

languages ICT

Using ICT effectively at Key Stage 4

Teaching about festivals in German

Useful sites

The sites covered on this advice sheet were researched in March 2008 and all provide useful information on feast days and festivals in Germany and Austria.

- Deutsche Lebensart (www.deutsche-lebensart.de) is an off-shoot of the Goethe Institut.
- Kids Web (www.kidsweb.de)
- Öbv4Kids (www.oebv4kids.at) is an Austrian children's website sponsored by Österreichische Beamtenversicherung.
- Tivi (www.tivi.de) is the website for Zweites Deutsche Fernsehen.
- Helles-Koepfchen (www.helles-koepfchen.de) is a children's search engine with its own information sections.
- Kaleidoskop (www.kaleidos.de) is a website aimed at non-native German speakers.

The topic of German Feast Days & Festivals is not covered by a single website; rather details can be found scattered across a variety of websites, all of which offer the same topic but from different perspectives and using different levels of language. There are sections which provide complete calendars of events from both religious and secular standpoints, others which explain the origins of the festivals, and some which describe specific traditions from different regions of the German speaking world.

For teaching and learning

Use these websites both for developing cultural awareness as well as building target language competence.

Draw up a calendar of the most important festivals and research, using all the above sites, listing all the essential elements of each feast day. Use this as a reference point throughout the school year. This could be a wall display or a monthly list stored as a flipchart/notebook resource for display on the interactive whiteboard.

Making an electronic resource permits the use of colourful graphics, perhaps linked to audio recordings about particular festivals. The recordings could be made by the teacher or a native German speaker on the staff, such as a Foreign Language Assistant. Links to relevant web sites could also be added to the display resource.

Linking to sites listed on the resource via the interactive whiteboard will enable the whole class to focus on language and develop reading skills.

As each festival occurs, include brief texts and build activities into classroom learning. Illustrate texts with images located on the Internet or digital photographs taken by colleagues of festivals in Germany.

Vocabulary from the sites can be taken and used in authoring software to create interactive reinforcement exercises, which can be completed as a whole-class activity or by students working independently. Electronic worksheets can be created with text taken from the sites.

Such activities might focus on grammar, sentence or paragraph reconstruction or drop-down menus designed as an aid to extended writing.

As many festivals are shared across countries, it might be of use to adopt an approach of contrasting and comparing German and British customs. This would be valid for festivals such as Hallowe'en, now growing in popularity in Germany, and St. Martin's Day, the more traditional celebration about that time of the year. Christmas, Advent, and Fasching are other examples which might prove fruitful. Some useful material is available on these festivals at Öbv4Kids: go to Wissen >Saisonelles.

For creative work, students can work with digital photos of festivals in the United Kingdom such as Shrove Tuesday, or Easter, and create presentations, or complete extended writing tasks. Some students might wish to focus on festivals and celebrations within their local communities or on the multicultural aspects of contemporary society as evidenced in festivals and celebrations. Work produced could be shared with students in partner schools in Germany or Austria.

Why this site was chosen

Cultural knowledge and understanding, while referred to in many course books are difficult to define. Festivals and feast days are an informative way of introducing students to aspects of German life quite distinct from the experience of many KS4 students. The breadth of websites suggested here should enable teachers to create a German Calendar of Events for use throughout KS4.

About the 'Using ICT effectively at Key Stage 4' series

www.languages-ict.org.uk/technology/ks4.htm

This series of advice sheets deals with the effective use of ICT at Key Stage 4 for teachers of modern languages. The series focuses on online resources characterised by their richness and potential for stimulating teaching and learning languages, particularly French, German and Spanish, at Key Stage 4. It is hoped that the suggestions and ideas put forward in the sheets will be of use to teachers of other languages.

The sites were chosen as useful resources for teachers dealing with topic areas which, for various reasons, may be classed as 'hard to teach' at Key Stage 4.

The sites chosen are not presented in any way by CILT, ALL or Becta as unique or comprehensive and no responsibility is taken for any changes which may take place subsequent to this research.

The sheets were researched and written by a small team of consultants working on behalf of CILT, the National Centre for Languages.

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