



Dear Colleague:

Happy holidays to you and all of your students. If you are looking for a good holiday song resource, the Holiday Song Book is available to download for free at Elizabethclaire.com. There are eighteen traditional holiday songs with illustrations. You'll also find Word Help for each song at the bottom of each page.

The holidays are a great time to share U.S. traditions with students and to have students share the ways that they celebrate holidays in their homes and cultures. Conversations about joyful experiences at the holidays can be some of the most valuable interactions for English Language Learners. Have a great month!

*Carol Brigham*

### Replanting our forests (pages 1 and 9)

Every year around this time there are stories of wildfires. Earlier this year there were devastating wildfires in Canada and Hawaii. Throughout the summer there was news of wildfires in California and this fall there are still wildfires burning throughout the southern states.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to tell what damage wildfires do and what makes wildfires worse. They will be able to tell how tree climbers pick pinecones and how seeds are grown for replanting.

**Procedures:** Find out what students already know about wildfires. Ask questions such as: *What have you heard about wildfires? How do you think wildfires start? How do you think firefighters put out wildfires? What do you think happens with the land that a wildfire has burned?*

Read the article together. Take time to talk about any wildfires that may have been or may be close to your area (i.e. the Northeast was affected by the Canadian wildfires; the wildfires in several states in the west and south right now; etc.) Discuss ways students might harvest cones from trees. Have them come up with other creative suggestions. Ask questions such as: *Would you like to be a tree climber?*

*What dangers do you think tree climbers face doing their jobs? Why do you think it is hard to find people who want to be tree climbers? What other ways would you use to try and harvest cones from tall trees? Why do you think it is important to replant forests?*

### U.S. citizenship (pages 1 and 10)

We've had some requests for more articles on citizenship so we thought we would start with how people can get citizenship in the U.S. We'll try to include more articles focused on citizenship and becoming a citizen in future issues.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to tell what birthright citizenship is. They will be able to tell ways people can become citizens. They will be able to list qualifications for becoming a citizen in the U.S.

**Procedures:** Find out what students already know about being a citizen in the U.S. Ask questions such as: *Who can be a citizen in the United States? How does someone become a citizen in the United States?* Then read the article and have the students answer these questions again with information that they have read in the article.

### Events in December (pages 2 and 3)

Elicit special days this month from your students and from school activities: tests, field trips, assemblies, birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Elicit from your students any special days celebrated in their countries in December. Point out the dates that school will be closed for winter break.

**Hanukkah:** Have any Jewish students tell of their customs for Hanukkah, or invite a visitor to the class to do so. Point out that foods fried in oil are traditional, such as potato *latkes*, served with applesauce. If necessary, review ordinal numbers and talk about the first night, second night, etc.

**Preparing for winter:** Depending on where you live, make sure your recent arrivals from warmer countries know how to adjust to the temperature changes.

If your school has a coat/boot exchange, encourage your students to take advantage of it. Warm clothing is available at low cost at thrift stores such as Salvation Army. Point out the need to "dress in layers" so one can take off a coat and not overheat, but still have a long sleeve sweater for protection. Talk about the dangers of hypothermia and frostbite.

### Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day:

December 7, 1941 was one of the most dreadful days of American history. The events of 9/11 are often compared to the Japanese attack on the U.S. at Pearl Harbor that got the U.S. into World War II. The United States later defeated Japan, occupied it, changed their government to a democracy, became Japan's protector, and later, an equal ally and trading partner.

**Telling the temperature:** The actual formulae for converting from F° to C° are fine if you need accuracy, but the easy way to get a close approximation is more useful for day to day. Newcomers take a while to figure out that 40 degrees F is pretty chilly, but if they can do the quick calculation: subtract 32 (= 8°) then divide by two (= 4 degrees Celsius) they will have a better idea of how to dress. At the least, they should know that water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, equal to zero degrees Celsius. Have students practice with converting other Fahrenheit temperatures to Celsius.

**Wright Brothers Day:** Theirs is an inspiring story of persistence in the face of ridicule and everyone saying it couldn't be done. Ask: *Has anyone ever told you that you couldn't do something? How did that make you feel? Did you persist anyway?* Have students measure out 852 feet in the school hall or school yard to see how far the fourth flight of the Wright Flyer stayed in the air. Ask them about their flight to the U.S. if they came by plane. Compare with the 1903 flight.

**Christmas:** Point out that this holiday has both religious and non-religious customs. Decorations, candles, singing, sending cards, baking cookies, shopping, gift giving, giving to charities, Santa Claus, reindeer, Rudolph, and decorating trees are non-religious (secular) customs. Some customs have pagan origins, but in any case, they are encouraged by toy

manufacturers, store owners, package deliverers, etc. and increase the economy of the U.S. The birth of Jesus, nativity scenes, church-going, and songs about the birth of Jesus are religious traditions.

Orthodox Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on January 7, 2024.

**Kwanzaa:** Point out that this is a holiday invented for the purpose of bringing an awareness and appreciation for African Americans' ethnic heritage. This holiday is remarkable in that it can inspire anyone to think about starting a holiday. Have students brainstorm holidays to celebrate something in their own heritage and decide what foods, clothing, decorations, activities, and purposes it would have.

**New Year's Eve:** Ask how students celebrate this holiday in their home countries. What are their plans this year? Point out that many people prefer to stay home and stay safe on this evening because of drunk drivers on the roads. Mention that the New Year may be different in different cultures: China, India, Cambodia, Israel, and Iran for example.

### This is your page (page 4)

As students read the stories, ask comprehension questions, then have students share their own stories of a similar nature. Ask questions such as: *Have you ever been caught in a snow storm? What happened? What happened the first time you saw snow? If you've never seen snow, what is your favorite weather? What is your favorite winter activity? How is driving in the U.S. different from driving in your home country? What has been your favorite New Year's celebration ever?*

### Dr. Ali: Move those muscles (page 5)

**Objectives:** Students will be able to give examples of voluntary and involuntary muscles and muscles that can be both.

**Procedure:** Have students wiggle toes, fingers, ears, nose, raise arms, walk in place, etc. to demonstrate voluntary muscles. Have students count how many different muscles they can feel or identify through movement in their arm from finger tips to shoulder. After that exercise, have students notice that during that time, they did not have to tell their breathing muscles to move

their chest to take in air. But they can cause greater intake or lesser intake of air, showing that those muscles are partly voluntary. Ask questions such as: *What kinds of exercise do you do every day? Climb stairs? Change classes? Walk home? Housework? Work at a job? How many hours do you spend sleeping? Sitting? Are you getting enough exercise to keep your muscles healthy?*

### Ask a Speech Coach: Weak words (page 5)

A major reason ELLs have trouble understanding spoken English even when they can read and write it effectively is the seeming disappearance of the "weak words." And until speakers learn to *not* stress the weak words when they read or speak, they won't sound like Americans.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to identify weak words in a sentence they hear someone read while they read along silently. They will be able to read a sentence stressing the important words and pronounce the weak words with lower volume and energy.

**Procedures:** Read the article and practice the sentences. Have students read any of the other articles out loud, practicing the quick skipping over of the weak words. Create additional dialogs or have students write dialogs (correct them first) to practice.

### Heroes and History: Clement Clarke Moore and A Visit from St. Nicholas (pages 6 and 7)

*A Visit from St. Nicholas* has been part of our culture for 200 years and will continue to be so; it does not preach any religion nor mention any deities; it teaches vocabulary, rhyme, meter, culture and history. Students are not asked to believe anything, but enjoy a fairy tale.

**Objectives:** Students will be able to retell the story of the visit from St. Nicholas in their own words; they will learn 20-50 new vocabulary words; some students will memorize a few lines of the poem.

**Procedures:** Recite the first four lines of the *Visit* and ask students if they have ever heard this poem. Then read the background about Clement Clarke Moore together. Talk about why people remember other people. *What is Moore remembered for? What would you like to be remembered for?*

If you have a large illustrated children's book of the *Visit*, read from that, as

students listen. Point to pictures in the book to illustrate the vocabulary as you are reading. Ask comprehension questions to be sure students understand along the way. *Who is telling the story? Who is sleeping? What did the father see? What was pulling the sleigh? How many reindeer were there? How did St. Nicholas get into the house? How was he dressed? What did he have with him? What color was his beard? What did he do? How did he get back up the chimney? What did he say?*

Another day, build vocabulary that you feel is difficult for students. Read the poem dramatically and slowly from the newspaper, as students read along silently. Then read it again, leaving out the last word in each line for students to fill in, in chorus.

**Optional:** Many English language learners come from school systems where rote memorization plays an important part in education and students expect such assignments. Memorizing a popular poem or part of it will enhance ELLs' self-esteem and astonish others. So invite students to memorize. One day, have students take turns to read stanzas of the poem. Another day, have students work in groups of two or three taking turns reading the poem. Ask volunteers to memorize parts of the poem, so that each student has several lines to say. Have the students say the poem aloud as a group from memory.

Put on a presentation for another class. This will motivate pronunciation practice. If it's worth saying, it's worth saying excellently. Explain stressed and unstressed syllables in *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*, using what they learned from *Ask a Speech Coach*.

### ANSWERS

- |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. b                  | 16. F (six)       |
| 2. a                  | 17. T             |
| 3. d                  | 18. F (mouse)     |
| 4. c                  | 19. F (reindeer)  |
| 5. a                  | 20. T             |
| 6. b                  | 21. C (chimney)   |
| 7. a                  | 22. A (campfires) |
| 8. d                  | 23. E (acres)     |
| 9. a                  | 24. F (wreath)    |
| 10. b                 | 25. H (portable)  |
| 11. T                 | 26. G (jury)      |
| 12. T                 | 27. D (weak)      |
| 13. F (New York City) | 28. J (fee)       |
| 14. F (New Year's)    | 29. B (sleigh)    |
| 15. T                 | 30. I (rappel)    |

## December 2023 Quiz I

Choose the best answer. Write its letter on the line in front of the number.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What do trees take in to make oxygen?
- a) water
  - b) carbon dioxide
  - c) fire
  - d) pinecones
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What starts wildfires most often?
- a) people
  - b) wind
  - c) lightning
  - d) droughts
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. How many fires burned from January to October?
- a) 26,572
  - b) 102,686
  - c) 1,765
  - d) 50,015
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. How many acres burned?
- a) 1,565,032
  - b) 765,821
  - c) 2,539,627
  - d) 276,654
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. How much land needs replanted across the United States?
- a) 4 million acres
  - b) 1.5 million acres
  - c) 750,000 acres
  - d) 3.5 million acres
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What is the best way to harvest cones from trees?
- a) drones
  - b) tree climbers
  - c) potato guns
  - d) squirrels
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What do volunteers plant in the ground that was destroyed by wildfires?
- a) saplings
  - b) seeds
  - c) pinecones
  - d) pine branches
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Who can vote in the United States?
- a) legal immigrants
  - b) undocumented immigrants
  - c) visitors
  - d) citizens
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. How often does the United States government do a census?
- a) every 10 years
  - b) every year
  - c) every five years
  - d) every six months
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. How long do most permanent residents have to live in the U.S. before becoming citizens?
- a) one year
  - b) five years
  - c) 10 years
  - d) 15 years

**II. From Here and There**

**True or False?** Write “T” for true, and “F” for false. If the sentence is *false*, *make it true*. Write a word to replace the underlined word.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Another name for the Miracle of the Lights is Hanukkah.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Young children expect Santa Claus to bring presents on Christmas.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The biggest New Year’s Eve party is in Times Square in Chicago.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. *Auld Lang Syne* is a traditional song people sing on Christmas Eve.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. During Kwanzaa, African-American children learn arts and crafts of Africa.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. It takes four hours for the New Year to reach all of the states of the U.S.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. Clement Clarke Moore wrote *A Visit from St. Nicholas*.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. In the poem, not a creature was stirring, not even a cat.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. Eight eagles pull St. Nicholas’ sleigh.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. St. Nicholas filled all the stockings.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**III. Building Vocabulary**

Write the best word to complete each sentence. Write the letter of that word on the line in front of the number.

**Word List**

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| A. campfires | F. wreath   |
| B. sleigh    | G. jury     |
| C. chimney   | H. portable |
| D. weak      | I. rappel   |
| E. acres     | J. fee      |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. Smoke from a stove or fireplace goes up through a \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. People who camp light \_\_\_\_\_ for light, warmth, and to cook on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. The farmer has 40 \_\_\_\_\_ of corn.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a round decoration for a door made from evergreen branches.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. If you can carry something with you, it is \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. It is a responsibility for U.S. citizens to serve on a \_\_\_\_\_ when they are called.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. The opposite of *strong* is \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. You must pay the \_\_\_\_\_ when you apply for citizenship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. Eight reindeer pull St. Nicholas in his \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. When rock climbers climb up mountains, they must \_\_\_\_\_ back down again.