

# CELEBRATIONS

onestopenglish

## Krampusnacht

Teacher's notes

Age: Adults

Level: Upper-intermediate–Advanced (B2–C1)

Time: 60–90 minutes

**Activity:** In this lesson, students will:

1. read a text about Krampusnacht;
2. analyse language related to Krampusnacht;
3. discuss and debate a controversial proposal.

**Language focus:** vocabulary related to Krampusnacht and language used in meetings

**Materials:** one copy of the worksheet per student, minus the role cards; enough copies of the Meeting role cards worksheets for one role card per student

### Procedure

#### 1. Warmer

Briefly brainstorm figures closely connected with different festivals and celebrations.

Next, read the text about Krampus and compare any previously mentioned scary figures with that of Krampus as given in the text.

#### 2. Key words

Students search for words and expressions in the text and write them next to the definitions while noticing how the words are used in context. Note: the definitions are in the order that the words appear in the text.

#### Key:

1. mythical
2. demon
3. birch
4. matted
5. suppressed
6. sentenced to death
7. banality
8. pop culture
9. commercials
10. colloquially
11. folklore spectacle
12. code of conduct

#### 3. Find the information

Students read the text and find the information to answer the questions.

#### Key (suggested answers):

1. Austria in particular, especially in Alpine villages, but also from the surrounding mountainous (Alpine & Tyrolean) regions in Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic and Hungary.
2. There have been times in history when Krampus celebrations were forbidden by the church and by the governments of the day, e.g. during the time of the Spanish Inquisition, and during the second world war.
3. It is the after-dark *Krampuslauf*, in which young men dress up in Krampus costumes and masks and run through the fire-lit streets scaring onlookers.
4. They are fed up with the banality and commercialism connected with Christmas today and are looking for something more 'real' and exciting. Also, Krampus has become increasingly known around the world via his inclusion in pop culture.

#### 4. A Krampus meeting

This is a meeting for six to eight students. If you have one or two students without roles, have them observe the meetings closely and make notes about the language the others used and the effect it had (positive or negative). If necessary, in a smaller group, roles 7 and 8 can be left out – give the marketing manager the role of chairing the meeting, and make sure that everyone makes notes. In a large group, more than one meeting can be held simultaneously.

Hand out the role cards and give students five minutes to get to know their role and also to make notes about questions they might like to ask during the meeting. Make sure students do not see each other's cards.

Set a time limit for the meeting. Start with 20 minutes and extend it if necessary. It is important that the meeting runs in a professional way and that everyone is involved.

Remind the students that their main aim is to reach a decision that is satisfactory for all participants and that to reach this they may have to make some compromises and alternative suggestions.

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If possible plan time for a debriefing / feedback session afterwards.

### 5. Krampus vs the Christmas Elf

Students watch a short clip from a US talk show in which Austrian actor Christoph Waltz explains Krampus to talk show host Jimmy Fallon:

'Christoph Waltz explains Krampus to Jimmy Fallon' – *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* – [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbkGuCozc9M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbkGuCozc9M)

Have students discuss how much of the information from the *Krampusnacht* text in the lesson plan is mentioned in the clip, as well as the audience's and the host's reaction to Krampus.

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## Krampusnacht

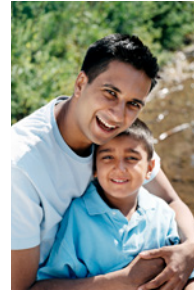
Meeting role cards

### 1. Town Events and Marketing Manager



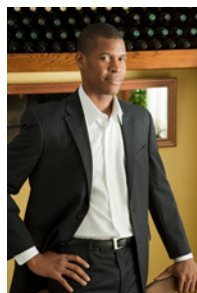
You're new to this position and want to make your mark. In the ten years up to his retirement, your predecessor didn't introduce any exciting new events into the town's events calendar. You believe the money is available for the necessary marketing and security measures involved in holding a Krampus run. The only doubt you have is that when you showed a video of Krampus runs in Austria to your children (aged five and seven) they both ran away and hid in their rooms.

### 2. Chairperson of the parents' committee at the local primary school



You were initially sceptical, but after discussing *Krampusnacht* at a school PTA meeting you are now open to the idea – but only if it is made child-friendly. The school's teachers are prepared to become involved in holding a children's Krampus run but would like guidance and instructions. As you will have to deal with the questions of concerned parents, you need solid answers from this meeting about what part children will play in the festivities, as well as safety (and potential psychological) issues.

### 3. Representative from the local gastronomic association



You represent the town's hoteliers and restaurant, café and bar owners. In general, you welcome any event that will increase your profits by bringing in new thirsty and hungry customers as well as more hotel guests. You know, though, that in other towns Christmas market stands take away custom from local bars, cafes and restaurants, so you want assurance that outside caterers will not be allowed. You'd like permission to set up your own stands along the sides of the Krampus run to sell onlookers special warming alcoholic Krampus drinks.

### 4. Chief of police



Your main concerns are about maintaining law and order and safety. You'd prefer the festival not to take place at all, as it's going to be an organizational nightmare. If it does, you will need to put all your officers out on the streets and cancel any leave. Additionally, you would like extra funding to bring in officers from nearby towns. If a Krampus run takes place, runners should not wear masks and there should be no fire involved. You'd also like a ban on alcohol being consumed outside and a special fine put in place for anyone found drinking on the streets – runners and onlookers!

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## Krampusnacht

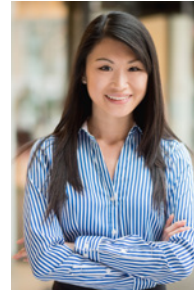
### Meeting role cards

#### 5. Representative of the inner-city residents' committee



You represent the people who live in the town centre. Your primary worries are about noise going on all day and late into the evening, rubbish left behind and a lack of public toilets, and you'd like to know where all the visitors are going to park. Personally, you have two teenage grandsons who you know would love to take part in a Krampus run.

#### 6. Member of the youth council (studying to be a social worker)



You are totally in favour of any new event that is likely to be of interest to the town's youths – everything else that's on in the town's calendar seems to be aimed at kids and older people. You'd like to really focus the Krampus run on 15–25-year-olds, so that they feel it's their event. You hope that there won't be too much police presence or restrictions on food and drink, as that would just take the fun out of the day.

#### 7. Mayor



You have called the meeting and are responsible for chairing it, keeping order and making sure that everyone is able to make their voice heard. Your main priorities are promoting the image of the town (and of yourself, so that you get re-elected in two years' time).

#### 8. Minute-taker



You work at the town hall and are responsible for making notes of what is said at the meeting and of any decisions that are made, as well as any questions that remain open. You will be required to write a report after the meeting, as well as a press release, so make sure you follow what is said and ask questions if anything is unclear.

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## Krampusnacht

### Worksheet

#### Exercise 1: Warmer



- Name figures and creatures that you closely connect with specific celebrations and festivals.
- Did any of these frighten you when you were a child?
- Describe the scariest holiday figure that you can think of.

Read the text. How does Krampus compare to the scariest holiday figure you talked about?

#### Exercise 2: Key words

Find the words in the article that match the definitions below.

1. relating to, or only existing in old traditional stories \_\_\_\_\_
2. an evil spirit \_\_\_\_\_
3. a tall tree with thin branches \_\_\_\_\_
4. hair or fur that is twisted or stuck together and usually dirty \_\_\_\_\_
5. stop an activity, especially by making laws or by using your authority \_\_\_\_\_
6. when a judge officially states that the punishment for a crime is for the person who did the crime to be killed (3 words) \_\_\_\_\_
7. the fact that something is boring because it contains nothing new, original or unusual \_\_\_\_\_
8. aspects of modern day life that are transmitted via the mass media and aimed particularly at younger people (2 words) \_\_\_\_\_
9. advertisements on television or radio \_\_\_\_\_
10. when something is used in informal conversation rather than in writing or formal language \_\_\_\_\_
11. an exciting and impressive public event that is connected with traditional stories and beliefs from a particular region (2 words) \_\_\_\_\_
12. a set of rules stating how people should behave in a certain situation (3 words) \_\_\_\_\_

### Krampusnacht

The mythical horned devilish Austrian figure of Krampus is gaining popularity in the US and in his central European Alpine homeland.

*Krampusnacht* – the night of Krampus – takes place on December 5th, the day before St Nicolas' Day. The celebrations are centred in Austria, but they are also popular in some parts of Bavaria in southern Germany, as well as in the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Tyrolean parts of northern Italy. Although it may seem like a new or previously unknown celebration to many, in actual fact the celebration of *Krampusnacht* goes back hundreds of years.



Krampus is a demon-like folklore figure who accompanies Saint Nicolas, the traditional central European version of Santa Claus. But while Saint Nick rewards good children with presents and treats, Krampus catches naughty children, puts them in his sack and beats them with a birch stick. To many people, Krampus is a beloved traditional figure, but one that nevertheless remains controversial.

The word Krampus comes from old German and means 'claw'. The figure of Krampus is a devilish-looking creature who is covered in dark matted fur. He has flaming eyes and long twisted horns, and he wears chains and bells which warn naughty children that he is on his way.

For years, the Catholic Church suppressed the demonic figure of Krampus, and during the time of the Spanish inquisition anyone found celebrating the devil-like Krampus was sentenced to death. During the second World War, the fascists, who were, in principle, against many traditional aspects of Christmas, thought Krampus to be a creation of the left-leaning Social Democrats, and so celebrations were banned again.

But now, Krampus is making a comeback – not only in his traditional homeland, but also in the USA where Krampus fans say that the commercialization and cheery banality of Christmas has driven them to celebrate the devilish (and rather more interesting) beast.

In the past few years, the figure of Krampus has made its way into pop culture. These days you can buy Krampus greetings cards, toys, chocolates and books, not only in Austria but also in many other counties around the world. Krampus has appeared in Christmas commercials, in US TV shows such as *Scooby Doo* and *Lost girl*, and there is even a Hollywood-made Krampus comedy-horror movie.

The largest celebrations, however, are still held in Krampus' traditional Alpine homeland. In Austria, December 5th is known colloquially as *Krampusnacht*. In many town and villages, the whole day is given over to festivities, with the main event taking place after dark. This is the *Krampuslauf*, or the Krampus Run, during which hundreds of young men dress up in Krampus costumes and artistic and elaborate wooden masks and run through the fire-lit streets scaring onlookers.

In many places in Austria and Bavaria the *Krampuslauf* has become the most popular folklore spectacle event of the year, attracting thousands of visitors from near and far. In order to prevent the runs and parades from getting out of hand, some places demand that the Krampuses adhere to a code of conduct in which they promise not to drink alcohol and not to hit children with their birch sticks.

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## Krampusnacht

### Worksheet

#### Exercise 3: Find the information

Answer the questions with information from the text.

1. Where does the tradition of Krampus originate from?

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2. Why hasn't it been celebrated constantly throughout the years?

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3. What is the main event in today's Krampus celebrations, and what happens in it?

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4. What attracts people around the world to celebrate *Krampusnacht*?

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#### Exercise 4: A Krampus meeting

Your small, sleepy and uneventful town wants – and needs – to improve not only its image but also its economic situation.

Hold a meeting and decide whether to introduce *Krampusnacht* and a *Krampuslauf* into your town's currently rather empty events calendar.

You must reach a decision today (even if it means compromising or altering your views and position).

#### Exercise 5: Krampus vs the Christmas Elf



Watch well-known Austrian actor Christopher Waltz and US TV talk show host Jimmy Fallon discuss differences between Austrian and US holiday traditions:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbkGuCozc9M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbkGuCozc9M)

- What aspects of Krampus and the celebrations discussed in the clip had you already read about in the text?
- Which parts of the clip provoke the strongest reactions from the audience?
- Would you like to celebrate Krampus in your own town?