

## 001119 Holiday

### Lessons

This week I started a new lesson with my boarding school classes. I decided to teach them about holidays in the States since Thanksgiving is just around the corner. A lot of the students assume that the holidays are the same all over the world since the government tells them that they are, so it is good to teach them that there are differences. Even teachers here at the school are surprised when I tell them that the US does not celebrate International Children's Day (June 1) or International Labor Day (May 1). "But they are international holidays. What do you mean you don't celebrate them?" So, the students are really interested in learning about the US holidays and about what people do.

I chose a few of the most popular holidays to teach. I decided not to include Easter or Christmas since I did not want to water them down or to teach their real meaning. I start with Valentines Day, which is gaining in popularity here in China. I explain what it is and the students always get a little goofy about it. They get even more so when I pull out a Valentines Card that I made and explain that people send their friends cards, flowers or the like. Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day are also celebrated in China and my students know all about them. Memorial Day is a little more difficult to explain. I tell my students that it is a day to remember soldiers in wars. I usually need to explain what a soldier is and what a war is. In one class I told my class that a soldier was a person in the army. Then I asked, "Mingbei, bu mingbei" (do you understand). They answered in unison, "bu mingbei!" (we have no clue what you are talking about, but thanks for asking). So, I put my hand up to my face in a salute and they all exclaimed, "mingbei!" (got it!). It was pretty funny.

I also teach the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Halloween (gaining popularity in China, but kids don't trick or treat) and New Years. Next I play a game that all of my classes have really gotten into. The game is an adaptation of Jeopardy where I have categories of questions with each category having five questions. The questions are worth between 100 and 500 points. The categories include US holidays, Chinese holidays, music and money. I divide the class up into teams with each team being one row. The teams must chose the category and for how many points.

The Chinese holiday category is trickier than they think it will be. The 500 point question asks for the date of the Spring Festival which is based on the lunar calendar and so changes every year. No one has gotten it. The 400 question asks what animal represents this year. They know the Chinese, but I want the English. The US holidays questions are a little easier and a way to review the lesson. The 500 point question asks what people eat on Thanksgiving (turkey) and the 300 asks what you give your friend on Valentines day. The music category is a little trickier still. The 100 point question asks what movie is "My heart will go on" from (Titanic). The 500 asks them to name the group that sings songs that I write on the board and even sing a little of (Backstreet Boys). The money category asks them to give me the name of money in a country. For example the 300 question is the name of money in Russia. The 500 question is the name of money in Hong Kong which is often missed.

The game usually goes into the break between classes and I have even had to have extended play to break ties. The lesson is a lot of fun to teach and a good wind down lesson for the year.

## Ankle

Well, Sunday should have been the day that I was off of my crutches, but I am not. My ankle is not healing, but is actually getting worse over time. So, this morning I will head out to get some more x-rays taken to send down to the doctor in Hong Kong. I have decided to move up my departure date so that I can see a doctor in the US, especially if surgery is going to be necessary. Moving up my date was a very difficult decision to make. I really do not want to leave early. But, I will have been on crutches for over two months by the time that I leave China.

My classes are over at the end of December, so my original intention had been to leave in early January via South Korea. I have a layover there that the airline was going to let me extend for several days. So, I would be able to travel to South Korea, basically for free. I wanted to check out Seoul and the DMZ before it was all changed. And it would have been a good transition between China and the US.

My departure date is now December 15th which will hopefully give me enough time to visit a doctor and make the arrangements for surgery if necessary before my insurance runs out. I will be flying from Yantai to Boston via Seoul, Anchorage and New York. I will arrive in New York on the night of the 15th and have a layover until the 16th. So, if anyone who lives in New York would be interested in putting me up for a night, I would be much obliged. :)

The results of the x-rays may actually cause me to move the date up even sooner if the doctors think it will be best. Leaving so soon is already an emotional roller coaster, so I would not want to leave before the 8th. But, we shall see.

Take care,

Jeff

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