

Lesson Plan: Intercultural Holiday Party Planning

by [Sarah Sahr](#)

Being the culturally sensitive teachers we are, it's so hard to find a proper holiday lesson plan. Making sure we cover all the holidays all year long can be really challenging. This activity circumvents this issue by letting groups choose their own holiday to celebrate. And, for the sake of neutrality, this lesson plan is an exercise in cultural awareness—so grading is optional.

Materials: For the first day, the holiday handout, printouts of holiday photos, and tape. After that, students are responsible for their own materials.
Audience: If manipulated in the correct fashion, this activity can be formatted to meet the needs of all age and proficiency levels.
Objective: Students will be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• plan a holiday party with an assigned group of students.• present their holiday activities to the class.• celebrate their holiday with all classmates.
Outcome: Students will turn in/present the information on their holiday worksheet.
Duration: 2–4 class periods: The first day is to start the planning process. Some planning may take place outside of class. The other days are for each group to present their holiday to the class and, if you have the time and resources, for celebrating all the holidays!

Lesson Preparation

If possible, print some pictures of holidays around the world based on your students' demographics. (If you don't have access to a printer, you can try drawing representations of the holidays.) I have yet to find an open source clip art web page that offers selections from all the holidays I know. It seems best to search the web for each holiday separately.

Once you have about a dozen holidays to choose from (make sure to represent all regions of the world), label each photo with a number and tape the photos around the room. If you have beginner students, you might want to put a Holiday Word Bank on the board, just to help them out. Leave room at one side of the board to make a list of other holidays students might know of that aren't represented around the room.

Introduction (10 minutes)

As students arrive in class, hand them a piece of paper numbered with as many pictures as you have posted (10 photos means you will number the paper from 1 to 10), and ask them to do a "gallery walk." Students will walk about the room, look at each photo, and write down what holiday they think the photo might represent.

After about 6 minutes, ask students what holidays they see. Which one might be their favorite? Which holidays are missing? If they were to plan a party, which holiday would be the easiest one to plan for? Which the hardest? Questions should vary based on level of language proficiencies in your class. As you ask questions, start making a list of holidays on the board. Allow students

to share their knowledge of a holiday if they would like. Even though the introduction is only 10 minutes, it can go longer, as long as students are producing quality conversation.

Information (15 minutes)

With the help of your class, the list of holidays will become the planning committees for specific holiday celebrations. For example: the እንቁጣጣሽ (English spelling *Enkutatash*, known as Ethiopian New Year) students will plan the “New Year’s Day” party; the *Diwali* (known as the Festival of Lights in India) students will plan a 5-day festival.

Once the list is complete, divide the class into groups. Depending on size, groups may vary. This might be a great opportunity for students to self-select groups. The only concern when deciding on groups may be to group people around a holiday they know. It might be challenging for your students to plan Татьянанин день (English spelling *Talyana Day*) celebration if they haven’t lived in Russia. However, for more advanced students, you can turn this into a research project, and have them learn about holidays they’re unfamiliar with.

Each group is responsible for planning their particular holiday celebration. The Holiday Worksheet will help assign official responsibilities for the presentation. Encourage students to bring in physical examples pertaining to food, decorations, games, music, costume, and such. If you have the capacity to do so, have students solicit help from the community. Students will want to plan a 20-minute presentation around their holiday.

Planning (20 minutes)

Give students the rest of class time to plan with their groups. It might be best if the actual presentations take place a few weeks after this initial class. That way, students can gather more information and, possibly, props. If needed, you can set up a time to meet with each planning committee/group, after school, during lunch, etc., to help plan. Make sure you set a solid deadline for presentations and often remind students of that due date.

Presentations

Each member of the committee must help with planning and presenting their particular holiday to the class. (Remember, participants are able to convene an actual party as their presentation.) Depending on the proficiency level of the students, you may want to scaffold presentations in some way. For more advanced students, you may want to let students know they can present their holiday in any way they’d like. They might want to present a report, create a holiday simulation of some kind, or feed the class. Possibilities are endless! However, you’ll want to know what they are planning, just so you can prepare and make sure it is okay with the school. (If students are presenting Beltane, a Gaelic May Day festival, they probably won’t be allowed to have a bonfire in class. Yikes!)

Conversation

After each presentation, allow ample time for classroom discussion. First, let students talk in their groups to synthesize what they just learned. Then, open the floor to the class. As the teacher, you may want to lead the conversations. However, with more advanced students, the presenters can lead the discussions as well.

Evaluation

Each presentation should be looked at for its cultural sensitivity and creativity, and you may not want to grade them at all: This extended activity is for fun and cultural awareness.

You can find past *TESOL Connections* lesson plans and activities in the [TESOL Connections archives](#), or you can visit the [TESOL Resource Center](#). From there, search Keyword “Sahr” and you will find about 20 resources with my name on it.

Sarah Sahr works at TESOL and is currently pursuing her doctorate in education administration and policy at the George Washington University. Her professional career has taken her all over the world, most notably as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia and as a traveling school teacher/administrator with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. Sarah is also a certified ashtanga yoga instructor and has managed an eco-lodge in Chugchilan, Ecuador.