Festivals in their cultural context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 syncretic festival ____	**a** a festival blending elements from multiple cultural or religious traditions
2 rite of passage ____	**b** a ceremony marking an important transition in a person's life
3 invented tradition ____	**c** a custom presented as ancient but actually created relatively recently for a specific purpose
4 commercialisation ____	**d** the process by which cultural practices are exploited for profit
5 cultural appropriation ____	**e** adopting elements of another culture without understanding or respect for their original meaning
6 intangible heritage ____	**f** non-physical cultural practices, such as rituals or oral traditions, recognised as heritage
7 liturgical calendar ____	**g** the fixed annual cycle of religious observances and festivals
8 collective memory ____	**h** a shared set of memories and narratives held by a community
9 pageantry ____	**i** elaborate, ceremonial display, often with costume and spectacle
10 authenticity ____	**j** the quality of being genuine or true to origin, rather than manufactured

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For a festival blending multiple traditions: syncretic / purely singular.

2 For a ceremony marking a life transition: rite of passage / ordinary routine.

3 For a custom falsely presented as ancient: invented tradition / genuinely ancient practice.

4 For exploiting cultural practices for profit: commercialisation / preservation.

5 For adopting another culture's elements without understanding: cultural appropriation / respectful exchange.

6 For non-physical cultural practices recognised formally: intangible heritage / physical monuments.

Festivals in their cultural context

7 For elaborate ceremonial display: pageantry / plain simplicity.

8 For being genuine rather than manufactured: authenticity / artificiality.

3 Complete the festival collocations with one word.

1 a _____ festival (= blending multiple traditions)

2 a _____ of passage (= marking a life transition)

3 an _____ tradition (= falsely presented as ancient)

4 growing _____ (= exploitation for profit)

5 accused of cultural _____ (= adopting without respect)

6 protect _____ heritage (= non-physical cultural practices)

7 elaborate _____ (= ceremonial display and spectacle)

8 question the _____ (= genuineness of a tradition)

Festivals in their cultural context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

authenticity | collective memory | commercialisation | cultural appropriation | intangible heritage | invented tradition | liturgical calendar | pageantry | rite of passage | syncretic

Case A: Historians revealed the ceremony was actually an 1 _____, created only a century ago despite being widely believed ancient.
Case B: The festival is genuinely 2 _____, blending indigenous and colonial elements into a distinctive local tradition.
Case C: UNESCO recognised the practice as 3 _____, protecting it as part of the community's cultural identity.
Case D: Local organisers expressed concern about growing 4 _____, as tourist demand began to overshadow the festival's original purpose.
Case E: Critics accused a fashion brand of 5 _____ after it used sacred symbols purely for commercial design.
Case F: The coming-of-age ceremony functions as an important 6 _____ for young people in the community.
Case G: The event follows the traditional 7 _____, occurring on the same date each year regardless of the modern calendar.
Case H: The festival forms part of the town's 8 _____, connecting current residents to shared events long past. Its elaborate 9 _____ draws visitors from across the region, though some question its 10 _____ given how much it has changed.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

The invented-tradition debate

Historians studying festivals frequently encounter cases where celebrations widely believed to be ancient are, on closer examination, relatively recent inventions, sometimes deliberately created to serve nationalist or commercial purposes. This finding does not necessarily diminish a festival's cultural significance, scholars argue, since traditions can acquire genuine meaning and community attachment regardless of their actual age. The concept of authenticity itself becomes complicated in this light, as the question shifts from whether a practice is truly ancient to whether it genuinely reflects and serves the community that currently practises it. Commercialisation complicates this further, since a festival's transformation into a tourist attraction can simultaneously threaten and sustain its ongoing survival.

1 What do historians studying festivals frequently encounter? _____

2 Why were some celebrations deliberately created, according to the text? _____

Festivals in their cultural context

3 Does this necessarily diminish a festival's cultural significance? _____

4 How does the concept of authenticity become complicated? _____

5 What does the question shift to, instead of whether a practice is ancient? _____

6 What effect can commercialisation have on a festival's survival? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

1 The tradition was actually created recently, not ancient. INVENTED TRADITION _____

2 The festival blends elements from several different cultures. SYNCRETIC _____

3 The company was accused of using sacred symbols disrespectfully. CULTURAL APPROPRIATION _____

4 The practice is protected as non-physical cultural heritage. INTANGIBLE HERITAGE _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word account analysing whether a festival's cultural value depends on its historical authenticity, distinguishing observation from argument.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

Festivals in their cultural context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Connotation

1 syncretic 2 rite of passage 3 invented tradition 4 commercialisation 5 cultural appropriation 6 intangible heritage 7 pageantry 8 authenticity

3 Collocations

1 syncretic 2 rite 3 invented 4 commercialisation 5 appropriation 6 intangible 7 pageantry 8 authenticity

4 Case notes

1 invented tradition 2 syncretic 3 intangible heritage 4 commercialisation 5 cultural appropriation
6 rite of passage 7 liturgical calendar 8 collective memory 9 pageantry 10 authenticity

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Cases where celebrations widely believed ancient are, on closer examination, relatively recent inventions.
2 To serve nationalist or commercial purposes.
3 No.
4 The question shifts from whether a practice is truly ancient to whether it genuinely reflects and serves the community that currently practises it.
5 Whether it genuinely reflects and serves the current community.
6 It can simultaneously threaten and sustain its ongoing survival.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 It was an invented tradition. 2 The festival is syncretic.
3 The company was accused of cultural appropriation. 4 The practice is intangible heritage.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.