



Practice Exam - Culture and Traditions

Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511 | Reading practice paper

Exercise 1

Read the article about a community lantern evening then answer the questions.

Lanterns by the lake

A town has held a lantern evening by its lake for more than thirty years. The event began when a small arts group wanted to mark the end of winter with a quiet outdoor gathering. Today it attracts hundreds of people, but organisers still try to keep the original atmosphere. There is no stage, loud music or fireworks. Instead, families walk slowly around the lake carrying paper lanterns they have made during workshops. Visitors are asked to keep to the path because lantern wire and paper can be damaged easily if people push through the crowd.

The workshops are held in schools, libraries and the community hall during the week before the event. Volunteers teach people how to bend thin sticks into simple shapes and cover them with paper. Younger children are given ready-made frames because the sticks can be difficult to handle. Battery lights are used instead of candles, which makes the lanterns safer and easier to carry in windy weather.

Each year has a theme connected to the town. One year, the lanterns showed local birds; another year, they represented boats that used to bring goods across the lake. The theme helps people learn about local history without turning the evening into a formal lesson. Organisers say the best lanterns are not always the neatest. They like designs that show a personal connection to the place.

The event has had to change. When crowds became larger, the path around the lake was divided into one-way sections to prevent pushing. Volunteers now stand at narrow points with small lights and radios. Food stalls are placed away from the darkest part of the route, so people do not stop where others need to keep moving.

Many residents see the lantern evening as a tradition, although it is not ancient. It has become meaningful because people repeat it together and add new details each year. For newcomers, it is also a gentle introduction to the town. They can join without knowing all the history, and by the end of the walk, they have shared something with their neighbours. After the event, volunteers collect broken lantern frames and separate reusable sticks from torn paper.

The organisers ask families to write names on the lantern frames before the event begins. This simple rule prevents confusion at the end of the evening, when many lanterns look similar in the dark.

Exercise 1 questions

Answer the questions using information from the article. Write short answers.

1 Where is the lantern evening held? [1]

2 Which season was the original event designed to mark the end of? [1]

3 What do families carry around the lake? [1]

4 Where are workshops held apart from schools and libraries? [1]

5 Why are younger children given ready-made frames? [1]

6 Give three safety measures at the lantern evening. [3]

Exercise 2

Read the article about four cultural activities (A-D). Then answer Questions 9(a)-9(i).

A Family language morning

A library invites families to teach simple greetings in languages spoken at home. The morning is informal, so nobody has to give a speech. Children make small cards with words and drawings. The organiser checks spelling with families first because some languages use different scripts or several accepted spellings. Families may also record the pronunciation on a tablet, so visitors can hear the greetings as well as read them. Families can record pronunciation as well as writing the greeting.

B Festival costume display

A museum displays costumes worn at local celebrations. Visitors can touch fabric samples, but not the original clothing because some pieces are fragile. Labels explain when each costume is worn and who usually prepares it. The display avoids ranking traditions as old or new; it focuses on how people use them today. Curators include recent photographs beside older objects to show that the clothing is still part of community life. Visitors are encouraged to compare materials, colours and the occasions when outfits are worn. Recent photographs show that the clothing is still used today.

C Traditional games afternoon

A youth group runs an afternoon of games from different countries. Each game has a short instruction card and a volunteer who demonstrates the first round. The activity works well when rules are simplified at the beginning. More complex versions are introduced only if players want a challenge. The volunteer watches the first round carefully because players sometimes apply familiar rules from a different game. A pause after the first round gives players time to ask questions. A pause after the first round lets players ask about confusing rules.

D Shared celebration calendar

A school creates a calendar showing important celebrations for students and staff. The calendar helps teachers avoid planning major tests on dates when many students may be absent or tired. It also includes quiet reflection days, not only colourful festivals, because some traditions are private or serious. Students can add a short note explaining whether a celebration affects food, attendance or homework deadlines. The calendar includes quiet reflection days, not only colourful festivals.

The cultural activities avoid treating traditions as museum objects. They show how languages, clothes, games and calendars are still used by families, schools and communities in ordinary life.

Exercise 2 questions

For each statement, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on the line. Each letter may be used more than once.

No.	Which cultural activity...	A-D
9(a)	helps teachers plan assessment dates more sensitively
9(b)	allows visitors to touch examples but not original items
9(c)	uses demonstrations before people play
9(d)	needs checking because words may be written in different ways
9(e)	includes serious traditions as well as festivals
9(f)	does not ask participants to make formal presentations
9(g)	introduces harder rules only later
9(h)	explains who prepares clothing for celebrations
9(i)	uses cards made by children

Exercise 3

Read the article about preparing a cultural food evening then complete the notes.

Sharing food respectfully

A cultural food evening can help people learn about each other, but it needs careful planning. Organisers should avoid treating food as entertainment only. Families are invited to share the story behind a dish if they want to, but they are not expected to represent a whole country or culture. This avoids putting pressure on one person to explain everything.

Food safety rules must be clear. Each dish needs a label with ingredients, allergy information and whether it contains meat. Food should arrive at the correct temperature, and dishes that need to stay hot should be served quickly. Organisers also provide serving spoons so people do not use the same spoon for different dishes.

The room layout matters. Large tables can create long queues, so some events use several smaller stations. Drinks are placed away from the food tables to reduce crowding. A quiet seating area is useful for older visitors or young children who may find a busy hall tiring. Organisers also ask contributors how they want the dish name written, because translations can change the meaning or tone.

A successful evening includes listening as well as eating. Short introductions can explain where recipes came from, but they should not become long speeches. Organisers may display maps, family photographs or recipe cards beside dishes. These details help visitors understand that food is connected to memory, migration and celebration, not just taste. Recipe cards are collected after the evening and shared online only when families give permission. Organisers also check whether a recipe has been adapted, so visitors do not assume there is only one correct version.

Organisers ask contributors to write the story of a dish only if they want to. This keeps the evening friendly and avoids making families feel that they must explain private traditions to everyone.

The organisers also prepare a quiet table for people who prefer to taste food without speaking in front of a group. This keeps the event welcoming for shy visitors.

After the event, recipe cards are returned to families or stored with permission. This is important because some dishes may belong to family traditions that should not be copied or displayed without agreement.

Exercise 3 questions

Complete the notes using information from the article. Write short words or phrases.

Notes	Write short answers
10 Information needed on food labels	- - -
11 Ways to make the evening comfortable and respectful	- - - -

Exercise 4

Read the article about learning a traditional dance then answer the questions.

Steps I did not understand

My friend invited me to a traditional dance practice before a community celebration. I said yes because I like music, but I assumed the dance would be easy if I copied the people beside me. During the first practice, I was wrong almost immediately. The steps were simple individually, but they changed direction in ways I did not expect.

At first, I felt embarrassed. Everyone else seemed to know when to turn, clap or pause. The teacher noticed and told me that the dance was learned through repetition, not explanation. She said many people had practised it since childhood, so their confidence came from memory rather than natural talent. That made me feel less foolish.

The hardest part was understanding why some movements mattered. I thought a pause was just a pause, but my friend explained that it gave the next pair space to move forward. A turn helped the group change shape, and a clap signalled the end of one pattern. The dance was not only about individual steps; it was about keeping the group connected.

By the celebration, I could follow most of the dance, although I still watched others carefully. I made mistakes, but people smiled and adjusted around me. That surprised me. I had expected tradition to mean doing everything perfectly, but here it also meant helping new people join without stopping the dance. The writer had expected the teacher to correct every mistake, but the group seemed to learn through watching each other.

I left with more respect for traditions that look simple from the outside. They often contain rules that regular participants no longer need to explain. Learning the dance taught me that joining a tradition is not the same as performing it flawlessly. It is also about paying attention, accepting help and understanding your place in a group. That changed the writer's view of tradition from something fixed and distant to something people keep alive by practising together.

At the final practice, I stopped trying to look impressive and watched the older dancers' feet. The dance made more sense when I treated it as a pattern people shared, not a performance about me.

Exercise 4 questions

For each question, choose the correct answer, A, B or C.

12 Why did the writer expect the dance to be easy? [1]

- A He thought he could copy other people.
- B He had learned it as a child.
- C The teacher said there were no rules.

13 What helped the writer feel less foolish? [1]

- A being told the steps did not matter
- B learning that others had practised for years
- C watching a video alone

14 What did the writer realise about the pause? [1]

- A It gave dancers time to rest.
- B It showed the music had stopped.
- C It helped the next pair move forward.

15 What surprised the writer during the celebration? [1]

- A Nobody noticed the music.
- B The dance was cancelled.
- C People helped him continue after mistakes.

16 What does the writer say about traditions from the outside? [1]

- A They are always easy to explain.
- B They may contain hidden rules.
- C They should never change.

17 What is the writer's main lesson? [1]

- A Joining a tradition involves attention and help.
- B Traditions require perfect performance.
- C Copying others is never useful.

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Exercise 1

1. by the lake
2. winter
3. paper lanterns
4. the community hall
5. the sticks can be difficult to handle
6. battery lights are used instead of candles; the path around the lake was divided into one-way sections; food stalls are placed away from the darkest part of the route

Exercise 2

9(a) D; 9(b) B; 9(c) C; 9(d) A; 9(e) D; 9(f) A; 9(g) C; 9(h) B; 9(i) A

Exercise 3

10 Information needed on food labels

- ingredients
- allergy information
- whether it contains meat

11 Ways to make the evening comfortable and respectful

- several smaller stations
- drinks placed away from the food tables
- quiet seating area
- short introductions

Exercise 4

12 A; 13 B; 14 C; 15 C; 16 B; 17 A

- 12 A - He assumed he could copy people beside him.
- 13 B - The teacher said confidence came from repeated practice.
- 14 C - His friend explained its group purpose.
- 15 C - People smiled and adjusted around him.
- 16 B - He says simple-looking traditions contain rules.
- 17 A - He says it is about paying attention and accepting help.