Celebrations/Festivals

1 **Complete the gaps with:** CHECK

scare away | honour | set off | partying | dress up
torches | altars | lanterns | patron | costumes

A

The Mexicans **1)** _____ the spirit of their ancestors. Family and friends make **2)** _____ and put food and flowers on them.

B

The British ***3)*** _____ *as witches or ghosts. They put candles inside* ***4)*** _____ *made of pumpkins to* ***5)*** _____ *evil spirits.*

C

In Valencia, people celebrate the feast of San José, the ***6)*** _____ *saint of carpenters. They* ***7)*** _____ *fireworks and watch street processions.*

D

People in Shetland, Scotland dress in Viking **8)** _____, light **9)** _____ and drag a full-size replica Viking longship along the streets which they burn. Then, there is **10)** _____ and dancing.

put up decorations

offer presents

prepare a special meal

set off fireworks

have a barbecue

watch a street parade

dress in costumes

dance

play games

bake a cake

blow out candles

have a party

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stand in the streets

(unlit) bonfire

parade

shallow wooden barrel

burning tar (n): a thick hot sticky substance that is usually used to cover roads

eye-catching costumes

fancy dress

(fire walking) ritual

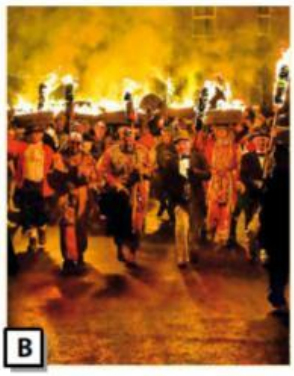
hurl barrels

cheer and applaud

b) Use the words/phrases below in the correct form to complete the paragraph. CHECK
Which picture does it match?

- ***stand in the streets*** • ***bonfire*** • ***parade***
- ***shallow wooden barrels*** • ***burning tar***
- ***eye-catching costumes*** • ***fancy dress***
- ***ritual*** • ***hurl barrels***
- ***cheer and applaud***

A



B

The picture shows a night parade. People are **1)** _____ watching some men dressed in **2)** _____. They have **3)** _____ on their heads with **4)** _____ in them. Some are holding lit torches. They may want to light a **5)** _____. I think it's winter time because everyone is wearing heavy clothes.

Picture

LIVEWORKSHEETS

THE TAR BAAL

A The village of Allendale is nestled in the North Pennines of Northumberland, an area of outstanding natural beauty, in the north of England. It is a typical sleepy English village where, normally, nothing much happens except for a few visitors on country walks turning up at the weekend. But once a year that all changes and Allendale becomes a hive of activity as preparations are made for an unusual festival and the arrival of flocks of visitors. Every year on the 31st December, the village is packed with people who have come to witness an ancient ritual, the Tar Barrel Fire Festival, known locally as the Tar Baal.

B The celebration doesn't start, officially, until a quarter to midnight but hours before *that*, people of all ages begin to gather in the streets of Allendale. Crowds stand in the streets and the main village square in anticipation of the evening's festivities. If the weather is very wintry then people wrap up in lots of thick warm clothing so as not to get too chilled while waiting for the main event to start.

C At around 11 pm people begin to swarm around a huge unlit bonfire in the middle of the square. Parents

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lift their children onto their shoulders to make sure they get a clear view of the entertainment. Then, towards the last hour of the old year, a brass band begins to play. It is now nearly midnight and 45 Allendale men, called Guisers, balance shallow wooden barrels filled with burning tar on their heads. Each barrel can weigh as much as 35 pounds, nearly 16 kilos, and quite a weight to carry on your head! The men then begin to parade through the streets of Allendale. They walk two by two with the band playing in the middle of the procession as sparks and flames from the burning barrels light up the dark winter night. The men are dressed in eye-catching costumes. Traditionally, they all used to dress up as court jesters from the Elizabethan era, but in more recent years the men have performed the ritual in all kinds of fancy dress. You might see a Roman gladiator or a children's cartoon character like Scooby Doo pass you by. The one thing the participants all have in common, however, is that they are from Allendale families. The right to take part in the festival as a Guiser is only ever passed down the generations from father to son. Some Guisers have performed the task for as many as fifty years.

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D Once the Guisers have completed a circuit of the village they gather at the bonfire, or Baal, just as the clock is about to strike midnight. Then they hurl their barrels onto the fire while everyone shouts 'Be damned to he who throws last!' As the new year is welcomed in, people may break into singing the traditional New Year's song *Auld Lang Syne*, while others are content to simply warm themselves by the flames of the fire, especially if they've been standing in the cold for hours!

E No one knows for sure how the centuries old tar barrel festival began. With no documented evidence to give proof of its origins, the only explanation for the spectacle is in local folklore, which has linked the event to the invasion of Vikings from Scandinavia in the 8th century, as well as a pagan belief in fire gods.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

4a Reading

Check these words

3 **Choose the best answer according to the text.** CHECK **Give reasons for your answers.**

1 People go to Allendale at New Year to
- **A** walk in the countryside.
- **B** spend a quiet weekend.
- **C** see a traditional event.
- **D** help prepare a festival.

2 The word 'that' in line 13 refers to
- **A** the ritual.
- **B** the village.
- **C** the time the event starts.
- **D** midnight.

3 The fire ritual starts at
- **A** 11:45 pm.
- **B** 11:00 pm.
- **C** midnight.
- **D** about 10 pm.

4 The brass band
- **A** lights the tar barrels.
- **B** parades through the village with the men.
- **C** plays for over an hour.
- **D** has forty five musicians in it.

5 The men in the parade
- **A** are given a special name for the ceremony.
- **B** must all live inside the village boundary.
- **C** are all only sons.
- **D** have to wear the same clothes.

6 According to the author, the origins of the festival are
- **A** Scandinavian.
- **B** pagan.
- **C** English.
- **D** unknown.

- *nestle* • *outstanding*
- *ancient ritual* • *gather*
- *in anticipation of* • *swarm*
- *brass band* • *shallow*
- *procession* • *court jester*
- *gladiator* • *complete a circuit*
- *hurl* • *spectacle* • *invasion*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Match the opposites to the following.
Check in your dictionaries. CHECK

deep | disperse | new/modern
plain | busy/lively | modern

1 **sleepy** village ≠ _____
2 **ancient** ritual ≠ _____
3 **gather** ≠ _____
4 **shallow** barrel ≠ _____
5 **colourful** costumes ≠ _____
6 **traditional** song ≠ _____

Speaking

Make notes under the headings:

Name of festival	Reason

Place

Date

Celebrations

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