

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: You will listen to an article about the religious holiday Easter. The article is 4 minutes and 45 seconds long. Listen only, and don't worry about understanding everything.

Step 2: Look at the questions. Read and understand them, then listen again. As you are listening, try to answer the questions in your head. Don't write the answers yet. Next, listen again and write the answers this time. Compare your answers with a partner.

Step 3: Read the article. Check in your dictionary any unknown words. Now listen again. Can you understand more?

Step 4: Listen! Listen! Listen! Listen to the article on the train or in your free time. Each time you listen, you will slowly improve!

QUESTIONS

Answer the questions to check comprehension. If you don't know an answer, don't worry. Skip it. Then listen again.

1. What does Easter celebrate?
2. Why does the date change from year to year?
3. How do people prepare for Easter?
4. What does Lent represent?
5. When was Easter first written about?
6. What has Easter become associated with in many countries and cultures?
7. According to the article, what do Americans do on Easter?
8. According to the article, what do Swedes do on Easter?
9. What do eggs symbolize?
10. What have candy manufacturers done?

the ARTICLE



Easter celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus. Although it falls on a Sunday, the holiday follows the phases of the moon in the lunar calendar. Hence the actual date changes from year to year. Easter can be celebrated as early as March 22, and as late as April 25 in Western Christianity. In such places as Greece and Russia, the holiday can even be as late as May 8.

Easter follows Lent, which is a 40-day period of fasting and prayer. Christians prepare for Easter during this period by abstaining from certain foods, such as meat or fish, as well as through prayer and special church services. Modern-day

devout Christians also try to limit smoking and drinking, watching too much TV, or other similar pleasurable activities as a form of sacrifice. The period of Lent supposedly represents the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness, a time when he fended off the devil's temptations.

Then comes the week before Easter Sunday. Each day is significant and with special liturgies which represent Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and crucifixion. On Easter itself, many churches contain festive music and numerous floral decorations as a sign of celebration and rebirth. The history of Easter is quite long, with the first written record appearing in the 2nd century.

Nowadays, however, Easter has become associated with secular events and traditions, much like Christmas (although not to the same extent). Greeting cards, chocolate and candy eggs, dyed eggs, and jelly beans are one part of the holiday in many cultures. But there are unique aspects from country to country. In America, many children participate in Easter egg hunts. According to children's stories, the Easter Bunny hides the treats during the night for kids to find in the morning. In Norway, murder mysteries have become part of the holiday, with most TV channels broadcasting detective stories. And in Finland and Sweden, children dress up as witches, go door-to-door, and exchange pussy willows for candy.

Again, like Christmas, the non-religious traditions usually come as a mix between commercialism and much more ancient beliefs. Eggs are a symbol of rebirth, and were frequently exchanged at spring festivals by Mediterranean peoples as far back as Roman times. Pussy willows come into the holiday because of an old tradition where willow branches were used to bless homes. Yet candy manufacturers have capitalized on these ancient associations with must-have chocolate and candy eggs greedily eaten by children everywhere. For some, modern practices put a relatable face on an ancient and very spiritual holiday, while others believe Jesus' sufferings have been cheapened.



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES (optional)

1. Which paragraph was the easiest to listen to? Which paragraph was the most difficult? Look at the vocabulary and sentence structure, then think why one paragraph was easy and another difficult.

2. Listen for these words, understand the context, then try to repeat the information from the sentence:

although (paragraph 1)

abstaining from (paragraph 2)

significant (paragraph 3)

associated with (paragraph 4)

commercialism (paragraph 5)

3. Listen and write the sentences:

Modern-day devout Christians also try to limit... (paragraph 2)

The history of Easter is quite long, with... (paragraph 3)

Nowadays, however, Easter has become... (paragraph 4)

For some, modern practices put... (paragraph 5)

ANSWERS

QUESTIONS
1. Easter celebrates the death and resurrection of Jesus.
2. The holiday follows the phases of the moon in the lunar calendar. Hence the actual date changes from year to year.
3. Christians prepare for Easter during this period by abstaining from certain foods, such as meat or fish, as well as through prayer and special church services.
4. Lent supposedly represents the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness, a time when he fended off the devil's temptations.
5. The first written record appears in the 2nd century.
6. Early drinkers believed that coffee cured a variety of illnesses.
7. Easter has become associated with secular events and traditions, much like Christmas.
8. In America, many children participate in Easter egg hunts.
9. Children dress up as witches, go door-to-door, and exchange pussy willows for candy.
10. Eggs are a symbol of rebirth.
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES - Listen and write the sentences.
...smoking and drinking, watching too much TV, or other similar pleasurable activities as a form of sacrifice
...associated with secular events and traditions, much like Christmas (although not to the same extent).
...a relatable face on an ancient and very spiritual holiday, while others believe Jesus' sufferings have been cheapened.
...the first written record appearing in the 2nd century.