

CELEBRATIONS

Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day)

Teacher's notes

Age: Adults and young adults

Level: Intermediate to Upper-intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: 90 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. Read a text about Shrove Tuesday and find out why it is also known as Pancake Day;
2. Work with the language involved and talk about how they make and prefer to eat pancakes;
3. Hold a short survey and practise talking about survey results and statistics.

Language focus: vocabulary related to Pancake Day and language to describe statistics and survey results

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Procedure

1. Warmer

Students do the quiz in pairs and then see how well they do compared to other students. The mini quiz serves to introduce the topic of pancakes.

Key:

1. b
2. a
3. b

2. Key words and expressions

Students search for and underline the key words in the text. Then they quickly read the text to notice how the words are used in context before writing them next to their definitions.

Note: After this task, the students should read the text again thoroughly and carefully before moving onto task 3.

Key:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 1. determined | 7. The Commonwealth |
| 2. fall | 8. mass |
| 3. confess | 9. contestant |
| 4. sins | 10. toss |
| 5. fasting | 11. peers |
| 6. indulgences | 12. charity |

3. Understanding the article

Now that they have read the text twice, students cover the text and discuss with a partner how best to answer the questions. They should imagine that they have been asked to explain Shrove Tuesday / Pancake Day to someone who has never heard of it before, therefore making their answers comprehensive, detailed, but also easy to understand.

Key (suggested answers):

1. In February or March, on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday which is the start of the Christian time of Lent, which leads up to Easter. Shrove Tuesday is always 47 days before Easter Sunday. The moveable date of Easter Sunday determines its exact date.
 2. 'Shrove' comes from the old English word 'shrive' meaning to confess your sins to a priest.
 3. During Lent, people are supposed to give up certain indulgences and start fasting. Eggs, milk and flour were luxury food items that people would use up on Shrove Tuesday by making pancakes – providing one last indulgent feast before fasting until Easter.
 4. In 1445 a woman heard the church bells ringing on Shrove Tuesday morning. She was still making pancakes at the time, but she didn't want to be late for mass. She ran as fast as she could to the church while still carrying her pan with a pancake in it. This developed into the tradition of pancake races. Today, many villages and towns in the UK hold pancake races in which people race each other through the streets while carrying (and tossing) pancakes in frying pans.
- b.

Key: lost track of time

- c. Students use the expression to talk about when they have lost track of time. This may be something that happens to them regularly, e.g. *I often lose track of time when I go on social media.*

4. Perfect pancakes

In this short discussion task, students share pancake recipes or talk about how they or someone they know makes pancakes. Do they have any tips to share with one another?

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If they have never eaten or made pancakes, then they should look up a recipe on the internet and discuss how easy or difficult it would be for them to get the ingredients and make pancakes.

5. Talking about statistics

- a Students read the short text based on information on the UK government's official website and underline all the ways of writing statistics and giving survey results that they can find.

Key:

According to a recent survey, nearly 65% of respondents say they eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.

Almost one in three (33%) people say that they might eat pancakes on Pancake Day, compared to around 10% who say they will not.

Seven in ten people prefer sweet pancakes, while 5% prefer savoury fillings and almost a quarter (23%) like both equally.

Over 60% of respondents say that they like to have sugar and lemon on their pancakes. In contrast, 20% prefer either ice cream or chocolate spread on their pancakes.

- b. Students briefly discuss how they think the statistics and survey results might differ to those in the text if the same questions were asked of people in their country.

6. A pancake survey

Students tick the appropriate boxes to show how they would answer these two survey questions. Then they ask everyone in their class the same questions and put ticks in the appropriate boxes. Talking to everyone ensures that all the students get the same survey results and can talk about them using the language of survey results and statistics, as practised in the previous task.

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1. Warmer

Choose the best answers to the questions.

- A pancake is a ...
 - one-centimetre thick cake baked in the oven in a tin.
 - thin flat cake made of batter and fried in a pan.
 - round, sweet treat made by deep-frying dough in a pan.
- Pancake mixture is made using ...
 - flour, milk and egg.
 - oil, water and flour.
 - egg, butter and sugar.
- In the UK, the favourite pancake topping is ...
 - chocolate spread and powdered sugar.
 - lemon juice and sugar.
 - cheese and ham.

2. Key words and expressions

Read the article and find and underline the key words from the box below. Then match the words to their definitions (1–12).

charity	The Commonwealth	confess	contestant	determined	fall
fasting	indulgences	mass	peers	sins	toss

- officially decided or controlled when something happened _____
- happen on a particular day or date _____
- tell a priest about the bad things you have done, and ask to be forgiven for them _____
- actions or ways of behaving that you think are morally wrong _____
- eating no food or very little food for a period of time, often for religious reasons _____
- special things that someone eats for pleasure, not because they need to _____
- an organization of countries that used to be under the political control of the UK _____
- a religious ceremony in the Roman Catholic church _____
- someone who takes part in a race _____
- throw something up into the air _____
- people who are from a high social class in the UK and have a title such as 'Lord' or 'Lady' _____
- organizations to which you give money so that they can give money and help to people who are poor or ill, or who need advice and support _____

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Worksheet

Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day)



The exact date of Shrove Tuesday each year is determined by the date of Easter. Depending on when Easter is, it can fall anytime between 2 February and 9 March, but it is guaranteed to always take place 47 days before Easter Sunday, and always on a Tuesday. In the UK, Ireland, Australia and Canada, Shrove Tuesday is more commonly known as Pancake Day.

The day after Shrove Tuesday is Ash Wednesday which is the first day of Lent, a period in the Christian calendar which lasts until Easter. The word shrove comes from the old English word 'shrive' which meant 'to confess your sins to a priest'. As Lent is meant to be a time of self-examination and fasting – when people traditionally eat simpler food and give up indulgences such as meat, dairy products, eggs, as well as (more commonly these days) chocolates and alcohol – it became a tradition in the UK and The Commonwealth countries to use up these foods before Lent by making pancakes.

Many other countries make similar Shrove Tuesday treats using the same or similar ingredients. In French, Pancake Day is known as 'Mardi Gras', meaning 'Fat Tuesday', after the celebratory meals made using these 'luxury' ingredients which celebrated the end of the carnival season and the beginning of Lent.

Although now a normal workday, in the past, Shrove Tuesday was a 'half holiday' in Britain. It started at 11 o'clock in the morning and was announced by the ringing of church bells. Tradition says that in 1445 a woman in Olney in Buckinghamshire was so busy making pancakes that she lost track of time. When she heard the bells ringing, she ran as fast as she could to the church and arrived there just in time for Shrove Tuesday mass, still carrying her pancake in a frying pan. And so began the tradition of holding pancake races through the streets on Shrove Tuesday – a tradition that continues to this day.

Every year on Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day, many towns and villages hold pancake races in which the aim is to reach the finishing line as fast as you can without dropping your pancake. The rules usually state that each contestant must toss and catch their pancake, in their frying pan, at the beginning and end of each race. There is even an annual pancake race held in London between members of parliament, peers from the House of Lords and political journalists which raises money for charity.

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3. Understanding the article

a. Cover the Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day) text and answer the questions with a partner.

1. When is Shrove Tuesday? What determines its exact date?
2. Where does the name 'Shrove' come from?
3. Why is it known as Pancake Day by many people?
4. What unusual competition takes place on Pancake Day, and why?

b. Find a four-word expression in the article that means to forget about other appointments and plans because you are so interested in what you are doing at the moment.

c. Use the expression to talk about a day or situation when this happened to you.

I completely _____ when ...

I often _____ when ...

4. Perfect pancakes

Talk about how you (or someone you know) make/s pancakes. If you don't have a recipe of your own, look one up.

5. Talking about statistics

a. Read the short extract below. This is the type of report you might see in a newspaper. Underline the typical language used to report statistics and survey results.

Pancakes still a favourite

According to a recent survey, nearly 65% of respondents say they eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.

Almost one in three (33%) people say that they might eat pancakes on Pancake Day, compared to around 10% who say they will not.

Seven in ten people prefer sweet pancakes, while 5% prefer savoury fillings and almost a quarter (23%) like both equally.

Over 60% of respondents say that they like to have sugar and lemon on their pancakes. In contrast, 20% prefer either ice cream or chocolate spread on their pancakes.

b. What do you think the results would be if you asked the same questions to people from your home country?

I don't think that 65% of people would eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. I think the figure would more likely be about 10%.

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6. A pancake survey

a. Read the survey below and answer the questions about yourself by putting a tick ✓ next to your answers.

Question 1

Are you planning to eat pancakes on Pancake Day?

Yes, I am.	Maybe.	No, I'm not.	I never eat pancakes.

Question 2

Which, if any, of the following are your favourite pancake toppings/fillings?

Pancake topping	Me	My friends
Lemon and sugar		
Chocolate spread (e.g. Nutella)		
Honey		
Cinnamon		
Smoked salmon and cream cheese		
Cheese		
Mushrooms		
Peanut butter		
Ham		
Spinach		
Jam		
Other		

b. Talk to the other students in your class and tick ✓ their answers.

c. Work in groups. Talk about the results of your survey using language structures similar to those from Exercise 5.

In our class, around 20% of people like to eat their pancakes with chocolate spread. In contrast, only one person would eat pancakes with spinach.