



Culture and Traditions

Short-answer questions: cheese rolling at Cooper's Hill | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. Why do people keep old traditions alive?
2. Would you race down a very steep hill?
3. Can dangerous events still be part of culture?
4. What makes a local tradition famous?

Exercise 1 at a glance

Read one factual text. Answers are in the text. Copy exact words and check the question carefully before choosing your answer.

2. Read for overall understanding

Read the text. Why is cheese rolling both famous and controversial?

Cheese Rolling at Cooper's Hill

Cooper's Hill Cheese-Rolling is one of Britain's strangest traditions. It takes place near Brockworth in Gloucestershire. Competitors chase a round Double Gloucester cheese down a very steep hill, and the first person to reach the bottom is the winner. In reality, the cheese moves so quickly that most competitors are racing the hill rather than the cheese.

The event is often described as old, local and chaotic. Its exact origins are uncertain, but it has become strongly connected with the area. The race usually takes place on the Spring Bank Holiday, and people travel from different parts of Britain and other countries to watch or take part.

The rules sound simple, but the event is dangerous. Cooper's Hill is steep and uneven, so competitors often lose balance almost immediately. Many slide, roll or tumble towards the bottom. Injuries can happen, and safety concerns have led to arguments about whether the event should continue in its traditional form.

Supporters argue that cheese rolling is part of local identity. It is unusual, dramatic and unlike a carefully controlled modern sports event. For some people, this is exactly the point. The race looks wild because it has not been turned into a polished commercial show.

The event also attracts media attention. Photographs and videos of competitors falling down the hill are shared around the world. This attention can bring visitors to the area, but it can also create problems if too many people arrive or if spectators ignore safety advice.

Cheese rolling shows how traditions can be both loved and questioned. The race is memorable because it is risky, funny and deeply local. At the same time, the danger that makes it exciting is also the reason some people worry about it.

The cheese itself is part of the tradition. Double Gloucester is a local cheese, so the object being chased is not random. It links the event to Gloucestershire's food culture as well as to sport and spectacle. Even people who know little about the county may recognise the image of a round cheese racing down a green hill.

Because the race is so unpredictable, it is difficult to make it completely safe without changing its character. Barriers, medical help and crowd control can reduce some risks, but the main challenge remains the hill itself. This is why cheese rolling raises a wider question about how far a community should go to preserve a dangerous tradition.

3. Strategy focus

Notice risk and attraction

A text may explain why something is popular and why it is risky. Check which side the question asks about.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

Answer the questions using words from the text.

1. Which cheese do competitors chase? [1]

2. Where does the event take place? [1]

3. When does the race usually take place? [1]

4. Why do competitors often lose balance quickly? [1]

5. What can media attention bring to the area? [1]

6. According to the text, what are three reasons people may want the tradition to continue? [3]

5. Vocabulary notebook

Underline five useful words or phrases. Check their meaning, then record them in your vocabulary notebook.

6. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Should risky traditions be banned?
2. Summary: Summarise cheese rolling in about 50 words.
3. Creative task: Write safety advice for spectators.
4. Research: Find one unusual tradition from another country.

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2. Read for overall understanding

Suggested answer: It is famous because it is an old and unusual local tradition, but controversial because competitors race down a very steep hill and injuries can happen.

4. Exam-style short-answer questions

1. Double Gloucester cheese
2. near Brockworth in Gloucestershire
3. the Spring Bank Holiday
4. Cooper's Hill is steep and uneven
5. visitors
6. Any three from: part of local identity; unusual; dramatic; unlike a controlled modern sports event; not turned into a polished commercial show; memorable / deeply local.

Notes for checking

1. Answers should be short and clearly based on the text.
2. Accept bracketed or optional wording if the meaning is clear.
3. For the final question, learners need three separate details.