

Unit 1 Reading practice

Birthday celebrations around the world

- A** The tradition of birthday parties originated in Europe many years ago. In those days, people were scared of evil spirits and believed that they were particularly in danger on their birthday. To protect them, friends and relatives came to be with the birthday person and to bring their good wishes. Later, they started to give gifts to bring even more good luck. Birthday celebrations have now become a tradition all over the world, and they vary from country to country.
- B** In Denmark, people put a flag outside the window to signify that someone in the house is having a birthday. The family always puts presents around children's beds while they are sleeping so that they find them as soon as they wake up. In Norway, schoolchildren dance in front of the class with a friend while the others sing 'Happy Birthday'.
- C** In England, the custom is for friends to give the birthday person 'the bumps'. They do this by holding the person up in the air by the hands and feet and lifting them up and down to the floor. They count out loud as they do this – one for each year and then one for luck.
- D** In Vietnam, everyone celebrates their birthday on New Year's Day, which is called 'Tet'. The Vietnamese do not acknowledge the exact date you were born, so a baby celebrates its first birthday on 'Tet' no matter when it was born in the previous year. For this reason, they never identify themselves with monthly horoscopes such as Leo or Virgo, but instead they talk about the symbol for the year they were born, for example, the Year of the Dog.

1 Read the text and write *True* or *False* for sentences 1–5. Explain your answers.

- 1 People originally gave birthday presents to people to celebrate their age.

- 2 In Denmark, the people in the street know when it is someone's birthday.

- 3 In Norway, everyone dances in the classroom when a child has a birthday.

- 4 In England, you give someone the bumps by lifting them up and dropping them on the floor.

- 5 In Vietnam, Tet is not only the beginning of a new year.

2 Read the text again and answer the questions. Use complete sentences.

- 1 Traditionally, why did people visit you on your birthday?

- 2 How many bumps do you give someone who is nine? Why?

- 3 Why do the Vietnamese not have monthly horoscopes?

3 Find words and phrases in the text that mean:

- 1 afraid (*paragraph A*) _____
- 2 especially (*paragraph A*) _____
- 3 family members (*paragraph A*) _____
- 4 presents (*paragraph A*) _____
- 5 to show (*paragraph B*) _____
- 6 tradition (*paragraph C*) _____
- 7 know or care about (*paragraph D*) _____