Running of the Bulls
READING: Running of the Bulls

Each year from July 6th-14th, hundreds of people put their lives at risk to run with the bulls. The San Fermin festival in Pamplona, Spain is world renowned because of this event (the encierro). The festival honors Saint San Fermin, the patron saint of bakers, boot makers, and wine makers. Saint San Fermin was the first bishop of Pamplona in the 3rd century. He was beheaded for being a Christian and is considered a martyr to this day.

The bull run takes place at 8:00 am sharp each morning of the festival. The runners gather half an hour early in front of a statue of San Fermin. They sing and ask the saint for protection. When the rocket is fired a group of six bulls and eight steers takes off into a narrow, walled off street. The goal of the bulls is to get to the bull ring where the bullfights are held later in the day. The goal of the runners is to get close to the animals without getting injured or killed. The run takes about three minutes in total, and as the bulls tire and break from their herd it becomes more dangerous for the runners. A lone bull is much more likely to charge than a bull in its herd. In fact, it is safer to run with the herd than to run alongside it.

There have been 15 deaths at the bull run of Pamplona since 1915. Why do these people risk their lives? Most of the runners are young men who do it solely for the adrenaline rush. Some just want to be able to say they did the run once in their lives. If nothing else, it is something they can tell their future grandkids. Each bull weighs at least 1500 pounds (close to 700 kilograms). Bulls have sharp, curved horns that can gore a person to death. Runners can be trampled to death if they don’t get out of the way quickly. About 200-300 people get injured every year. Many of the injuries are caused by tripping and falling in the cobbled streets.

There are a few important rules to follow before running with the bulls in Pamplona. Firstly, runners have to be 18 years of age or older. Secondly, all runners must arrive half an hour before the bulls are released. Thirdly, runners must not be under the influence of alcohol. Police do their best to weed out those who are still drunk from the night before. The San Fermin festival can get very rowdy, but the run is not to be taken lightly. Runners must also agree to run in the same direction as the herd. Due to safety reasons, no cameras are allowed on the course.

Besides the rules there are also traditions and precautions for bull runners. Most wear white shirts and pants with red scarves and waistbands. The red scarf symbolizes the saint’s slashed throat. To avoid being gored and trampled, runners are reminded to curl into a ball rather than stand up if they fall. The only way to know if it is safe to get up is if someone taps the runner on the shoulder. Locals recommend that first time runners watch the encierro at least once before participating.
READING COMPREHENSION

Directions: Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write the answers in the spaces below.

1. When does Pamplona’s running of the bulls take place?

2. Why was Saint San Fermin killed?

3. What happens at 7:30 am each morning of the festival?

4. Why is a tired bull more dangerous than a bull with energy?

5. Why does the reading mention the shape of the bulls’ horns?

6. How do many of the runners get injured at the festival?

7. What is the age restriction for runners?

8. What do the police do prior to the run?

9. What is the traditional costume of the San Fermin festival? What is the significance of the color red?

10. What should a person do if he falls down while running with the bulls?
VOCABULARY REVIEW

A. Match the words on the left with the correct meaning on the right.

_____ 1. world renowned   a) at exactly eight o’clock
_____ 2. patron saint    b) by one’s self
_____ 3. beheaded    c) to run at a person or thing in anger
_____ 4. martyr    d) full of energy and excitement; loud
_____ 5. 8:00 sharp    e) a feeling of excitement while taking a risk
_____ 6. lone    f) to remove the unwanted; eliminate
_____ 7. to charge    g) having a mind altering substance (alcohol or drugs) in one’s blood
_____ 8. adrenaline rush    h) a saint who is seen as a leader or guide for a certain group
_____ 9. gore    i) sliced the skin with a knife or sharp weapon
_____ 10. trampled    j) a person who dies for a religion or cause
_____ 11. cobbled    k) killed by cutting off one’s neck
_____ 12. under the influence    l) to pierce the body with something sharp
_____ 13. weed out    m) put together roughly (ex. a road with old stones)
_____ 14. rowdy    n) known by people around the world; famous
_____ 15. slashed    o) run over by a bunch of people or animals

B. Choose the word(s) with the closest meaning to the underlined words in the following sentences.

1. The San Fermin festival in Pamplona, Spain is **world renowned** because of the *encierrro*.
   a) criticized b) famous c) controversial

2. Participants in the running of the bulls must not be **under the influence** of alcohol.
   a) drunk  b) tired  c) rowdy

*continued on next page*
3. The bull run takes place at 8:00 am **sharp** each morning of the festival.
   a) dangerously  b) exactly  c) gored

4. Police do their best to **weed out** those who appear to be under the influence of alcohol.
   a) control    b) find   c) eliminate

5. The red scarf symbolizes the saint’s **slashed** throat.
   a) cut  b) beheaded  c) charged

C. Real life Examples (Pair activity)

Look at the vocabulary in the left column of Exercise A. Choose one of the words or phrases but don’t tell your partner which one you chose. Think of a real life example from the news or your own life to describe this word. Describe the example and invite your partner to guess which word you are thinking about.

**EXAMPLE:**

**STUDENT A:** “Yesterday I was walking downtown with my friend. There was a guy who couldn’t walk straight. He smelled like beer. When he got in his car my friend called the police. I wrote down the license number. I hope they caught him. *What word or phrase am I thinking of?***

**STUDENT B:** You’re thinking of “under the influence”. That man was under the influence of alcohol. I hope the police caught him.
PAIR WORK: Sharing Information (Student A)

**Directions:** You and your partner each have a reading containing different information about *The corrida* (bullfight). Read your paragraph and then share your information with your partner so that you can both complete the festival brochure.

**FEATURE STORY**

The bullfights in Pamplona have been held regularly since 1767. The Pamplona bullring, where the San Fermin festival bullfights take place, seats just over 19,500 people. 90% of the seats are reserved to season ticket holders. This is the third largest bullring in the world, and the second largest one in Spain. Unfortunately, there are only 1950 tickets available to the general public, so tourists have difficulty getting in. Spectators must arrive before a bullfight begins. The first bullfight starts at 6:30 pm. If you arrive late you must wait until a bull is killed. The mules remove the dead bull from the grounds.

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**BULLFIGHTS at SAN FERMIN FESTIVAL**

DON’T MISS THE ACTION!

- **Name bullring:** _________________________
- **Held regularly since:** _________________________
- **Total # of seats:** _________________________
- **Seats available to the public:** _________________________
- **% of seats available to season-ticket holders:** ______
- **Name of San Fermin Clubs:** _________________________
- **Size of bullring:** _________________________
- **Time first bullfight begins:** _________________________
- **Time Peñas leave:** _________________________
- **Shady sections:** _________________________
- **Sunny sections:** _________________________
- **Atmosphere in Sol:** _________________________
- **Atmosphere in Sombre:** _________________________
- **Job of the mules:** _________________________
- **Rule about arriving mid-fight:** _________________________
- **Reason the festival is popular outside of Spain:** _________________________
- **Reason the festival is popular outside of Spain:** _________________________
- **Reason the festival is popular with foreigners:** _________________________
PAIR WORK Contined

PAIR WORK: Sharing Information (Student B)

Directions: You and your partner each have a reading containing different information about The corrida (bull-fight). Read your paragraph and then share your information with your partner so that you can both complete the festival brochure.

FEATURE STORY

Seating for a bullfight in Pamplona is very organized. Ticket holders choose to sit in the sun or in the shade. The sunny sections are called the Sol. The shady sections are called the Sombre. The atmosphere differs in each section, due to the presence or absence of The Penas. The Penas are clubs that have gradually formed over the years. Each club has its own costume and clubhouse. Unlike the serious fans in section 1, 2, and 3 these partying groups gather in sections 5, 6, 10, and 12 and are rowdy and fun. They leave in a large parade at 8:30. There are even some from foreign countries. Many people around the world learned about the running of the bulls through Ernest Hemmingway’s book The Sun also Rises. Hemmingway was very interested in bullrunning and bullfighting, and after his book was published in 1926, foreigners became more interested in the festival. Today about 1 million people attend the festival in Pamplona each year.

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GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Directions: Get in small groups and discuss the following questions. Look out! This conversation may get heated!

1. Do you think the encierro is cruel to animals?

2. Do you think bullfighting should be illegal?

3. Do you know of any other cultural traditions that involve the killing of animals?

4. Before a bullfight a bull spends time in the dark. How does this provide a disadvantage to the bull?

5. Matadors often have assistants who help. Is this unfair to the animal?

5. Should the matador be treated as a celebrity?

7. In your opinion, is bullfighting a form of cultural expression, and art form, or a blood sport?

8. Do you think bullfighting will become illegal in the future?

9. What will happen to tourism in Spain if bullfighting is banned?

10. If you received a free ticket to a bullfight would you sit in the sun or shade (or would you give your ticket away)?
VOCABULARY, IDIOMS, AND EXPRESSIONS

1. **to take the bull by the horns** – to take action with confidence and get something done
   *Ex. Sandra took the bull by the horns.* She told the neighbors how much the fence would cost and asked them for half the money.

2. **a bull in a china shop** – acting carelessly when you need to be careful
   *Ex. At the tea party, the toddler was acting like a bull in a china shop.*

3. **to be full of bull** ("that’s bull") – to say that something is not true (Note: This is slang and is not appropriate language in some company. It is a short form of a swear word meaning you don’t believe something.)
   *Ex. She’s full of bull to say that. I know she’s lying.*

4. **Full of baloney** – a more acceptable way of saying that something is not true; safe expression to use with a child
   *Ex. Kyle says he’s moving to Spain. He’s full of baloney.*

5. **cock and bull story** – a lie
   *Ex. I don’t believe that cock and bull story about meeting the president. Where are the pictures to prove it?*

6. **hit the bull’s-eye** – to get something exactly right; also to get something exactly in the center (as in darts)
   *Ex. You hit the bull’s eye when you said that deal was too good to be true.*

7. **bull headed** – stubborn or set in one’s ways; to not care what others think
   *Ex. I want to paint the door red, but my husband is bullheaded. He went out and bought brown paint.*

VOCABULARY AND IDIOM PRACTICE

Now write your own sentences using the vocabulary and idioms on this and the previous page.
ANSWERS

Page 3. Comprehension

1. Pamplona's running of the bulls takes place each year from July 6-14th.
2. The saint was killed due to his belief in Christianity.
3. Half an hour before the race, the runners gather and sing to the saint, asking for his protection.
4. A tired bull may break from its herd and attack a runner.
5. The bulls' horns are curved and therefore very dangerous if they pierce through a person's skin.
6. Many runners get injured by tripping and falling on the cobbled stones. Some get trampled by other runners or animals.
7. All runners must be 18 years of age or older.
8. The police try to make sure that the runners are not drunk.
9. The traditional costume is a white shirt and pants with a red scarf and belt. The red scarf symbolizes the slashed throat of the martyr.
10. A person should curl up in a ball and wait for a tap on the shoulder.

Page 4 & 5. Vocabulary

A. 1. n  2. h  3. k  4. j  5. a  6. b  7. c  8. e  9. l  10. o  11. m  12. g  13. f  14. d  15. i

B. 1. b  2. a  3. c  4. c  5. a

Page 8. Pair Work

Name bullring: Pamplona Bullring
Held regularly since: 1767
Total # of seats: 19,500+
Seats available to the public: 1950
Percentage of seats available to season-ticket holders: 90%
Name of San Fermin Clubs: Peñas
Size of bullring: Third largest in the world
Time first bullfight begins: 6:30 pm
Time Peñas leave: 8:30 pm
Shade sections: 1, 2, 3
Sun sections: 5, 6, 10, 12
Atmosphere in Sol: rowdy
Atmosphere in Sombre: serious
Job of the mules: to drag the dead bulls away
Rule about arriving mid-fight: You must wait until the bull dies before seating
Reason the festival is popular outside of Spain: Ernest Hemmingway's book *The Sun Also Rises*