

CHRISTMAS UNKNOWN

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Level: Intermediate and above

Time: 90 minutes

Aims:

1. To revise vocabulary related to Christmas
2. To introduce vocabulary associated with symbols of Christmas (plants)
3. To find out about ways of celebrating Christmas in different parts of the world

Technical requirements: One computer per a group of 2-3 students, with the Internet connection.

Knowledge: Students should be skilled at typing the URLs and using search engines

Procedure:

Pre-stage (offline)

1. Teacher asks students if they like Christmas and tells them to justify their answers.
2. Teacher asks students to mention all the symbols of Christmas they remember and explain what they represent (they'll probably mention the star, tree, mistletoe, carols, turkey, etc).
3. Teacher asks if they know any other plants (apart from the mistletoe) that are considered to symbolise something associated with Christmas (they probably don't know)

While-stage (online)

4. Teacher writes the names of other Christmas plants like 'ivy', 'laurel', 'rosemary', 'holly' and 'poinsettia'. Students are asked to use a search engine to find pictures of the above mentioned plants. To make it faster you can suggest some URLs, like www.cyberus.ca/~tecsport/newslet/news21.htm or www.english.uga.edu/cdesmet/dita (for pictures of holly) and www.800florals.com/category.asp?category=ch (for pictures of poinsettia).
5. When students have found the flowers, they are asked to think about the meanings of such symbols, they can speculate for a couple of minutes, then the teacher asks them to enter www.Christmas.com/worldview and find out what the symbols stand for.

mistletoe: love and health

ivy: eternal life

laurel: triumph of Humanity

rosemary: protects from evil spirits

holly: peace and joy

poinsettia: flower of the Holy Night

Variation: If time allows, the teacher may ask students to use Paintbrush and draw colourful pictures of the plants, then copy them to a Word document and prepare a short description with gaps to be completed by other students. If it's possible the teacher prints the sheets and distributes them to groups as a kind of a vocabulary exercise.

6. The teacher asks students whether they know how Christmas is celebrated in other parts of the world (outside Europe). If they don't know they are asked to go to www.Christmas.com/worldview again and find information necessary to complete the table.

	Climate	Christmas meal	Other customs
Africa (Zimbabwe, Nigeria or Ghana)			
Australia			
South America (Brazil)			
One European country of Your choice			

Post-stage

7. Students are asked to report back, they share the information they've found, the teacher asks comprehension questions, students justify their choices.

8. The teacher asks students to write a short passage describing the holidays of their dreams (they can choose the country, customs etc.)

GOING ON HOLIDAY

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PART ONE

Objectives

- To practise searching for specific information on the Web
- To practise reading for details and extracting information
- To revise vocabulary concerning travel and holiday
- To practise word-processing skills

Time: two 45-minute periods

Resources used

Computers, Internet websites, word-processor

Sample websites

Hotels: <http://www.hotelbook.com/>, <http://www.travelocity.com/>, <http://reservations-hotels.com/>, <http://www.hotelreservationnetworks.com/>,
http://www.hotelguide.com/html/main_site.cfm?CFID=4846115&CFTOKEN=87694466,

Flights: <http://book2.flybmi.com/>, <http://www.travelocity.com/>,
<http://msn.expedia.com/daily/home/default.asp>,

Planning a trip: <http://travel.yahoo.com/>

Possible problems

- Some popular sites (such as travel.yahoo.com or www.travelocity.com) may be overloaded and consequently it may take a long time to access them, so teachers with a slower connection lab should again try to make an Internet search for given places before class or find travel sites which load faster.
- Make sure students do not choose the same place or places to research, as otherwise Part Two of the lesson will not be that interesting.

Before you start

Try to find leaflets of holiday trips to some exotic destinations. These should have pictures, information about hotels, travel to the place, leisure time activities. It is important to have at least one leaflet per group of students, as they will constitute a model during the activity.

Procedure

1. Refer to the idea of adventure. Ask students whether they like adventurous trips and whether they would be ready to go on such a holiday trip. Students should think about a dream holiday destination and say why they would like to go to that particular place.
2. Review vocabulary connected with travel and holiday: give each pair of students a topic area, such as travelling, accommodation, spending free time, holiday dangers, attractions, and ask them to come up with as many words as they can. The list, together with native language equivalents, should be written in a word-processor.
3. The teacher collects lists from all students, puts them together and uploads on a class website (by saving a word-processor document as .html file) or prints out a complete list for each pair of students. The whole class should go through these expressions to check that they understand them.
4. The teacher should distribute holiday leaflets and ask students to read them carefully. The whole class ought to come up with the most important pieces of information included in the leaflets: photos, descriptions of hotels, way of travelling to the place, leisure time activities, price, contact information, etc. These headings should be written up on the blackboard so that students could see them during the subsequent part of the lesson.
5. The teacher asks pairs of students to decide on one dream holiday destination, search the Web for pictures and information on it to produce a holiday brochure in a word-processor. Students should choose a certain place, go to a search engine, type in a word, browse through results, extract relevant pieces of information. The teacher should control and help students if they are lost. A good idea here would be to ask students to make a design of the leaflet, and if there are as many computers as students, one person from a pair could search the Web for information while the other could be working in a word-processor on the physical layout of the leaflet.
6. Once students have the information required, they create a holiday brochure, describing a dream weekend in a marvellous holiday destination, planning the accommodation, flights, evening entertainment. It is advisable to incorporate pictures of the places, as well as use colours for background and fonts to make the leaflet more appealing.

7. It is extremely important that students should include links to websites relating to their destination on the leaflet, as this is how others will be able to do that trip in the next class.
8. If the class runs short of time, students could work on the word-processing of the leaflet at home or in a self-access school lab.

PART TWO

Objectives

- To practise reading skills
- To develop speaking skills - talking about advantages and disadvantages of a chosen holiday trip
- To learn how to write an informal letter
- To write and send a letter to a keypal

Time: two/three 45-minute periods

Resources used

Computers, Internet websites, word-processor, email programme

Possible problems

The letters written in Stage 5 may take up a lot of space if students insert too many pictures. Consequently, it may take long to send them and receive by email. Thus, the teacher should make sure students do not insert more than one-two images to their letters.

Before you start

- Collect all holiday brochures students made in Part One and upload them to a class website. When doing that, make sure that each leaflet does not take more than one screen in order to prevent scrolling up and down the page, so manipulate with picture size and font size.
- Make sure students have email accounts and know how to use them.

Procedure

1. Point students to the class website with holiday brochures they created. Ask them to read all in pairs and decide on one destination. Then ask some students which holiday they have chosen and why.
2. Allow students to go on a chosen holiday, that is follow the links included in the brochures, browse through websites given, explore the place of their choice. They should find out the information needed to describe the holiday to a friend in a letter.
3. Draw students' attention to a sample letter to a friend. Remind them what to write in each paragraph, how they should open and close the letter, what linking words they should use to make their letter coherent.
4. Now ask students to come up with the questions about holidays they feel can be useful in their letters. Students should answer these questions with the information from their trip to make a basis for writing.
5. Now students should work in pairs or individually and write a letter to a friend in a word-processor. The letter should have a proper layout. Students can insert some pictures from the Web to illustrate their writing. Remind students to make use of Web dictionaries, both bilingual and monolingual, as well as of the spell-checking feature of the word-processor. Make sure they save their letters to disc.
6. Once the letters are written, students should log into their email accounts, attach a letter they wrote in a word-processor to an email message and send it to all other students in the class as well as the teacher. Remind them to give the subject of the message (e.g., a letter to a friend), as well as a short description of what can be found in the attachment (virus protection measures, opening only those attachments which you expect and you know are safe).
7. Students should open the attachments, read the letters, choose one and write a reply to it, commenting on the holiday described and describing their own trip.