**Unit 1 Water Festivals**

Buddhist New Year starts at different times around the world. In Southeast Asia, it starts in mid-April. To celebrate, people have water festivals. But why water festivals?

In Buddhism, water is a way to make everything new again. When people pour water on things, they are cleaned and reborn. So water festivals help wash away bad things that happened in the past year. Then people are ready for the new year.

Songkran is the biggest water festival. It happens every year in Thailand from April 13th to 16th. There are huge water fights in the streets. People use water guns and buckets to playfully splash each other. Even elephants join in on the festival too! They use their trunks to spray water on people.

Water festivals are a fun way to celebrate Buddhist New Year. So next New Year’s Day, why not splash your friends with water? It will help them start the year fresh and clean!

**Unit 2 Who Threw the Tomato?**

Were you ever in a food fight before? Food fights are usually loud and messy. However, nothing is like La Tomatina. It is the biggest food fight in the world!

La Tomatina is a festival in Spain. It happens every August in a small town called Buñol. In the town square, 20,000 people gather and throw tomatoes at each other. The food fight lasts for about an hour. In that time, people throw around 240,000 tomatoes!

But how did this unique festival start? In 1945, a fight broke out during a parade. There was a vegetable stall with tomatoes nearby. People picked up the tomatoes and began throwing them at each other. It was a giant food fight. Since then, the town has continued the tradition each year.

Today, people come from all over the world to attend La Tomatina. They enjoy the messy, tomato-throwing fun. Do you want to join the world’s biggest food fight too?

**Unit 3 Olympic Symbols**

The Olympic Games are a world sports event. Athletes get together and share the Olympic spirit every four years. The Olympics have many symbols. Three main symbols are the Olympic flag, the mascot, and the flame.

The Olympic flag symbolizes the world. The five Olympic rings represent Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. Olympic athletes come from all over the world.

The Olympic mascot symbolizes the Olympic spirit. Each host city has its own mascot. It is usually an animal character. The mascot helps people get into the spirit of the Olympics. Misha the Bear is one of the most well-known mascots. She represented Moscow at the 1980 Olympics.

The Olympic flame symbolizes the start of the Olympics. The flame is lit during the opening ceremony and keeps burning until the end of the Games.

The next time you watch the Olympic Games, look for all the symbols. Remember that each one has a special meaning.

**Unit 4 Sportsmanship**

In sports, winning is important. But it is not everything. Sportsmanship is as important as winning.

What is sportsmanship? Sportsmanship is playing sports with good manners. It means showing respect to players, coaches, and referees. It means following the rules and never cheating. And sometimes, it even means caring about fair play more than winning.

The World Fair Play Trophy is an award for sportsmanship. Italian bobsledder Eugenio Monti is a famous winner of the World Fair Play Trophy. At the 1964 Winter Olympics, he helped two other bobsled teams. Monti lent one team a new bolt for their sled. He then helped another team. This time, he fixed their sled. Thanks to Monti’s amazing sportsmanship, both teams won gold medals.

In sports, it is always important to be faster and stronger. But it is also important to play fairer. Good sportsmanship makes sports special.

**Unit 5 Bird Architects**

Some birds are amazing architects. They design and build their nests in creative ways. Baya weavers and tailorbirds are two amazing bird architects.

Baya weavers live in Southeast Asia. They build hanging nests on tree branches. First, baya weavers collect long grass leaves. Then, with the grass leaves, they weave a rope down a tree branch. They continue weaving the grass leaves with their beak and claws. When their nest is finished, it looks like a round, hanging bag.

Tailorbirds live in Asia. They build pocket nests with tree leaves. First, tailorbirds wrap themselves inside a bunch of leaves. Then, they poke holes along the edges of the leaves. Mainly using cobwebs, they sew the leaves together. When their nest is finished, it looks like a cone-shaped pocket.

Baya weavers and tailorbirds are amazing architects. They are very creative with their nests. So the next time you are outside in nature, look for some amazing bird architecture!

**Unit 6 Smart Crows**

All birds are pretty smart. But crows are probably the smartest bird of them all. Crows can make tools, solve difficult problems, and even remember human faces!

Crows are excellent tool makers. They can make tools like hooks. To make hooks, they bend twigs. Then they use the hooks to catch bugs from tree trunks.

Crows are amazing problem solvers. They can use forces like gravity. To eat walnuts, they drop them from high up in the sky. Crack! The shells open and the crows can eat the walnuts.

Crows have fantastic memories. They can remember human faces. If people bother a group of crows, the crows will remember their faces. When the people return in the future, the crows will make angry sounds at them.

Crows are very smart in many other ways too. Some scientists say crows are smarter than a seven-year-old child. Do you believe them?

**Unit 7 Flash Mobs**

You are at the train station. Suddenly, everyone around you stops moving. They turn and look right at you. There is a noise. It is music. And now they are all dancing together at the same time. This is a flash mob.

For a flash mob, a group of people suddenly get together in a place. They sing, dance, or play music for a short time. Then they just go on their way. The group usually meets in a crowded place like a train station. They like to surprise people around them.

In January, 2009, there was a large flash mob in Liverpool, England. Over 400 people started dancing together. Their dance routine included hip-hop, disco, and ballroom dance moves. The video of the event is still very popular on the internet.

Next time you are at the train station, be ready. A flash mob may start at any moment!

**Unit 8 Billy the Ballet Dancer**

Billy takes a boxing class at the gym. But one day, he takes a ballet class instead. He secretly learns ballet with the girls. He worries people will not understand him. But he loves dancing.

Billy’s ballet teacher thinks he is talented. She wants him to go to a special ballet school. She pushes Billy to be brave. When he tells his family, they are not happy. But they eventually support him. Now Billy has to dance in front of the ballet school teachers. Can he do it?

This is the movie *Billy Elliot* from 2000. It takes place in Northern England in the 1980s. The movie was very popular worldwide. People loved the dancing scenes. But they loved the movie’s message more. *Billy Elliot* tells viewers to follow their hearts. Do not worry about what other people think. If you love to dance, go dance!

**Unit 9 School Uniforms**

Police officers wear uniforms. Nurses wear uniforms. What about students? Some students like wearing school uniforms and others do not. There are both good and bad points of school uniforms.

What are the good points of school uniforms? First, school uniforms help school unity. They make students feel they belong to the same school community. Second, school uniforms help students study better. They give students more time to focus on studying instead of choosing their school clothes.

What are the bad points of school uniforms? First, school uniforms stop self-expression. They do not let students show their personalities. Second, school uniforms can be uncomfortable for some students. There are students who need special clothing fits or sizes. Third, school uniforms can be expensive. Parents need to buy their children both everyday clothes and uniforms.

School uniforms have both good and bad points. What do you think? Should students wear school uniforms?

**Unit 10 Basketball Uniforms**

Basketball started in America in 1891. The first basketball uniforms were wool. They had tight T-shirts and long, tight pants. Around the 1920s, the T-shirts got looser. Then they lost their sleeves and became vests. Also, the pants became shorts. But the uniforms were still wool and too warm.

In the 1940s and 1950s, players said goodbye to their wool uniforms. The new uniforms used new fabrics: polyester and nylon. They were lighter and cooler than wool. The shorts also got shorter and tighter.

Then, in the 1980s, Michael Jordan made big changes to the uniform. This famous basketball player wanted long, loose shorts. From then on, uniforms became more comfortable and stylish. Now people wear these uniforms to play basketball. They also wear them to be stylish. Look around. Is anyone wearing a basketball uniform? They are comfortable, so try one out!

**Unit 11 QR Codes**

What is the black-and-white square in the picture? It is a QR code. Where else do you see QR codes? Look around. They are everywhere. You can pick up almost any product in a store, and you will see a QR code.

What is a QR code? QR code means “Quick Response” code. Scan a QR code with your smartphone, and it quickly takes you to a website or application.

Before QR codes, there were barcodes. Barcodes have only vertical lines to hold information. But QR codes have both horizontal and vertical lines. That means QR codes can hold a lot more information than barcodes.

QR codes are becoming more popular because they are easy to use. You do not have to type in a full web address anymore. You just scan a code to see a video or get any information you need. Isn’t it exciting to scan a code and see what pops up?

**Unit 12 Bluetooth**

Cables connect electronic devices. They connect headsets to smartphones. They connect a mouse, keyboard, and printer to a computer. So there are many cables. And, sometimes, we cannot find the right one to use. Fortunately, there is a solution. It is called Bluetooth.

Bluetooth is an amazing technology. It makes electronic devices wireless. We do not need cables anymore. Bluetooth uses special radio waves to connect two devices. However, we must keep them near each other. Bluetooth only works over short distances.

Bluetooth was named after the Danish king, Harald Bluetooth. He brought Danish tribes together into one kingdom around 1,000 years ago. The Bluetooth logo comes from the king’s name, Harold Bluetooth. It is the combination of the initials H and B.

Nowadays, many products use Bluetooth. There are smart toothbrushes. They let us know our brushing time. And smart wallets let us know where our wallets are. No cables are needed!

**Unit 13 Preserving Food**

You open the refrigerator and look for a snack. Then you wonder – how did people keep food before refrigerators? It was not long ago that people started using refrigerators.

So how did people keep their food for a long time? They preserved it. And we still preserve food today.

Salting is a popular way to preserve food. Germs like moisture, but salt helps keep food dry. Before refrigerators, ships at sea often had barrels of salted meat. Ships traveled for months, so salted meat was a common food.

Germs like moisture, but they do not like the acid in vinegar. Food preserved in vinegar is “pickled.” Before refrigerators, people often pickled fruits, vegetables, eggs, meat, and fish. Even today, you can see pickled foods in jars at the store.

Since germs like moisture, people dry food too. Before refrigerators, people often dried food using the sun and wind. Today, drying is still a popular way to preserve foods like fruit and meat.

**Unit 14 Smelly, but Super!**

Do you like cheese or yogurt? How about kimchi or apple cider? These foods have one thing in common: they are fermented. Germs in the air help ferment foods. Sometimes fermented foods can be smelly or taste strange. But they are good for our health.

Why are fermented foods good for us? They are easy to digest and have lots of nutrients. Most importantly, they have good bacteria called “probiotics.”

Probiotics do amazing things in our bodies. They help us digest different foods and keep our gut healthy. They also fight bad bacteria and stop us from getting sick. They even create vitamins for our bodies such as vitamins K and B.

A healthy gut is needed for a healthy brain. The gut makes an important chemical for the brain. This chemical is called “serotonin.” Serotonin helps us feel happy.

Fermented foods are good for the body and mind. They are super foods!

**Unit 15 Jigsaw Earth**

There are hundreds of small earthquakes every day. Usually, you do not feel them. But some earthquakes can make buildings fall, destroy roads, or make giant waves.

Earth’s crust is like a jigsaw puzzle. It has many pieces called plates. The plates move slowly, but they are always moving – even now. They move because of the mantle.

The mantle is the hot rock below Earth’s crust. Sometimes, the heat in the mantle makes it move. Then that makes the plates move. The plates push or pull each other. As they slowly push or pull, they build up energy. When there is too much energy, the plates move a lot. This is an earthquake.

Most earthquakes happen at faults. Faults are where plates touch each other. There are many faults around the Pacific Ocean. This area’s nickname is the “Ring of Fire.” Why? It is famous for having many earthquakes and over 450 volcanoes.

**Unit 16 Beautiful and Strong**

Diamonds are beautiful. They are often used for jewelry. Diamonds are also very strong. So they are used for other things like tools.

People first found diamonds in India around 300 BC. But all diamonds are much older than that. Most diamonds are more than 1 billion years old. Diamonds formed deep inside Earth. They formed through intense heat and pressure. Then volcanoes brought them out.

Diamonds shine and sparkle. They can be colorless or pretty colors like blue and pink. In 1477, people started using diamonds for wedding rings. Nowadays, diamonds and wedding rings go hand in hand. Diamonds make rings more beautiful and they last forever.

Diamonds are also used in tools. Diamonds are very strong. They can cut very hard materials. So diamonds are used in tools that cut, sharpen, or grind. For example, some special drills and knives have diamond tips.

Diamonds are not just beautiful, they are super strong too!