

Web Quest Subject: Tradition

Web Quest Title: The Crazy Traditions of Europe!

Key competences: cultural awareness and expression; digital competence; social and civic competence; teamwork; critical thinking; creativity; communication.

Key words: European culture; cultural traditions; cultural diversity; online research; teamwork.

Introduction

Europe is often referred to as ‘the old continent’ because it has a rich history and many ancient traditions. Some of these traditions and customs can be considered quite odd to outsiders, but having these traditions is what makes Europe so rich in cultural diversity. You could travel from one side of Europe to the other and meet completely unique traditions that have been carried down through generations at every stop along your journey. The aim of this Web Quest is to introduce you to some of these crazy traditions and to spark your interest in travelling to visit them!



Task

You and your friends have decided to take a trip together in Europe, but you want to challenge yourself a little and experience something that is very different from your own culture and background. Surely you can find something suitable in this culturally diverse continent!

You and your friends want to experience something you have never experienced before, try new food, see new things, learn more about a completely new culture. But how can you find a country to visit that offers something completely new, when compared to life in your own country? What is it that sets countries apart? For sure, weather is one consideration, but to better understand a different European culture, you need to appreciate their cultural traditions. To help you to decide where you will visit, you are given the task of researching online for curious traditions or customs from across the European continent. You will then share ideas with your friends and together you will choose a place to visit. Will it be Polterabend in Germany that sparks your interest? Or Witch’s night in Czech Republic or La Tomatina in Spain? Determining this will help you to find your destination!



Note for Facilitator:

In beginning this Web Quest, we would recommend that learners work in groups of 3-4. The aim is the learners will complete research tasks on their own, and when they have selected 1-2 traditions that they would like to visit, they then informally present these traditions to their group members and together the group can decide which one they would like to visit. As such, the role of the facilitator is to ask each group, at the end of this process, which tradition they have chosen to visit and why. Then all groups can share which tradition they will visit with the other groups in the class and the facilitator can lead a group discussion and reflection on the richness of Europe's cultural diversity.

Process:

Step 1: What is a tradition?

The first step is to begin with a definition of what a tradition is. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a tradition is described as: "the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction." You can find further definitions of the term 'tradition', at these links:

- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tradition>
- <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/tradition>
- <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tradition>

Step 2: Why is tradition important?

We all participate in certain traditions – even if we don't take part in festivals or events that are traditional to our culture, we have personal traditions that we enjoy with our families and friends, but why is it important that we do this? And why is it even more important that we continue to practice our traditions across the continent of Europe?

The following links may help you to answer some of these questions and to appreciate why it is important to uphold our traditions:



- <https://www.franksonnenbergonline.com/blog/7-reasons-why-traditions-are-so-important/>
- <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/girl-without-friend-group>
- <https://medium.com/asoulforeurope/tradition-identity-and-future-basic-issues-concerning-a-european-cultural-policy-5dac0aa66d48>
- <https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-sociologie-1-2008-5-page-153.htm>

Step 3: Understanding the Strange Traditions of Europe

Before you begin to conduct research online, we will give you a short summary of some of the strange traditions that we celebrate in Europe:



- La Tomatina (Spain). The last Wednesday of August, in Buñol in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento, the traditional "Tomatina" takes place, which consists of a battle of tomatoes (150 tons of them) among festival attendees, which as of 2013 allows a maximum of 22,000 people.
- Blackening (Scotland) at weddings, when a couple is going to get married, the bride or the couple is bathed in tea and then they throw eggs, sweets and whatever sticky food they find, and then walk them all over the village. This activity is known as Blackening and is said to prepare the heart of the bride to face all the problems that may come later with the marriage.
- In a small British town called Coope's Hill they celebrate the traditional cheese race every year. It is very simple, from a very steep slope fall a cheese rolling obviously with circular shape, like almost all cheeses, and behind dozens of boys and girls begin to go after him at a speed impossible to control by the human body, so much that they fly practically.
- «Whipping» women (Czech Republic). It is not about gender-based violence, but rather a rare habit of tapping the female buttocks with a pomlázka, a braided willow branch. It is a practice where it is believed that this increases the fertility of women during Easter Monday.
- Dead good fun (Spain): During this festival in rural Galicia, devout Spaniards who have survived a near-death experience in the preceding year, whether illness or accident, are paraded in coffins through streets to give thanks to God and Santa Marta, the event's patron, for being alive. The coffins are followed by relatives and friends dressed in black, in a procession that replicates a Spanish funeral.



These are just some of the traditions that you can experience in Europe, but you can conduct online research to find more examples! The following links might be useful to support your research:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2018/jun/02/20-great-traditional-festivals-europe-france-spain-greece-sweden>
- <https://europeisnotdead.com/european-weird-traditions/>
- <https://esn.org/blog/7-weird-customs-across-europe-you-may-have-never-heard-about>

Step 4: Europe's Cultural Traditions in Depth

From reviewing all of the links in the previous step, you should have a better understanding of some of the cultural traditions that are still practiced in Europe today. You should have a list of 3-4 traditions that you are interested in researching more about.



With your list in hand, it is time that you complete some online research into these traditions on your own. Remember that you will present your chosen tradition to your group of friends at the end of this Web Quest, so when you are conducting your online research, it is important that you address the following questions:

- Where is the tradition practiced?
- How did the tradition originate? How did it come about?
- Why is this tradition significantly important to the people who practice it?
- Why do you want to go there?

Step 5: Are all Traditions Good Traditions?

Once you have answered these questions, you should be ready to choose the top 1-2 traditions that you would like to visit, but there is one final check to complete first. Some of the traditions in Europe are coming under question by modern society – regarding if they are safe for people to participate in, if they represent cruelty to animals, or if they are racist or derogatory to different social groups. Before you decide which tradition, you would like to



visit with your friends, dig a little deeper to make sure that the tradition you have chosen is one that you are happy to participate in and support.

The following links might be helpful to support you to complete this check:

- <https://www.toptenz.net/top-10-dangerous-traditions.php>
- <https://greenglobaltravel.com/harmful-traditions-cultural-practices/>
- <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/12/black-pete-christmas-zwarte-piet-dutch/>
- <http://listverse.com/2014/06/21/10-bizarre-traditions-that-prove-europe-secretly-hates-animals/>

Step 6: Group Discussion to Share your Ideas

At this point, it is time for you to meet with your group to discuss which traditions you are interested in visiting. If this is your group's first group discussion, it may be worthwhile to review these links first:

- <http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/group-discussion-plan/>
- <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/tips-for-successful-group-discussion.htm>

In a group discussion, it is important that all parties are respected and heard and that they are given enough time to express their opinions freely, without being judged, interrupted or ridiculed for their views.

When you are participating in this discussion, ensure that the group takes its time and does not rush through. Allow each group member enough time to explain:

1. Which tradition they chose and why?
2. What other traditions did they choose to research and why didn't they choose them?
3. Two positive and two negative aspects about traditions in Europe that they learned.



When all group members have had their turn to speak, it is time to vote within your group on which tradition you will all visit together. This may take several rounds and may require you to practice your negotiation skills if you want your tradition to win!

For tips on how to negotiate with your peers, visit these links for some top tips:

- <https://lifehacker.com/five-tips-to-negotiate-better-with-just-about-anyone-493106085>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140318020938-1468172-top-10-tips-when-negotiating>

Step 7: Decision Time!

As the final step in this activity, you and your group will share with other groups in your class the tradition you have chosen and where you will take your holiday in Europe this year! When

you have shared the event you will visit, you should also mention why you chose this event, was it difficult to choose just one event and what are you looking forward to most?

Once all groups have presented their choice, you can share a short group discussion to reflect on the rich traditions from across Europe that you have learned about through this activity!

Learning outcomes

Knowledge	skills	Attitudes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factual knowledge to define tradition. - Theoretical knowledge about why traditions are important in Europe. - Basic knowledge about diverse traditions in Europe. - Factual knowledge about the good and bad points of some European traditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practice teamwork skills to complete the project. - Use organisational skills to complete the project at hand. - Apply negotiation skills to choose one tradition from the group. - Evaluate information sourced online for accuracy. - Present different traditions to group members. - Apply research skills to look for information about European traditions. - Apply critical thinking to identify good and bad traditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of the cultural diversity in Europe - Appreciation of European traditions - Respect for the different European traditions

Conclusion

Customs and traditions are what give countries their identity and set them apart from others. Traditions can dictate social norms and influence what is considered "normal" in certain places. At first some of the traditions explored in this Web Quest might seem strange to you, but you should also appreciate that to others, some actions that you carry out in your country may be viewed very strangely in another place.



It is curious to see the differences between the traditions of other European countries and your own. By viewing European countries through the eyes of their traditions, you get a unique insight into their culture, their beliefs, and the role of family, community and/or religion in these traditions also helps you to appreciate the values that are celebrated in different European countries. Understanding each other through the lens of our traditions allows the space for successful cultural integration between European citizens.

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