

Lokaverkefni til B.Ed. -prófs

Introducing British culture in English language classrooms through three festive traditions.

Ásdís Ýr Ólafsdóttir.



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Maí 2008 14

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1. Abstract

This essay focuses on three major British festive traditions and activities related to those traditions. These activities are designed to fit the 10th grade in Icelandic Elementary schools and are supported by Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theory. This essay is meant to enlighten teachers about three traditions and prepare them to teach their students about those traditions. In so doing it is hoped that both teachers' and students' knowledge of British culture will be deepened.

The three festive traditions I have chosen to explore are Guy Fawkes Day, Valentine's Day and May Day. These traditions span the entire school year and are easy to learn about as they all have something in common with our traditions, even though they are not the same. Discussing the differences in our traditions and the British ones is a good way for the students to broaden their minds and widen their perspective about Britain.

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2. Introduction

In this essay I will focus on three major British festive traditions as components of a unit on British culture, designed to be taught in the 10th grade in Icelandic schools. According to Samovar and Porter (1994), “Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.” And as Berglind I. Gunnarsdóttir states in her essay, “Most people don’t realise just how much of an influence culture moulds them as individuals until they get acquainted with another culture and therefore witness new beliefs, standards and values” (Berglind I. Gunnarsdóttir, 2007).

Guy Fawkes Day, Valentine’s Day and May First are three British cultural traditions that exemplify aspects of British culture which I will demonstrate may be used to introduce students to the concept of British culture. I have chosen to write about these festive days because they span the school year, starting in November and ending in May. By learning about British culture students will learn more about the language, both at the linguistic and cultural levels suitable for their age. My reason for choosing Britain is to compensate in part for the preponderance of American culture in which Icelandic children are immersed. Because I choose to make these activities suitable for 10th graders, I feel I can go more deeply into the subjects and get better results from the students than if I were to teach this in the 8th grade.

I don’t think that the British culture is taught at sufficient depth in Icelandic elementary schools. Most students can speak and understand English but they have little knowledge about why the language is as it is nor the culture behind it. I believe that it is very important that the students learn about important days in the culture of the language that they are learning for I think that in doing so they get a better understanding of the language. I will therefore show links between these three festive days and the language.

The intelligences I entwine in the activities as Armstrong (2000) describes them are as follows:

- **Linguistic intelligence** which consists of “the capacity to use words differently, whether orally or in writing. This intelligence includes the ability to manipulate the syntax or structure of language, the phonology or sounds of language, the semantics or meanings of language and the pragmatic dimensions or practical uses of language. Some of these include rhetoric, mnemonics, explanation and metalanguage”.
- **Musical intelligence** which is “the capacity to perceive, discriminate, transform and express musical forms. This includes sensitivity to the rhythm, pitch or melody and timbre or tone colour of a musical piece”.
- **Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence** which is “the expertise in using one’s whole body to express ideas and feelings and facility in using one’s hands to produce or transform things. This intelligence includes specific skills such as coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, flexibility and speed, as well as proprioceptive, tactile and haptic skills”.
- **Spatial intelligence** which “involves sensitivity to colour, line, shape, form, space and relationships that exist between these elements” and “includes the capacity to visualize and graphically represent visual or spatial ideas”.
- **Naturalist intelligence** which is “expertise in the recognition and classification of the numerous species –the flora and fauna- of an individual’s environment. This also includes sensitivity to other natural phenomena and in the case of those growing up in an urban environment, the capacity to discriminate among nonliving forms such as cars, sneakers and music CD covers”.
- **Logical- mathematical intelligence** which is “the capacity to use numbers effectively and to reason as well. This intelligence includes sensitivity to logical patterns and relationships, statements and propositions, functions and other related abstractions. The kinds of process used in the service of logical- mathematical intelligence include: categorisation, classification, inference, generalization, calculation and hypothesis testing” (Armstrong, 2000:2).

3. Guy Fawkes Day

Guy Fawkes Day, which occurs on November 5th is the day when the British celebrate the anniversary of the famous Gunpowder plot conspiracy by Guy Fawkes and other men to blow up the English Parliament and King James I in the year 1605. When Parliament opened the King was always present and that is why the opening day of the Parliament was the perfect day to kill the king in a way that would not require direct confrontation with him.



The plotting began early in 1604 and was intended to be the beginning of an uprising of English Catholics. The group of conspirators quickly grew to vast numbers or to the point where secrecy was impossible. One member, Thomas Percy, rented the cellar under the House of Lords where 36 barrels of gunpowder, nearly 1800 pounds or 800 kg of gunpowder, were later placed. The barrels were overlaid with firewood and iron bars.

The gunpowder was later found because a mysterious, anonymous letter had been sent to Lord Monteagle which he received on October 26th. Monteagle was a brother in-law of Tresham, one of the conspirators, and in the letter Lord Monteagle was urged not to attend the Parliament on the opening day. Others were also made aware of the plot and one of them, the 1st Earl of Salisbury, along with others took the first steps that led to the discovery of the gunpowder.

Guy Fawkes was arrested that day as he entered the cellar. Other conspirators were also apprehended and sent to prison, killed or executed. Amongst those who were executed was Henry Garnett. He was the superior of the English Jesuits and he had known of the conspiracy although he was not involved in planning it. Fawkes' penalty was to be hanged, drawn and quartered (Guy Fawkes 2007).

Until 1840, the full punishment for the crime of treason was to be *hanged, drawn and quartered* in that the condemned prisoner would be:

1. Dragged on a hurdle (a wooden frame) to the place of execution. (This is one meaning of the word *drawn*)

2. Hanged by the neck for a short time until almost dead. (*hanged*)
3. Disembowelled and emasculated and the genitalia and entrails burned before the condemned's eyes.
(This is another meaning of the word *drawn*)
4. Beheaded and the body divided into four parts
(*quartered*)
(Hanged, drawn and quartered 2001).



Guy Fawkes Day and Guy Fawkes Night is still celebrated in England to this day. Bonfires are lit and scarecrows dressed as Guy Fawkes are burnt on them. At night there are firework displays and in them there is often a skeleton that is lit on fire, representing the death of Fawkes. Children also make life-sized models of Fawkes and drag them through the streets and ask people for money. Later they burn the Guy on the bonfires (Nihlén and Gardenkrans, 1997:22).

Guy Fawkes was born on April 13th 1570 and he died on January 31st 1606 at age thirty-six. Fawkes was a revolutionary who is best known for his part in the famous Gunpowder Plot that is described here above. Fawkes was a Roman Catholic who wanted to replace the King, who was a Protestant, with a new Catholic King. After he was apprehended he was tortured and on January 31st he was tried and convicted of treason and then executed (Guy Fawkes 2007, Guy Fawkes Biography 2006).



3.1 Guy Fawkes Activities

3.1.1 Capital Punishment

When introducing the punishments to the students show the students the full sized painting that is shown here above or at least an A4 sized picture so that they can see the details clearly. In the painting the students can see many of the conspirators being hanged, drawn and quartered. Also hand out a print out of the painting on A4 paper to the students so that we could talk about the painting and the ways of punishment inflicted on the conspirators. This activity is suitable for those students that are strong in linguistic intelligence.

Start by showing the students the full sized painting or at least an A4 sized picture so that they can see the details clearly. Hand out A4 sized pictures of the painting as well, one for each two students.

After clarifying the meaning of the punishments inflicted on the conspirators divide the class into groups of 4-5 students and hand out questions about the following punishments to the students. Ask the students to discuss the questions and write down their main points. The students would then be asked to find out what the punishment for this kind of treason is today.

Questions to hand out:

1. What do you think hanging people as punishment? Why?
2. What do you think of the punishment of being drawn? Why?
3. What do you think of the punishment of being quartered? Why?
4. Why do you think people were punished in this way?
5. What would the conspirators' punishment be today in Britain?
6. In what other way could they have been punished?

Other questions can be asked as well. Make sure that the students take this seriously and make sure that they do this correctly. Control the classroom subtly.

3.1.2 The Celebrations

When introducing the celebrations to the students show the students videos that can be found online that show the burning of the Guy and an interview with a young girl that explains why they are celebrating this night. Watching videos of the real thing instead of just talking about it makes it clearer for the students and perhaps gives them a new insight into the celebration. (See video).

At the bonfires a song used to be sung about Guy Fawkes. The song is still sung today but as times have changed the second verse is not sung due to its content. This activity is ideal for students who are strong in musical intelligence.

Start by making sure the room is prepared before the class starts by rearranging the seats so that everyone can see the television.

Then ask the students why the British celebrate this day and night to see if they have understood everything. If they are not sure, go over the main things briefly before showing them the video. After watching the video ask the students if they think that this is in any way similar to our New-Year's eve celebrations and how?

To introduce the song to the students bring the song to class on a CD so that the students can hear the song as it is instead of just reading the lyrics. Without the song the lyrics aren't as memorable as they should be. These lyrics are sung to the tune "Remember" by John Lennon. Ask the students to sing the song with you so that they can get the feel for it. Discussions about the song and its meaning afterwards are good. The students should write down what they think it means and then rewrite the song in their own words.

To find this video and others, go online and Google this: "Guy Fawkes Night Video" or "Guy Fawkes Celebrations Video". The link I used is in the Reference section.

The lyrics of the song sung at the bonfires are as follows:

Verse 1

*Remember, remember the Fifth of November,
The Gunpowder Treason and Plot,
I know of no reason
Why Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.
Guy Fawkes, Guy Fawkes, t'was his intent
To blow up King and Parli'ment.
Three-score barrels of powder below
To prove old England's overthrow;
By God's providence he was catch'd
With a dark lantern and burning match.
Holloa boys, holloa boys, let the bells ring.
Holloa boys, holloa boys, God save the King!*

Verse 2

*A penny loaf to feed the Pope
A farthing o' cheese to choke him
A pint of beer to rinse it down
A faggot of sticks to burn him
Burn him in a tub of tar
Burn him like a blazing star
Burn his body from his head
Then we'll say ol' Pope is dead
Hip Hip Hoorah! Hip Hip Hoorah Hoorah!
(Guy Fawkes Night 2007)*

3.1.3 Understanding British History

In this activity the students will learn the difference between the Protestants and the Catholics at that time and also learn a little bit about the previous Kings and Queens. The previous Kings and Queens play a major role here as they were not of the same religion and so the religious changes in Britain were many in a short time and that created uncertainty amongst the people. These kings and queens belonged to the House of Tudor (Timeline of kings and queens of England 2007). This activity emphasizes linguistic intelligence.

Start by handing out a list including the names of the former kings and queens and ask the students to find out all they can about them and especially their religious beliefs. The students should then, after finding all the information about the previous kings and queens, make

a type of poster-timeline that shows the religious changes in Britain during their reign. Along with each king or queen there should be a description of how they ruled the country. The text should be written in whole sentences, not individual words and should include the resources the students used.

Have a list of resources ready for the students. Make sure that you have at least one book, so that they do not get all their information from the internet. My list of resources can be found in the Reference section.

3.1.4 Poster Making

When teaching the students about Guy Fawkes making posters that show the most interesting parts of his life would be good. Students can also make posters about Guy Fawkes Day and night as it is today. Making these posters requires the students to familiarize themselves with the most important moments in Guy's life and finding a way to bring them to life through the posters. The posters must include a text that explains what is going on in the posters so that the other students, as well as students in other classes, can read it for themselves after the presentations are over.

Each student in this group can make his/her own poster but if some students prefer, they should be allowed to work together in groups of two or three and make a bigger poster that includes at least three to five moments in Fawkes's life. The moments could be his plotting, the moment when he was arrested, his death or the celebrations held today. The intelligence used here in this activity is spatial intelligence.

Make sure that you have posters ready as well as coloured papers. You need scissors and glue as well. Each student has to make a poster of two moments in Fawkes's life but if students want to pair up and do one poster together they have to make a larger poster and have three to five moments of Fawkes's life on it. Each poster has to include an explanatory text so that other students can read about what is going on in the poster.

Make sure that when the students are writing down the text to go with their poster that they describe their poster in full sentences, not just individual words. The text should be approximately half a page to one page long. Since making a poster requires a relaxed atmosphere so that the student's creativity can blossom, you should have found a separate room

for them to use or make sure that the classroom is not too noisy. When the students have finished hang the posters up in the classroom.

You will need to have prepared links to online material so that the students can go directly to them and will not get sidetracked whilst on the internet. Some of the links I used can be found in the Reference section under “Guy Fawkes activity 3.1.4”.

3.1.5 Putting on a Play

Here the students write a play to show to the rest of the class. In this station students will write, read, talk and listen as well as make their costumes. The play should not be 8-15 minutes long. The students can choose for themselves what part of Fawkes’s life they want to act out, with the exception of the infliction of the punishments. The play can, for example, evolve about the plotting of the treason and lead up to his arrest. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence is the intelligence that is mostly used in this activity since the students will have to use their whole bodies to express themselves (Armstrong, 2000:2).

Ask the group to decide who will be the writers and who will be the costume designers. Then ask the students to decide on a moment that they would want to act out and help them get started, if needed. The costumes do not have to be made from scratch but can simply be aluminium foil (for armour) and old clothes put together in a way that make them look old. The students should not spend too much time writing the play down word for word, instead they should practise and get a feel for what should be said and what should be done. Make sure that they can practise in a separate room so that the play will be a surprise to the other students but not something that they have seen a dozen times before.

When the students believe that they are ready, have them show you the play before they act it out in front of the class, so if there is something wrong, it can be corrected beforehand.

3.1.6 Making a Music Video

When making a music video the students will work together so that everyone gets to do everything. That way they learn the most. Talk to the computer teacher and ask if the students can use the music room and if he could be there to help if needed but it is also necessary to have studied how to make videos on the computer yourself. According to students in the Icelandic

Film school a large number of kids already know how to make music videos, due to You-Tube and some of the students in the Film school are more than happy to come to elementary schools and teach the students there how to make a video.

Making a music video is not just about making the video but the song as well. In this case ask the students to make a video of the song that is sung on this day. Writing their own song takes up too much time as this is an assignment that is to be worked at mostly in school. The intelligence used in this activity is musical intelligence but that is the intelligence that emphasises the sensitivity to rhyme and rhythm (Armstrong, 2000, p.2).

Start by talking to the students about what resources they have and how to go about in this assignment. Let them know that they can go the music teacher for help, students in the Film School as well as to you. They are welcome to film the video all over the neighbourhood as well as in the school or at home. They will be able to use the school's video camera but if they own a video camera themselves they can use that as well and then perhaps shoot twice as much material. Since they do not have to write their own lyrics ask them to make a new tune to go with them, they can use the instruments in the music room for that as well as objects that are not instruments.

When they have recorded their song and shot all their material they have to have a clear idea of what the video is supposed to look like. They can either sing the lyrics themselves or make it a silent video where the lyrics appear "on" the video. Make sure that the students make a copy for each student in this group. Then show the rest of the students the video and enjoy.

4. Valentine's Day.

February 14th is the day when people in many countries celebrate St Valentine's Day. The day is named in honour of Saint Valentine who lived in Roman times and died on February 14th, 269 AD. "This is the day of love and friendship all over the world" (Nihlén and Gardenkrans, 1999:6). The day was linked to romance in the 14th century and today people send Valentines cards, roses, chocolate and other small tokens of affection to their loved ones on this day.



Legend has it that on the day Saint Valentine died he had left a note to his jail keeper's daughter which was signed "Your Valentine", which is what triggered the sending of Valentines cards (Valentine's Day 2008, Holidays and festivals 2000).

On Valentine's Day Eve in Britain, women used to pin four bay leaves to the corners of their pillow and eat eggs. They would, however, not eat the yokes, but remove them and replace them with salt. In so doing they believed that they would dream of their future husbands that night. They would also write men's names on paper and put the paper then in balls made out of flour and water, which they then dropped into water. The paper that surfaced first would have the name of their future husband on it (Holidays and festivals 2000).



Teaching students about Valentine's Day includes teaching the students about the rituals that were performed in the past and those that are practised today. This would be done by open conversations during class as well as through assignments. Begin by asking the students what they know about St Valentine's Day and write their ideas on the board. See what else is left to mention and briefly discuss this before handing out assignments for the students. Asking if they know what saints are is necessary because Valentine was a saint and talking about romance is important too.

4.1 Valentine's Day Activities

4.1.1 Valentine's Cards

Talking about the differences between Valentine's Day rituals in Iceland and those in Britain is an interesting topic as Valentine's Day is relatively new here.

I can imagine that the student's perspective on romance would be a great addition to the discussions about St Valentine's Day and I would have the students send Valentines cards to each other as well. The students should draw names so that everyone is included equally. For this part the students should have found some famous Valentine's Day quotes by famous or well known persons like Shakespeare on the internet or in books. That can be done at home as homework. This activity is good for those students who are strong in the linguistic intelligence but that intelligence emphasises, amongst others, on the capacity to use words differently whether it be on paper or orally (Armstrong, 2000:2).

Start by splitting the students up into four or five groups. Then ask the students to make a mind-map about Valentine's Day rituals in Iceland versus the rituals in Britain. The teacher writes a few key questions like: What do people do nowadays? Why? What is love? Do you know any love quotes? on the board to get the students started. (Nihlén and Gardenkrans, 2000:32). When the mind-map is finished the students use that as well as the quotes they had to find at home to write their own Valentine's cards to send to members of the class. They will have drawn names so that everyone is included equally. If there is spare time left at the end of class the students can make Valentine's cards for their friends and family as well.

Here are a few quotes that I will have put on cards for the students to read as well:

Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be.

- Robert Browning

If music be the food of love, play on.

- Shakespeare

Love is the enchanted dawn of every heart.

- Lamartine

It's not the men in my life that count -- it's the life in my men.

- Mae West (1892-1980)

Never judge someone by who he's in love with; judge him by his friends. People fall in love with the most appalling people. Take a cool, appraising glance at his pals.

- Cynthia Heimel

At the touch of Love every one becomes a poet.

- Plato

Love may not make the world go round, but I must admit that it makes the ride worthwhile.

- Sean Connery

Love doesn't grow on trees like apples in Eden - it's something you have to make. And you must use your imagination too.

- Joyce Cary

One advantage of marriage, it seems to me, is that when you fall out of love with him, or he falls out of love with you, it keeps you together until maybe you fall in again.

- Judith Viorst

Love is like an hourglass, with the heart filling up as the brain empties.

- Jules Renard

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.

- Oscar Wilde

It is never too late to fall in love.

- Sandy Wilson

(Valentine's Day Quotes [without year])

4.1.2 Poster Making

Asking students to make posters of their ideal Valentine's Day would be great and the students could use pictures from magazines and the web as well as create their own pictures. The students would then have to describe their poster in a few words so that the others can understand their poster. Poster making requires spatial intelligence. Spatial intelligence involves sensitivity to colour, line, and shape, to name a few (Armstrong, 2000:2).

Start by dividing the class into groups of three, four at the most, so that everyone has a role in the poster making. Make sure that you have poster board paper ready as well as coloured paper and magazines. You need scissors and glue as well. Make sure that the students describe their poster in full sentences, not just individual words. After the posters are finished, hang them up in the classroom for all to see.

4.1.3 Writing a Love Poem

Another thing would be to introduce them to English poetry and ask them to write poems. To do that you need to show them English poem books like the book “LOVE” by Susan Morris (1980) and use the web. Show them one or two short poems that are funny as well as sweet like the poems here below, that should show them that poems do not need to be long or complicated but can be short and easy.

Do You Love Me?

Do you love me,
Or do you not?
You told me once,
But I forgot!
(Nihlén and Gardenkrans, 1999, p.6-7).

I’m standing outside.

I’m standing outside,
I’m thinking of you,
My heart is warm,
But my nose is BLUE!
(Nihlén and Gardenkrans, 1999, p.6-7).

Roses are Red.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Carnations are sweet
And so are you.
And so are they
That send you this
And when we meet
We’ll have a kiss.
(Morris, 1980:47).

Hold me tight, by the Beatles.

Hold me tight
Tell me I’m the only one
And then I might
Never be the lonely one.
(Morris, 1980:81).

These poems as well as other poems from the book “LOVE” by Susan Morris are easy but interesting and well adapted to inspire students to write their own poems. This activity is also suitable for those students that are strong in linguistic intelligence. Linguistic intelligence consists, amongst others, of the capacity to use words differently, whether orally or in writing (Armstrong, 2000:2).

Begin by asking the students if they know any English poems. These need not to be love poems, just poems. Then the teacher asks if the students know the names of any poets.

Teacher can then mention the names of a few poets who wrote love poems such as William Shakespeare, Edgar Allen Poe, Emily Dickinson and Robert Browning. William Shakespeare is someone everyone should know as he wrote Romeo and Juliet, the greatest love story of all.

Then students go online or look at some books that the teacher has brought to class and familiarize themselves with the poetry. Students can make wordlists if they like or write down a

few sentences and then finish the poems at home. Since writing poems often seems to be hard for the students they are better adapted to do this at home where there is no pressure on them. In the next class the students hand in their poetry and the teacher asks if anyone would like to read their poem out loud to the class. There is always someone who will read their poem and often the teacher is allowed to read out poems so that they are anonymous.

4.1.4 Working with Songs

To appeal to the students who are musically intelligent I will include songs and working with songs. Have the students listen to English love songs and rewrite them, piece them back together or turn them into a poem. If students have a difficult time with grammar, using songs is a good way to help them understand it better. This is a good activity for the students that are strong in musical intelligence. Musical intelligence includes for example the capacity to transform and express musical forms (Armstrong, 2000, p.2).

Copy the lyrics to the song “You’re Beautiful” by James Blunt onto paper and cut it down into sentences. Play the song two or three times for the students and then ask them to piece it back together. Divide the students into groups of two or three and give them all the sentences. This activity requires the students to listen carefully as the song is being played and then use their minds to try and piece it back together.

Another exercise is to have them listen and fill in the blanks, that way they have to listen carefully to be able to find the correct words. That also emphasises their listening skills and requires them to work on their spelling when they write down the missing words. If the teacher feels the students have weak points in their grammar this can also be used as a grammar exercise. For example, if the students have difficulties finding the verb tenses past simple, past continuous and past perfect, the song “Goodbye my lover” by James Blunt is the perfect song to use. If the students have a hard time finding the simple and present continuous the song “Things I’ll never say” by Avril Lavigne is also very good.

To use the songs “Goodbye my lover” and “Things I’ll never say” as a grammar exercise, remove all the bold words and put lines instead, then the students will fill in these words.

Goodbye My Lover

Did I disappoint you or let you down?
Should I be feeling guilty or let the judges frown?
'Cause I **saw** the end before we'd **begun**,
Yes I **saw** you **were blinded** and I **knew** I **had won**.

So I **took** what's mine by eternal right.
Took your soul out into the night.
It may be over but it won't stop there,
I am here for you if you'd only care.

You **touched** my heart you **touched** my soul.
You changed my life and all my goals.
And love is blind and that I **knew** when,
My heart **was blinded** by you.

I've **kissed** your lips and **held** your hand.
Shared your dreams and **shared** your bed.
I know you well, I know your smell.
I've been addicted to you.

Goodbye my lover.
Goodbye my friend.
You **have been** the one.
You **have been** the one for me.

I am a dreamer and when I wake,
You can't break my spirit - it's my dreams you take.
And as you move on, remember me,
Remember us and all we **used** to be

I've **seen** you cry, I've **seen** you smile.
I've **watched** you sleeping for a while.
I'd be the father of your child.
I'd spend a lifetime with you.

I know your fears and you know mine.
We've **had** our doubts but now we're fine,
And I love you, I swear that's true.
I cannot live without you.

And I still hold your hand in mine.
In mine when I'm asleep.
And I will bare my soul in time,
When I'm kneeling at your feet.

Things I'll never say

I'm **tugging** at my hair
I'm **pulling** at my clothes
I'm **trying** to keep my cool
I **know** it shows
I'm **staring** at my feet
My cheeks are **turning** red
I'm **searching** for the words inside my head

(Cause) I'm **feeling** nervous
Trying to be so perfect
Cause I **know** you're worth it
You're worth it

If I could say what I **want to** say
I'd say I **want to** blow you... away
Be with you every night
Am I squeezing you too tight
If I could say what I **want** to see
I **want** to see you **go** down
On one knee
Marry me today
Yes, I'm **wishing** my life away
With these things I'll never say

It **don't do** me any good
It's **just** a waste of time
What use **is** it to you
What's **on** my mind
If it **ain't** coming out
We're **not going** anywhere
So why can't I just **tell** you that I **care**

What's **wrong** with my tongue
These words keep slipping away
I **stutter**, I **stumble**
Like I've got nothing to say

Yes I'm **wishing** my life away with these things I'll never say
If I could say what I **want** to say
I'd say I **want to** blow you...away
Be with you every night

Am I **squeezing** you too tight
If I could say what I **want** to see
I **want** to see you **go** down
On one knee
Marry me today

4.1.5 Meaning of Flowers

Since Valentine's Day includes sending flowers asking the students to find out the meaning of the most popular flowers that are sent on this day can be a fun challenge. This can be done by going online, by visiting a flower store or looking at books about flowers. This activity is good for the students that are strong in the naturalist intelligence. The naturalist intelligence includes, for examples, recognition and classification of numerous species in the flora and fauna in an individual's environment (Armstrong, 2000:2).

Divide the class into a few groups and give each group a few flower names. Then ask the students to go and find out the meanings of these flowers.

Most school libraries have books about flowers that the students can use and they can also use the internet. When all groups have found the meaning of all of their flowers ask the groups to read out the meanings of their flowers to the rest of the class. Make sure that you know the meaning of all the flowers that you hand out.

Meanings of flowers



Red Rose- love

Yellow Rose-friendship

Roses, white and red-unity

Sunflower-admire/adore

Red Carnation-Admiration

Fern-fascination

Daffodil-regard

For-get-me-Not- true love

Rosebud-beauty and youth

Tulip-an open heart

White Rose-charm and innocence

Pink Rose-perfect happiness

Slipper Orchid-beautiful lady

Camellia, white-loveliness

White Carnation-pure and ardent love

Daisy-innocence, gentleness

Chrysanthemum, red-I love you

Primrose-young love

Larkspur-an open heart

(Meaning of Flowers 2006, The language of Flowers 2008).

5. May Day

May Day is, unlike the other festive days discussed in this essay, a public holiday in Britain. This holiday brings out many activities that we Icelanders see as extremely strange such as the fact that “on May Day morning thousands of people gather at dawn to hear a choir sing a medieval hymn from an ancient tower in Oxford and Morris Dancers perform on an ancient 180-foot-tall picture of a man on a Dorset hillside” (May Day, 2007).

For the convenience of the public all May Day activities have been moved to the first Monday in May which is now “a bank holiday”, a day off from school and work. This is the time of year when the weather starts to get warmer and this is also said to be the time of romance and love. I will go into two of the traditional spring dances, Maypole Dancing and Morris Dancing. Maypole Dancing used to require people to cut down trees and stick them into the ground so that people could dance around them but nowadays people often use flagpoles or buy a wooden pole from the lumber yard. Most often it was the children in the elementary schools who danced around the pole and today that tradition still exists. Elementary schools today practice dancing around the Maypole, making a beautiful pattern with the ribbons. Today Maypoles are not as common as they were but they are still very popular downtown in many villages.



Maypole Dancing has been popular for over 150 years and it will most likely still be around in a hundred years (May Day, 2007). “The tallest Maypole is said to have been erected in London on the Strand in 1661; it stood over 143 feet high. It was felled in 1717, when it was used by Isaac Newton to support Huygen’s new reflecting telescope” (May Day, 2007).

In the past, May Day celebrations began very early in the morning when people went out before sunrise to gather greenery and flowers to decorate their houses. People also decorated their villages and believed that it would bring good fortune by the vegetation spirits. The girls and women of the villages also went out early morning and washed their faces in the morning dew as they believed that doing so made them beautiful for the following year.

Another celebration on this day involved the May Queen. After the morning rituals had been done and the houses had been decorated the other festivities took over. The other festivities were dancing on the village green, exhibitions of strength and an archery contest. Then the highlight of the day was the crowning of the May Day Queen, the human replica of Flora; “the goddess of flowers in roman mythology” (Flora, 2008). It was tradition that the Queen took no part in the festivities but sat like a true Queen in a flower-decked chair and watched her “subjects”.



May Day was, and remains, in some parts of Britain called Garland Day. The young girls make May Garlands by covering two hoops with flowers and leaves and sometimes put a doll inside to represent the goddess of spring. There was also a tradition once where a gang of young men lifted a pretty girl in a flower bedecked chair on May Day and then the following day, that girl would choose one of the boys to be her date for the day.

In the North of England May Day was a considered to be a late April’s Fools Day. All sorts of pranks and tricks would take place and if you were able to trick someone their response would be: “*May Goslings past and gone. You’re the fool for making me one!*” (May Day, 2007).

Today May Day celebrations often begin at sunset on April 30th by people decorating their houses and then helping with the decoration of the towns. In a village named Charlton-on-Otmoor, near Oxford the May Day festival involves all the Primary School children. Everyone wears white and carries garland flowers and the festival starts with a special May Day song, followed by a procession to the church. Besides wearing white all the girls wear straw bands along with posies and ribbons in their hair. After this special service all the children go back to their school with their families and friends and dance a number of May Day dances as well as a Maypole dance. After that they have a May Day feast with great varieties of food and drinks.

In Rochester they celebrate their annual May Day Sweeps Festival. The 1st of May is the single traditional holiday that chimney sweepers used to enjoy. This is a very colourful festival with music and dancing in the streets as well as entertainment for



the people. These traditional dances are passed down from one generation to the next one and are very popular amongst the people on the streets. The dances paint their faces black and dance a type of Morris Dance (May Day, 2007).



Morris Dancing is an extremely popular May Day activity. It is a traditional dance that is performed on May Day as well as the rest of May. It is a lively, loud dance often accompanied by an accordion player. The men and women who dance this dance usually have sticks in their hand and rattles or bells fastened to their knees so that the people can hear the rhythm as well as see it. The Morris dancers' wear different colour clothing depending on which part of the country they are from and the type of clothes worn by the dancers also differ between regions. In some towns they even paint their faces like the Morris Dancers in Rochester so that they look like the chimney sweeps covered with soot. Dancers in other towns paint their faces different colours or simply match their faces with their clothing.

There are usually six to eight dancers in the dance, arranged in two lines opposite each other or in a circle facing each other. The dancers carry white handkerchiefs that they shake or, more commonly, short sticks that they bang together as they dance (Morris Dance 2008, May Day 2007).

5.1 May Day Activities

5.1.1 May Day Festivities in the Past

As briefly stated above May Day festivities were somewhat different in the past though many festive traditions are still held. Ask the students to find out some traditions that are no longer celebrated today, but were popular in the past. This activity is good for those who are strong in spatial intelligence as well as in linguistic intelligence. The spatial intelligence involves, for example, sensitivity to colour, line and shape while linguistic intelligence consists of the capacity to use words differently, whether orally or in writing amongst other things (Armstrong, 2000:2).

Divide the students into a few groups and have them find other old traditions that were celebrated on May Day in the past. The students are required to describe the traditions in whole sentences and try to find pictures that describe the tradition, if possible. When the students have found all the information about their tradition/traditions you can ask them to make a poster about their tradition or if they have found many traditions, ask them to modify them so that they could become traditions today.

5.1.2 Making a Maypole

Making your own Maypoles is easy and with that the students can practice making patterns with the bands. This way the students get a better feel for how the Maypoles were made and the hard work it took to practice a dance that would create a beautiful pattern with the bands. These Maypoles need not to be tall, simply the size of a table ornament. This activity requires the spatial intelligence.

You need a paper towel roll, paint, cardboards, crepe paper that is longer than the pole (3 to 5 colours), tape and scissors. Make sure that you have written the instructions on the board before the class starts and have a Maypole that you have done yourself ready so that the students can get visual support as well. Then divide the students into groups of three and hand out kits containing all the items above.

Instructions that have to be written on the board: Start by painting the towel roll white and let it dry. Then tape one end of the painted roll to a piece of cardboard so that the pole can stand up straight. Next you tape the crepe paper strips to the top of the pole and then make your

own pattern. When finished making the pattern, tape the loose ends of the crepe paper to the bottom of the pole and paint over them to make them identical with the cardboard (Make Your Own Maypole,2008).

5.1.3 Making Garlands

Garlands can be made out of almost anything so if there are no flowers near the school that the students can pick you can use popcorn, leaves, dried berries and crepe paper. To make this a bit easier you can use plastic rings to stick the ornaments on instead of fastening them together with flower wire. What you need are: plastic rings, flowers, leaves, popcorn or crepe paper, sewing pins or flower wire and glue. This activity is good for those students who are strong in spatial intelligence.



Begin by handing out half a plastic ring to each student as well as enough ornaments to fill each half of the ring. Have a ring ready that you have made yourself so that you can be prepared to help the students with their garlands. If students prefer they can make their garland out of flower wire. Have pictures of garlands on the board or hand them out to students so that they know what their garland is supposed to look like.

5.1.4 Learning a Morris Dance

For this activity the main point is to have fun and learn a dance that is fun. The idea is that you and the dance teacher at your school, or the neighbouring school if there is no dance teacher at your school, learn a few steps or make up a few steps to teach to the students. You can do this yourself if you want or even ask the other teachers to join in and then this could be a bigger event.

There are videos online that show the dances and so, according to dance teachers, learning a few steps should not be so hard. The music can be the same as is in the videos found online and the sticks you can get from the industrial arts teacher. Unlike in the real activity

everyone may not need to dress the same, but if the students want they can, of course, come to school in the same colour clothes.

An alternative is to have a dance teacher teach the students the dance. I have contacted a few dance teachers in Reykjavík and they all said that getting a dance teacher to teach the students this dance should be possible. This activity is perfect for those who are strong in bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence includes the expertise in using one's whole body to express ideas and feelings, amongst other things (Armstrong, 2000:2).

This requires you to learn the dance, or a version of it, or have contacted a dance teacher to teach the students. This biggest part of this dance is the noise it makes in beat with its steps so you will need to hold on to bells or something that makes noise to see if you have the correct rhythm.

After you have learned the dance have the students make their own knee bands with bells on or something that makes a similar sound. If you do not have enough bells you can simply use a toilet roll, tape it closed on one end, pour rice or popcorn beans in and tape closed the other end. That way you have hand sized rattles that the students can simply hold in their hand when they dance. You can then get some sticks from the woodworks room so that the students can hold them in their other hand to clash them together in rhythm to the dance.

The next step is then to teach the students the dance and have a good time. If the boys will not participate they can be in charge of keeping the beat by clapping their hands or using instruments such as shakers.

Morris dance videos can easily be found online by typing the words "Morris Dance Video" in Google and the links I used can be found in the Reference section under activity 5.1.4.

6. Conclusion

As stated in my introduction Berglind I. Gunnarsdóttir stated that “most people don’t realise just how much of an influence culture moulds them as individuals until they get acquainted with another culture and therefore witness new beliefs, standards and values” (Berglind I. Gunnarsdóttir, 2007). Fortunately there are many possibilities available in the teaching methods we can use when it comes to teaching culture in our English classes that finding new ways to communicate to our students in an interesting way should be no problem. It is also imperative for us to remember that with each cultural insight the students are exposed to they get a little closer to fully understanding the English language. With the help of Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory finding activities that can fit the needs of all the students in your class is possible.

All the activities above can easily be modified to fit other age levels or made even more complicated for those students who need more stimulation in class. Most of the activities require the students to talk amongst themselves and write and that also requires reading and listening so the four most important language skills are applied. Every activity is meant to be fun and interesting so that the students will be stimulated and have fun at the same time as they are learning.

We, as teachers, need to broaden our students minds when it comes to other cultures because after school finishes and real life, with work, family and all that comes with it, begins, they need to be able to assess other possibilities and other cultures with an open mind.

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Activity 3.1.2:

Video link: <http://revver.com/video/485445/guy-fawkes-night-london/>

Activity 3.1.3:

<http://www.britannia.com/history/h6f.html>

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/kings.htm>

<http://www.royal.gov.uk/output/Page11.asp>

Activity 3.1.4:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_Fawkes_Night

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/guyfawkes.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanged%2C_drawn_and_quartered

<http://www.guyfawkes.me.uk/>

Books: Portfolio; A year of fun

Activity 5.1.4:

Morris dance videos:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZjLATAUwao>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7ytMspgJ5A>

Pictures and videos of Morris dancers and dances:

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/maycustoms/pages/DSCN03930695.html>