult? How did the kids respond to their books?

3 UNDERSTANDING

Encourage your students to get involved in Papertigers blog's attempt to go around the world in 100 bookshelves (bit.ly/1axCZr). Ask your students to bring in a picture of their bookshelf, and then post each of the pictures on a bulletin board designated for the purpose. You may want to title

the bulletin board "Around the World in 100 Bookshelves" and explain the reference to the classic Jules Vern book.

When you post the pictures, do not identify the owner of each shelf. Instead, ask each of your students to look at the pictures and try to match up each of his classmates to the correct picture. They should use clues like the languages in which the books are written as well as the subjects which the books cover.

Before revealing the correct match ups, assign one of the pictures to each person in your class. Make sure no one gets his or her own picture. Then ask that person to write about the owner of the shelf by drawing conclusions from what books are there.

After your students have finished writing, you may want to have each person read what he or she has written and then reveal the actual owner of the bookshelf. Give the owner a chance to respond to what was said, and remind your entire class to keep a sense of humor throughout the activity. If you like, send the pictures to papertigers.org to be a part of their bookshelf project and to be posted online.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS ARE ONE OF THE KEYS TO GETTING KIDS INTERESTED IN READING.

To celebrate the day, encourage your students to read every day and explore what the world of children's literature has to offer.

Don't be a Fool This April: Activities You Can Do April 1st

IN MANY COUNTRIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, APRIL FIRST IS A DAY DESIGNATED FOR HUMOR AND FOOLISHNESS, AND CHILDREN AND ADULTS ALIKE PLAY PRACTICAL JOKES ON THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

The degree of tomfoolery varies from one country to another as well as from one individual to another, but for the most part the pranks are harmless and intended to be funny. Still, not all of your students will have the same appreciation for these pranks, even if they come from the same home culture. Since controversy provides the perfect excuse for classroom conversation, give your students a forum to discuss what is right and what is wrong about the lighthearted holiday with these April first activities.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO APRIL 1ST

1 IMPRACTICAL JOKES

A common practice among many April Fool's Day celebrants is the practice of playing practical jokes on friends and family. These (somewhat) innocent pranks are intended to be funny, and often are, but sometimes they can go too far. Put your students into discussion groups, preferably groups that represent different nations, to discuss their opinions on practical jokes.

- What practical jokes can your students think of?
- What jokes have they played on others or heard that others had played that may have gone too far?
- How does a person know when they are going too far? Is it possible to do so?
- What should the prankster do if they have gone too far?

Have each group decide on a list of five pranks they think are appropriate and five they think are inappropriate and give reasons for those they say are inappropriate. If possible, ask your stu-

dents to come up with a short list of rules that should be followed when planning and carrying out an April first prank. Be careful, though. Talking about practical jokes may inspire your students to play a few of their own, so be on guard!

2 WORD GAMES

After a discussion on what makes an appropriate practical joke, spend some time as a class brainstorming all the words you can think of that English speakers associate with April Fool's Day. Be sure to include as many synonyms for prank as you can, and you may want to have your students use a thesaurus and dictionary to help expand the list. Review unfamiliar vocabulary with your class, and then challenge groups to make a word game for their classmates using some or all of the words the class brainstormed. Groups may want to make their own word search puzzles or crossword puzzles. They can also make cryptograms or other word puzzles with the brainstormed vocabulary list. You may want to have a few copies of popular puzzle magazines available in your classroom so your students can gain inspiration for their original word games. If word puzzles are inappropriate for your students, either because of their difficulty level or the context in which you teach, you can use the lists that they brainstormed for a game of charades or Pictionary, which will keep the energy in the classroom high all day!

3 A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

If your class is made up of students of several nationalities, they might benefit from a time of sharing on how April Fool's Day is celebrated in different cultures around the world. Culture is an ever-present topic in a multinational ESL classroom, so asking students to share with the class what they typically experience on April first can help your students understand each other and their cultures. As your students share, you may hear of the "April fish" tradition celebrated in French speaking Canada, France and Italy. Your students may also say that pranks played after noon

attest that the prankster is a fool rather than his victim. To explore this activity further, pair students with someone from a different home country and have the two compare and contrast the celebrations in each nation. You can have them use a Venn diagram or make lists of similarities and differences. You may also want your students to research what types of traditions different nations have for April Fool's Day. You can find this information online or in your library.

4 TROMPE L'OEIL

Perhaps one of the longest traditions of trickery is the artistic rendering of trompe l'oeil art. This French term which means 'deceive the eye' is used to describe paintings and other artistic renderings which trick the eye into believing it is seeing a three dimensional, real object rather than a two dimensional piece of art. Familiarize your students with this type of art by showing them pictures of some art of this genre (you can do an image search on trompe l'oeil to find examples), then share with them this CBS News video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECeGwg7Cm0A>) about Julian Beever, one of the most renowned trompe l'oeil artists of our time. Show the segment a first time to familiarize your students with Beever's art, and then play the clip again. Challenge your students to take notes during the second viewing, noting what makes Beever's art different from traditional art and what methods he uses to share his art with the general population. For the truly adventurous, you can challenge your students to come up with their own trompe l'oeil pieces of art!

APRIL FOOL'S DAY MAY BE A FAVORITE DAY FOR ANY PRANKSTERS IN YOUR CLASSROOM, BUT IT CAN ALSO BE A GOOD STARTING POINT FOR DISCUSSION AND LANGUAGE PRACTICE AMONG YOUR STUDENTS.

Having your students share their own personal experiences and opinions on April Fool's Day opens the channels for communication and gives them a chance to practice their English skills while still bringing fun into the classroom.

Foolproof Fun Lesson Activities for April Fool's Day

NOTHING HELPS AN ESL CLASS RELAX MORE THAN SOME GOOD OLD-FASHIONED LAUGHTER. AND ISN'T THAT WHAT APRIL FOOL'S DAY IS ALL ABOUT?

On this day when so many take the time to play pranks and practical jokes, give your ESL students the chance to join in the fun, and who knows? Maybe you'll inspire them to play some pranks of their own. Here are some ideas for April Fool's activities for your ESL class.

FUN APRIL FOOL'S DAY ACTIVITIES

1 A PRANK WITH APPEAL

There's no better way to illustrate the meaning of a prank than to simply play one. You will need a ripe banana and a toothpick. Stick the toothpick into the banana, preferably where there's already a spot. Move the toothpick left and right inside the banana, and cut through the fruit - make sure you don't cut through the peel. Take out the toothpick and repeat five to six times on different spots on the banana.

Now in class, tell you're students you're in the mood for a snack. Give the banana to one of your students and ask him or her to peel it for you - you can pretend you're busy doing something else, like erasing the board. Witness your students' looks of surprise and bafflement as they see the banana has been sliced inside the peel!

Briefly explain to your students the tradition of playing pranks for April Fool's Day. Tell them they can play this prank at home, and show them how to prep the banana. Other pranks your students can try at home include switching sugar for salt or replacing fresh eggs with hard-boiled ones.

2 FOOL ME ONCE...

There are a great deal of expressions and phrases with the word

"fool". Some of the most common are:

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

A fool and his money are soon parted.

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client.

Introduce these, or others, to your students and ask them to explain the message the phrase is trying to convey and to which situations these phrases may apply. Recommended for upper-intermediate to advanced students, however, there are plenty of other shorter expressions that you may use with students in lower levels, like "a fool's paradise" or "fool's gold". You will find these and more at PhraseFinder.com (bit.ly/T8GKtb).

3 APRIL FOOL'S READING

Here are two great options for April Fool's reading activities:

- The Very Bad Yorkshire Joke (busyteacher.org/3420-the-very-bad-yorkshire-joke.html) - This worksheet comes complete with introduction and follow-up activities. See if your students get the joke!
- April Fool's Day (bit.ly/VyitDd) - HeadsUpEnglish provides this great reading task, which also comes with audio you can download (simply right click where it says Listen Now and go to the Save Link As option to download the audio file to your computer), plus a worksheet you can use in class.

4 FOOLISH GAMES

April Fool's is a great opportunity to teach vocabulary related to humor, namely words like joke, hoax, prank, trick, surprise, annoy, etc. EnchantedLearning.com (enchantedlearning.com/themes/aprilfool.shtml) has tons of worksheets, puzzles, and other fun activities that are ideal for your young-

est learners.

5 WHO CAN YOU FOOL?

For this writing assignment, ask students to come up with their own practical joke or prank. Make sure they write the materials that will be needed first, then, the steps for the setup, and finally the execution of the prank itself. Walk around and supply hints or ideas as needed. Students share their pranks with the class, then, vote for the best one!

6 A FOOL'S DEBATE?

This is a great speaking task for intermediate to advanced students, whether they are teens or adults. Discuss what makes a practical joke appropriate or inappropriate? Where should they be played? What lines should never be crossed? When does good old-fashioned fun become a painful embarrassment? Now's a good time to review the real meaning behind April Fool's - that it should be a day of fun for everyone, rather than simply a good opportunity to have fun at someone else's expense.

7 WATCH VIDEOS - JUST FOR LAUGHS!

Just for Laughs is a hidden camera show that best illustrates the true spirit of practical jokes. Watch some of these pranks on VideoBash (bit.ly/QGitwg) with your students and you will have a classroom full of roaring laughter. Discuss people's reactions: how do they react when they realize they've been fooled? Make sure you choose videos that are appropriate to your students' ages.

SO, IF YOU'VE BEEN FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON GRAMMAR LATELY, OR GIVING YOUR STUDENTS WAY TOO MUCH HOMEWORK, LIGHTEN UP! LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE, RIGHT? FORGET ABOUT REPORTED SPEECH FOR ONE DAY AND TRY THESE FUN APRIL FOOL'S ACTIVITIES INSTEAD.

How to Incorporate April Fools Day into Your Lessons

EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD JOKE, EVEN WHEN IT'S PLAYED ON THEM.

Take advantage of April Fools' Day to develop your students' cultural knowledge, increase their motivation, and build community all at the same time. Here are some easy, classroom-ready ways to incorporate this special day into your classroom.

CONVINCE YOUR STUDENTS YOU ARE A MIND READER

Students already know that their teacher is brilliant, but do they know that you can read minds on April Fools' Day? Here are a few ways you can trick your students into thinking you are a mind-reader. Even if they don't have them fooled for long, it's a good way to bring some humor and light-heartedness into the classroom. Use one or a combination of the following mind-reading tricks to amaze your students.

1 Go around the room and have each student tell you a number between 1 and 100. Pretend to write down each number on a little piece of paper that you fold and put into a hat. What you really do is write down the first student's number on every piece of paper. When you ask a student to pick a number out of the hat, you will automatically be able to guess what number they picked! If you have a clever class that can figure that out too easily, don't write anything down the first time, and instead use the second student's number each time!

2 To do this 'pick a card' trick, you will need to prepare a little in advance. You will need an envelope, and four cards, two of which will need to be the same number (for example, a jack, a queen, and two kings).

Step 1: On the back of one of the cards, let's say the queen, you put a post-it note on the back with a big X

written on it.

Step 2: On the back of the envelope, write in big letters "You picked the jack."

Step 3: When you're ready to do the trick, make sure that the jack, queen, and one of the kings are on one side of the envelope while the other king card is hiding inside the other part of the envelope out of sight.

When you're ready to do the joke, pull the three cards out of the envelope, but make sure they don't see the writing on the envelope or the X on the back of the queen. Lay the three cards face up on the table and ask a student to point to one of the cards. Make a big deal about how you already knew before you came to class that day which card they would pick. If they choose the jack, flip the envelope over to show them your written message. If they chose the queen, turn the queen card over to show them the X on the back of the card, and show them how none of the other cards have an X on the back. If they pick the king, pull the other king card out of the envelope, and show them how there are no other cards hiding in the envelope. Make sure you do it really well the first time because you can't do this trick more than once without giving away your secret!

3 This one involves some real math magic! Before class, look in a book on page 108 and find the ninth word on that page. If your book doesn't have 108 pages, look on page 10, line 8, word 9. Have this word in your head before class or write it on a post-it note.

In class, ask your students to choose any three digit number (the joke will work with any three digit number so long as all three digits aren't the same, e.g. 333). For example, let's say your student chose 791. Then you ask your students to subtract the inverse of that number, 197 (always subtract the smaller number from the

larger of the two). That gives you 594. Then tell your students to add this new number to its inverse, 495. This gives you the number 1089. Hand the book you used before class to a student and ask them to look on page 108 for the ninth word on that page. They will be amazed that you knew the word that went with their number! In reality, any three-digit number you use will always yield 1089 in the end.

USE CLASSIC JOKES

Knock-knock jokes, puns, and other jokes are great ways to lighten the classroom as well as expand students' language skills as most jokes or puns rely on the double meanings of words or similar pronunciation. Making students aware of these humorous ways to manipulate language will help them feel more connected to English as well as having a better understanding of the many meanings of a word. It will also give them something fun to share with their American friends. In the classroom, you can simply tell the jokes to the students or create an activity by writing down the jokes and their answers on separate pieces of paper to distribute to the students. Then, have the students mingle to match the jokes to the answers. Examples of jokes can include:

What do you call a fish with no eyes? Fshhhhhhh.

What did the fish say when he swam into a wall? Dam. (May not be appropriate for younger audiences)

Why was six afraid of seven? Because seven ate (eight) nine!

What do you call a dinosaur that gets into a car accident? A Tyrannosaurus wrecks

What kind of flower is on your face? Tulips

Why didn't the two melons get married? Because they cantaloupe.

RIDDLES

Along with classic funny jokes, riddles

are a great low-key April Fools' Day activity that helps students build both their language skills as well as their critical thinking skills. Put students in pairs and allow them to work together to try and figure out the riddles as a warmer in your classroom. Most students love riddles, and they will practice using logic in their second language while they talk it over with their partner and try to find the "catch" in the riddle. Some great riddles are:

- A plane crashes exactly on the border of the U.S. and Canada. Half of the people on board were American and half of the people were Canadian. Where do you bury the survivors? Answer: You don't bury survivors!
- Some months have 30 days, and some months have 31 days. How many months have 28 days? Answer: All of them! January 28, February 28, etc.
- What gets wetter the more it dries? Answer: A towel.
- How do you drop an egg 3 feet with out breaking it? Answer: Drop it from four feet, and the first three feet won't hurt it.
- What has four wheels and flies? Answer: A dumpster
- What word begins and ends with e but only contains one letter? Answer: An envelope.
- The person who makes it, sells it. The person who buys it never uses it and the person who uses it doesn't know they are. What is it? Answer: A coffin.

PRACTICAL JOKES ON STUDENTS

There's nothing wrong with a good innocent practical joke on a class. It can be helpful to build community and spread some laughter. Just don't be surprised if your students turn the tables on you one day! Here are some fun innocent practical jokes:

- If you're in a computer lab, change the language of Google to a language the students don't know, such as Esperanto or Klingon.
- Put on a fake tattoo and convince

your students that it's real.

- Put food dye in some cookies or other snacks and offer it to them.
- Give students a difficult pop quiz and have the last question say "What holiday is today?"
- Plan an innocent joke together as a class to play on a good-natured administrator!
- Switch classrooms with another teacher and act surprised when they tell you that you are in the wrong classroom. Pretend that you believe you have been their teacher this whole time.

HOAX WEBSITES

Google always does a fantastic April Fools joke every year, however, there are a number of additional good websites that are "hoaxes." Make a webquest for students to do in pairs or go through the website as a class and see if any students can figure out that the website isn't real. One great website to use is www.dhmo.org. This website is not an actual "hoax" but gives warnings and statistics about a dangerous chemical known as dihydrogen monoxide (aka water) that can harm people through inhalation, be found in acid rain, and is also found in our milk. This is also an ideal lesson for introducing the idea of responsible research on the Internet.

LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

If jokes and humor aren't your thing, you can always do some classic exercises involving the history of April Fools' Day and how it is celebrated in other countries. You can do gap-fills to build reading skills or listening exercises after watching a video on April Fools' Day. For speaking practice, you can have students recall the best joke they have ever played/had played on them and whether they like surprises or not. This day is also a good day to teach joking vocabulary and phrases such as 'gotcha' or 'just kidding.'

THESE ACTIVITIES ARE GREAT FOR ANY TEACHER, EVEN IF HUMOR DOESN'T COME NATURALLY FOR YOU. APRIL FOOLS' DAY ACTIVITIES ARE A GREAT WAY TO CHANGE UP THE ROUTINE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

AND INCREASE STUDENT MOTIVATION.

Whether it's humor, surprises, or tricks, students will appreciate the activities and gain a few ideas that they can use on their family or friends all while improving their English.

Marvelous May Lesson Ideas

APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS. THE MONTH OF MAY CAN FEEL LIKE THE BEGINNING OF SUMMER TO SOME PEOPLE SO STUDENTS MAY ALREADY BE THINKING ABOUT SUMMER VACATION.

If this is just a normal month of classes, check the school calendar to see if there are any activities planned that you can incorporate into your lessons. For some schools, this may be the last month of school for you and your students in which case reviews and tests may take priority over other topics. If this is not the case or if you find yourself with a few classes after exams have been taken, you should consider using some of the topics from this article in your lessons.

MARVELOUS MAY LESSON IDEAS YOU SHOULD TRY

1 CINCO DE MAYO

This is a Mexican holiday that has gained popularity around the world. Cinco de Mayo gives you a chance to talk with your students about Mexico, similar historical events and holidays, as well as the local culture. If you are teaching abroad and always telling your students about your native country, this will be a surprising change for them. If you happen to be teaching in Mexico, let students explain the importance of this holiday to you and provide them with the necessary vocabulary they need to do so effectively.

2 MOTHER'S DAY

Many countries around the world celebrate Mother's Day on different days and even in different months. In the United States it is the second Sunday of May so this might be a good time to include the topic in your course if you have not done so already.

For younger students this is a perfect opportunity to let students make cards for their mothers, and some classes of older students would enjoy this activity too. With high school students and adult learners consider doing a different type of exercise such as talking about the role their mothers have in

their lives. You can also discuss the personality traits that make a good mother which is something that will vary from one country to another but also has some similarities worldwide.

3 FRIDAY THE 13TH

This combination of day and dates happens at least once a year. In 2012 it happened 3 times throughout the year, while in 2013 it is going to be two times, but, unfortunately, not in May. Some people are superstitious and this day is supposed to bring bad luck. Talk to students about this and other common superstitions in your country and encourage them to tell you about others. Are your students or members of their families superstitious? Conduct a class survey to find out.

4 AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DAY & MEMORIAL DAY

Either of these two holidays makes an excellent prompt for a discussion lesson. Amnesty International Day helps raise awareness about pressing human rights issues. It is celebrated on the 28th of May. Some related topics might include the death penalty, poverty, crimes against women, and how certain groups are denied access to resources that would improve their overall health. These are obviously very weighty topics and would need to be adapted to suit younger learners.

Many countries also have certain days set aside to remember the soldiers lost in battle. In America Memorial Day is the last Monday of the month and can be used to introduce war related topics. Your school may not be open to discussing these types of topics with students so be sure to check before planning your lesson.

5 WEEKLY CELEBRATIONS

Nurse's Week, which is the first week of May, or National Police Week, which is the third week of the month, would be great opportunities to talk about those two professions. If your students have not already learned about health or safety and crime, then use these weeks to introduce and cover the material with your

students. Try to have someone from one of these professions visit your class to talk about their work. Since the weather is warming up, you could also talk about warm weather activities, health, and exercise by tying this in with Nurse's Week. If you want to get your students outside, talk about serving the community later on in the month and consider doing a school clean up or recycling activity with your students.

STUDENTS WILL ENJOY THE VARIETY OF MATERIALS YOU CHOOSE TO INCLUDE IN YOUR COURSE THIS MONTH ESPECIALLY THE CHANCE TO EXPRESS HOW IMPORTANT THEIR MOTHERS ARE.

Some schools will finish the school year during this time so exams may take center stage, and if you have to choose between these many suggestions, mothers should definitely take priority with any level or age group.

Finishing with a Bang:

Wrapping Up the Semester

Well, that went fast: that fifteen-week semester just flew by. It seems as if you were just taking attendance of this class for the first time and learning students' names, and now it's time to say good-bye. It's been a great semester, but you don't want to just fade off. And actually, that probably won't happen as there is so much to do in these last weeks that it feels like the frantic beginning of the semester again. What are some ways to get everything done and end your semester leaving students with a lasting and positive impression? This takes some careful planning, but it can be done.

HOW TO HAVE A GREAT END OF SEMESTER

1 PREPARE

The key to a good end of semester is actually in the start: it is all of your planning of what to cover, and all of your work in establishing class policies, giving students the opportunity to interact, and providing effective instruction that the groundwork of a strong semester end is laid. The class that is run effectively will generally end effectively. However, a few addition steps can be taken. First, revisit your syllabus. Can you realistically complete all the material you had planned to cover? Things happen during the course of the semester, such as a class taking longer than expected with a specific unit of instruction, that can change your initial schedule. Maybe it would be best to just skim that last textbook chapter or write one fewer essay than planned. Gauge where you are, and make adjustments as needed, leaving off or shortening final chapters or projects, while making sure you are still covering required material.

2 WRAP IT UP

Any projects not finished — those essays or speeches students are still in the midst of, for example — should be completed, again shortening as necessary while still preserving the integrity of the class and covering all of the necessary learning objectives. No new materials should be assigned at this point if students still have outstanding projects. Instruction of new material should also be limited as students are at this point focusing on completing their final projects

or study for exams.

3 CONFERENCE

Meet with students. Have them visit you during office hours, or devote class time to individual conferences. Give students some feedback on their progress over the term and what classes you believe they should take next. Remember you might be the only advisor ESL students have on campus because the counselors and other instructors on campus sometimes know little about ESL students and their academic needs, and some students are only taking ESL classes, so your input is critical.

4 ASSESS

Give some sort of final assessment — it doesn't have to be a traditional final exam. But students should have the closure of a final assessment, whether it is simply a quiz or project or a more traditional test. This also becomes part of the final conferencing process as results from this can be used to advise where students need to go after this class — the same or higher level ESL class or classes within the mainstream curriculum. It can also be compared to student performance at the beginning of the class to show how much growth has occurred.

5 NOW STUDENTS GIVE FEEDBACK

Students are very used to being tested or evaluated, they should know we also value and can learn from their feedback. While most institutions of higher learning in the U.S. give some end-of-course evaluation, often it is so vague as to be almost useless for making instructional or curriculum changes: items on the evaluation were "The instructor is nice" and "I like this class", but this is of little use because most students simply mark "agree." And even when the students mark "don't agree," there just isn't enough specificity for the teacher to know what to change. Just hand out your own course evaluations, asking that names be left off, and assuring students that their grades will not be affected by the evaluation: it is just for you to get more information about the course and instruction. Ask rather specific ques-

tions about methods of instruction, use of group work, the course textbook, and so forth. Often the evaluations still come back marked with "Everything was great!" which is certainly validating, but sometimes you'll get some constructive feedback like the use of groups made the room too noisy or the textbook layout was confusing.

6 PARTY

An end-of-term party is often very valuable for ESL students, as a time to say good-bye to their classmates who might be returning to another country, to practice social English, and to learn American culture related to parties. The teacher can do some final advising here as well as teach an American song, story, or game for parties.

7 GOOD-BYES

I usually have a last day set aside for students, apart from the final and party, in which to give back each student's final, last papers, and final grade, and placement of the next semester. This is held more like an office hour in which students can just drop by and pick up the papers and give their farewells. Some are not able to make this last day and so can email to get their final grades and plan to pick up papers the next term.

8 AND BEYOND

Keeping an active website is very helpful for instructors so that students can get information about your classes and office hours and can therefore stop by when necessary. If this is not possible, at least posting this information somewhere is important. Past students do frequently get in contact — for advice, for letters of recommendation, to find out about classes for themselves or peers, or just to talk, so being available and keeping the lines of communication open is important.

THE GROUNDWORK FOR A SUCCESSFUL END OF SEMESTER IS ALL THE PREPARATION AND WORK YOU PUT INTO THE BEGINNING AND MIDDLE OF THE TERM. Saying good-bye is never easy (indeed, I always feel teary at the end of good class), but along with the tears is the satisfaction of completing a well-taught class.

3 Electrifying Tips for Teaching Through the Summer

WHETHER YOU ARE TEACHING ADULTS OR YOUTH THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER, IT IS AN IMPORTANT TIME TO TRY OUT NEW THINGS AND SHAKE THINGS UP. Teaching through the summer doesn't have to be an ordeal though. Follow these 3 electrifying tips to bring your students in out of the heat and into your refreshing world of language this summer!

HOW TO TEACH THROUGH THE SUMMER

1 PROJECT-ORIENTED WORK

Project-oriented work is a valuable approach to engage students throughout the summer. The first thing it does is delivers a sense of purpose with solid timelines and clear expectations for the students. This helps the time go by faster because each class period they will know what is coming at them. They will also be advancing forward on a project that is very individually significant. Project work can be very appealing and distinctive because students get the chance to really take the time to hammer something out that they are excited about working on. It brings an electric energy into the classroom as well as a more relaxed, self-paced feeling a lot of the time.

The best way to set-up projects is to first come up with some options to share with the class. Then let each student have a say in specifically what they want to do. They should each devise a plan for their project from the beginning. They can organize their ideas and timeline and you can then format how you want the each class period to flow. The basis for the projects will really depend on the class, the level and the age group. It's a good idea to provide project ideas that combine speaking, researching, and writing with some kind of design or craft.

One possibility that is applicable for kids or high school students is to design dream homes. You can supply them with a basic floor plan and from there the sky is the limit with what they come up with! You can incorporate lessons on home types, house vocabulary, materials to build a house, and cost estimates. You

could even have them draw out a model home with a lot of detail and then present it to the group. Another idea following this same vein is students create a model of the home they live in and then they have to be a realtor and sell you their home. If you have an advanced class, you could tie that in with lessons related to buying a home, searching for the ideal home, describing things, and persuasive speech. One more idea for a big project that students could spend the summer working on is to craft some kind of invention. This is a worthwhile one because you can do all sorts of fun lessons on everyday items and how they came to exist, stories about inventors, improvement or advancement of our world in general. This could be done in groups to make it easier, and students would research and then design a new product and eventually present it to the class. These types of projects really do keep students' attention and they are excited and enthusiastic about attending class!

2 READ BOOKS

This might seem intimidating at first, but what better time to read a book than summer time? There are a lot of resources out there for all levels of ESL, and options for guided readers, young adult fiction, or graphic novels. You don't want the students to be overwhelmed by this choice or in over their heads. Be sure to consult the class for their ideas and provide several options. Start small and if it goes well you might find you have time to do two or three more. After choosing the type of book or story that you will focus on in the class, you need to begin thinking about how to make it as interactive as possible. You want to incorporate lessons on things like setting, mood, and characters. You can do this in interesting ways by involving students and getting them to take charge of the lessons. One way is to have students first discuss what they are reading in very basic terms. Then get them to dissect pieces of what they are reading by providing exercises and dialogue. You could have groups of students act out their favorite scene from a chapter. Have them work on it for two or three class periods and then present their mini-plays to the group. Another way to do this is to take a chunk of the story, maybe two to three pages and cut it up. Students then

have to organize it into order by memory. Along with this activity you can include discussion about the characters, setting or mood. Other ways to really engage them in the reading is to have them do some exercises where they predict what they think is going to happen in the next chapter, write an alternate ending to a chapter or to the entire book, or draw out caricatures of their favorite or least favorite characters.

3 AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Though it may not be possible to do full-blown field trips with your class, that doesn't mean that you can't gather them together and walk out of the classroom. There is a whole world out there that ESL students can learn from just by slowing down and analyzing things. Think about your immediate neighborhood and what possible lessons live right outside the front door. For a beginner level class, you could take them to the coffee shop across the street and have them practice ordering and paying. You could take them on a short walk and plot out where all the bus stops are within a mile or two. For more advanced students you could think about doing a short nature hike and examine the types of trees, flowers and plants in your area. Students may have intimate knowledge about these things to share with you or they may never have really stopped to look around at what surrounds them. Another option could be to go into a local grocery store. Choose an area that you want to focus on like produce or grains and do some lessons beforehand. You could give them a scavenger hunt to do which could include speaking to employees of the store to find some obscure thing. There is an abundance of simple things you can do just to get the students out of the classroom for some real world exposure! Maybe you make this a weekly event and take suggestions from the students.

THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS TO ENGAGE STUDENTS DURING OFF-SEASON TEACHING. You can take these ideas and run with them and adapt them for your particular needs. Find your own inspiration from your students and allow them to have a say in the lesson creation.

Red, White and Blue Day: A Day of Color-filled Fun

WITH SUMMER IN FULL SWING, PATRIOTIC HOLIDAYS WILL BE INSPIRING THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE IN ALL OF US.

Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day - all these holidays and more are reason to celebrate. Why not bring your class into the celebration with a few red, white and blue themed activities this summer?

HOW TO PROCEED

1 A READING RAINBOW

You can start your red, white and blue day with a few books about color. Most school libraries have plenty of books from which to choose. If you are looking for specific color books, you can try *Color* by Ruth Heller, *Chidi Only Likes Blue: An African Book of Colors* by Ifeoma Onyefulu, or *The Crayon Box That Talked* by Shane Derolf. You can also ask your students what their favorite color themed books are, and invite them to bring in any that they may have at home.

After reading some examples, have students write their own color books. How you do this will depend on the age of your students. For those who are very young, ask your students to draw an example of something for each color. You can stick with red, white and blue or expand it to include orange, yellow, green, purple, brown and black. On the red page they could draw apples, fire engines or hearts. The white page may have snow, a kitten or popcorn. Try not to do too many different pages with your class at one sitting to avoid your students losing interest in the project. After students have colored all the pages, ask them to make a cover for their book and then staple them together. If you have printed words on the pages (for example, red is..., white is..., blue is...) you can read one aloud to the class while the follow along in their own books. This reading activity will be good for developing sight word skills and will also give your students a chance to share their creativity. For older students and their books, ask

each person to describe how a certain color feels or makes them feel. Red is hot and spicy. White is calm and pure. Blue is moody and wet. You can combine all the answers and make a class book or let your students compile their own books once again. If your students are able, ask volunteers to read their books to the class.

2 UP FOR A VISIT

If you can manage it in your schedule, a red, white and blue theme can provide a week of activities with visits from public service members. On red day, invite the fire fighters to come and visit your classroom. You can also ask them to bring the fire truck and talk to your students about fire safety. Many times, they will bring hats for the kids and allow them to sit in the fire truck. This is a memorable and exciting experience for your students. Don't be surprised if many of them decide they want to become fire-fighters after an exciting visit from a real life hero.

For white day, ask a nurse to come and talk to the class. Hospitals often offer in school field trips that come with educational programs about being healthy. You can ask your nurse to talk about proper nutrition, having good hygiene or what it is like when you break a bone. He or she can put gauze bandages on your students' fingers or give out samples of hand sanitizer. By doing this, you will help your students to be brave and not be afraid the next time they have a cut or have to go to the hospital.

The boys in blue round out the week with a visit from a local police officer. Your local department may have an officer who specializes in giving programs at schools. He or she will probably want to talk with the kids about how the police are their friends and are available to help them not punish them. It is surprising how many parents threaten to punish their children by sending them to jail. The classroom officer may also talk about the DARE program or other information designed

for use in schools. Of course, you will want to have the squad car and give the kids the chance to sit in the back seat and hear the sirens and see the lights if the officer says it is okay.

3 DECORATE

You can easily turn your classroom into a red, white and blue bonanza with very little preparation. On a bulletin board or just on a blank wall, post labels for each of the colors red, white and blue. Then ask your students to bring in pictures from magazines of items that are each of these colors. Anytime a student brings a picture in, allow him to post it with either a pushpin or a piece of tape. Before long you will have an extensive collection of examples for each color.

You can decorate yourselves, too, by dressing in a color theme for the day. Choose one day and encourage all your students to wear red. (This might be good for the day the fire-fighter comes.) Choose another day for wearing white. Choose another day for wearing blue. Take pictures of your class on these days and post those pictures on the color wall with the magazine cutouts.

Finally, you can decorate your lunch break with a little red, white and blue fruit salad. You do not have to get complicated. A simple mixture of strawberries and blueberries with a dollop of whipped topping makes a fancy feeling snack that is too easy to be true. (Just be careful there are no berry allergies in your class.) It is a tasty way to round out a week of red, white and blue flare.

WHETHER YOU ARE CELEBRATING A PATRIOTIC HOLIDAY OR JUST LOOKING FOR SOMETHING FUN TO DO THIS WEEK IN CLASS, A RED, WHITE AND BLUE WEEK CAN BE THE ANSWER.

It may not be easy being green, you can ask Kermit about that, but red, white and blue fun is just waiting for you to grab it.

Get Wild: Celebrate Zoo and Aquarium Month [JUNE]

IF YOU TEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ESL, YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT KIDS LOVE ANIMALS, BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT NATURAL LOVE BY CELEBRATING NATIONAL ZOO AND AQUARIUM MONTH THIS JUNE?

The start of summer brings warm days, sunny skies, and a chance to celebrate some of our favorite furry, scaly, slithering friends in class, and improve our students' language skills in the process. Here are some ideas you can use with your students to celebrate our friends from the natural world.

HOW TO CELEBRATE ZOO AND AQUARIUM MONTH THIS JUNE

1 MAKE A CLASSROOM ZOO

Have your students ever been to a zoo? Ask them to share their experiences with the rest of the class. Encourage students to mention animals that they saw and what their habitats looked like. This may be a good time to do a vocabulary review of animals with your ESL students. Then, use that list as a starting point for a classroom zoo. Have individuals or pairs of students select an animal they would like to learn more about and then create an exhibit for that animal. They will need to make a poster sized picture of their animal as well as a sign giving some general information about that animal and its natural habitat. Each pair should write up a short description of the animal to post next to the picture as well, and then set these exhibits around the walls of your classroom. Have your students work together to make a zoo brochure that includes a map of the exhibits. If you can supply some guides from local zoos or print some from the Internet, your students can model their brochure after those. You should make copies of the zoo guide for each of your students as well as visitors. Then, invite other classes to come in and visit the zoo. If possible, have several different grades visit your classroom zoo. Each visitor should get a copy of the map/brochure, and your students can play the role of animal trainers. Have each person stand near his own animal exhibit and answer questions about that animal to get in

speaking practice. Once the zoo exhibit is closed, celebrate with your class with animal crackers (allergies permitting) and an animal themed costume party!

2 INVITE A GUEST AND BE A GUEST

National Zoo and Aquarium month is the perfect excuse to take your class on a field trip to the local zoo, and there are several language activities you can do in the process. Prepare for the trip by asking your students what animals they hope to see and why. Before taking the trip, invite a zoo employee or other local animal lover in to your class to talk about keeping animals in captivity. If possible, have your guest talk about how zoos create the most natural habitats for their inhabitants and what challenges it presents when running the zoo. Let your students ask questions and make comments. Finish with your trip, encouraging your students to read the informational pieces on display with the animals. Have your students choose an animal at the zoo and compare the habitat there to the animals natural habitat. Your students may need to do some research on their chosen animal to know what its natural living conditions are like before writing the comparison. You may want two paragraphs, a few sentences or a complete essay. Determine the complexity of the assignment based on the language level of your students as well as their ages.

3 ANIMAL GAMES

While you are at the zoo, take pictures of the staff and animals you see there. Try to get pictures of as many animals and people that you can. When you get back to class, use these pictures (busyteacher.org/10584-5-unique-ways-practice-grammar-using-pictures.html) to create games that your students can use during independent study periods. You can turn one set of pictures into flash cards with vocabulary on the back. (Laminate them if you can.) Use another set of pictures to create a memory style game. To pair with each picture, make a card with either the name of the animal or a description of that animal, then play the memory game with the cards. A third set

of pictures can be used to play Pictionary, charades or a Catch Phrase style game. (Give one person one minute and the stack of pictures. He then tries to get his team to guess each of the animals by describing it without using its name. When the group guesses, he moves on to the next picture. The team that guesses the most after all team members have a turn giving descriptions wins.) You may even want to have a set of pictures handy so your students can invent their own games. Have them write the rules and display them in the classroom.

4 START AN AQUARIUM

As part of Zoo and Aquarium this month, why not set up a fish tank in your classroom? Keeping pets in the classroom offers many benefits for students, including an increased capability for empathy and a sense of responsibility and caretaking. Even a small beta fish in a glass container will benefit your students. Besides the social and cognitive benefits classroom pets have to offer, keeping a tank in your classroom will require your students to use a completely new set of vocabulary on a regular basis.

You can use your aquarium for many English based activities. Ask your students to write a dialogue between them and the fish. Challenge students to describe what it might be like to live in the aquarium or underwater. Ask your students to imagine themselves in your fish's place and ask them to list pros and cons of being part of an ESL class. Using your imagination, you can use your aquarium for inspiration of countless discussion and writing topics!

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR MORE WAYS TO CELEBRATE ZOO AND AQUARIUM MONTH, ASK YOUR STUDENTS. KIDS WHO LOVE ANIMALS WILL HAVE GREAT IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING THEM INTO CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES. Role plays between people and animals, letters written to animals or research about animals are all activities that will further your students' language skills as they learn about their favorite animals.

Juicy June Lesson Ideas

EVEN WHEN SUMMER'S ALMOST HERE, SOME ESL TEACHERS ARE BUSIER THAN EVER.

Some of us in the northern hemisphere may be enjoying a long-awaited break, but there are others who still have plenty of teaching to do. So, for those of you who still need lots of great advice and ideas - never fret! BusyTeacher.org works year round to provide you with fresh tips and suggestions. Here are some fabulous ideas for your June lessons:

HOW TO TEACH A PERFECT JUNE LESSON

1 FLAG DAY

Flag Day is celebrated in the United States on June 14th. If you want to give your ESL students a dose of American history and culture, this is a great opportunity to do it. Americans are typically proud to display their flag outside their businesses and homes, but on this day very few are without a splash of red, white and blue. Some activities you may want to choose include:

- Talking about the symbolism of the colors chosen for the flag and the flag's history.
- Crafts involving the American flag.
- Reading the lyrics to the Star Spangled Banner, followed by some hearty singing.
- Check out this excellent June Worksheet (busyteacher.org/5840-summer-worksheet-june-activities.html), with wonderful Flag Day activities.

2 EAT YOUR VEGETABLES DAY

Every month has quirky observances and celebrations, and the month of June is no different. June is National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month, and June 17th is Eat Your Vegetables Day. Some great activities include:

Teaching or reviewing fruits and vegetables in English. Play games and give your students fun worksheets. Don't forget you can make your own Fruits and Vegetables Word Search

with our easy-to-use tool.

Talking about healthy eating habits. Give your students a secret message or healthy eating tip to unscramble with our Tile Puzzle creator.

Why not give your class a challenge? Dare your students to eat nothing but fruits and vegetables for the entire Eat Your Vegetables Day. Then, ask them to write about what it was like to become a vegetarian for one day. Your students may be surprised to find out it's not that hard after all.

For more interesting or unusual observances for the month of June, go to About.com (familycrafts.about.com/library/spdays/bljundayslong.htm). You can choose any special day or celebration and make it into a fun-filled lesson!

3 FATHER'S DAY

This month there's a very special celebration, and one that students really look forward to: in 2013, Father's Day is on June 16th. Here are some of things you can do to celebrate this special day:

- Father's Day crafts are a must. Help your students make something special to take home to their dads.
- No Father's Day lesson is complete without a Father's Day card.
- Help students show their dads just how much they love them with a special writing assignment: I love my Dad because..., or have them describe a special trip or day they shared together.
- Create a Best Dad Award or Certificate.

4 JUNETEENTH

June 19th, also known as Juneteenth, commemorates the ending of slavery and African-American freedom. It is a great time to share with your students yet another important period in American history. Your Juneteenth lesson may include:

- Discussions on slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries – What was it like? How did they live? When was slavery abolished?

- Reading about the role of the Underground Railroad. National-Geographic.com (bit.ly/AERfqR) has an amazing adventure for your advanced students. They must follow a slave on his escape to Canada and be faced with the same decisions runaway slaves were faced with back then.
- Listening to African hymns and songs.
- Reading about Phillis Wheatley. Phillis Wheatley was a slave and the first African-American woman to be published. Read about her life with your students, but also give them a chance to see some of her poems although they may not understand most. American-Poems.com (americanpoems.com/poets/Phillis-Wheatley) has some great information on the poet, as well as her poems, available.

5 FIRST DAY OF SUMMER

If you're teaching ESL over the summer, you may take advantage of everything the season has to offer. Why not start by celebrating the First Day of Summer!

- Have a picnic or organize an outdoor activity.
- Worship the Sun god with some crafts – make them all bright yellow!
- Help your students make their own Summer Visors (busyteacher.org/6076-seasonal-worksheet-summer-visor.html).
- Enjoy more Summer Fun with this worksheet (busyteacher.org/5860-summer-fun-worksheet.html)!

BUSYTEACHER.ORG HAS EVEN MORE GREAT WORKSHEETS AVAILABLE FOR YOU IN OUR JUNE WORKSHEETS SECTION. FATHER'S DAY, FLAG DAY AND MORE! SO, MAKE THIS A FUN-FILLED JUNE FOR YOUR ESL STUDENTS AND RELAX - WE'VE GOT THE BEST RESOURCES FOR YOU SO YOU CAN ENJOY THE SUMMER, TOO.

Thinking About Dad: 10 Great Activities for Father's Day [JUNE]

EVERY JUNE IS A CHANCE TO HONOR AND APPRECIATE THE MEN IN OUR LIVES WHO HAVE HELPED TO MAKE US WHO WE ARE: OUR FATHERS.

Though not every culture celebrates Father's Day, if your students are studying English in an area that does, June 16 is the day to make Dad proud in 2013. Here are some Father's Day activities you can do with your ESL class without sacrificing language learning in the process.

TRY THESE 10 GREAT ACTIVITIES FOR FATHER'S DAY

1 FUN FACTS ABOUT FATHER'S DAY

How much do your students know about Father's Day? Test their knowledge with these fun facts (1.usa.gov/JeZ80w) from the U.S. Census Bureau. You might want to turn them into a true/false quiz, ask an oral question about each fact to your class, or have your students explore the website themselves. Encourage your students to note anything that surprises them!

2 A CARD SAYS A LOT

Traditionally, children give cards to their fathers on Father's Day. Some are humorous, some serious, but all are meant to honor the man who receives them. Bring in a collection of Father's Day cards for your students to look through. They can be new or used, in fact, used cards will give your students even more insight into how the giver feels about the recipient. Either in groups or individually, give your students a chance to look through the cards and note the sentiments they express. What do children value in their fathers based on the messages in the cards? Have your students make a list based on what they read.

3 OUR OWN FATHERS

Parents have an extraordinary impact on their children's lives and upbringings. Challenge your students to think about their own fathers or father figures. What have those men done for or taught each of your students? Chal-

lenge each person to list at least five things they learned from their father. If you have younger students, you may want to use a graphic organizer to help them come up with their ideas. Simply copy a large five-pointed star on a blank piece of paper and ask your students to write one item in each corner. They may want to draw a picture of their father in the center of the star.

4 WHAT WE PASS ON

As each of our upbringings affects us, we affect those who come after us. Based on the last activity, ask your students to think of five pieces of advice they might pass on to their children or the next generation. Some may be the same things they learned from their fathers, and some may be contrary to what their fathers taught them. After both activities are done, post each person's graphic organizers next to one another on a bulletin board and title it "Generations Speak".

5 QUALITY TIME

One of the ways a father can show love to his children is by spending quality time with them. Ask your students how they like to share quality time with their fathers. You may want to have discussion groups, talk together as a class or have your students write a journal entry on the topic. Whatever you do, give your students a chance to share with the class so they can appreciate how different each person and each father is from the next.

6 CULTURAL NORMS

What makes a great father? You may find that the home cultures of your students affect the answers they give. If you teach in a multicultural classroom, divide your students into groups based on their home cultures. Then, ask each group to list what makes a great father in that culture. Once each group is finished, change your groups so each new group contains one person from each of the first groups. Ask the groups to discuss what it means to be an ideal father. Make sure your students know they can agree to disagree with one another during the discussion.

7 CULTURAL ROLES

Now that your students have looked at the roles great fathers play, have them think about the roles that great mothers play. Using a Venn diagram, have students list the qualities of a great mother and a great father. Make sure each person lists qualities that mothers and fathers share and the ways they differ. Then using that information, ask your students to write one paragraph explaining how great mothers and fathers differ and a second paragraph explaining how they are the same.

8 A FAMILY'S GENERATIONS

Because Father's Day promotes discussion about the family, you may want to take it as an opportunity to review the vocabulary of family. Show your students how to create a family tree, and have them make a tree that illustrates their own family make up. Then have each person assign the appropriate vocabulary to each person in the tree so it describes that person's relationship with him.

9 DEAR DAD

As you encourage your students to think about their fathers, why not have them write a letter to their dads? Spend a few moments reviewing how to write a friendly letter, and then ask each person to write a letter to her father thanking him for the ways he helped her grow and become the woman she is today. Even kids can do this though they will have a shorter perspective in which to see their fathers' influence.

10 CREATE A CARD

Finally, make sure everyone in your class has something to share with Dad on Father's Day and let them make their own cards. You may want your students to come up with sentiments of their own or let them borrow some from the cards you brought to class. For a traditionally fun flair, make the cards in the shape of a tie and have your students list the qualities they appreciate in their fathers on each of the stripes. Make sure you have plenty of art supplies handy.

Wave High and Proud: Celebrate Flag Day June 14th

FLAG DAY MAY BE A NATIONAL HOLIDAY IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT IT CAN BE A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND CULTURE FOR THE ESL TEACHER.

Because we work with students from all areas of the world, talking about flags gives your students a chance to share who they are and where they come from. It is a natural lead in to culture and history, and as you show your class flags from around the world, your students will come to know and appreciate one another more. As you are getting ready to wave those banners high June 14th, here are some communicative activities you can do with your ESL class that use your flag and theirs!

HOW TO CELEBRATE FLAG DAY THIS JUNE

1 MORE THAN WORDS

Do your students think a flag can communicate something about the people who wave it? Give your students a collection of various national flags that they may not be able to recognize, and in small discussion groups, challenge your students conclude something about the people of a nation from their flag. Give small discussion groups some time to talk about the flags before coming back together as a class. Then ask groups to share their thoughts. Did any groups come to the same conclusions about the people of any given nation? Tell your students which country each flag belongs to, and then give your students a chance to show how their native country's flag says something about the people of their nation. Ask each person to draw a simple picture of his native country's flag or print one off the internet. Give them an example by explaining your own flag, and then invite each person to the front of the room to discuss the meaning behind their nation's flag. What do each of the colors and symbols represent? They may want to share some of their country's history, values or character as it relates to the flag

As a follow up activity, challenge your students to create a personal flag which they can use to communicate a message about themselves. Like the flags of nations around the globe, each person may want to communicate something about

her history, her values or her character through the flag. Invite each person to share with the class, and then write a paragraph describing what her flag means. Once everyone has completed her flag and paragraph, display them on a bulletin board in your classroom and allow students to look at what their classmates have to say about themselves!

2 FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

How well do your students follow directions? Can they translate instructions from the page to perform a physical process? You can challenge your students' reading comprehension as well as their ability to follow directions by challenging them to fold an American flag. Only one proper way of folding the flag exists. Direct your students to U.S. Flag (usflag.org/foldflag.html) for directions, and give each pair of students a small American flag with which to practice. (Now is a great time of year to get small flags for low prices if you live in the U.S.!) Give your students enough practice folding the flag until they can do it correctly at least once. Then, direct your students to go through the directions and identify any descriptions of place which aid in understanding the directions (waist-high, parallel to the ground, lengthwise, outside, etc.). Would they be able to fold the flag correctly without these descriptions? Have pairs discuss how these phrases aid the reader in recreating the process. Now challenge your students to use these or other directional phrases as they give directions to perform a different physical activity.

You can also use folding the flag as a way to introduce the idea of respect. Your class may enjoy discussing what they think it means to respect a flag and the nation it represents and why some people feel that you should respect a country's flag. Do your students have a proper way to treat a flag from their country? Is there a special folding technique that they should follow? Ask your students to share their own ideas about how a person should treat a flag from his country and how he should treat a flag from another country. Make sure your students support their opinions. You may want to finish your discussion by giving your students a chance to share tradi-

tional ways that people in their home countries show respect for their flags.

3 PERSONAL MEANING

As Americans, many people value their independence, tenacity and go get attitude, but not everyone around the world thinks of Americans this way. In fact, people around the world hold many other assumptions when it comes to the idea of being American. Many think Americans are fat, lazy or indulgent. Challenge your students to think about what it means to be a member of the culture from which they come and how people in other areas of the world may have a different perception of their fellow nationals just as they do of Americans. Whether they are Asian, Latino, African or European, challenge your students to define what it means to be a member of their cultural group. You may want to give them some time to journal freely as they think about the topic. After your students have had enough time, give them independent work time to create a two-sectioned collage. On one side of a large piece of paper, ask students to create a collage that communicates what it means to them to be of their cultural origin, both good and bad. On the other side of the paper, ask students to represent what people around the globe think it means to be a person from that culture, both good and bad. You may want to give students some time outside of class to work on their project as well. Then, invite each person to talk to the class about his collage. Have students pay particular attention to the difference between their own ideas of nationality and those held by people around the world. Invite students to speculate why there is a difference between the two sides of the collage, if they are so inclined. Finish with a discussion about what it means to be nationalistic or have pride in one's culture or country.

FLAGS NOT ONLY REPRESENT A COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE, THEY GIVE THE ESL TEACHER AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW THEIR STUDENTS THINK AND FEEL. When June 14th rolls around, give your students a moment to think about what their flag means to them and to the rest of the world!

Fireworks and History: Colorful Lesson Ideas for the 4th of July

THE FOURTH OF JULY IS A PERFECT EXCUSE TO BRING IN SOME AMERICAN HISTORY TO THE CLASSROOM.

Students are often curious about how America came to be an independent nation. History doesn't have to be boring though. Just add some creativity and your Fourth of July lessons will be as colorful as sparklers and roman candles.

TRY THESE COLORFUL LESSON IDEAS FOR THE 4TH OF JULY

1 RED, WHITE AND BLUE CHALLENGE

A fun way to weave in history into some of your lessons before the Fourth of July is to play the Red, White and Blue Challenge. The premise is pretty simple. You divide the class into three teams: Red, White and Blue. Each team answers questions like on a trivia game show. The trick to this game is that all the answers have to contain items that are red, white or blue. You can devise a point system for each color. Every correct answer automatically gets one point. Answers with white items get 2 points because they are a bit more difficult. You could also give ? a point for answers that are correct but that contain other colors or don't have anything to with color. Some possible questions could be:

- Describe the stars on the flag.
- Describe the stripes on the flag.
- Name something related to the Revolutionary war.
- Name something related to the 13 colonies.
- Name something you find at a Fourth of July BBQ

2 HISTORICAL FUN

In order to play the Red, White and Blue Challenge successfully you will have to do some lessons on American independence, the founding fathers, and the Declaration of Independence. Think creatively when you are putting these lessons together. There are lots of options for making these

lessons interactive. Be sure to consult the internet and find some videos or audio recordings about the above topics. There are some that are narrated from the standpoint of Ben Franklin or George Washington. You could then do fill in the blank exercises or have discussion about what they watched or listened to. Another idea would be to teach students some patriotic songs like the Star Spangled Banner or examine the Pledge of Allegiance. This could lead to a lot of discussion and beneficial new vocabulary. Once students have learned about the basic events leading up to the Fourth of you July you could have them draw out those events, and post their drawings around the classroom.

3 BIRTHDAY PARTY

Everyone loves a good birthday party. Break out the streamers, candles, party hats and birthday cake. There are several ways you can organize America's Birthday party. Assign each student a task like decorating, cleaning up, setting up, or last minute details. You can have the students sing happy birthday or even better, play some patriotic music and teach them the lyrics. The birthday party doesn't have to be extravagant to be effective. During the party, you'll want to have some amusing activities like pin the star on the flag or tell your favorite thing or fact about America. Students of all ages will enjoy playing games, and you can ask them what they think America would like as a gift this year. You can also discuss the age of the country and how America is a relatively young country and what that means. You'll want to steer clear of politics but providing fun facts, trivia, and little known facts can also engage students.

4 ALIEN INVASION

Alien Invasion is another fun game to play to see how much the students remember about American history. Split the class in half. One half of the class will be the aliens and the other half will be the founding fathers who have time-traveled to the year

2012. The Aliens ask questions to the founding fathers. Because they are aliens they are unfamiliar with anything and everything American. You can give the aliens prompts to get them started. Questions can be as simple or as complex as the students can come up with from the previous lessons. It could start out with the aliens asking simple questions like: Where are we? What is this place? Who is the leader of this place? How big is it? Who lives here? What is there to eat? After a set period of time the aliens can then switch to play the role of the founding fathers. They can then continue from where they left off.

5 FIREWORKS

Too bad we can't light fireworks off with our students. You can however do the next best thing: show them all the different types of fireworks and what they do. You can do this first by using photographs or a slideshow of some of the variety of fireworks. You can have students describe the different types by how they look, what they do, and how they sound. Some of the most popular fireworks include: sparklers, roman candles, rockets, pinwheels, cherry bombs, firecrackers, and fountains. Ask the students if they have ever been to a fireworks display. You can find a lot of resources on the internet for this if you want to play them a short video and see if they can identify some of the shapes and formations.

If you happen to be teaching somewhere where there is a fireworks show, you may want to do a lesson on how the fireworks are set-up and then what happens behind the scenes during the show. Often you can find excerpts from the local news channels that you could play for the class. Otherwise you could describe it for students and then have them explain the steps to putting on a large fireworks show.

THE FOURTH OF JULY IS OFTEN A BAFFLING HOLIDAY TO STUDENTS.

Explaining the history behind a holiday doesn't have to be dry or tedious if you think outside the box.

Summer's Top Activity to Take Outside: Small Talk

THE SKY IS BLUE. THE WHITE CLOUDS FLOAT PAST HIGH OVERHEAD. THE BIRDS CHIRP ENTICINGLY CALLING, "COME OUTSIDE. COME OUTSIDE." THE TEACHER IN YOU SAYS TO BE RESPONSIBLE, BUT THE FOREVER STUDENT INSIDE WANTS TO GIVE IN TO YOUR STUDENTS' CRIES TO TAKE CLASS OUTSIDE.

The good news is this: you can enjoy the beautiful weather summer has to offer while still teaching your class useful and important English skills.

TEACHING SMALL TALK: HOW TO PROCEED

1 INTRODUCING SMALL TALK

One of the easiest activities to take outside is conversation. It's easy enough to simply take your class outside to do conversation activities you have already planned for your current unit, but why not use an out of classroom experience to give your students a more authentic experience with native speakers? Small talk is the perfect opportunity for your students to practice their English in a non-threatening and low commitment setting with native speakers.

Before setting your students loose among the public, explain to them the concept of small talk. Small talk is chatter between people that do not know each other who are either trying to get to know each other or trying to keep up polite conversation. In English, there are some acceptable topics for small talk. One of the most common is the weather. You can teach your students colloquial phrases like "Is it hot enough for you?" and "April showers bring May flowers." You can also use the opportunity to review weather vocabulary or introduce it if you are teaching beginning students. Going out into the public and making small talk is an opportunity to show your students that weather vocabulary is not just something to mark off a checklist but a thing that it is useful in

day-to-day living.

Professional sports may be another subject area you want to explore when giving your students tools for small talk. "How about them Yankees?" or similar phrases can be useful for international students who are trying to carry on a conversation with native speakers. Different times of the year will be appropriate for different sports. With summer approaching, baseball is a hit. Depending on how much class time you invest in this subject, you may even want to take your students to a game (minor league games are great and inexpensive).

2 WARN YOUR STUDENTS

Make sure your students understand that there are many topics not suitable for small talk. They should know that it is inappropriate to discuss politics with strangers as well as topics of finance and appearance. These subjects will not always be taboo in a student's native culture, so it is always best to give some direction as to what not to say.

3 PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Now is your opportunity to give your students some practice before actually hitting the streets. You can pre-generate a list of possible scenarios your students may find themselves in where small talk could be required. These places may include standing in line at a restaurant, at a sporting event, or when waiting to purchase something. Keep it simple. There is no real need to create scenarios with great detail because your students will be acting as strangers to one another and have no more complex a goal than making simple conversation. Pair students together and let the whole class practice at once, then take some of your bravest volunteers to act out the scenario in front of the class. Other students can give feedback on what they did well and where they need to work for improvement.

4 MAKE THE MOST OF WHERE YOU ARE

Finally, take your students out into the public to practice their newly acquired small talk skills. Your specific location will determine what places you can bring your students. Some potential places might be a coffee shop, a grocery store or a cafeteria. A local park or public area, a ticket booth, a beach or a shop are also possibilities. A public library or courthouse may also be places you could take your students. Your best opportunities will come in places where there are a number of people waiting for something with nothing else to do at the time.

Let your students know that the setting may also open up new topics for small talk including the food at a particular restaurant, a movie you may be in line to purchase tickets for or a sporting event. All these are suitable topics when they relate to the setting the small talk is happening in. It would not really be appropriate to discuss food at a particular restaurant while waiting in line for a movie ticket, though.

THE NEXT TIME THE BIRDS BECKON AND THE SUN ENTICES - REMEMBER THIS: AS ESL TEACHERS, WE DO NOT HAVE TO FEEL GUILTY ABOUT TAKING OUR CLASSES OUTSIDE.

The good summer weather can provide the perfect opportunity to work on small talk, an area of conversation that is often neglected. The more opportunities you give your students to have authentic conversation with native speakers, the more progress they will make and the easier their transition will be to full immersion in English. So go outside, meet some people, and try to make the most of the good weather ahead.

3 Spectacular Strategies for Summertime Travel Activities

INCORPORATING THE TOPIC OF TRAVEL INTO SUMMERTIME LESSONS MAY BE JUST THE DISTRACTION THAT STUDENTS ARE CRAVING.

It can also be practical as many students may be venturing out on adventures and family trips.

TRY THESE 3 SPECTACULAR STRATEGIES FOR SUMMERTIME TRAVEL ACTIVITIES

1 PLAN DREAM VACATIONS

To jumpstart the energy level in a summer ESL class, you can begin by planning dream vacations. This topic can span several weeks and generate a lot of substantial and entertaining lessons. Start by having students brainstorm places that they would like to visit. This is a good opportunity to review geography, countries, and maps. Tell them they are going to plan a ten-day vacation to the destination of their choice and they have x amount of money to plan with. You can organize it so that they do this independently, in pairs, or even as an entire class. After the location selections have been made it is time to start thinking about logistics. You can organize entire lessons on travel logistics. Some things you will want to include are:

- What does it mean to be a tourist?
- How are they going to travel?
- Where will they stay and how will they decide and book accommodations
- How many locations or cities will they visit?
- What do they want to do while they are there?
- What famous places are there to visit and what is the main theme or point to the trip?
- What is the itinerary?

Another way to organize this is to have the class pick two to three destinations they are very interested in, and then assign a similar project to groups of students. The students then become experts on their chosen destination and country and can present their dream vacations to the class. This is the type of project that can be adapted and changed

to fit your individual group's needs and specifications. You can get as in-depth as you would like or focus more on keeping the topics broad and generalized.

2 TOURIST IN YOUR AREA

Travel ideas don't have to take students far away. One of the best ways to bring out students' passions is to use what they know and love. There are many options for doing lessons based on being a tourist in your hometown. One that students enjoy a lot is one where they get to be tour guides to a set group of people or individual. You can craft assorted profiles of travelers that have different reasons and interests for their tours. For example: John is 25 years old and is visiting Tokyo for the first time. He would like to visit many tourist attractions and see Tokyo nightlife. John also loves to eat so he wants to go to many traditional Japanese restaurants.

If you give each student a specific tourist they won't all present the same thing and it can lead to more independent thinking and work. After the students are assigned their designated person or group, they can then begin determining the best places to share with their guests. You can organize lessons on itinerary building and include things like:

- What tourist attractions should they visit?
- What are some basic facts about local attractions like temples, landmarks, churches, shopping areas, etc.? Have the students gather facts to put into their presentation.
- What are the highlights of your town?
- What restaurants would you introduce them to? Discuss the local food and how they would explain it to someone who has never experienced it.

You can take this as far as you would like, and students will have a wealth of their own ideas. A variation on this project would be to have each student play tourist for a day in their own town. Tell them to discover an attraction they have never been to or a place that they are fairly unfamiliar with. You can still have them answer a lot of the same questions above to plan their day. They should then report back to the class about what

they saw, what they learned, and how they feel about the experience!

3 TRAVELING TIPS

Traveling tips is another topic that could produce several continuous lessons. Whether you have a class of experienced adult travelers or younger students who haven't traveled a lot yet, you can incorporate traveling tips. The point is to tap into student experience, but also to open them up to things they may not have experienced or thought about. This may also be particularly interesting if they happen to live in a place that is very touristy. The main goal of the lesson is to answer the question, what does it mean to be a good traveler and also to create a list of tips for how to be a good traveler. Questions to discuss could include:

- How do travelers/tourists affect a place or a country?
- What responsibilities do travelers/tourists have to the place they are visiting?
- How should travelers behave?
- Have you met travelers in your town?
- What tips do you have that make traveling easier?
- What are your travel experiences and what did you learn?

Students could then be put into groups and asked to come to some determination about the above questions as well as others that you designate. Then they brainstorm a list of tips that they believe are their top 10 or 20 tips for travelers. They present their ideas to the class, and the class can discuss their opinions. Each student should contribute their ideas and their experiences to the bigger discussion. At the end when each group has contributed all their ideas, you could make a master list of traveling tips from their notes or collect their write up of the activity. That way everyone walks away with lots of great tips and the conversation about travel can continue.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS WAYS YOU CAN INCORPORATE TRAVEL INTO YOUR SUMMERTIME LESSONS. Students will have a lot to say on the topic and they may even have their own ideas about places or themes that they really want to learn about.

Star Light, Star Bright, Seeing Stars in Class Tonight

HOW MANY PEOPLE ON HOW MANY NIGHTS HAVE GAZED UP INTO THE ENDLESS NIGHT SKY AND BEEN TAKEN IN BY THE STARS?

We humans are fascinated by the gaseous wonders whose light may take years to travel from their places of origin to earth. Under the stars, some find significance, their places in the universe. Others feel overtaken by the vastness of space. Whether we feel large or small, close or distant, stars may be that spark you need to brighten up your ESL class. Try these activities based on the stars above us all and see your students improve their language skills down on earth.

HOW TO PROCEED

1 GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED

If you were going to travel through the stars, what would you pack? It is an interesting question since life in space is so much different from life on earth. Have your students think about what possessions are most important to them, and then ask them to share with a partner what items they would bring into the outermost regions of the universe. Also, remind your students that as the speed of travel approaches the speed of light, time slows. This phenomenon has been portrayed in many popular movies. Ask your students to imagine what the world on earth would be like after they had travelled for one hundred years in space and they return to earth the same age as they are now! You may want to ask groups of students to create posters showing what the future of earth might be like when they return from their space travel.

2 CONSTELLATION MYTHOLOGY

For thousands of years, humankind has been seeing pictures in the stars. Though the pictures that ancient man saw are almost certainly different from those we see today, the stars

have inspired humanity to see heavenly beings for years. Talk with your class about constellations, and see how much information your students already have about the stories in the skies. Can they identify any constellations? If so, do they know the names of those constellations? You may challenge their non-text reading abilities by providing diagrams of the night sky, both in summer and winter. Challenge your students to a scavenger hunt to find certain pictures or names of specific stars. Then use those constellations as a jumping off point to learn some of the mythology behind the beings we imagine up above. You can direct your students to read the mythology behind the constellations (comfychair.org/~cmbell/myth/myth.html). To take the exercise a step further, ask each person to write a story featuring one of these mythological beings either in its constellation form or as its mythological character.

3 STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT

One of the most popular children's poems is *Star Light, Star Bright*.

*Star light, star bright
First star I see tonight
I wish I may, I wish I might
Have the wish I wish tonight.*

Some children recite this poem every night as the first star becomes visible in the sky. Using this poem, you can do two different activities with your class. First, challenge each person to write his own poem about the stars. He should follow the same format and rhyme scheme as this poem though he should feel free to write about anything that has to do with the stars. Second, ask each person to think about what she would wish for if she said this poem to the evening's first star. You may want each student to discuss her answer with a partner or have her write a short paragraph explaining what she would wish for and why. You can make a spectacular display on a classroom bulletin board to coordinate with the star theme. Take one or two strings of holiday lights and carefully staple them to a blank bulletin board, bulbs pointing out. (To do

this, situate your staples so they fall on either side of the wire and do not puncture it.) Then, take dark blue or black paper and carefully cover the bulletin board. As you do, poke small holes in the paper for the light bulb to stick out. Then, when you are ready to light up your own night sky, plug the lights in and watch them twinkle in the darkness of night. If you like, allow your students to recite their poems in front of this display, and record their presentation. You can use this film later to review pronunciation during a one on one conference.

4 HOLLYWOOD STARS

Another popular use of the word star comes in reference to celebrities in the entertainment world. The stars of Hollywood seem to change every day, but those who get their own star on the walk of fame will be remembered. Have your students imagine that they were each going to receive a star on the walk of fame. Ask each person to write an explanation of why he or she deserves the star and what accomplishments he or she has made to earn it. Of course, these will be fictional pieces, but your students should feel free to use their imaginations and dream big. If you like, give each person a star template to decorate and make your own walk of fame around the classroom. If you are lucky enough to live in the Los Angeles area, take a walk to the stars and do some rubbings of your favorites! Using a piece of paper large enough to cover the star, rub the side of a crayon over the engraving and see it replicated on your paper. If you like, display them in your classroom.

WHETHER YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THE STARS OF HOLLYWOOD OR THE STARS OF MYTHOLOGICAL LEGEND, THE SKY'S BRIGHT LITTLE LIGHTS HAVE BEEN A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION, CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION TO THOSE WHO GAZE UPON THEM. Your students will enjoy thinking, learning and writing about the stars in the sky when you invite them into your classroom.