

UK dates to remember

A April Fool's Day is on 1st April. It isn't a public holiday, but it's a day when people play jokes on friends and family. Some good jokes are in the newspapers or on TV – for example, one year on the BBC there was a programme about spaghetti trees in Switzerland. Many people believed it was true!

B In most countries, **May Day** is on 1st May, but in the UK the holiday is always the first Monday of May. A traditional May Day activity is maypole dancing, when people in colourful clothes dance around a tree or a pole to celebrate the end of winter and the start of sunny weather.

C Boxing Day is a holiday on 26th December. If this is a weekend, then the holiday is the following Monday. The name comes from the custom of giving servants a small box with a present or money on this day. Some families meet to watch sport, while others prefer to go shopping on the first day of the sales.

D Bonfire Night isn't a holiday but it is a national celebration. On 5th November, people remember Guy Fawkes' plan to destroy the English Parliament in 1605. The plan was not a success, and every year since then towns and villages have huge bonfires and fantastic firework displays. They also burn a model of the man responsible for the plan: Guy Fawkes.

Read the article about important dates in the UK and find the answers to the questions. Write **A, B, C, or D**.

On which day or days...?

- 1 do some people watch football
- 2 do people remember a moment in history
- 3 do people celebrate a change in the weather
- 4 do people go to work
- 5 do people hear stories which aren't true
- 6 do some people wear special clothes

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Living in London

Read about three young people who are living in London.

Kathy O'Brien is 26 years old and she's from Ireland. Right now, she's living in a flat in north London and she has a job in a shop. She doesn't like her job, but she needs the money. When the weather is good, Kathy sings and plays her guitar in Hyde Park. She is very good and lots of people stop and listen to her. Kathy goes to a lot of auditions because she wants to be a professional singer one day. She's also using her laptop to make a CD of her songs to send to all the music companies in London.

Answer the following questions

- 1) Where is she living right now?
- 2) Does she like her job?
- 3) Why does she work?
- 4) What does she do when the weather is good?
- 5) Why does she go to a lot of auditions?
- 6) What is she also using to make a CD of her songs?

Music is changing their lives

Inside the **concert hall** a top **orchestra** is playing brilliantly. Their young **conductor**, Gustavo Dudamel, is one of the best in the world. But we are not in New York, London, or Vienna. We are in Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. The orchestra is the **Simón Bolívar Youth orchestra**, and its conductor and young musicians come from the poorest families in the country. They are a product of *El Sistema* ('the system' in Spanish), a project started in 1975 to save poor children from crime and drug addiction through classical music.



Today more than 270,000 young Venezuelans from the *barrios* (poor areas in Caracas) are learning to play instruments. They **practise** Beethoven and Brahms instead of learning to steal and shoot. Gisella, aged 11, says 'I am learning the **viola** because I want to escape from the *barrio*. In Venezuela now it's cooler to like Strauss than salsa.' Edgar, 22, who plays in the orchestra, says 'sometimes when we finish late I stay in town – it's dangerous to go home at that time. But now most of my friends are here. We are a family as well as an orchestra.'

Dudamel is now also the Musical Director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, one of the USA's top orchestras. But he returns frequently to Caracas to conduct. 'I miss my orchestra, but I will never leave them. They're family,' he says.



Answer the following questions

- 1) Who is Gustavo Dudamel?
- 2) What is the name of the orchestra he conducts?
- 3) Where do its conductor and young musicians come from?
- 4) How many young Venezuelans from the *barrios* are learning to play instruments?
- 5) Which other orchestra is Dudamel the conductor of?