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# 1

UNIT

# It's a festival!

## Learning objectives

**Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:**

- explore and compare the customs of Midsummer or the Summer Solstice in different countries;
- develop a critical attitude toward newly-emerged festivals;
- know some festivals around the world and their importance.





Amid the boom of firecrackers a year has come to an end, and  
the spring wind has wafted warm breath to the wine.

— Wang Anshi (1021–1086, statesman, poet)

## Warm-up

### Step Brainstorming

- 1 Please brainstorm the customs and origins of some traditional Chinese festivals.

Festivals	Customs	Origins
Spring Festival		
Lantern Festival		
Dragon Boat Festival		
Mid-Autumn Festival		
Winter Solstice Festival		

### Step Sharing your ideas

- 2 Some festivals and customs have been in existence for thousands of years, while some have just emerged in recent years. What do you think may contribute to the emergence and evolution of a festival or a custom?



The Carnival of Venice

# Culture reading

## Reading 1

# Here comes the sun in Sweden

**decoration** /,dekə'reɪʃn/  
n. 装饰

**festivity** /fe'stɪvətɪ/  
n. 庆祝活动; 庆典

**glow** /gləʊ/  
vi. 发光

**dim** /dɪm/  
v. (使) 变昏暗; (使) 变暗淡

**hay** /heɪ/  
n. 干草

**exuberance** /ɪg'zju:bərəns/  
n. 热情洋溢; 喜气洋洋

**parallel** /'pærəlel/  
n. 相似的人(或物)

**consensus** /kən'sensəs/  
n. 共识

**summerhouse** /'sʌməhaʊs/  
n. 避暑房屋

1 Per Olof, a farmer who has spent every one of his 84 Midsummers in the village of Hysingsvik, on the far eastern shore of the Swedish mainland, is overseeing the **decoration** of a Midsummer pole. Beside him, seven-year-old Ida Ek, whose last name means “oak,” is tying leaves and wild flowers to the upright. Tomorrow, the pole will be raised up and planted in the ground to mark the beginning of the village’s **festivities**. The wild flowers **glow** in the evening sunshine, which will finally **dim** for a few hours between midnight and 2 am.

2 “We’re celebrating summer, the happiness of the sun coming up, and the first **hay** being cut,” says Per Olof.

3 Across Sweden, Midsummer is greeted with an **exuberance** that’s hard to understand unless you’ve experienced the cold and darkness of a Swedish winter. Midsummer Eve is celebrated across the whole country on a Friday between 19 and 25 June every year. The festival has no **parallel** in southern Europe, but it’s Christmas’ non-identical twin: It holds a special place in the national psyche with its own customs, memories and social pressure.

4 As with much else in Sweden, there’s a profound national **consensus** about the right way to do things. Work stops. Cities empty, and people head to **summerhouses**. Swedes pride themselves on their closeness to nature and the ideal elements of a Midsummer festival include being with friends in a remote spot, singing, and eating and drinking a lot.



5 The **Stockholm archipelago** is a place of beauty at any time, but during Midsummer it's the place to be. On the way out to the archipelago from Stockholm, the road winds through the beautiful green landscape of a fairy tale.

**Stockholm** /'stɒkəʊlm/  
斯德哥尔摩  
**archipelago** /,ɑ:kɪ'peləgəʊ/  
n. 群岛

6 In Norrtälje, the gateway town to the Stockholm archipelago, the supermarket is full of shoppers the day before Midsummer Eve. The Midsummer foods of strawberries, **herring**, new potatoes and **sour** cream are flying off the shelves.

**herring** /'herɪŋ/  
n. 鲱鱼  
**sour** /'saʊə/  
a. 酸的; 酸味的

7 For my Midsummer Eve, I'm heading to the island of Blidö. The air is very fresh, cleaned by sea **breezes**. **Roe deer** skip out of the path of bicycles on the roads.

**breeze** /briz:/  
n. 微风; 和风  
**roe deer** /'rəʊ diə/  
n. 狍

8 Blidö is part of Roslagen, the name for the northern part of the archipelago. By midmorning on Midsummer Eve, there are groups of flower-pickers along Blidö's narrow roads. They're collecting a variety of flowers to make



**bouquet** /bəʊ'keɪ/

*n.* 花束

**crown** /kraʊn/

*n.* 花冠

**overlook** /,əʊvə'lʊk/

*vt.* 俯瞰; 俯视

**cooler** /'ku:lə/

*n.* 冰桶; 冷却器

**tasteful** /'teɪstfl/

*a.* 趣味高雅的; 有品位的

**under no illusion(s)**

不抱幻想

**kick off** 开始

**bouquets** and **crowns**, and to decorate the pole that's the centerpiece of the summer celebrations. There's another use for them. It is said that if you sleep with seven varieties of wild flowers under your pillow on Midsummer Eve, the face of your true love will appear in your dreams.

9 Just after two o'clock, holidaymakers from the village of Eknäs begin to gather in a field **overlooking** the sea. Over a hundred families have summerhouses in the area and they've come to celebrate Midsummer. The partygoers gather in a wide ring, sitting in family groups with blankets, **coolers** and picnic baskets. They lift the pole into place and the festivities begin. Children and adults, some wearing crowns, sing and dance around the pole. In the beautiful surroundings, the whole celebration is so **tasteful** and sincerely done that it makes me wish I were Swedish.

10 Most of Blidö's summer visitors are long gone by the time winter approaches, but a few people are so attracted by the island that they've chosen to live here year-round. Ingrid Hedman, a journalist from Stockholm, has been attracted by the clear air and silence into moving here full-time. She's **under no illusions** about the hard winter on the island, but she's facing a more immediate challenge: hosting her first Midsummer party. As anyone who's had to cook a Christmas turkey for an extended family understands, the social pressure to provide guests with a memorable experience can make Midsummer an undesirable obligation for the host.

11 "There's a lot of pressure around the festival. Midsummer is all about status," says Ingrid. "It's about advertising your social success. It's about spending it in the best place, close to nature, with close friends."

12 Ingrid's party **kicks off** at seven, and everyone turns up. The herring are delicious. Lukas, Ingrid's boyfriend, leads the partygoers in singing Swedish drinking songs. One of Ingrid's guests is a Briton who's been living here for the past seven years. According to him, "This is Christmas, National Day and your birthday all together. It's the biggest day of the year."



## Language focus

Complete the sentences with suitable words or phrases from the box. Change the form where necessary.

<b>bouquet</b>	<b>decoration</b>	<b>dim</b>	<b>exuberance</b>
<b>festivity</b>	<b>kick off</b>	<b>overlook</b>	<b>under no illusion(s)</b>

1. The New Year \_\_\_\_\_ include a parade, an open-air concert and a huge display of fireworks which attract both the young and the old.
2. With bright colors, non-stop celebrations and total \_\_\_\_\_, the Spring Festival is one of the most important festivals for Chinese people.
3. We bought some beautiful \_\_\_\_\_ for our Christmas tree.
4. Halloween activities \_\_\_\_\_ in the city square at around 6 pm. All participants are encouraged to dress up.
5. Many Chinese couples wear beautiful clothes, arrange outdoor activities and buy beautiful \_\_\_\_\_ for their loved ones at the Qixi Festival.
6. This is her first time to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for all the family members, so she is \_\_\_\_\_ that she will make no mistakes.
7. The lights in the square \_\_\_\_\_ as the celebration ended.
8. We booked a room with a window \_\_\_\_\_ the beach where the New Year's Eve firework show will be held.



## Global understanding

Read the passage and complete the summary with information from the passage.

### Preparations for Midsummer

- People go to the supermarket to buy 1) \_\_\_\_\_ of strawberries, herring, new potatoes and sour cream.
- People collect a variety of flowers to make bouquets and crowns and to decorate the 2) \_\_\_\_\_.

### Celebrations of Midsummer

- It is celebrated across the whole country on a 3) \_\_\_\_\_ between 19 and 25 June every year.
- People go to a Midsummer 4) \_\_\_\_\_, lift the pole into place, and 5) \_\_\_\_\_ around it, some of them wearing crowns.

### Significance of Midsummer

- It is as important as 6) \_\_\_\_\_, and holds a special place in the 7) \_\_\_\_\_ with its own customs, memories and social pressure.
- It is time for Swedes who pride themselves on their 8) \_\_\_\_\_ to nature to get together with friends and to be in remote spots.



Summer Solstice celebrations at Stonehenge

## Detailed understanding

Read the passage again and decide whether the statements are true (T) or false (F).

- \_\_\_ 1. People usually go to their parents' home to celebrate Midsummer Eve.
- \_\_\_ 2. The author goes to the island of Blidö to celebrate Midsummer Eve.
- \_\_\_ 3. It is said that you will become healthier and wealthier if you sleep with seven varieties of wild flowers under your pillow on Midsummer Eve.
- \_\_\_ 4. The tasteful and sincerely done celebration makes the author wish he were Swedish.
- \_\_\_ 5. Although Ingrid Hedman has hosted the Midsummer party before, she still feels a lot of pressure around the festival.
- \_\_\_ 6. The host desires to provide guests with a memorable Midsummer experience.
- \_\_\_ 7. Ingrid Hedman believes that the Midsummer party is about advertising one's social success.
- \_\_\_ 8. Lukas thinks that Midsummer is Christmas, National Day and one's birthday all together.

## Cultural thinking

Midsummer is the period around the Summer Solstice, to celebrate the longest day of the year. The Summer Solstice has long been honored by people in many parts of the world. Find another country that celebrates the Summer Solstice and think about the following questions:

- When is the Summer Solstice celebrated in this country?
- Why is the Summer Solstice celebrated in this country?
- How do people in this country celebrate the Summer Solstice?
- What are the similarities and differences between the celebrations in this country and those in Sweden?



## Reading 2

# Singles' Day is about more than huge sales

**cynical** /'sɪnɪkl/

*a.* 愤世嫉俗的

**bachelor** /'bætʃələ/

*n.* 未婚男子; 单身汉

**retail therapy**

购物疗法 (指通过购物使  
心情愉快)

**statistics** /stə'tɪstɪks/

*n.* 统计数据

**stakes** /steɪks/

*n.* (在商业或政治冒险中的) 赌注

**soar** /sɔː/ *vi.* 猛增; 骤升

**prominence** /'prɒmɪnəns/

*n.* 重要; 著名

- 1 In China, Singles' Day, on November 11, is one of the world's biggest 24-hour shopping events. A **cynical** response to Valentine's Day for **bachelors** at first, the day was later renamed as "Double 11." The day has come to represent a business and cultural event of **retail therapy** and gamified social media campaigns from retailers across the country.
- 2 The **statistics** are amazing, both for the volume of sales in just one day and for year-over-year increases. In 2019, e-commerce giant Alibaba reported sales activity totaling 268.4 billion yuan. As a comparison, that's more than 2.5 times the US sales of last year's Black Friday and Cyber Monday combined.
- 3 We recently experienced this atmosphere first-hand at Alibaba's headquarters in Hangzhou.
- 4 When we visited several Hangzhou tech companies a week before Singles' Day, we found that the **stakes** for the holiday were **soaring**. Online retail companies had to ensure the success of the biggest online shopping festival the world had ever seen.
- 5 The ever-increasing **prominence** of Singles' Day raises the stakes even further. Patient, price-conscious consumers often delay making big purchases as the big day nears, in the hope of deep discounts. Companies that don't perform well on Singles' Day stand to lose out on weeks, if not months, of inactive buying activity. For some rising brands, Double 11 represents as





much as 25 percent of sales for the entire year, according to informal Alibaba estimates. That pressure was obvious on our visit. An unspoken excitement could be felt in every office; employees and executives alike were **on high alert**. It seemed that they allowed themselves no room for errors or excuses.

**on high alert**

保持高度警觉

6 From the viewpoint of Alibaba and other online retailers in China, then, what is the advantage of Singles' Day? Why would they continue to fuel the growth of an event that causes severe **disruption** to the core business, while **catering to** consumers' price sensitivity? Clearly, profit maximization cannot be the only driving force behind the Double 11 phenomenon.

**disruption** /dɪs'rʌpʃn/

n. 扰乱; 打乱

**cater to** 迎合; 满足

7 Our Hangzhou trip provided a surprising answer. Nearly every employee we spoke to described the challenges of Double 11 not as a necessary evil, but rather as the event's primary value-add. They spoke of Singles' Day as a stress test that forced the entire organization to pass its limitations, enabling it to accomplish and become what would be impossible otherwise. As the Executive Director of Alibaba Industry Internet Research Center explained, "Double 11 becomes an entire ecosystem's exercise."

8 Representatives from the Chinese companies we talked to mentioned several specific business areas where Double 11 **annually** brought about ambitious next-level change.

**annually** /'ænjʊəli/

ad. 一年一度地; 每年

9 First, product innovation. According to the Global Chief Marketing Officer of Alibaba, as of 2018, one million new products are launched on Double 11. Double 11 creates an ideal platform for companies to launch new products.





**capacity** /kə'pæsəti/

*n.* 能力; 才能

**logistical** /lə'dʒɪstɪkl/

*a.* 物流的; 后勤的

**capability** /,keɪpə'bɪləti/

*n.* 能力; 才能

**barrier** /'bæriə/

*n.* 壁垒; 障碍

**coordination** /kəʊ,ɔ:drɪ'neɪʃn/

*n.* 协调

**adversity** /əd'vɜ:səti/

*n.* 厄运; 逆境; 不幸

**motivational** /,məʊtɪ'veɪʃən/

*a.* 鼓舞人心的

**banner** /'bænə/

*n.* 横幅; 横幅标语

10 Because companies race new products to market, the intense stress strengthens the **capacity** of R&D departments and product managers to deliver high-quality results, quickly. The same is true of internal innovations; companies must improve and reinvent their processes across product innovation, IT, customer service and **logistical capabilities** to deal with the extreme loads. Those benefits last long past the day itself.

11 Another benefit is removing **barriers**. Barriers are a common problem for organizations; even though managers know it is important to work across teams and units, in the normal course of business they can get along without it. Double 11, however, requires all-hands-on-deck cooperation. In the months leading up to Double 11, for example, top executives from Tmall and Cainiao (Alibaba's in-house logistics network) meet weekly to align promotions with logistics capacity. This careful **coordination** has helped Cainiao take large steps toward Jack Ma's stated long-term goal of 24-hour delivery to anywhere in China.

12 Finally, nothing brings people together like **adversity**, and the campaign of Double 11 fosters stronger team spirit that lasts through the year. Core workers, such as engineers, will remain at the office overnight, sometimes for days, catching naps in sleeping bags. Despite this tight schedule, spirits generally seem high. **Motivational banners** signed by employees make a full commitment to "one heart together fighting the war of Double 11." The strong bonds between employees fostered by these efforts help companies hold onto sought-after talent in increasingly competitive tech centers like Hangzhou.

## Culture notes

### 1. Black Friday

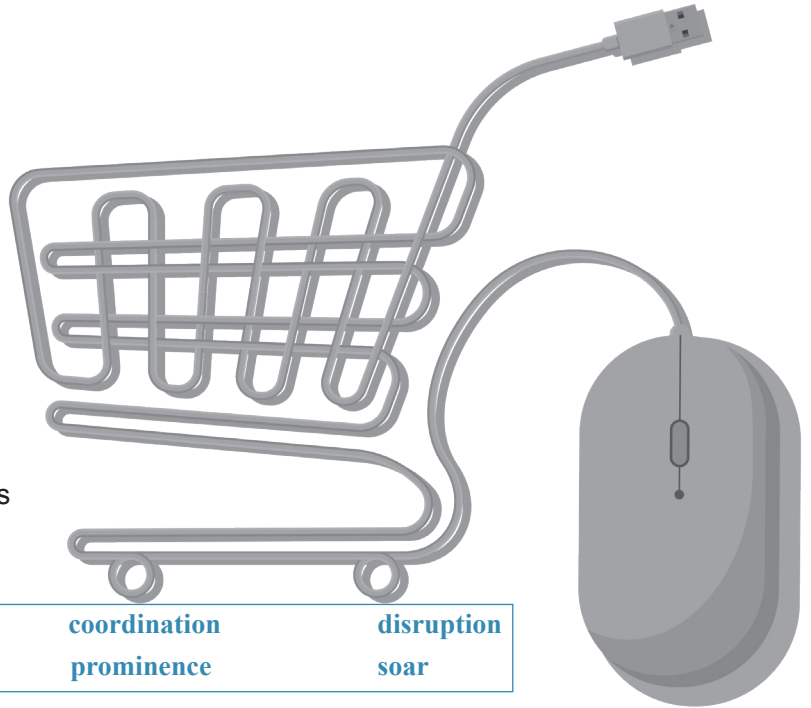
It is the Friday following Thanksgiving that has become one of the busiest shopping days of the year in the United States. National chain stores traditionally offer limited money-saving specials on a wide variety of goods in an effort to attract shoppers into stores.

### 2. Cyber Monday

It is a marketing invention for the Monday after Thanksgiving in the United States that was first observed in 2005 by online retailer, Shop.org. Seen as an online version of Black Friday, Cyber Monday was created to encourage people to shop online.

## Language focus

Complete the sentences with suitable words or phrases from the box. Change the form where necessary.



<b>barrier</b>	<b>cater to</b>	<b>coordination</b>	<b>disruption</b>
<b>motivational</b>	<b>on high alert</b>	<b>prominence</b>	<b>soar</b>

1. High shipping costs are a big \_\_\_\_\_ for consumers in global online shopping.
2. Cyber Monday rose to \_\_\_\_\_ as the online version of Black Friday, achieving record-breaking e-commerce sales each year.
3. The manager gave a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ speech to his employees before the Singles' Day shopping event.
4. The success of any festival activities requires several months of preparation and \_\_\_\_\_ of all related parties.
5. The role of moon cakes in the Mid-Autumn Festival is not only to \_\_\_\_\_ people's appetite but also to serve as the carrier of our love for families and friends.
6. Organizers have responsibility for properly managing the crowds to avoid widespread \_\_\_\_\_ to the music festival.
7. Thanks to many memorial activities and flowers in bloom, the number of park visitors \_\_\_\_\_ in Beijing during the Qingming Festival.
8. Consumers are \_\_\_\_\_ for every price change of the products they want to buy months before the approach of the Singles' Day promotion.



## Global understanding

Read the passage and complete the summary with information from the passage.

### Prominence of Singles' Day

- It is one of the world's 1) \_\_\_\_\_ 24-hour shopping events.
- It is a business and cultural event of 2) \_\_\_\_\_ and gamified social media campaigns from retailers across the country.
- The statistics are 3) \_\_\_\_\_, both for the volume of sales in just one day and for year-over-year increases.

### Influence of Singles' Day

- Consumers: They delay making big purchases as the big day nears, in the hope of deep 4) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Companies: Those that don't perform well on Singles' Day stand to 5) \_\_\_\_\_ on weeks, if not months, of inactive buying activity.

### Driving forces behind Singles' Day

- Profit 6) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Product 7) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Removing 8) \_\_\_\_\_ by forcing people to work across teams and units.
- Bringing people together and fostering stronger team 9) \_\_\_\_\_.

## Detailed understanding

Read the passage again and answer the following questions.

1. How did Singles' Day begin?
2. What did the employees to whom the author talked think of the festival?
3. How can Singles' Day encourage product innovation?
4. What benefit does Cainiao gain from the all-hands-on-deck cooperation with Tmall?
5. How can Double 11 foster stronger team spirit in companies?

## Cultural thinking

Nowadays there are so many festivals. People celebrate for various kinds of reasons, and it seems that every day can be a festival. Besides traditional festivals, such as the Spring Festival, many new festivals have emerged in recent years, such as film festivals, music festivals, and the list goes on. Do we really need so many new festivals? Will you participate in the celebration of these new festivals? Why?



Wuzhen Theatre Festival



# Integrated <sup>?</sup> thinking

In this unit, we find an interesting fact — some countries, despite their radically different cultures, celebrate similar festivals. For example, Midsummer or the Summer Solstice has long been a worldwide festival; China's Singles' Day bears a close resemblance to America's Black Friday or Cyber Monday. Read the two passages again and then answer the following questions.

1. What other traditional and newly-emerged festivals do you know are celebrated in more than one country?

Traditional festivals



Newly-emerged festivals



2. What are the possible reasons for the phenomenon that different countries celebrate the similar festivals?



# Culture mosaic

1

## Rituals and ceremonies



Rituals are a common thread that has linked humanity throughout the ages, regardless of ethnicity, culture or religion. Through rituals, we build families and communities, we make transitions and mark important events in our lives, we express ourselves in joy and sorrow, and perhaps, most importantly, we create and sustain identity.

Rituals are fascinating because they reflect the diversity of the human experience. Usually what seems quite normal to one culture is completely strange to another.

Imagine making your 13-year-old son wear gloves packed with hundreds of angry bullet ants for 10 minutes — you would get arrested for child abuse, but for the Sateré-Mawé tribe of the Amazon, it marks an important coming-of-age ritual.

Before marriage, the women of the West African Fulani Tribe have their mouth and lips tattooed. It won't magically transform them from a girl into a woman — nor will the Sateré-Mawé's ants make a man of the boys — but both share the importance of intention. The cultural or personal significance is what makes it so effective.

In modern times, some hold that we may no longer need rituals, while there are still others claiming that ceremonies are an expression of culture and people still need rituals to mark major points in their life.

**Task** Do you think rituals are important for a country's culture, and why?

## Marking international days

International days are occasions to educate the general public on issues of concern, to mobilize political will and resources to address global problems, and to celebrate and reinforce achievements of humanity.

Some most popular days include International Women's Day (March 8), World Water Day (March 22) and the International Day of Peace (September 21). You may also be interested to know that March 21 is the date of five different international days, and June is the month with the most international days. Each international day offers people the opportunity to organize activities related to the theme of the day. The United Nations, governments, and even universities make an international day a springboard for awareness-raising actions.

One of the great examples of the crucial awareness-raising job that international days do is International Mother Language Day, which is celebrated on February 21 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. This international day serves to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialog.

Linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened as more and more languages disappear. Every two weeks on average a language disappears, taking with it an entire cultural and intellectual heritage.

**Task** If you were to propose a new international day to the United Nations, what kind of international day will you propose, and why?



## Interesting festivals around the world

Some annual festivals emerge out of religious rituals or cultural events, while others come about because of marketing experiments or boredom. Here are some interesting festivals that you may never have heard of.

Winter in the North is so cold that you wouldn't imagine setting foot outside without headwear in case your hair freezes. Yet in Canada, there is an entire festival dedicated to creating the most bizarre frozen hair sculptures. In winter, the town of Whitehorse, Yukon, holds the annual International Hair Freezing Contest. With temperatures at around  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ , festivalgoers gather at the Takhini Hot Springs to create their icy hairstyles. Simply soak your head in the water, and when you lift it out, the freezing air outside will complete the sculpture for you. The winners are announced in the following spring.

Located in the Florida Keys, the United States' only living coral barrier reef, the Underwater Music Festival has been running for over 30 years. A local radio station sponsors the event to promote environmental sustainability and responsible diving. Participants play their sea-themed music underwater through speakers that are suspended beneath boats situated above the reef. Participants are encouraged to wear costumes and play "underwater instruments" to compete for prizes.

These festivals promote diversity, bring neighbors into dialog, increase creativity, offer opportunities for civic pride, and improve our general psychological well-being. In short, they make cities better places to live.

**Task** Do you think these unusual festivals have meaning and significance, and why?

