

CELEBRATIONS

Prom night

Teacher's notes

Age: Teenagers/Adults

Level: Upper-intermediate-advanced (B2-C1)

Time: 60-90 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. read a text about prom night;
2. learn about the language and important elements of prom;
3. discuss and decide how to make the most of a limited prom budget.

Language focus: vocabulary related to prom night and school-leaving events

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Procedure

1. Elements of prom

Students match the words with the pictures and then briefly discuss whether these things were important, or played any part at all, at their school-leaving event. E.g. *Did they go to the event with a date? Did they buy or wear a corsage? Did they wear a ball gown or tuxedo?* etc.

Key:

make-up

date

corsage

tuxedo

ball gown

photographer

2. Key words

Students find and underline the key words in the text. They then match them with the definitions and carefully read the text to notice how the words are used in context. Note: the definitions are in the order that the words appear in the text.

Key:

1. pinnacle
2. graduation
3. adequate
4. sumptuous
5. topped
6. peers
7. extra curricular
8. parading
9. permissive
10. uncool

3. True or false?

Students read the text and, working in pairs, decide whether the statements are true or false. They should come up with new sentences to correct any that are false.

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Key:

1. False, it has now spread to other countries around the world.
2. False, they originated in the late 19th century.
3. True.
4. False, it celebrates graduation from high school (regardless of whether the students go on to college or not).
5. False, the prom king and queen are elected by other students in their school year as well as their teachers.
6. True.

4. Expressions

Students find expressions in the text and then, working in pairs, use them in sentences of their own to talk about prom night.

Key:

1. a rite of passage
2. the night is still young
3. booming post-war economy
4. pave the way
5. do away with (something)
6. shoulder the costs

5. 'When I left school'

Students talk in small groups or as a whole class about how they celebrated leaving school. How different or similar was their event to a US high-school prom night? Find out what made these events memorable and what students might do differently if they had the chance to organize an event for students who are going to graduate at the end of this school year.

If students have not yet left school, ask them to discuss what they hope their prom night, or school leaving event, will be like.

6. The prom budget

Students imagine they are going to prom and, working in pairs or small groups, talk about how

they would each spend a prom night budget of \$800 on themselves. Monitor as they discuss, to ensure students are focusing on the discussion questions rather than the maths – they only need to add things up roughly, as they are estimating costs and there is no correct answer to this task.

After deciding what they would spend their budget on, they should report back to the rest of the class on what they each think is or isn't important when it comes to prom night. Do they think they would stay within or go over budget?

Note: If adult students feel uncomfortable planning for themselves, an alternate way of doing this task would be to either ask each student to plan instead for their teenage child (either real or imagined), or ask each group to plan for an imaginary American teen, possibly giving them some pointers as to their personality (do they love/hate fashion, having their photo taken, etc) to aid debate.

7. The 'promposal'

Students search online for videos of promposals and talk about what they find. As an alternative to students searching online, you could find several videos yourself and project them on the whiteboard. Then students can split off into groups to discuss them.

Two examples of promposals you might like to include are:

- 'Ellen sets up an unforgettable promposal for two best friends' [TheEllenShow]
www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB8_pdzWy6Q
- 'Emma Stone responds to teen who asked her to prom' [Inside Edition]
www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhpzhUgqCyg

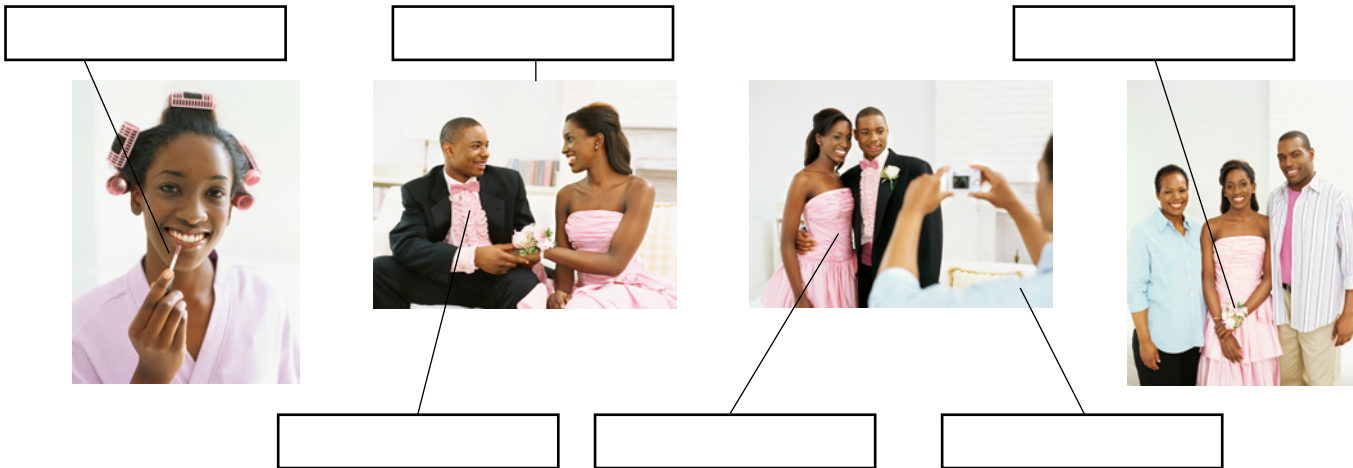
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Worksheet

Exercise 1: Elements of prom

Label the photos that show some elements of prom. Use the words from the box.



ball gown

corsage

date

make-up

photographer

tuxedo

Which of these elements played an important role at your school-leaving event? What else do you know about proms?

Exercise 2: Key words

- Look at the words in the box below. Quickly find and underline them in the article.
- Match the words with the definitions below.
- Now read the text carefully.

adequate
peers

extra-curricular
permissive

graduation
pinnacle

uncool
sumptuous

parading
topped

- the most successful or exciting part of someone's life _____
- a ceremony at which you are given a degree, certificate or other qualification _____
- satisfactory, but not extremely good _____
- impressive, expensive and of high quality _____
- be better or more impressive than something else _____
- people who are the same age as you _____
- activities that you do at school or college that are not part of your course _____
- walking around so that people will look at and admire you _____
- allowing someone a large amount of freedom to behave as they choose _____
- not considered popular, attractive or fashionable _____

What is prom night?

1. One of the pinnacle events in the lives of many high-school students is prom night. Proms have become a rite of passage for most teenagers across the US, and students spend many months, as well as a great deal of money, planning for them.
2. High school proms are usually held towards the end of the academic year in May or June. They celebrate graduation and the end of school in general for high school seniors, who at the age of 17 or 18 are finally leaving school behind them and moving on to the more adult world of college or work.
3. Prom starts well before the actual night. First, the venue and theme of the night have to be carefully considered. In the past, a decorated school gymnasium was considered an adequate venue, but these days proms are more likely to be held in a country club or a hotel ballroom with a sumptuous banquet and music provided by a professional band or DJ. However, so far, no one has topped the venue of Susan Ford's 1975 prom, which was held in the White House during her father's presidency.
4. Also in the lead-up to prom, students cast their votes via the school's website to elect their year's prom king and queen. In the past, this was often not much more than a popularity or beauty contest, but these days students have to get the backing of not only their peers, but also teachers, and so it's as important to get excellent grades, volunteer for extra-curricular activities and show leadership qualities as it is to have sparkling teeth and shiny hair. The king and queen are crowned, presented with sashes and usually expected to lead the other students in the first dance on prom night.
5. In recent years, 'promposals' have become major events in themselves. This is when (usually) a guy asks someone to be his date and accompany him to the prom. The proposals have become more and more elaborate, with many being videoed and put online. Even if a girl does the inviting, however, the boy is still expected to buy an old-fashioned corsage for his date.
6. On prom night, students arrive with their friends at the venue in a specially-hired limousine or party bus. Many parents book photographers to capture images of their teenagers dressed up for the big night in ball gowns and tuxedos (or at least a special prom dress and a suit) before they leave for the prom.
7. When the long-awaited high-school prom comes to an end at around 11 o'clock, the night is still young for many students. And so the celebrations continue with after-prom parties, which have now become as important as the official school prom.
8. Prom night originated in New England universities in the late 19th century as a way for graduating students to prepare themselves for the next stage of their lives. The word *prom* is short for *promenade*, the formal parading around of guests at a party, and proms were originally often seen as a place for graduates to meet their future husband or wife. The booming post-war economy in America, along with the arrival of rock and roll, a new way of dancing, as well as attitudes gradually becoming more permissive in general, paved the way for the formal early proms to evolve into the fun parties they are today.
9. Although prom is as American as baseball, Thanksgiving, and country music, its popularity has spread across the globe in recent years via American movies and TV shows. These days, countries such as the UK, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand have done away with their traditional but relatively uncool school leavers discos and replaced them with glitzy prom nights. Luckily, the prom costs that most parents have to shoulder are still much lower outside of the US – around £200 per pupil in the UK, compared to a minimum of \$1000 per student in America.

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Exercise 3: True or false?

Decide whether the statements are true or false according to the information in the text. Correct any that are false.

1. Prom night is a purely American celebration. _____
2. The first prom nights started in the 1950s. _____
3. Proms are usually held in exclusive venues and no longer in schools' sports halls. _____
4. Prom night celebrates students going off to college. _____
5. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) elect a prom king and queen each year. _____
6. Students spend a long time and a lot of money preparing for their perfect prom night. _____

Exercise 4: Expressions

a. Find expressions in the text that have the following meanings.

1. a ceremony or event that marks an important stage in someone's life, for example becoming an adult (para 1) _____
2. it's not yet very late (para 7) _____
3. a time in the 1950s when the US was doing very well in business and there were a lot of jobs and new things available to buy (para 8) _____
4. create a situation that makes it possible or easier for something to happen (para 8) _____
5. get rid of (something) (para 9) _____
6. deal with a financial burden or responsibility (para 9) _____

b. In pairs, use these expressions to talk about prom night.

Exercise 5: 'When I left school'

Did your school hold a prom, a ball, a disco or a party when you left school? Tell the other students about it.

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Worksheet

Exercise 6: The prom budget

Imagine you are going to prom and you have a budget of \$800. Look at the list of things you could spend your money on:

Price List:

Limousine – \$130 per hour
(minimum four-hour rental)

Party bus – \$170 per hour

Tuxedo rental – \$150

Corsage – \$25 upwards

Ball gown – \$150 upwards

Shoes – \$80 upwards



Prom night ticket – \$100

Hair and styling (male) – \$50 upwards

Hair and styling (female) – \$120 upwards

Make-up artist – \$80 upwards

Photographer – \$50 per image

Dance lessons – \$40 per hour



Discuss the questions:

- Which of these things are important to you?
- Which costs you are willing to accept as they are?
- Which things, if any, would you spend more on?
- Which costs would you try to find a way of reducing? (How?)
- Which things do you think you wouldn't need?
- Is there anything else you need to include in your budget?

Exercise 7: The 'promposal'

Working in a group, type *promposal* into a search engine and watch several promposals online. Then discuss the questions.

- Which one do you find most touching?
- Which do you think is the most elaborate?
- Which would have made you say, 'Absolutely yes!'
- Which would have made you say, 'No way!'
- Do you think promposals are a good or bad idea?