

Lesson plan **Me and the world** **Traditions and rituals**

1. **Theme:** Me and the world: Traditions and rituals
2. **Grade:** 5th
3. **Lesson type:** Lesson for acquiring new knowledge
4. **Duration:** 45 min.
5. **Basic terms:** world, country, culture, intercultural, traditions, rituals, religion, holidays, pilgrimage, faith, belief, worldview
6. **Pedagogical methods:** storytelling, presentation, discussion, dialog, group work, reflection, project-based work
7. **Means:** board (interactive or otherwise), markers, laptop/computer, multimedia (screen/projector), ppt presentations, sheets of paper, drawing tools, info sheets, scissors, glue, tape
8. **Goals:**
 - Educational:
The students
 - ✓ Recall facts about traditions in different countries
 - ✓ Describe the meaning of different cultural and religious traditions
 - ✓ Compare traditions from different cultures to their own
 - ✓ Identify similarities and differences in traditions and rituals, connecting them with different beliefs
 - ✓ Express opinions about which traditions they find most interesting or meaningful
 - ✓ Design a model (poster) for a given tradition and explain its essence
 - Formational:
The students
 - ✓ Develop their perceptions about different cultural and religious traditions
 - ✓ Discuss similarities and differences in traditions and rituals
 - ✓ Explore interconnections between traditions and rituals from various cultures, including their own
 - ✓ Exhibit interest in further investigation of the subject and in gaining more knowledge on the matter
 - ✓ Form positive attitudes towards diverse expressions of faith through traditions and rituals

- ✓ Develop intercultural and inclusive communication skills regarding different religious traditions

9. Cross-curricular connections: Social studies, Religious studies, History

10. Intra-subject connections: with the lesson plans on the themes: Me and the others, Me and society, I support others, Me and my environment, and the previously explored Me and the world themes

11. Expected results:

- ✓ Students will be able to describe at least three traditions or rituals from the reviewed 6 countries
- ✓ Students will understand and be able to explain that traditions often have historical or religious roots
- ✓ Students will recognize that clothing, food, music, and rituals can carry symbolic meaning
- ✓ Students will be to compare traditions from different cultures to their own
- ✓ Students will gain deeper interest about different cultures and will be encouraged to explore their traditions and beliefs
- ✓ Work collaboratively to present cultural information creatively

12. Preparation

○ For the teacher: Reading the theoretical base, downloading the presentation, providing the info sheets, sheets of paper and drawing tools.

13. Structure of the lesson:

Me and the world: Traditions and rituals

1. Traditions and rituals
 - Meaning, roots, beliefs
2. Religious traditions and rituals in 6 countries
 - Traditions in Turkey, Greece, Ireland, Spain, Japan, and Israel
 - Different beliefs shape cultural and religious traditions by giving people unique ways to celebrate important events, show respect, and express their values.

Even though the rituals and customs can look very different, many share common themes like family gatherings, special meals, music, and acts of kindness. These similarities remind us that, no matter where we come from or what we believe, traditions can bring people together in joy and understanding.

- Concrete traditions and rituals, rooted in religious beliefs: Mevlid Kandili, Turkey / Islam; Orthodox Easter, Greece / Orthodox Christianity; St. Patrick's Day, Ireland / Catholic Christianity; The pilgrimage El Camino de Santiago, Spain / Christianity; Obon festival, Japan / Buddhism; Shinto; Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Israel / Judaism

3. Activity

4. Reflection and discussion

- The students are prompted to answer several questions on the subject, reflecting on their thoughts and feelings and engaging in a discussion.

14. Structure, content and timeline

1. Introduction (5 min.)

- Teacher activity:

- Actualization of prior knowledge on the subject: have you heard of traditions from other countries? Can you describe an interesting tradition that you know of? Have you ever worn special clothes for a holiday, wedding, or festival? (2 min.)

- Introduction of new information and terms: (3 min.)

Imagine it's New Year's Eve in Brazil. Instead of fireworks at midnight, you're on the beach, dressed in white, throwing flowers into the sea for good luck. Around the world, people celebrate important moments with unique rituals, dances, food, and clothes. Today, we'll travel across continents and explore amazing traditions and rituals and see how different religions also have their own ways of celebrating. But first, let's discuss the meaning of "tradition" and "ritual".

A tradition is something people do regularly that has been passed down from parents and grandparents, like celebrating holidays, eating special foods, or singing certain songs. Traditions are often part of a family, culture, or religion and help people feel connected to their history. A ritual is a special action or set of actions that people do in a certain way, often during traditions or ceremonies, like lighting candles on a birthday cake, saying a prayer, or exchanging gifts. Traditions are the bigger customs we keep over time, while rituals are the specific steps or activities that are part of those traditions. Traditions and the specific rituals they consist of can have historic, cultural, or religious roots; often, they are combined, and the traditions are connected to the history, culture, and religion of the given country.

- Student activity:

- Participation in the dialog, asking questions, active listening.

- Methods and tools:
 - Methods: dialog, storytelling
 - Tools: board, marker or an interactive whiteboard (for outlining the theme and the terms; optional, for writing down student's ideas, thoughts)
- 2. Stating the theme of the lesson: Me and the world: Traditions and rituals (35 min.)
- Teacher activity:
 - Short presentation, focused on traditions in 6 countries (10 min.)
 - Theoretical overview, performed with the presentation:

Mevlid Kandili is a special night in Turkey that celebrates the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, an important figure in Islam. On this night, many people go to the mosque to pray and listen to the story of the Prophet's life. The Mevlid Kandili was first observed around the 13th century, preceded by a month of celebration. The word Mevlid means "birth" and Kandil means "candle," and in the past, mosques would be lit with many candles to mark the occasion. In contemporary times, homes and mosques are decorated with bright lights and colourful banners. Families often read or listen to poems about the Prophet, as people love to tell stories about him and sing beautiful songs praising him. The stories and songs talk about the Prophet's life, how he was kind and honest, and cared about everyone. Some people give out sweets or desserts, such as lokma or helva, to neighbours and friends as an act of kindness. The night is also a time to think about being a better person — showing honesty, generosity, and respect for others. One of the most important parts of Mevlid Kandili is expressing kindness and sharing food, love and care with others.

In Greece, Easter is among the most important religious celebrations of the year, and it is filled with meaningful traditions and rituals. During Holy Week, the days before Easter, families attend church services that remember the last days of Jesus Christ. On Good Friday, people take part in a quiet procession, carrying candles and singing hymns. On Holy Saturday night, just before midnight, everyone gathers at the church with unlit candles. At midnight, the priest announces, "Christ is risen!" and lights his candle from the holy flame, which is then shared from person to person until the whole church glows with light. This ritual symbolizes hope, new life, and the victory of light over darkness. After the midnight service, families go home carefully carrying their glowing candles, and they enjoy a special meal together. One of the most loved traditions is the red egg game, where people tap their eggs against each other to see whose egg will remain unbroken. The red eggs represent life and the resurrection. On Easter Sunday, families gather for a festive meal, often including roasted lamb, traditional bread called tsoureki, and music. These rituals and traditions bring families and communities together, reminding everyone of togetherness, joy, and renewal.

In Ireland, St. Patrick's Day is a joyful tradition that honours St. Patrick, the country's patron saint, who helped spread Christianity there over 1,500 years ago. The day is celebrated on March 17th and begins with church services for many families, where people remember St. Patrick's life and teachings. St. Patrick's Day was once celebrated predominantly as a religious holiday,

but in contemporary times it is related more to spending a joyful time with friends and family and honouring the traditions, also showing Irish pride. A well-known ritual is wearing green clothing or accessories, because green is the colour most connected with Ireland and its lush landscape. Another reason is that leprechauns (creatures from fairy tales and legends, characteristic for Ireland) allegedly can't see the colour green, so they won't be able to see people and pinch them. People also wear shamrocks, a small three-leaf plant that, according to legend, St. Patrick used to explain the Christian idea of the Holy Trinity. After church, the day turns into a festive cultural celebration with parades, music, and dancing. Streets fill with people wearing green, waving flags, and enjoying traditional Irish music played on fiddles and pipes. Irish step dancing is also enjoyed by many. Families and friends gather to eat meals that often include Irish foods like soda bread or stews. In many places, landmarks are even lit up in green to honour the holiday. The traditions and rituals of St. Patrick's Day remind people of Irish heritage, faith, and unity, while also welcoming others around the world to join in the celebration.

In Spain, one very famous religious tradition is the pilgrimage called El Camino de Santiago, or "The Way of St. James". This is a journey that people from all over the world take, walking or cycling along special paths that lead to the city of Santiago de Compostela, where it is believed the remains of St. James, one of Jesus's apostles, are buried. The tradition has been followed for hundreds of years, and pilgrims wear simple clothing, often with a wide hat and a scallop shell symbol on their bag. The scallop shell is the sign of the pilgrim and represents the different paths all coming together at the same place. Along the way, pilgrims stop to pray, reflect, and sometimes attend church services in villages they pass through. Reaching the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela is the most important ritual of the journey. Many pilgrims attend a special mass where the giant incense burner, called the botafumeiro, swings high through the church, filling the air with sweet smoke. Some pilgrims also climb to the statue of St. James and give it a hug as a sign of thanks. For many, the pilgrimage is not only about religion but also about personal growth, meeting new people, and finding peace while walking through beautiful landscapes. The rituals of El Camino remind people of faith, hope, and the value of life's journey.

In Japan, the Obon Festival is a very special tradition that honors the spirits of ancestors. Over 500 years ago, this custom began as a Buddhist tradition, but today it's celebrated throughout Japan by people of all faiths. It is usually held in summer, and many people travel back to their hometowns to celebrate with their families. A main ritual during Obon is a particularly beautiful one – toro nagashi, or floating lanterns. It involves lighting a paper lantern and releasing it onto a river, a symbolic act believed to guide ancestors' spirits back to the afterlife. Families also visit and clean their ancestors' resting places, placing flowers and offerings of food there. Inside the home, some families set up a small altar with special decorations and food to welcome the spirits. These rituals show respect, love, and gratitude for those who came before them. Another common practice is creating "spirit horses" and "spirit cows," called shouryouma. These are made from cucumbers and eggplants with legs, based on the belief that they will help ancestors quickly find their way back home. A joyful part of Obon is the Bon Odori, a traditional dance performed in towns and villages. People wear light summer kimonos called yukata and dance in circles to the beat of drums and folk songs. At the end of the festival, floating lanterns are released on rivers, lakes, or the sea, guiding the spirits back to the afterlife. The sight of hundreds

of glowing lanterns on the water is both beautiful and peaceful. Obon is not just a time of remembrance, but also a celebration of family, community, and the connection between the living and the ancestors.

In Israel, an important Jewish tradition is the Bar Mitzvah for boys and the Bat Mitzvah for girls. This ceremony marks the age when a child is considered old enough to take on religious responsibilities — usually 13 for boys and 12 for girls. The word Bar Mitzvah means “son of the commandment,” and Bat Mitzvah means “daughter of the commandment”. The main ritual takes place in the synagogue, where the boy or girl may read from the Torah, the Jewish holy book, often in Hebrew. This is a big achievement, because it usually takes months of practice. The ceremony shows that the young person is now part of the adult religious community and responsible for their own choices. After the religious service, families and friends celebrate together with a joyful party. There is often music, dancing, and lots of food, and the young person may give a speech about what the day means to them. Guests sometimes bring gifts, and some families even organize big gatherings with traditional Jewish songs and dances like the hora, where everyone holds hands and dances in a circle. More than just a birthday, a Bar/Bat Mitzvah is a tradition that celebrates faith, community, and the significant milestone of growing up.

3. Activity: “Traditions Around the World Museum” (25 min.)

- ✓ The teacher divides the students into small groups (3-4 children)
- ✓ The teacher assigns each group a tradition (if the groups are less than 6, the traditions can be divided equally, or some of them can be extracted)
- ✓ The teacher gives each group an info sheet with data about the tradition, assigned to the given group
- ✓ Each group creates a small “exhibit” on a poster or large sheet of paper with:
 - Name of the tradition and the country
 - A drawing or symbol (like lanterns for Obon, red eggs for Greek Easter, a flower for St. Patric’s day)
 - A ritual written in their own words (example: “At midnight, Greek families light candles and share the flame”)
 - Explanation in their own words about the meaning of the tradition (to bring people together, to be kind and sharing, to show love and care)
 - When ready, groups set up their posters around the classroom. Students walk around like visitors in a museum, looking at each “exhibit.” Each group explains their tradition in 3–4 minutes.
- Student activity:
 - Participation in the dialog, taking notice of the presentation, asking questions, active listening, participation in the activity
- Methods and tools:
 - Methods: dialog, presentation, storytelling, group work, discussion

- Tools: interactive board or a screen, laptop/computer, board, marker, sheets of paper for each group of students, coloured markers and/or pencils (or other drawing tools), crayons, scissors, glue, tape (optional, for setting the posters on the walls), info sheets
4. Reflection and discussion (5 min.)
- Teacher activity:
 - Posing questions for a discussion:
 - ✓ “Which tradition did you find most interesting?”
 - ✓ “What do many traditions have in common?”
 - ✓ “If you could take part in one tradition from another country, which one would it be?”
 - ✓ “What is one tradition in your family that you enjoy most, and why?”
 - ✓ “Why is it important to learn about traditions from other countries?”
 - ✓ “What do you think makes a tradition special?”
 - Engaging the students with prompts:
 - ✓ “In my family, one tradition we always celebrated was...”
 - ✓ “A tradition from another culture that I would love to take part in is...”
 - ✓ “One tradition that surprised me when I first learned about it was...”
 - ✓ “When I was your age, my favorite tradition was...”
 - Answering questions and clarifying information
 - Student activity:
 - Engaging in the discussion
 - Reflection on their ideas and emotions on the subject
 - Methods and tools:
 - Methods: reflection, discussion, active listening
 - Tools: possible use for a board/flipchart and a marker – to write down interesting ideas and suggestions.

15. Variations:

- The theoretical part could be merged with the activity: the info sheets to be distributed among the groups of students beforehand, so they would be provided with

- the information; then the students work on their projects and present them; after that, the teacher can provide more details about the traditions and engage the students in a discussion.
- The “Tradition stations” activity: the teacher sets up in advance 6 “stations” for the six different traditions. They are equipped with posters/sheets with images and details about each tradition. During the class, the students go through each station, review the provided information, and ask questions. The teacher clarifies the facts, adds additional data, and answers the questions. Afterwards, the students pick a tradition and try to describe it to the class.
 - The “Traditions in a box” activity: the teacher gathers short info cards about types of traditions (food, clothes, dances) in a box and gives them to every student to draw a card. When a student draws a card, the teacher describes a tradition from one or two countries (ex., food; how people eat in Japan and India). Then, the student shares a tradition that they know of, or their family's rituals regarding the specific type of tradition. While different traditions are discussed, the teacher points to the specific country on the map, and the class traces the traditions around the world. A subsequent discussion is organized to explore the differences and similarities between the traditions and cultures.

16. Fun facts (from <https://littera24.com/en/exploring-25-fascinating-cultural-traditions-around-the-world/>; Tirosh, O., 2024; <https://www.tomedes.com/translator-hub/24-cultural-traditions-around-world>)

- ✓ Holi, a Hindu festival, is also known as the “festival of colours” because participants throw coloured powder and water at each other during the celebration.
- ✓ In Spain they celebrate a festival called Tomatina, during which people throw tomatoes at one another for fun.
- ✓ Another festival, at which people celebrate by throwing things at each other, in this case – water, is Songkran. It is devoted to the Thai New Year.
- ✓ In Japan there is a tradition known as Hanami – enjoying the beauty of cherry blossoms in the spring.

- ✓ Believed to bring luck to a marriage, a UK tradition involves couples freezing the top tier of their wedding cake and eating it a year later, on their first anniversary.
- ✓ The annual Spring Bank Holiday sees crowds gathering on Cooper's Hill in Gloucestershire (UK) for a unique event: chasing a wheel of cheese down the hill.
- ✓ In Spain, people eat 12 grapes on New Year's Eve. The grapes are supposed to bring good luck and prosperity for the 12 months of the new year.