Special Days and Greeting Cards

Topic
Greetings cards, special days and celebrations

Aims
• To learn and practise vocabulary related to greetings for special days
• To practise speaking skills
• To practise reading skills
• To develop writing skills

Age group
12 – adult

Level
B1 / B2

Time
60 minutes

Materials
1. Special Days and Greeting Cards student worksheet
2. Internet links: http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_7740000/newsid_7747700/7747755.stm - News item from Newsround about people sending too many Christmas cards
   http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_7140000/newsid_7142200/7142226.stm - Article asking if sending Christmas cards should be banned at school
   http://www.greetingcardassociation.org.uk/resources/for-publishers/the-market/facts-and-figures - Facts and figures from the Greeting Card Association
Introduction

This lesson can be used at any time of year but you may like to tie it in with a special day in the country you're working in or with a special day in the UK. If you do this, pick and choose some of the activities here to extend your lesson.

Did you know that in the UK the greeting card industry is huge, producing more than £1.3billion annually? You may well find that in the country you're teaching in, giving cards for special days isn't as common as it is in the UK so your students may be interested to know more about the British habit of sending cards for occasions such as birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries, for the arrival of a new baby etc. etc. If you have examples of any cards people have sent you take them into class to show your students. If you don't have any cards to show your students make sure you explain clearly what a greeting card is before you start the class. The best way to do this would be to make a few, they don't have to be too professional looking.

Task one is a simple true or false activity about the enormity of the greeting card industry in the UK. Task two asks students to match typical greetings to special days and task three is a ranking activity which gives students the chance to talk about special days in their own country. Task four is a short reading and writing activity and the fifth task discusses the advantages and disadvantages of communicating greetings via cards, text messages, phone calls and e-mails. Finally students are asked to design a greeting card for their favourite special day.

Procedure

1. Task 1 – Greeting cards – True or False?

   As mentioned above, the custom of sending cards for many occasions is very British. The statements below are all true! Ask your students to read the statements (or save paper and read the statements to your class instead) and vote to see if they think they are true or false. If your students are surprised by any, add any extra 'local knowledge' to expand on the information.

2. Task 2 – Match the greetings

   This activity looks at the language of greetings. Ask students to read the greetings and try and match them to the special days. Encourage them to start with the easy ones and use a process of elimination.

   Answers: 1-d, 2-b, 3-a, 4-c, 5-e, 6-g, 7-h

3. Task 3 – Special days

   Here's an opportunity for students to tell you about their special days and days that are special in their countries but which may not be celebrated in Britain, like Saint's days or national holidays. Even if you know lots about these days, you may want to tell students you don't so as to let them tell you about them as a guest in their country.

4. Task 4 – What's your favourite special day?

   You can either ask students to read the whole text or you can put them into groups and read one message each and then share the information. Depending on the level of your class you may decide to pre-teach some vocabulary which you think will be difficult for your students. When they have read the text ask some general questions to check their understanding. Alternatively, ask the students to write one question each about what they've read, then ask several volunteers to ask their question to the whole group. Finally students should write about their own special day.
5. Task 5 – ‘Greener’ greetings

The title of this activity gives away one of the main advantages to communicating greetings by text messages or e-mails rather than sending actual cards… If you have experience of sending texts or e-mails to give someone a greeting you could share the recent messages you’ve sent with the class. Then discuss with your group the advantages and disadvantages of each way. See some example answers for the first row of the table. Students can then work together to complete the rest of the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of communication</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting card</td>
<td>More personal</td>
<td>Expensive to buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘special’ to receive something in the post</td>
<td>Waste of paper (not ‘green’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You can keep / display cards</td>
<td>You have to buy a stamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Takes time and planning ahead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Task 6 – Design a card for your favourite special day

Throughout the lesson you probably will have spoken about your students’ special days. If you haven’t, ask them some of the follow up questions from task four to get them thinking about their favourite day. Then give students time to design their card and write the message for the inside. They may well need your help to compose the message so be available to assist throughout.

Contributed by

Jo Budden