

4

The United Kingdom as a diverse society

The proposed syllabus for this section is a 'menu' for ESOL learners working towards Access 3, Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2. It is not exhaustive. Below is a suggested list of topics which could be studied under this section.

The items in bold are those which have teachers' notes and learners' activities associated.

- Introduction to the communities of the UK
- National statistics and ethnicity profile of local community
- Contribution of refugees and immigrants to UK economy
- Languages and cultures in the local community (introduction to minority languages, religion, cultures) and other main languages and cultures in the UK
- **Festivals, holidays and celebrations**
- Famous refugees and asylum seekers
- The press and our diverse society
- Family patterns
- Sexual orientation
- **Body language and cross-cultural issues**

4

The United Kingdom as a diverse society

Sources of the material used in this section

- www.100greatblackbritons.com
- www.refugeecouncil.org.uk
- Home Office Statistics for UK: www.homeoffice.gov.uk
- *Working to Rebuild Lives*, Department for Work and Pensions: www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/emp-guide.pdf
- *A Credit to the Nation: A Study of Refugees in the United Kingdom*, Refugee Council

Sources of other useful material

- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council Human Resources Department. Acknowledgement to Shap Working Party on Religions in Education.

Available from: www.bradford.gov.uk
Interfaith Education Centre – Tel: 01274 731674

- *Festivals and Celebrations Pack*, ESOL Pathfinder Project, Liverpool Community College.

Available from: Liverpool Community College
Tel: 0151 252 1515; e-mail: esther.cosslett@liv-coll.ac.uk

- Three texts (with matching pictures) about neighbours, on the topic of cultural differences.

This is part of the ESOL *Skills for Life* Learner Materials which range from Entry 1 to Level 2, and which are designed to support ESOL teaching and learning in a wide range of contexts. They are mapped to the new standards and the ESOL core curriculum.

Available from: DfES Publications
Tel: 0845 60 222 60; e-mail: dfes@prolog.uk.com
Ref: SfL LM/EE2

Useful Websites

| Website | Web address | Description |
|---|--|---|
| 19 Princelet Street | www.19princeletstreet.org.uk | This site is about 19 Princelet Street in Spitalfields, London. |
| 100 Great Black Britons | www.100greatblackbritons.com | Site has information on great black Britons, past and present. |
| BBC | www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/routesofenglish | Great site with lots of audio clips of different UK accents – talking posh; humour and regional accents too. |
| British Library – Collect Britain | www.collectbritain.co.uk | Rich resource containing virtual exhibition, regional history and multi-faith collections. |
| | www.collectbritain.co.uk/collections/dialects | Audio clips of various regional accents. |
| Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) | www.cre.gov.uk | Site celebrating cultural diversity in the UK. |
| Direct Government | www.directgov.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/fs/en | Information on learning, health and well-being, employment, home, finances and more. |
| The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) | www.drc-gb.org | An organisation working towards the elimination of discrimination against disabled people. |
| | | Information on getting fair treatment at work, in education or the health service. |
| Independent Race and Refugee News Network | www.irr.org.uk | Sections on education, health, housing and government policy. Also information on the history of famous black and Asian citizens. A quiz. |
| International Interfaith Centre | www.interfaith-center.org | An organisation aiming to promote peace and build understanding between different religious groups. |
| Minorities of Europe | www.moe-online.com | Site about and for different minority communities and young people in Europe. |
| Moving Here | www.movinghere.org.uk | The biggest database of photos and other materials documenting migration to the UK over the last 200 years. |
| Refugee Council | www.refugeecouncil.org.uk | The Refugee Council is the largest refugee organisation in the UK providing advice and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. |
| Stonewall | www.stonewall.org.uk | Stonewall works to achieve legal equality and social justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. |

| Type of resource | Online or downloaded? | Level/adaptability |
|--|--|--|
| Description of the house and the many diverse peoples and cultures – Huguenots, Irish, Jews, Bengali and Somali – who shaped the area. | Online information. | Teachers' resource, E2+ (✘ Int 1) |
| Text and pictures . The media centre has various articles on black Britons. | Online resource. Tour of the house, news, press. | Teacher resource, E3 (✘ Int 1/Int 2) |
| Resource using sound , has audio archives. | Interactive online resource. | E1 (✘ Acc 3) |
| Famous people like Sue Arnold and Ravi Shankar choose their favourite manuscripts or religious art. | Online . | Teachers' resource |
| Text -based site. | Best to download and adapt for students. | E1+ (✘ Acc 3) |
| Rights for carers/disabled people. Also fairly simple text on the elderly, parents and disabled people. | Online assessments available. | E1+ (✘ Acc 3) |
| Videos , lesson plans, teacher resources, photos and worksheets. General disability awareness. Also links to Wales/Scotland sites. | Online videos for students to watch. First page offers the opportunity to change text size/listen to the text online . | Easy read pages available, perfect for E1+ (✘ Acc 3). Listening service also available |
| Primarily text , articles and information on race and refugees, housing issues, and so on: see >housing. Information on far right politics too. | Online interactive quiz – /quiz/index.html | E2/E3+ (✘ Acc 3 /Int 1/Int 2) |
| /lectures.htm – very complex dense text . Suitable only if adapted. | Videos of interviews available online . | Teachers' resource, E3+ (✘ Int 2) |
| Text and articles, photographs , movies and sound clips. | Online . | Teachers' resource |
| Not just photos , film clips and sound archives too. /games – link to Multi Mart, an interactive shopping game with ingredients and recipes from all over the world. | Online search for family history – /galleries/roots | E2/E3 (✘ Int 1/ Int 2) (online search) E1+ (✘ Acc 3) (Multi Mart) |
| Information for asylum seekers and refugees available on this Website in 12 different languages. Facts about asylum. | Downloadable support packs for refugee advisers in the regions, publications, reports, press releases. | Teachers' resource |
| Text based, quite high level. | /education_for_all – case studies to read and download , and opportunity to tell own stories online . | E2 (✘ Acc 3/ Int 1) |

All details were correct at time of publication.

4.1 Diversity now

| Entry 1 (☒ Acc 3) | Entry 2 (☒ Acc 3/Int 1) | Entry 3 (☒ Int 1/Int 2) |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Read and identify famous people's origins, jobs and so on. | Predict jobs and family origins. | Discuss people's roots and family origins. |

Suggested procedure (Entry 2)

(☒ Acc 3/Int 1)

- Divide the class into two groups, A and B, and have each group subdivide so they can work in pairs. Give sheet A to group A pairs, and sheet B to group B pairs. Explain that each group has some photos of some famous modern Britons – they should find out if their partner recognises any of the faces, and try to match/guess at the names below.
- Once pairs have had some time to guess, give out answers, but do not allow group A to hear group B's answers, or vice versa.
- Now explain that although all these people are British, they have family roots (*see language points) in other countries, and ask learners to guess which countries go with which people.
- Again, give out answers so that group A does not hear group B's answers and vice versa.
- Now make new pairs of students, one A plus one B, and ask them to share their knowledge and compare sheets. Ask them to find anything the people on the handouts have in common. (For example, Lenny Henry and Linford Christie both have Jamaican roots, Paul Boateng and Michael Portillo are both politicians.)

Differentiation

- For stronger learners, lengthen the texts to include more information, or use the additional biographies to create gap-fills.
- For more listening/writing practice, ask the mixed pairs to dictate and write each other's texts.
- For additional speaking/listening practice, ask learners to describe and draw each other's sets of pictures.

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- use the quiz to highlight the plant metaphor – roots* and branches of a family, family tree, and so on;
- use the mixed pairs exercise to practise question forms (for example: 'What does he/she do?'; 'What's his/her name?') (E1/2) (☒ Acc 3/Int 1);
- use the photographs as a basis for teaching descriptive language and facial features (any level);
- revise 'jobs' vocabulary (any);
- ask learners to write similar short texts about themselves.

Extension activities

- Ask learners to research one of the people and their family roots and give a presentation to the class.
- Ask learners to discuss their own family roots.
- Ask learners to discuss whether this diversity is typical of cities in their original countries.
- Ask learners to discuss their own local environments, for example where do people in their neighbourhood originate from?
- Relate the family roots of people in the quiz to British history, immigration, colonialism and so on.
- Find texts (written, audio or video) relating to some of these famous people to use for reading/listening skills practice.

Additional materials needed

- An example flashcard of another famous person might be useful to contextualise the activity.

Answers to the activities can be found on p. 319.

Diversity now

4.1

Sheet A

1



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2



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3



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4



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5



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6



© TopFoto

Oona King

She is a politician. She is a member of the Labour party.

Shami Ahmed

He is the millionaire founder of the Joe Bliggs clothing chain.

Mariella Frostrup

She is a journalist and television presenter.

Lenny Henry

He is a famous comedian and a comedy actor. He works in film, television and in the theatre.

Michael Portillo

He is a journalist and politician. He is a member of the Conservative party.

Vanessa Mae

She is a famous international violinist and made three albums as a child.

Jamaica
Hungary

Spain
Singapore

Pakistan
Norway

4.1 Diversity now

Sheet B

1



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2



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3



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4



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5



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6



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Meera Syal

She is a writer, filmmaker and comedy actor.

Baroness Scotland of Asthal

She is the first black female QC in the UK. She sits in the House of Lords and is also a judge.

Paul Boateng

He is a politician and became the first black Cabinet Minister in the UK.

David Baddiel

He is a stand-up comedian and comedy writer.

Tracy Emin

She is one of Britain's most successful artists. She won the Turner Prize in 2001.

Linford Christie

He is a famous runner and British team captain. He won the Olympic and World Cup 100 metres races.

India

Turkey

Germany

Jamaica

Dominica

Ghana

Diversity now

4.1

Mariella Frostrup was born on 12 November 1962 in Oslo, Norway and moved as a child to Kilmacanogue, a small village outside Dublin. Her Norwegian father was a journalist and her Scottish-born mother an artist. In 1977 Mariella left Ireland to move to London where she lives today.

Vanessa-Mae Vanakorn Nicholson was born on 27 October 1978 in Singapore. She is the daughter of a Chinese mother, Pamela Tan-Nicholson and a Thai father, Vorapong Vanakorn. Vanessa relocated to London after her parents split. After settling in London, her mother re-married a British lawyer.

Shami Ahmed was born in Pakistan in 1962 and moved to England when his father, Nizam Ahmed, an Aeronautical Engineer, was transferred from Pakistan to England. Ahmed became one of the richest young businessmen in the UK.

Michael Portillo was born in North London in 1953. His father, Luis, had come to the UK as a refugee at the end of the Spanish War and his mother, Cora, was brought up in Fife. His parents met in England.

Oona King was born on 22 October 1967 in Sheffield and brought up in Camden. Oona's father is Preston King, professor of political science, is an African-American from Georgia. Her mother, Hazel King, a teacher, is Jewish.

Lenworth George Henry was born in Dudley in the West Midlands on 29 August 1958. The son of Winnie and Winston Henry, he was one of seven children and the first of his family to be born in the UK after the family moved there from Jamaica in the 1950s.

Linford Christie was born in Saint Andrew, Jamaica on 2 April 1960. At the age of two, his parents immigrated to the UK. Linford stayed behind with his grandmother until his parents sent for him.

Tracey Emin was born in London in 1963 and grew up in Margate in her parents' hotel until the age of seven. Her father is Turkish.

David Baddiel was born in England on 28 May 1964. His mother's family were German Jews who owned a brick factory until 1933 when the Nazis took over Jewish businesses. Baddiel's parents were among the last of the Jews to leave Germany just three weeks before war was declared.

Meera Syal was born in 1963 in Wolverhampton in the West Midlands. Her parents emigrated to the UK from New Delhi two years before she was born. Her mother, Surinder, is a Sikh and her father is Hindu.

Patricia Scotland was born in Dominica in 1956 and arrived in Britain at the age of two along with ten other siblings. In 1977 she was called to the Bar, Middle Temple, and received Silk in 1991, making legal history by becoming the first black female QC at the age of 35. In 1997 she was made a bencher of the Middle Temple and became a judge in 1999.

Paul Boateng was born in London of mixed Ghanaian and Scottish heritage in 1951 to Kwaku and Eleanor Boateng. In 2001, Boateng was appointed Financial Secretary to the Treasury, and in 2002 he became the first black Cabinet minister, 110 years after the first black MP.

4.2 A diverse history

| Entry 1 (☒ Acc 3) | Entry 2 (☒ Acc 3/Int 1) | Entry 3 (☒ Int 1/Int 2) |
|--|--|---|
| Write and spell countries and nationalities. | Identify meanings of high frequency words in a text. | Read about and discuss the history of immigration to Britain. |

Suggested procedure (Entry 2)

(☒ Acc 3/Int 1)

- Pre-teach 'merchants', 'clothworkers', 'protestant', 'famine', 'expelled', 'settle'.
- Give out the immigration table opposite, and ask learners to try to identify the countries/nationalities mentioned in the text from the flags they have been replaced with.
- Check answers, making sure learners are clear whether it is the name of the country or the nationality that is required.
- Ask learners to discuss what evidence of any of these nationalities they can see in their own neighbourhood. (For instance, an Irish-themed pub or a Vietnamese restaurant.)
- Ask learners to draw their own flag, and then to discuss what other nationalities they think are presently coming to the UK.

Differentiation

- For weaker learners turn each flag gap-fill question into a choice between nation/nationality (for example Spain or Spanish?)
- Allow dictionary use with text (mono or bilinguals).
- Give additional practice of pronunciation of dates and years.

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- tell learners that the word 'refugee' was itself brought to this country by the French Huguenots. Ask learners to suggest other

words that have come into English from other languages, or from the nationalities mentioned in the text;

- use the immigration table to draw attention to note form; you could ask learners to replace the ellipsed, missing words and expand the text to make full, 'formal' sentences;
- highlight or revise 'dates' vocabulary and pronunciation;
- do extended collocational/metaphor work on 'settle' – a high frequency verb. For example, *settle a debt/dispute/argument*, *settle down*, *settle on something*, *settle in a place*, *settle into a job/role/property*, and so on.

Extension activities































- Ask learners to discuss their own nationality's immigration to the UK – is it recent, or longstanding? Is there an established community here, or a relatively new one? What do they think their community will look like in 50 or 100 years time?
- Ask learners to do research to find out what each of the groups mentioned have contributed to the culture of the UK.
- Ask learners to look back at the personalities encountered in 4.1, and to try to relate these to the immigration table. (They could research this.)

Answers to the immigration table exercise can be found in the answers section, p. 319.

A diverse history

4.2

Roots in the future: Dates of immigration to Britain

| | |
|-------|---|
| 1100s | Merchants from  and  arrive in  as settlers. |
| 1200s |  merchants settle in Plymouth and London. |
| 1300s | Edward III invites cloth workers of all lands to  . |
| 1500s | Black trumpeter at Henry VII's court. Queen Mary marries Philip of  – beginning of  presence in   and  Protestants arrive. |
| 1600s | Asians brought to  as servants. Jews re-admitted by Cromwell. About 100,000 Huguenots ( Protestants) arrive. |
| 1700s | Refugees from  revolution. First records of  sailors in London. |
| 1800s | Famine in  brings hundreds of thousands to  . Thousands of Jews flee to  from  and  . |
| 1900s |  Civil War brings refugees. Refugees from Nazi  Immigration from the Commonwealth. Government encourages immigration from  , West Indies (for example ), South Asia (for example ) and  Asians are expelled from  and  – many settle in   refugees arrive in  . |

4.3 Body language

| Entry 1 (☒ Acc 3) | Entry 2 (☒ Acc 3/Int 1) | Entry 3 (☒ Int 1/Int 2) |
|--|---|--|
| Discuss body language and recognise some gestures and expressions. | Discuss body language, facial expression and gesture. | Discuss body language, facial expression and gesture, and their cultural associations. |

Suggested procedure (Entry 2) (☒ Acc 3/Int 1)

- Give out copies of the pictures on p. 119. Ask learners to discuss what each of the gestures mean in: a) their own culture/country; b) the UK (these may or may not be different).
- Now ask learners to decide individually, and then in pairs, with which of the people listed below the photographs they would consider using each of the gestures acceptable/appropriate.
- Ask learners to brainstorm other gestures and facial expressions from their own culture/the UK, and to discuss their meanings/social acceptability.

Differentiation

- Ask stronger learners to write a description of how to perform each gesture.
- Give out a glossary of parts of the body (for reference, or for weaker students to test stronger students on).
- Allow dictionary use.

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- parts of the body;
- vocabulary of facial expression (for example *frown*, *grin*, *smirk*, *beam*, *grimace*, and so on);
- vocabulary of body language (for example *slouch*, *wave*, *squat*, and so on).

Extension activities

- Learners discuss formality differences in gesture (you could ask learners to physically make a gesture).
- Ask learners to discuss different attitudes to body language/physical proximity between cultures, for example what distance between people counts as 'comfortable'. (Obviously, answers may vary hugely according to culture and gender.)
- Ask learners to tell stories relating to their own experiences of gesture/cultural misunderstanding – they will probably have many of these.
- Ask learners to ask you questions about yourself. You will only respond with gesture and mime – they have to work out what you mean.
- Ask learners to play the 'hotel' game. (They are staying in a hotel in a country where they do not speak the language at all, something is wrong with the room, and they must explain to the receptionist – their partner – what this is, using only gesture/facial expression/mime. You can change the context from hotel to shop/police station/hospital, if more appropriate, and give out slips of paper with problems for learners to mime.)

Answers to this activity will be culturally relative.

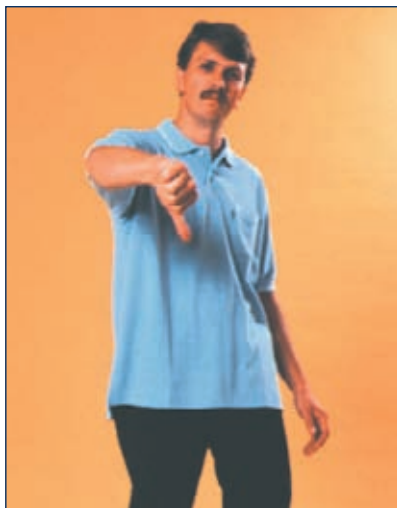
Body language

4.3

A



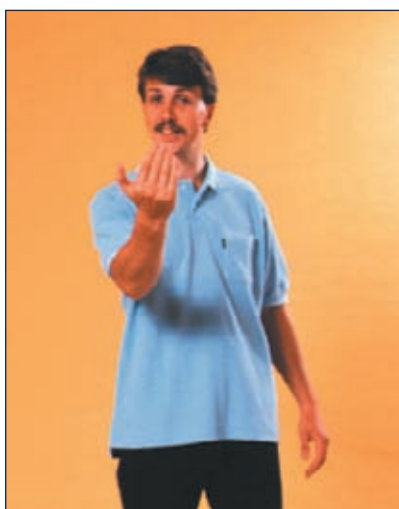
B



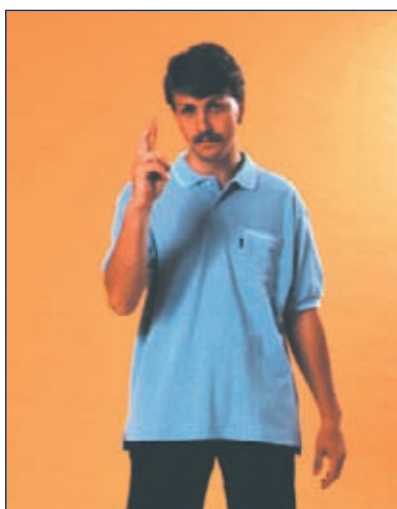
C



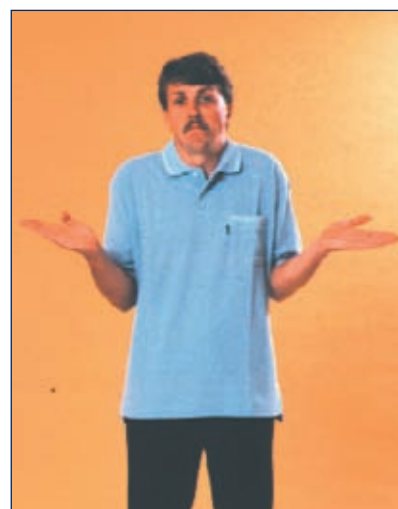
D



E



F

Images courtesy of www.comansys.net**Which gestures would you use with...**

a grandparent?

your partner?

a teacher?

your boss?

your neighbour?

a shopkeeper?

a checkout assistant?

your doctor?

a policeman/woman?

your children?

a bus driver?

4.4 Culture and diversity

| Entry 1 (☒ Acc 3) | Entry 2 (☒ Acc 3/Int 1) | Entry 3 (☒ Int 1/Int 2) |
|---|--|---|
| Have a simple discussion about culture and behaviour. | Discuss a set of statements about behaviour in different contexts. | Express views and opinions about culture and behaviour. |

Suggested procedure (Entry 2) (☒ Acc 3/Int 1)

- Ask learners to brainstorm things that they found different or strange when they first arrived in the UK, or in their present town/city.
- Draw learners' attention to the student quotations – did they think of similar things? Allow more time here for them to think of additional points.
- Take feedback. Then ask learners to look at the list below and decide which items they think would be appropriate or acceptable in the UK generally/in their home country/in their local community.

Differentiation

- Ask stronger learners to write sentences similar to the quotations about their first impressions of the UK.
- Ask weaker learners to give each item on the list a mark out of ten according to how acceptable it is, then compare.
- Ask learners to mime some of the situations/actions before ranking them, to help weaker learners.

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- 'ing' forms/gerunds;
- past simple/continuous in narratives;

- action phrases/collocations (*blowing your nose/riding a bike* and so on);
- modals to talk about hypothetical situations (for example '*it would/might/could be OK to...*').

Extension activities

- Ask learners to add to the list.
- Ask learners to qualify items on the list to render them acceptable (for example '*Eating with your hands is OK if it's chicken...*').
- Ask learners to discuss how they can show approval/disapproval of these types of action – and provide them with some language to do so (for example '*Excuse me, but I'd rather you didn't...*').
- Ask learners to choose a situation/action in the UK that surprised them, and write a paragraph explaining what it was exactly and how they felt at the time.
- Ask learners to predict/write/discuss what they think would surprise someone from the UK about their own country.

Answers will be very culturally relative, and may be very open to debate! (There is probably very little unanimity about what is 'acceptable' generally in the UK. This in itself may be a strange thing to many learners.)

Culture and diversity

4.4

When I came to London, the one thing that amused me was that everybody who lives in London walks so quickly!

Most of the time they usually have their food outside their home, that means on the train, bus and in the street. This is so strange for me. If I have lunch in the street I don't know where the food has gone to. Is it in my stomach or not?

I was amused about the amount of kissing in the street, on the bus and also in the parks. It doesn't embarrass me, but in my country all physical contact in public is prohibited.

I saw another thing that amazed me – in Tottenham Hill station, a girl brushing her hair and looking in a mirror in front of everyone!

One day I was also really shocked on the train because I saw a young woman pick her nose and then put the same finger in her mouth! It's totally different in my country!

(From learners at Hammersmith and West London College)

Image the following situations

Which do you think would be acceptable or appropriate in: a) your community or neighbourhood?; b) your country?; c) the UK generally?

- A friend telephones your house after 10 p.m.
- Two male friends or family members walk down the street hand in hand.
- A person walking along the street spits in the gutter.
- You are having dinner with a friend. They light a cigarette without asking if you mind.
- You are having dinner with a friend. They pick up and eat some food with their left hand.
- A visitor takes their shoes off as they enter your house.
- A person talks loudly on their mobile phone on a bus.
- In the middle of a conversation with you, your friend's mobile phone rings – they take the call.
- Someone visits your house without arranging it first.
- On a train, a person starts a conversation with a stranger.
- On the street, a person starts a conversation with a stranger.

4.5

Festivals and celebrations: Finding information

| Entry 1 (☒ Acc 3) | Entry 2 (☒ Acc 3/Int 1) | Entry 3 (☒ Int 1/Int 2) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Read short texts about festivals. | Find out information about festivals. | Describe and explain important features of a significant festival. |

Suggested procedure (Entry 2) (☒ Acc 3/Int 1)

- Give out the task sheet (opposite) and ask learners to answer the first two questions – feedback as a whole class.
- Now ask learners to complete the grid below with information about one festival/celebration (this could be from their own general knowledge, or you could give each learner information about only one of the festivals, or they could search the whole text).
- Now ask learners to prepare questions to ask each other to find out about the other celebrations and festivals.
- Ask learners to mingle, or make small groups, to exchange information about the festivals.

Differentiation

- *Simplify the texts for weaker learners or provide a glossary.*
- *Allow dictionary use.*
- *Gap the texts for stronger learners.*

Language points

Integrate the following specific language points:

- question forms;
- festival/celebration vocabulary (for example 'procession', 'lanterns', 'sacrifice');
- passives (many examples in the text);
- descriptions of processes (for example, use of passives in formal writing versus 'you light a fire and you sing songs' in spoken English).

Extension activities

- Ask learners to research one of the festivals in more detail – they could use the Internet or interview other learners.
- Ask learners to write a short narrative about a festival they celebrate or enjoy.
- Ask learners to design a new festival – for example 'Diversity Day'. What would this be like? What would people do?
- Ask learners to write menus/recipes for festival foods.
- Find some video/DVD extracts relating to a celebration or festival to use in class.
- Ask learners to design/exchange cards relating to a particular festival.

Festivals and celebrations: Finding information

4.5

Reading for information

Read the names of these festivals and celebrations.
They are in alphabetical order.

- Bonfire Night
- Christmas
- Diwali
- Easter
- Eid ul Adha
- Eid ul Fitr
- Hanukkah
- Vaisakhi
- Wesak

Which are Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist or Sikh celebrations?

Which are not religious celebrations?

First, choose one you know about and use the grid to record information from the text.

Now, choose one you know nothing about and use the grid to record the information.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Who celebrates? | |
| When? | |
| Why? | |
| How? | |

(You will not always find information for every box.)

4.5

Festivals and celebrations: Finding information

Asking for information

You are going to ask another person for information about the festivals they celebrate. Choose a person with a different background from yourself.

Prepare your questions. Take the information in the grid and make questions. Try to ask questions in different ways, for example direct questions or questions using 'Can you tell me...?'

Practise asking your questions and use intonation that shows you are interested in the other person's background.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Who celebrates? | |
| When? | |
| Why? | |
| How? | |

■ Bonfire night

Bonfire Night is celebrated across the UK on 5 November. The date marks the failed attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament by Guy Fawkes in 1605.

The intention was to kill King James I and everyone in government. The group wanted England to return to the Catholic faith. One of the group members had a friend in the Houses of Parliament and sent a letter to him, warning him to stay away. The letter was instead handed to the king.

Guy Fawkes and his friends rolled 36 barrels of gunpowder into the Houses of Parliament, and were waiting for the king to arrive when guards arrested them. They were tortured and executed.

■ Christmas

Christmas (25 December) is a Christian holy day that marks the birth of Jesus. However, it is not only a Christian festival. Christmas has roots in the Jewish holiday of *Hanukkah*.

Festivals and celebrations: Finding information

4.5

The *nativity* is the birth of Jesus as described in the New Testament of the Bible. Jesus was born to a woman called Mary who was married to Joseph, a carpenter.

Christmas today

Christmas remains the biggest holiday in the UK calendar. It is a largely secular holiday, with the main element the exchange of gifts on Christmas Day.

■ **Diwali**

Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, is the most popular of all the festivals from South Asia, and is also the occasion for celebrations by Jains and Sikhs as well as Hindus.

The festival of *Diwali* extends over five days.

The festival celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance.

Diwali UK

In the United Kingdom, as in India, the festival is a time for spring-cleaning the home and for wearing new clothes and decorating buildings with lights.

■ **Easter**

Easter is a Christian festival that takes place in either March or April each year. Christians remember that on *Good Friday*, Jesus died on the cross. His body was placed in a cave and a large rock was used to seal the entrance.

Two days later, on *Easter Sunday*, his followers returned to the cave to find that the rock had been rolled away and that Jesus had risen from the dead. After greeting his family and friends he ascended to *Heaven*.

On *Easter Sunday* it is traditional to give children chocolate Easter eggs.

■ **Eid**

Muslims have two Eid festivals:

Eid ul Fitr

This is celebrated on the 1st of *Shawal*, the month which comes after the month of *Ramadan* (the month of fasting) in the Islamic calendar.

Muslims are not only celebrating the end of fasting, they're thanking Allah for the help and strength that he gave them throughout the previous month.

Everyone wears best or new clothes, and decorates their homes.

4.5

Festivals and celebrations: Finding information

There are special services, processions through the streets, gifts are exchanged and, of course, there is a special celebratory meal. This is eaten during the daytime and is the first daytime meal Muslims will have had in a month.

Eid is also a time of forgiveness, and making amends.

Eid ul Adha (The festival of sacrifice)

This *Eid* is celebrated on the 10th *Dhul-Hijja* (last month of the Islamic calendar).

As with all festivals there are prayers and also presents.

The festival remembers the prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham) willingness to sacrifice his son when God ordered him to.

■ Hanukkah

Hanukkah or *Chanukah* is the Jewish festival of lights.

The festival begins on the 25th day of *Kislev* and is celebrated for eight days. In the Western calendar *Hanukkah* is celebrated in November or December.

The word *Hanukkah* means dedication and commemorates the Jews' struggle for religious freedom.

■ Vaisakhi

Vaisakhi is celebrated on the 13th/14th of April.

Vaisakhi is the Sikh New Year festival and the anniversary of the founding of the *Khalsa* in 1699.

The festival is marked with street processions which form an important part of Sikh culture and religious celebrations involving singing and chanting scriptures and hymns.

The processions are led by traditionally dressed *panj piaras*.

The Sikh holy book will be carried in the procession in a place of honour.

■ Wesak

Wesak is the most important of the Buddhist festivals and is celebrated in May. It celebrates the Buddha's birthday and, for Theravada Buddhists, marks the day of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.

The festival is celebrated with colour and gaiety. Homes are cleaned and decorated. In Thailand, for example, special *Wesak* lanterns are made of paper and wood. In *Theravada* countries during the festival, Buddhists will visit their local temple for services and teaching, and will give offerings to the monks