

Special Days (+ Phrasal Verbs)

Here are 5 short articles about special days. Take special notice of the words in **bold**.

A: Day of the Dead (Mexico) 31st October – 2nd November.

This celebration **takes place** during the 3 Christian celebrations known as All Hallows' Eve, All Hallows' Day and All Saints' Day. On the first day children make an altar to invite the souls of children that have **passed away**, and on the second day it's the adults' turn. The atmosphere is festive and cheerful- The cemeteries are full of flowers, food, toys and drink to welcome back the dead, and people recall their ancestors with funny anecdotes, remembering their deeds. People eat among the gravestones.

This celebration can be **traced back** to the country's precolumbian past. Modern Mexican devotion to 'La Santa Muerte' - a female skeleton- mirrors Aztec worship of the 'Lady of the Dead'. Although she is often worshipped alongside traditional Catholic saints, she is the personification of Death, and can provide protection against violent death and black magic. She is most venerated by poorer sections of society, amongst criminals and those most exposed to violent death, such as taxi drivers, policemen and nightshift workers. Her 'Saint's Day' is on the 1st November and her cult- far more open and visible in recent years- is closely entwined with the tradition of The Day of the Dead.

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B: Thanksgiving (USA) 4th Thursday in November.

The traditional Thanksgiving story is of disaffected Puritans in the year 1620 **setting off** from Plymouth in England to **set up** a second Promised Land in the New World on a ship called the Mayflower. Their first winter in Massachussets was harsh, and half of the pilgrims perished. The survivors were saved by the local Indians (or Native Americans as they are now more officially known) who brought them food and furs, and later showed them how to farm the land. The next year the harvest was good and the settlers invited the Indians to a feast which lasted three days. More than 200 years later after the Civil War had **tore** the country **apart**, President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a national holiday in an attempt to heal wounds and reunite the country. It is now one of the most enduring myths of the American nation.

Historians have **pointed out** that although they gladly received help from the natives, the Puritans never regarded them as anything more than savages, and even thanked God for later **wiping them out** with smallpox. One generation later, the Indians had been decimated by disease, firearms and slavery. This is not usually remembered when families **get together** to celebrate Thanksgiving nowadays.

C: Remembrance Day (UK, Commonwealth and many other nations) 11th November

From the beginning of November there is a common sight in the streets, schools and businesses of Britain and other countries- a paper poppy in a coat or jacket lapel, a jumper or in people's cars. At exactly 11 o'clock a minute's silence is held on radio and television to commemorate the exact moment of First World War ceasefire. The poppy was a common sight in the trenches and seems to symbolize the bloodshed. The following Sunday (Remembrance Sunday) there are numerous religious, civil and military acts to honour all those that have died in military service.

It is not a celebration, and neither is it seen as an appropriate moment to debate the legitimacy of war, or show political or pacifist symbols (although sometimes a white poppy can be seen- supporting soldiers families while **standing up for peace**). Quite simply these days are seen as a moment of gratitude to the common soldier and his family, and all proceeds from the sale of poppys go toward the families of the victims of war. It began the year after the First World War, which had begun with an **outbreak** of patriotism and eagerness, but concluded as 'The War to end all wars', which changed the public's perception of armed conflict from then on. More than 880,000 British soldiers (around 2% of the total population) lost their lives from 1914 to 1918, more than doubling the casualties of WWII.

D: Halloween (USA) 31st October. *profesor nativo gratis* ¡Tu Inglés Online!

The Celts were the first to celebrate October 31st as 'Samhain' - the end of the harvest and the beginning of the Celtic year, a magical time when the dead could communicate with the living. Bonfires were lit and the tribesman **made out** the faces of their ancestors in the smoke. Feasts were held and places were set for deceased kindred. Trick or treating, turnip or pumpkin lanterns and devilish masks **date back** to this time, as masked or costumed revellers went from door to door reciting verses in exchange for food.

The Catholic Church later tried to **do away** with Samhain, replacing it with All Hallows' Day on the 1st of November, and the night before became known as All Hallows' Eve, but these pagan traditions adapted and survived. The word 'Halloween' is the fusion of 'Hallows' Eve' with 'Samhain'. The Irish community was responsible for taking these custom to the USA in the 19th Century, where through Hollywood it has spread worldwide, and is widely regarded as another aspect of American culture, celebrated by and for children, while its ancient roots are generally unknown.

E: Guy Fawkes' Night (UK) 5th November (Bonfire or Fireworks Night)

During the reign of Elisabeth I- widely considered England's greatest ever Monarch- Catholics were forced to convert to Protestantism or were marginalised. 2 years after James I came to the throne, in 1605, one Catholic group- **made up of** some 11 conspirators- had transferred 36 barrels of gunpowder into the coal cellars of London's Houses of Parliament, by renting a house next to the kitchens and tunnelling through. Anonymous letters warning known Catholic sympathisers to stay away on the 5th November were handed over to the King. The rest is History- soldiers found the most infamous conspirator, Guido Fawkes, with the explosives the night before the opening of Parliament, when the King and Lords of the land were to be present. The other members were caught, tortured, executed, and their bodies flung onto a bonfire.

From then on, bonfires are lit every year in gardens and parks across the country, fireworks are **set off** and a 'Guy' - made of old clothes stuffed with newspaper- thrown onto the fire. Interestingly, there has been a recent twist to the hated figure of Guy Fawkes- His typical mask is now often used by antiestablishment groups to hide their identity in protests and demonstrations- the famous 'Anonymous' Mask is based on the figure of Guy Fawkes- using his failed attempt to blow up Parliament as a source of inspiration and as a metaphor (hopefully) of the fight against power.

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• Questions

- A: Day of the Dead (Mex.)
- B: Thanksgiving (USA)
- C: Remembrance Day (UK/Commonwealth)
- D: Halloween (USA)
- E: Guy Fawkes' Night (UK)

1. Which **two** days have survived the introduction of Christianity?
2. Which day is **not** considered a celebration?
3. Which days date back to real historical events?
4. Which day is not associated (directly) with death?
5. Which two take place for more than just one day or one night?

• Phrasal Verbs

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Happens in..... | A. Set off |
| 2) Explode* | B. Trace/Date back to |
| 3) Have its origin in.... | C. Pass away |
| 4) Give | D. Tear apart |
| 5) Begin a journey, (here) ignite | E. Do away with |
| 6) Emphasise, highlight | F. Take place |
| 7) Configure, (here) establish | G. Point out |
| 8) Discern, see with difficulty | H. Blow up |
| 9) Separate, divide in pieces* | I. Wipe out |
| 10) Destroy, Decimate* | J. Make out |
| 11) Get rid of, terminate | K. Hand over |
| 12) Die | L. Set up |

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* *in both a literal and figurative sense.*

• Choose the right phrasal verb

Many of our traditions _____ to events that _____ many centuries ago, or to myths or beliefs that have been _____ from generation to generation. From these traditions we can _____ what life must have been like in the past, and historians and other experts _____ the importance of preserving this collective memory. This is why many societies and associations are _____ - to make sure that these traditions are not _____ by the advance of modernity.